

Cinema Art and Science Annual Assessment Report AY 16-17

Summary

Varied assessment activities looked at Producing, Directing, and Screenwriting at the undergraduate level and Creative Producing at the graduate level. Overall, students are performing at a satisfactory level and consistently excelling at collaboration and content creation. A consistent area for improvement, especially in Directing and Screenwriting, is students' ability to communicate their creative ideas, off of the page, to a specific audience.

I. Major Degree Programs

Cinema Art and Science BA

Cinema Art and Science BFA

- Cinematography
- Cinema Visual Effects
- Directing
- Editing and Post-Production
- Producing
- Production Design
- Screenwriting
- Sound for Cinema

Television BA

- Television, Internet, and Mobile Media
- Post-Production and Effects
- Production and Design
- Writing and Producing

Interdisciplinary Documentary BA

II. Degree Programs Assessed AY16-17

Cinema Art and Sciences BFA: Producing (FA16)

Cinema Art and Sciences BFA: Directing (FA16)

Cinema Art and Sciences BFA: Screenwriting (FA16, SP17)

Creative Producing MFA (SP17)

III. Assessment 1: Cinema Art and Science BFA: Producing (FA16)

Learning Outcomes Assessed

Program Outcomes

1. Write story notes, script coverage and edit notes at an industry entry-level.
2. Define the key differences between a Creative producer and a Line Producer/UPM.
3. Use industry-standard software to create professional production budgets and schedules.
4. Create producer-driven paperwork and documentation such as Call Sheets, and Production Reports.
5. Manage a crew in all phases of filmmaking from development through to exhibition.
6. Negotiate and execute deal memos relating to cast & crew, define the role of unions and representation in these processes.
7. Articulate trends in distribution and customary acquisition (deal) terms.
8. Create a project-based plan including key art, festival and distribution strategies, cast & crew bios press and promotions.

Select Course Outcomes

1. Identify correct screenwriting techniques.
2. Define the key differences between a Creative Producer and a Line Producer/UPM.
3. Demonstrate the ability to use industry-standard software to create professional production budgets and schedules.
4. Create professional Call Sheets and Daily Production Reports.
6. Articulate the differences between crew -members and departments.
7. Express the vital role of the following processes:
 - a. Casting
 - b. Location Scouting
 - c. Pre-Visualization
 - d. Securing Equipment
8. Execute basic deal memos relating to cast and crew, and understand the role of guilds/unions, agents, managers and lawyers in these processes.

Method

During the FA16 semester, students in Producing I took a 107-question final exam. Each question on the exam was linked to the program and course outcomes listed earlier. 18 students took the exam.

Results

Regarding the program outcomes, students demonstrated a strong ability to manage projects, especially with taking notes and managing a crew. However, students performed poorly in certain post-production areas, such as distribution and acquisition and creating a promotion plan.

¹ It is difficult to interpret the results of the lowest performing *course* outcome (8. Execute basic deal memos) as there is discrepancy between what questions are identified with the *program* outcome on “deal memos” and the *course* outcome on “deal memos.”

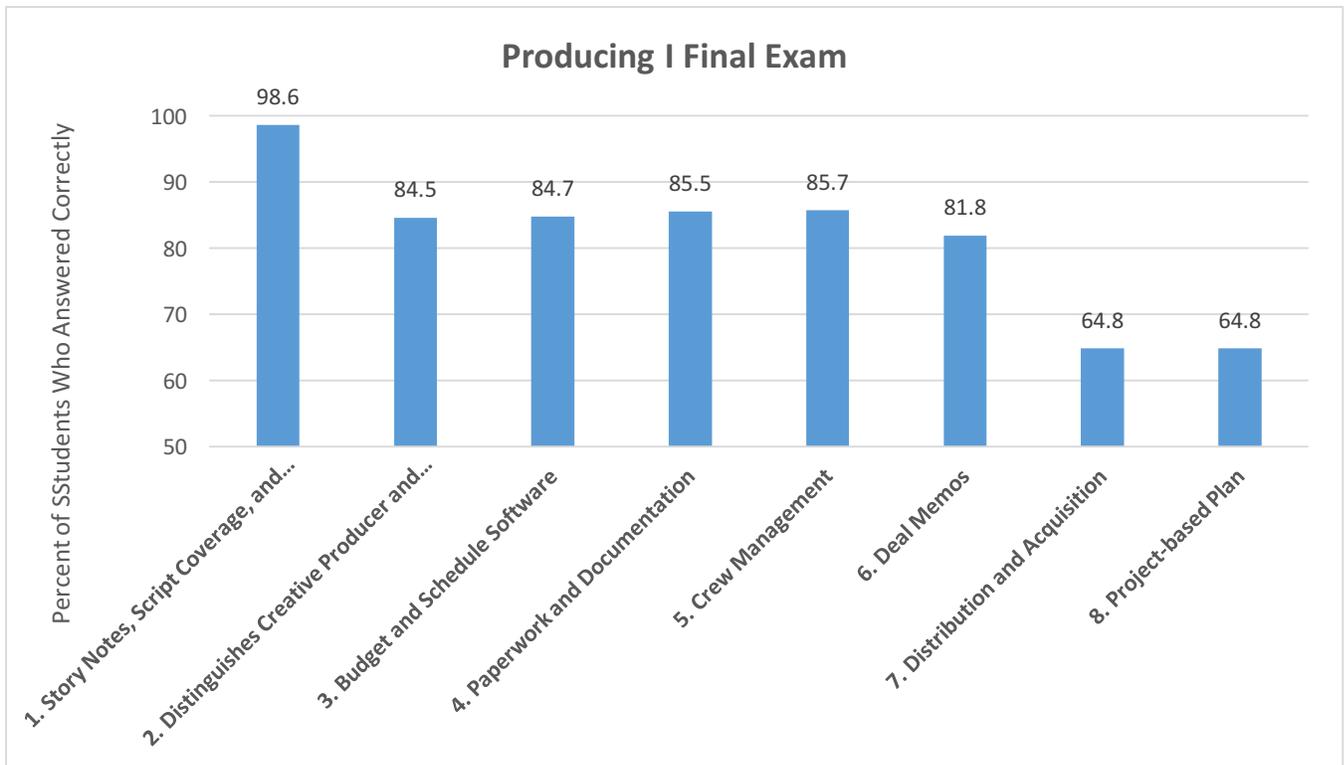


Figure 1. Producing I Final Exam Performance by Program Outcome

Strongest Performance

1. Write story notes, script coverage and edit notes at an industry level.
2. Manage a crew in all phases of filmmaking from development through exhibition.

Weakest Performance

1. Articulate trends in distribution and customary acquisition (deal) terms.
1. Create a project-based plan including key art, festival and distribution strategies, cast & crew bios press and promotions.

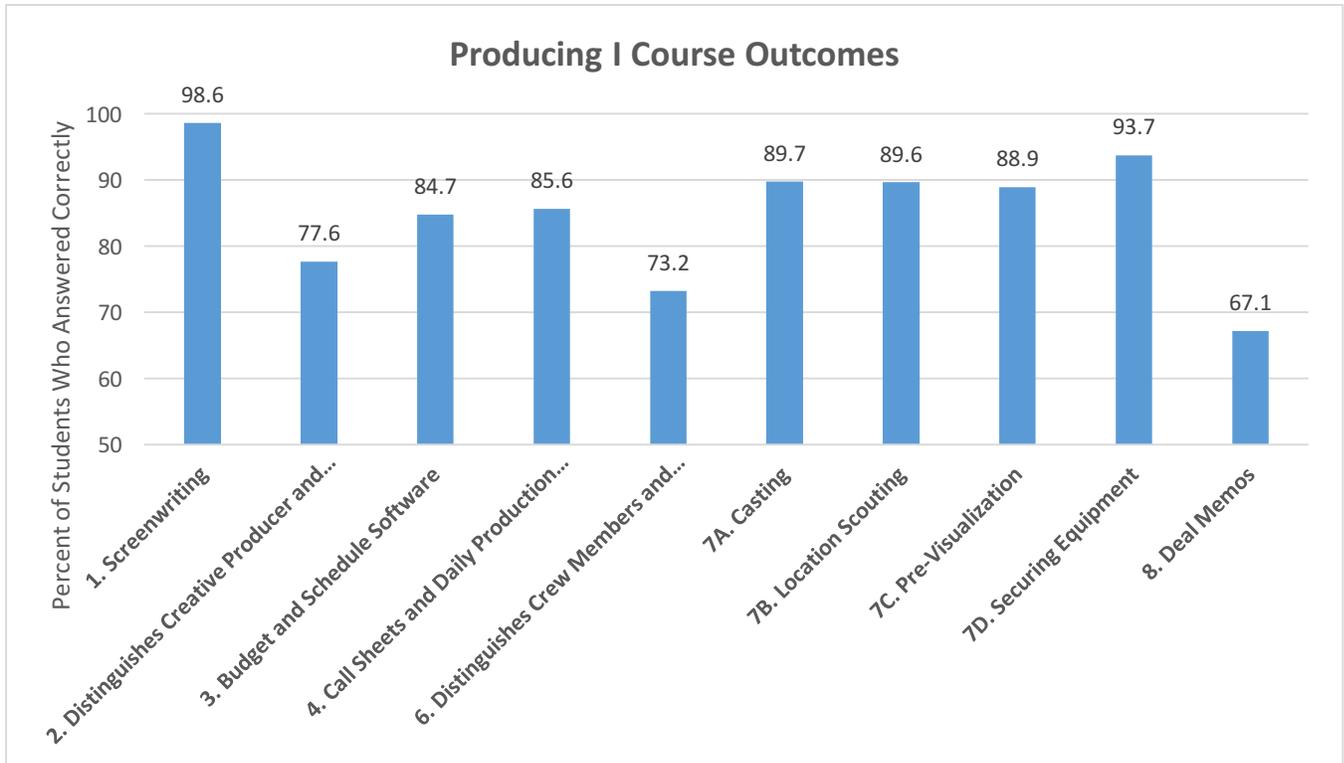


Figure 2. Producing I Final Exam Performance by Course Outcome

Strongest Performance

1. Identify correct screenwriting techniques.
2. Express the vital role of securing equipment.

Weakest Performance

1. Execute basic deal memos relating to cast and crew, and understand the role of guilds/unions, agents, managers, and lawyers in these processes.
2. Articulate the differences between crew-members and departments.

Moving Forward

- More attention in the curriculum might be given to areas of post-production to improve student performance in these areas.

Assessment 2: Cinema Art and Sciences BFA: Directing (FA16)

Learning Outcomes Assessed

- Analyze a narrative screenplay, prepare a director's breakdown, and visual treatment.
- Effectively communicate and collaborate with actors to create psychologically believable cinematic performances.
- Critically examine their own work and that of their peers.

Method

FA16 was the third semester of the new Acting & Directing and Directing courses. Instructors of all 13 sections were asked to complete Qualtrics surveys about students' performances and experiences in the courses. Six instructors then met in the Spring to discuss the survey results and their own experiences teaching the course.

Results

The survey showed very positive responses for three areas in Directing I that reflect the curricular changes:

- Block and stage a cinematic narrative scene
- Effectively communicate and collaborate with actors
- Conduct themselves professionally and safely on a studio set

The following are prominent comments from the faculty discussion of the survey results:

Director's Statements: Students had a difficult time articulating the purposes of what they are trying to achieve in their work. It was suggested that more courses require students to write Director's or Artist's Statements and that instructors bring in models for students to read, not just in the Directing sequence, but throughout.

Short Script (Initial Assignment in Directing I): Students consistently dislike the short script they are assigned at the beginning of the class. There was consensus that this was likely due to the perception that it was not tied to anything else in the course (or subsequent courses).

Foundations: There was some discussion that certain essential skills are not being developed early on as they used to be (and as they should be). The one mentioned most frequently was storyboarding.

Pedagogy: Another theme that emerged was the potential pedagogical value in consistency (and "repetition") throughout the curriculum, especially to emphasize that much of what they are learning and doing is preparation for their Advanced Production class.

Moving Forward

- Director's Statements: One instructor noted that he used to bring in examples of actual Artist Statements to help students generate their own. It was suggested that students should have to write and rewrite their Artist Statement each semester.
- Short Script: One suggestion was to use the short script as the final scene and move it into production. This would develop the script through Directing I and into Directing II.
- Foundations: There is a need for the Directing faculty to communicate with the Foundations faculty to discuss the present assessment.

Assessment 3: Cinema Art and Sciences BFA: Screenwriting (FA16, SP17)

Learning Outcomes Assessed

- Develop both short scripts and features
- Generate, develop, implement and revise story ideas into screenplay format

- Critique the work of their peers both orally and in writing and apply to their own revision process
- Collaborate and communicate effectively

Method

In week 15 of Screenwriting I, Screenwriting II, Adaptation, and Genres in Screenwriting, instructors used CAM to assess each student's "progress" over the semester and "skill" at the end on a rubric consisting of a scale of 1-4 (1=Experiencing Difficulty, 2=Developing Skills, 3=Performing Satisfactorily, and 4=Demonstrating Strength) in the following criteria:

- Student is open to candid feedback and new perspectives from both peers and instructor.
- Student can adapt diverse source material into dramatic short screenplays.
- Student is able to effectively pitch a cohesive concept to an audience.
- Student actively participates in peer critiques and classroom activities.
- For an (introductory) screenwriting course, student demonstrates appropriate application of scene structure and plot.
- For an (introductory) screenwriting course, student creates compelling and believable characters.
- For an (introductory) screenwriting course, student writes effective dialogue that serves the drama.

Results

In three of the four courses, students did very well at giving and receiving critique. Additionally, on average they created characters and dialogue at a satisfactory level. In the majority of courses, however, students were less strong at pitching their concepts. In other words, students were better at executing creative ideas than they were at communicating those ideas, off of the page, to an audience. It is encouraging that students had stronger "skill" performance in nearly all in Screenwriting II compared to Screenwriting I, showing improvement as they progress through the course sequence.

Though they were still near a satisfactory level, students performed much weaker in Genres in Screenwriting. In addition to the lower scores, the course was anomalous to the rest of the Screenwriting courses as students performed weakest in receiving feedback and in participation.

Screenwriting 1 (FA16)

N = 122 Assessed by Seven Instructors
42/122 (34%) Students Viewed Their Assessment on CAM

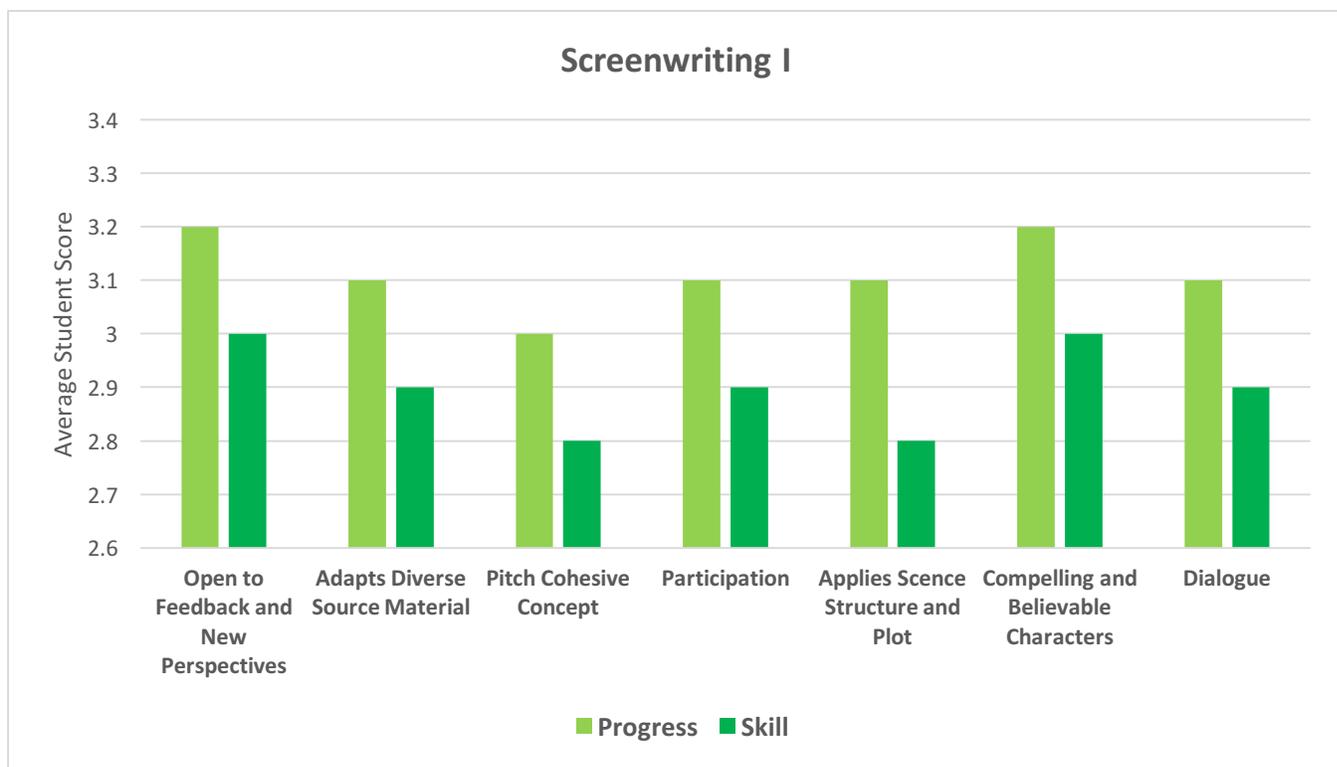


Figure 3. Screenwriting I Student Performance

Highest Performance

1. Open to Feedback and New Perspectives
1. Creates Compelling and Believable Characters

Lowest Performance

1. Pitch a Cohesive Concept to an Audience
2. Application of Scene Structure and Plot

Ranking by Corresponding Program Outcomes.

1. Critique the work of their peers and apply their own revision process
1. Develop both short scripts and features
2. Generate, develop, implement and revise story ideas into screenplay format
3. Collaborate and communicate effectively²

FA16 Screenwriting II (FA16)

N = 67 Assessed by Seven Instructors

24/67 (36%) Students Viewed Their Assessment on CAM

² Though students performed strongly in some areas related to collaboration, this outcome is ranked last for the “communication” portion.

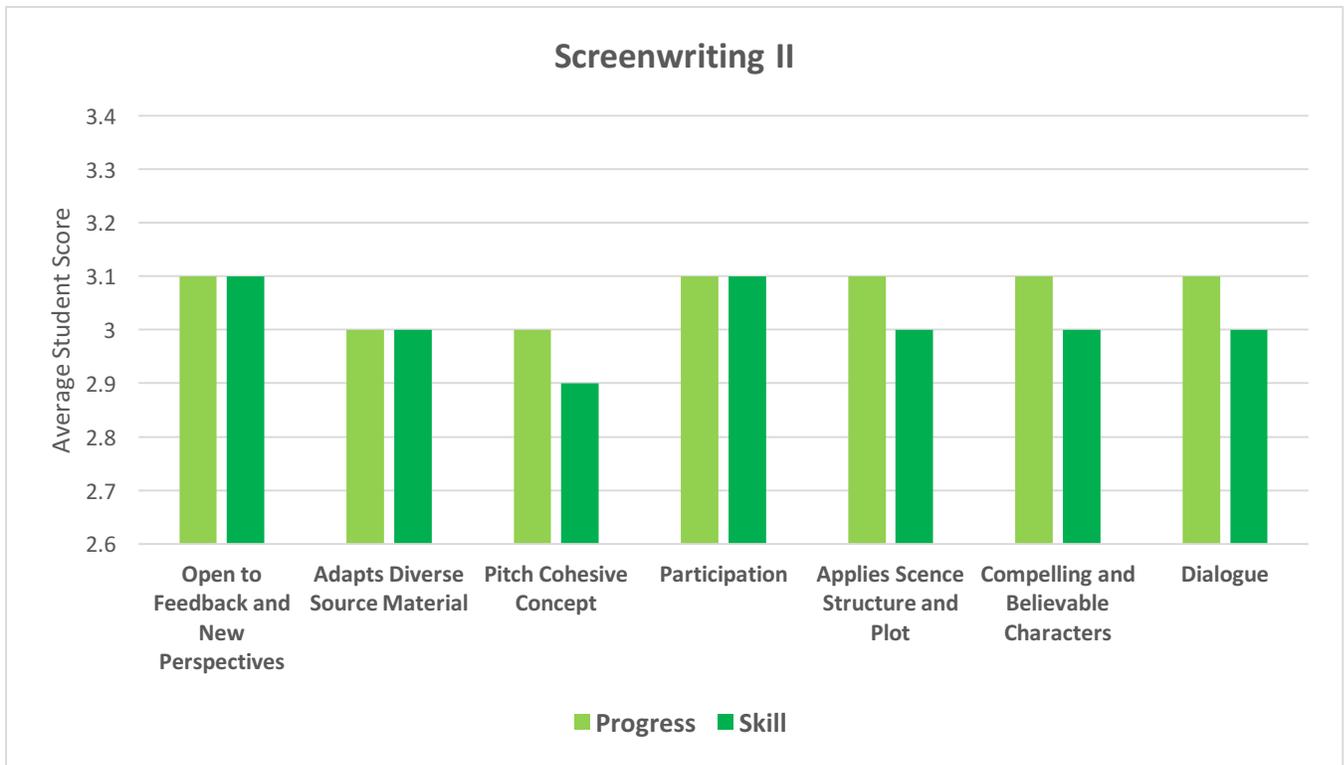


Figure 4. Screenwriting II Student Performance

Highest Performance

1. Open to Feedback and New Perspectives
1. Participation

Lowest Performance

1. Pitch a Cohesive Concept to an Audience
2. Adapts Diverse Source Material

Ranking by Corresponding Program Outcomes.

1. Critique the work of their peers and apply their own revision process
1. Develop both short scripts and features
2. Generate, develop, implement and revise story ideas into screenplay format
3. Collaborate and communicate effectively

Adaptation (FA16)

N = 29 Assessed by Two Instructors
12/29 (41%) Students Viewed Their Assessment on CAM

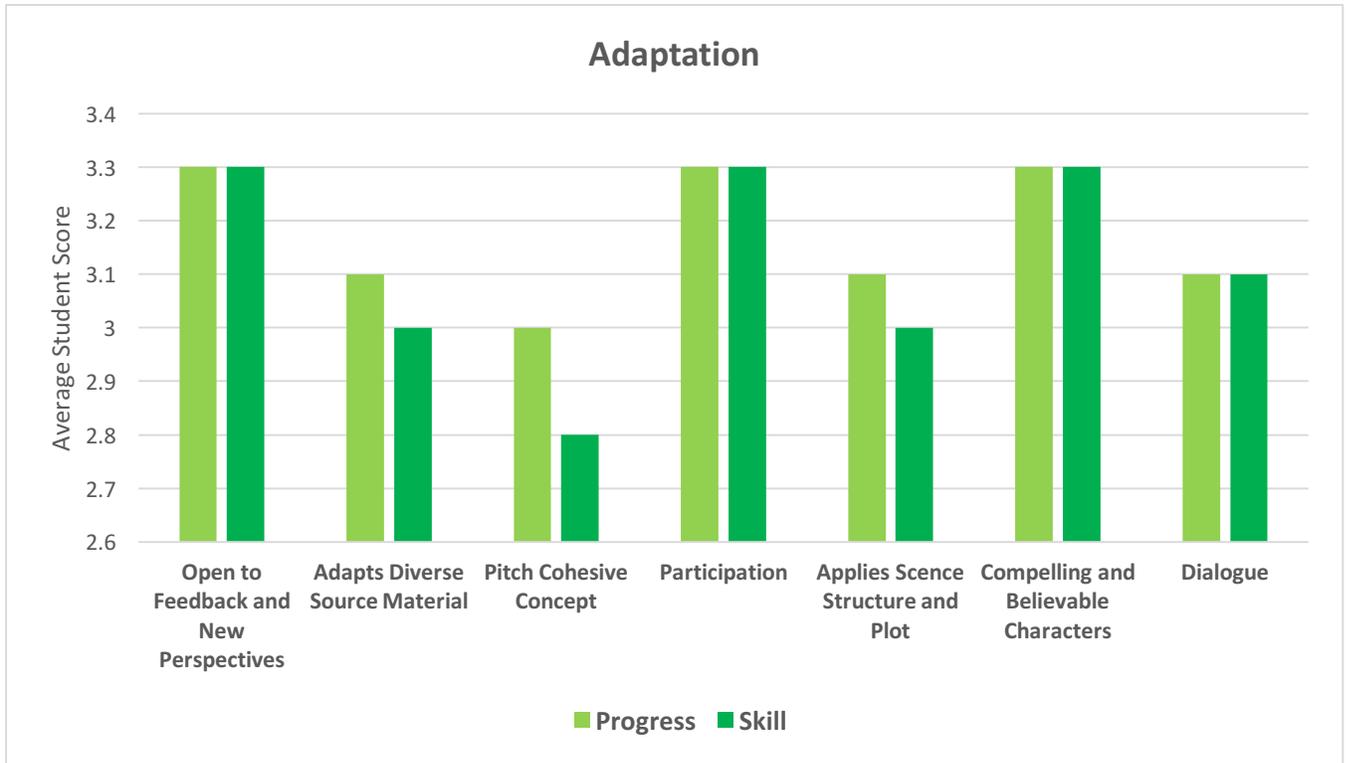


Figure 5. Adaptation Student Performance

Highest Performance

1. Open to Feedback and New Perspectives
1. Participation
1. Create Compelling and Believable Characters

Lowest Performance

1. Pitch a Cohesive Concept to an Audience
2. Adapts Diverse Source Material
2. Applies Scene Structure and Plot

Ranking by Corresponding Program Outcomes.

1. Critique the work of their peers and apply their own revision process
1. Develop both short scripts and features
2. Generate, develop, implement and revise story ideas into screenplay format
3. Collaborate and communicate effectively

Genres in Screenwriting (FA16)

N = 12 Assessed by One Instructor
0/12 (0%) Students Viewed Their Assessment on CAM

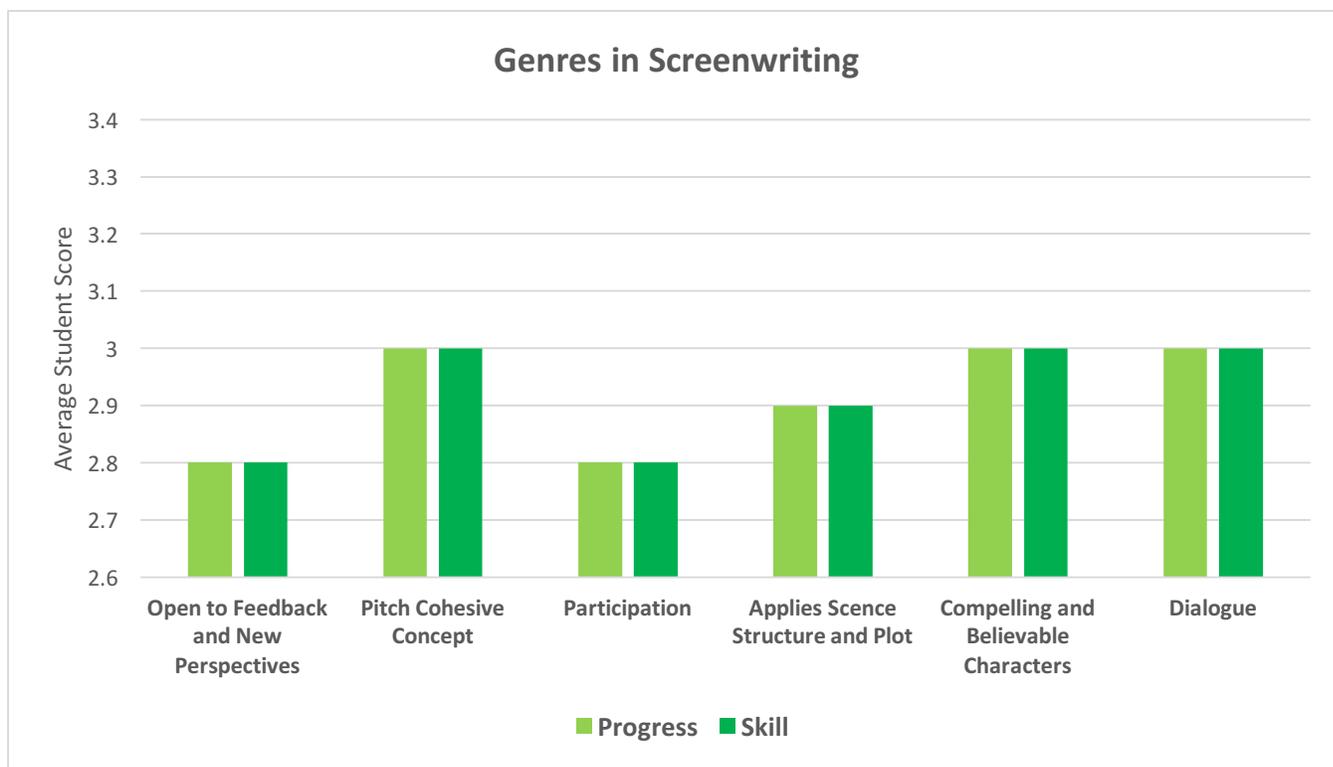


Figure 6. Genres in Screenwriting Student Performance

Highest Performance

1. Pitch a Cohesive Concept to an Audience
1. Write Dialogue that Serves the Drama
1. Create Compelling and Believable Characters

Lowest Performance

1. Open to Feedback and New Perspectives
2. Participation

Ranking by Corresponding Program Outcomes

1. Collaborate and communicate effectively
1. Develop both short scripts and features
1. Generate, develop, implement and revise story ideas into screenplay format
3. Critique the work of their peers and apply their own revision process

Moving Forward

- To improve students' abilities to pitch cohesive ideas, similar to the discussion that took place in the Directing assessment, Screenwriting might further encourage students to write and revise Artist's Statements to practice communicating ideas apart from content creation.
- With students doing noticeably worse in Genres in Screenwriting compared to earlier courses, the department might reconsider how collaboration and critique are approached in the course.
- To increase the number of students who view their assessment and feedback on CAM, faculty should consider strategies for presenting CAM to students.

Assessment 4: Creative Producing MFA (SP17)

Learning Outcomes Assessed

- Career Readiness: Students employ business, technological, and entrepreneurial skills to create a body of work across media-based platforms that demonstrates professional preparedness, resourcefulness and adaptability.
- Communication: Students demonstrate written and other communicative competencies across a range of academic, artistic, professional, and social contexts using appropriate print, oral, aural, digital, visual, kinesthetic, and other relevant modes.
- Community Engagement: Students generate work with a target audience that demonstrates considered, reciprocal engagement with communities in and beyond Chicago.
- Creativity: Students create a body of work informed by critical knowledge of creative producing in its artistic, historical, and/or cultural contexts.
- Critical and Analytical Thinking: Students examine methods and assumptions, use qualitative and quantitative data, multiple sources and arguments, in order to assess and evaluate their own work and the work of others.
- Ethics: Students explore their personal values and ethical responsibilities in order to develop and negotiate professional practice and communicate to a diverse audience.

Method

In this ongoing assessment, all CAS graduate faculty are invited to assess and offer feedback on student projects, which have been developed with an eye towards thesis consideration. Using CAM, faculty complete a rubric on the story, long-form package, and business plan presented by each creative producing student. Faculty use a scale of 1-3 (1=Needs Improvement, 2=Satisfactory, 3=Strong) to rate the following:

- Story and project are clear.
- Presentation is organized and clear.
- Able to answer questions; knowledgeable about the story.
- Story has been thought through from a variety of angles.
- Team is willing to incorporate critique and re-imagine storyline.
- Characters are dimensional and consistent with the story's tone and intentions.
- Individual story elements reflect a coherent theme or thematic interests.
- Team has done the necessary research to make the story authentic and the film producible.
- Intended audience clearly identified and taken into consideration when developing the story and project
- Producing the project could likely be accomplished with identified timeframe and budget.
- Extraordinary logistics have been addressed (such as special effects, extra, animal wrangling, locations, etc.)
- The scale and scope of the project is appropriate for a short film.
- Team is able to find and articulate a connection to the project.
- Team is able to present the strengths and best interests of the project even if they are not planning to remain involved.

- Team is able to continue the Development process (writers with a producer; producers with a writer and/or director).

Additionally, raters were asked to answer if they “would like to know more about the project.”

Results

The Creative Producing MFA students, overall, received satisfactory or near-satisfactory scores in Story Development, with a slight dip in scores on Story 3. In numerical ratings, students were strongest at articulating their personal connections to the projects, incorporating the critiques they received, and moving forward with revisions. The lowest scores, slightly below a satisfactory level, consistently were in researching the project and adequately illustrating the feasibility of the project’s logistics.

Both numerical scores and written comments also emphasize that students often focused on story and plot to the detriment of character. That average scores slightly decreased (rather than increased) with each successive Story is of notice (see Figure 9). On Story 3, students averaged below satisfactory in the majority of criteria, though the numbers of students and faculty participating in the Story 3 assessment were lower than the previous two.

Story 1

N = 64: 10 Students Assessed by 12 instructors
48/64 (75%) Rubrics Viewed by Students on CAM
I would like to know more about this project: Yes (64%) No (36%)

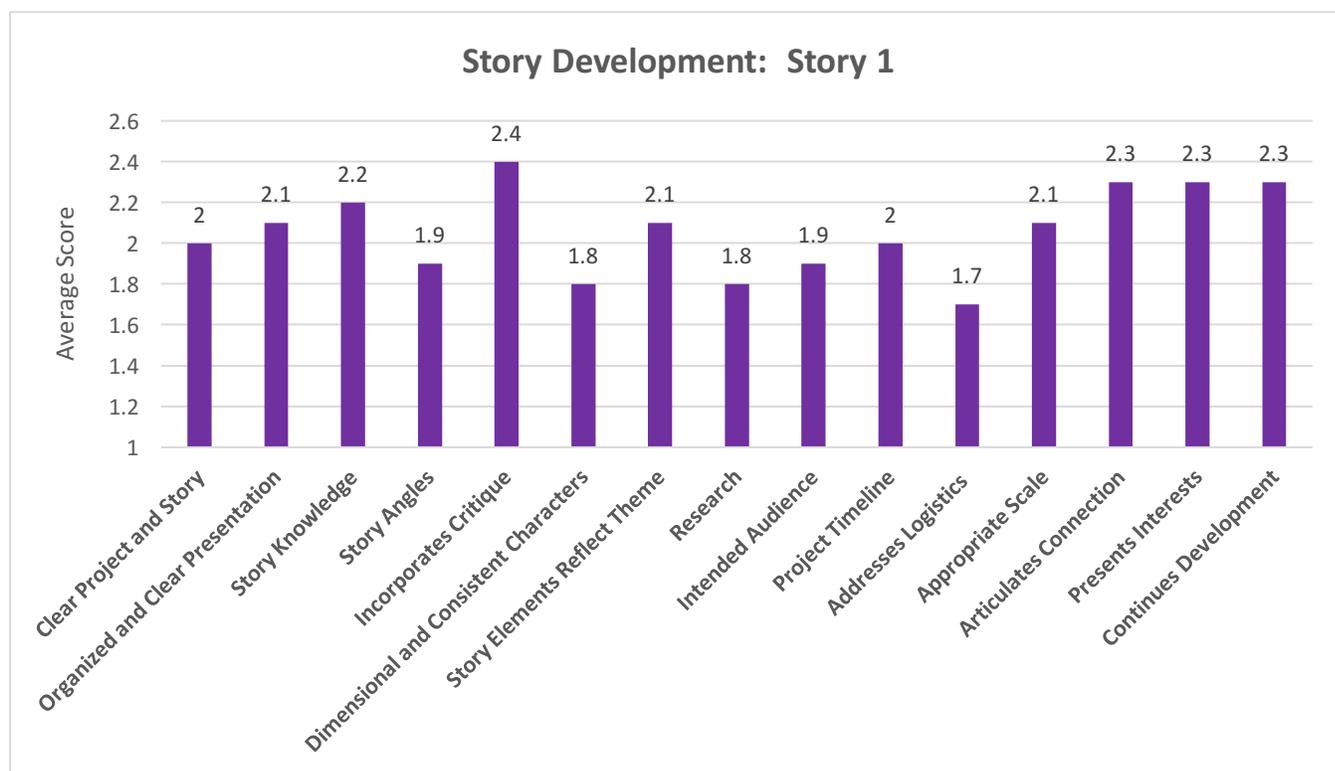


Figure 7. Story Development: Story 1 Student Ratings

- Highest Performance
1. Willing to Incorporate Critique
 2. Articulates Connection
 2. Presents Interests
 2. Continues Development

- Lowest Performance
1. Addresses Logistics
 2. Dimensional and Consistent Characters
 2. Research

Ranking by Corresponding Program Outcomes

Strongest

1. Collaboration: Students analyze, research and negotiate diverse viewpoints to develop intellectual property with creative partners.

Weakest

1. Critical and Analytical Thinking: Students examine methods and assumptions, use qualitative and quantitative data, multiple sources and arguments, in order to assess and evaluate their own work and the work of others.

For notable and recurring written comments, see Appendix A.

Story 2

N = 25: 10 students assessed by 10 instructors
19/25 Rubrics Viewed by Students on CAM
I would like to know more about this project: Yes (52%) No (48%)

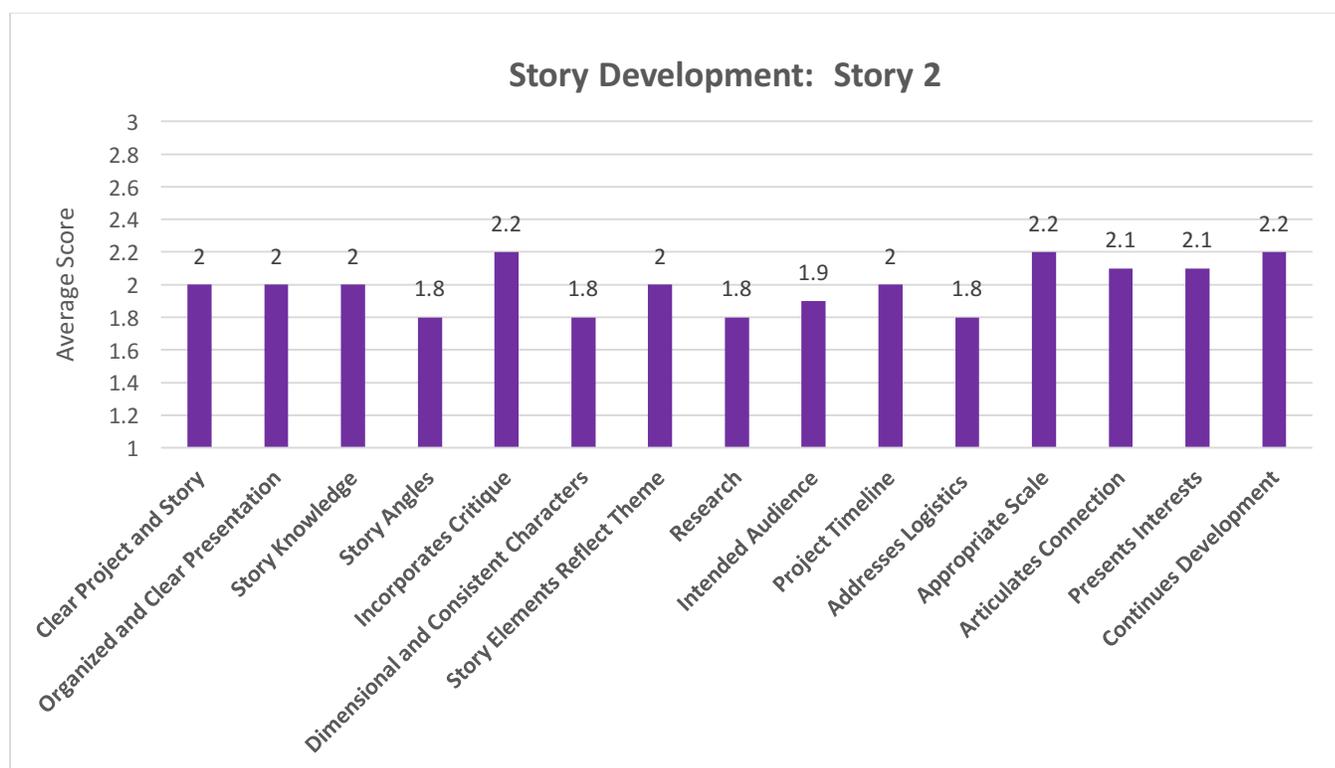


Figure 8. Story Development: Story 2 Student Ratings

Highest Performance	Lowest Performance
1. Willing to Incorporate Critique	1. Story Thought Through Multiple Angles
1. Appropriate Scale	1. Dimensional and Consistent Characters
1. Continues Development	1. Research
	1. Addresses Logistics

Ranking by Corresponding Program Outcomes

Strongest

1. Collaboration: Students analyze, research and negotiate diverse viewpoints to develop intellectual property with creative partners.

Weakest

1. Critical and Analytical Thinking: Students examine methods and assumptions, use qualitative and quantitative data, multiple sources and arguments, in order to assess and evaluate their own work and the work of others.

For notable and recurring written comments, see Appendix B.

Story 3

N = 12: Seven Students Assessed by 3 Faculty
7/12 (58%) Rubrics Viewed by Students on CAM
I would like to know more about this project: Yes (42%) No (58%)

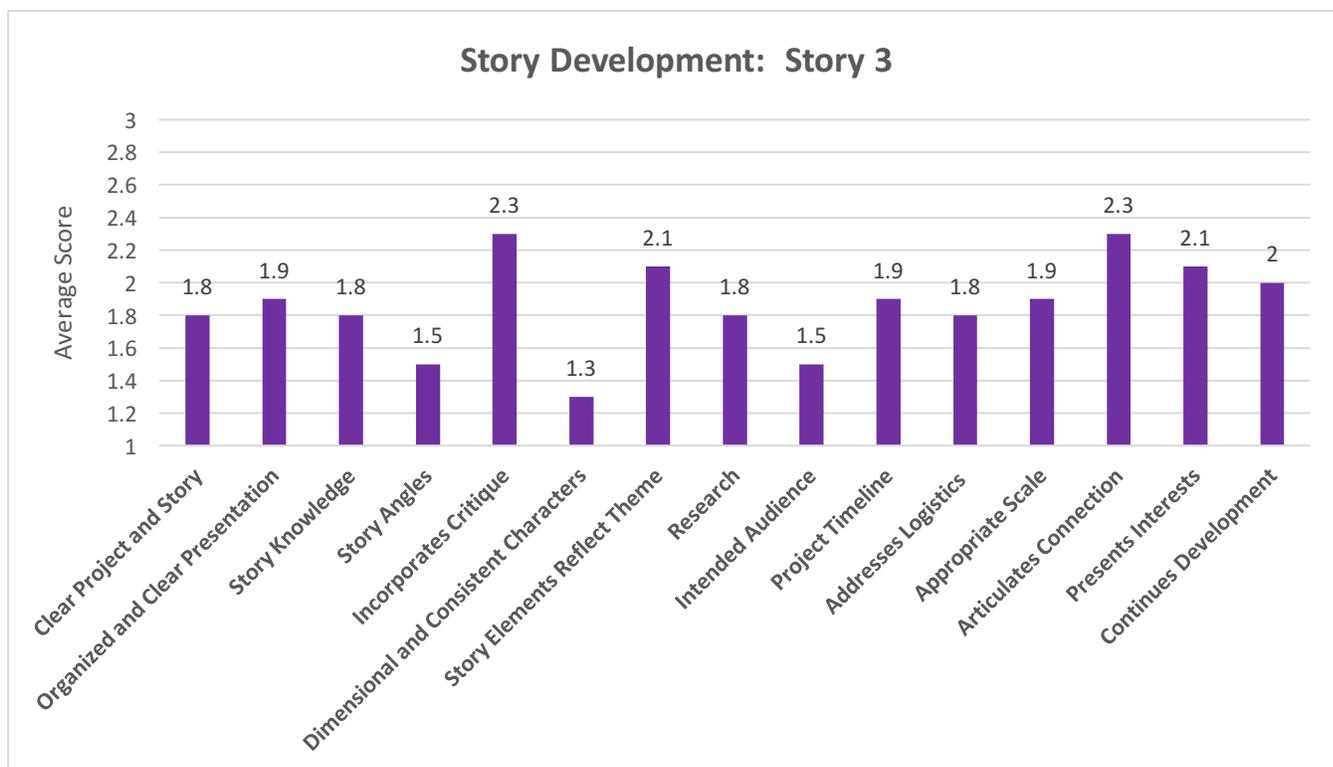


Figure 9. Story Development: Story Student Ratings

Highest Performance

1. Willing to Incorporate Critique
1. Articulates Connection
2. Story Elements Reflect Theme
2. Presents Interests

Lowest Performance

1. Dimensional and Consistent Characters
2. Story Thought Through Multiple Angles
2. Intended Audience Considered

Ranking by Corresponding Program Outcomes

Strongest

1. Collaboration: Students analyze, research and negotiate diverse viewpoints to develop intellectual property with creative partners.

Weakest

1. Critical and Analytical Thinking: Students examine methods and assumptions, use qualitative and quantitative data, multiple sources and arguments, in order to assess and evaluate their own work and the work of others.

For notable and recurring written comments, see Appendix C.

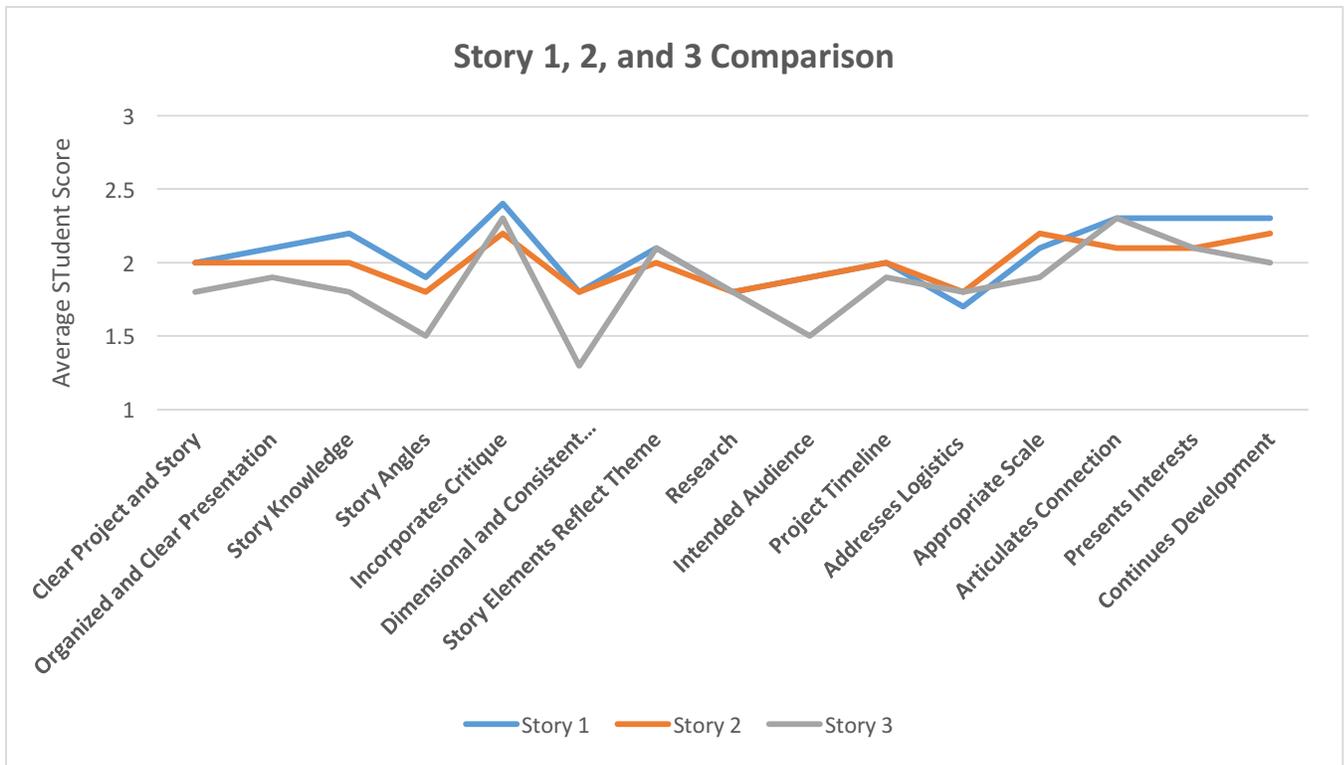


Figure 9. Progression of Students' Scores

Moving Forward

- Overall, the numerical scores and written feedback emphasize a need for students to further pursue the implications of the projects: how the story affects characters, how the projects could be viewed from multiple angles, and the logistics of shooting. Finding a way so that teams are knowledgeable of the “implications” questions they should be prepared to answer prior to their pitches may allow for students to better prepare in those areas.
- Discussion is needed for how to effectively sustain assessment through Story 3.

Appendix A: Story 1, Notable and Recurring Written Comments

Criterion: Able to answer questions; knowledgeable about the story.

- Clear view of story even though certain elements can be revised to make drama more compelling.
- Not only did it make sense, but it's easy to get excited about this project.
- The pitch of the story was too long. Really focus first on the spine - in a few sentences, walk us through the main arc of the protagonist's story. Then, flesh it out briefly.
- The pitch was far too detailed, to the point where it was unclear. Needs to be focused on the theme of the story, not every single step of the plot.
- In many ways, it sounds like they are trying to fit a much longer film into a short film.
- Too much time explaining the plot rather than the thematic and emotional aspects of the story.
- Good scope for a short film but the main character is too much of a cipher and the plot feels like scenarios rather than a unified narrative.
- Needs a better understanding of developing character empathy. Right now, the material is all social-issue plot.
- The pitch got out the story (it is a simple tell), but did not really deal with the ramifications that this story would have for an audience.
- Need to know character better. Strong on plot.
- Need to differentiate the characters and give them more depth in the pitch.

Criterion: Intended audience clearly identified and taken into consideration when developing the story and project.

- Seems to have thought through some of the logistics of the story. Good conception of what the production might be like.
- The director knows the intended audience and the material well.
- The material is too vague at this point.
- They certainly have thought through the story elements, and they seemed willing to consider new ideas for it as well.
- Some basic decisions have not yet been made.
- The whole idea, though interesting, is so undeveloped that it is unclear what she really wants it to be about. Good images, but not a coherent story.

Criterion: Team is able to continue the Development process (writers with a producer; producers with a writer and/or director).

- They definitely seemed to work well together and to have talked about a variety of aspects of filmmaking. They appear to have a solid working relationship.
- Very open to ideas and again, willing to incorporate feedback while the script is being developed.

Appendix B: Story 2, Notable and Recurring Written Comments

Criterion: Able to answer questions; knowledgeable about the story.

- Strong, focused, and energetic.
- I like this idea, but right now it's more of a premise than a thought-out film.
- The pitch seems more like a feature than a short.
- I was interested in the world of the story being pitched, but I did get lost while listening - especially in terms of what was driving the story thematically.

Criterion: Intended audience clearly identified and taken into consideration when developing the story and project.

- Interesting story. Works better as a feature.
- The story still needs some development - especially the two main characters - but the theme is strong and clear, and the general structure works well.
- It's a feature.

Criterion: The scale and scope of project is appropriate for a short film.

- Perfect scope for a short-film.
- Probably a feature.
- There are many elements (story, theme, character) that still need further development, but I do think the film could work in terms of budget, logistics, scale, and scope.

Criterion: Team is able to continue the Development process (writers with a producer, producers with a writer and/or director).

- The team works well together.
- Theme is clear. Focus the story to make it more appropriate for a short.

Appendix C: Story 3, Notable and Recurring Written Comments

Criterion: Able to answer questions; knowledgeable about the story.

- A good pitch with a complex plot and story
- Vague storyline. Lacks drama elements in plots. Also lacking in character development. Weak presentation in pitching the idea.
- I think this project has immense potential. Concept and themes are very strong, even as the story and characters need to be developed further.
- The pitch was solid in the sense that I was given a good idea of what was happening in the story throughout. That said, I was concerned that the story being pitched had more plot in it than would be good for the short form.
- The pitch was well-structured, but the characters lacked dimension, and I was unsure about what the theme was.

Criterion: Intended audience clearly identified and taken into consideration when developing the story and project.

- Strong concept but lacks character development.
- Lacks story logic.
- The theme is strong, but the story needs further consideration. I need to better understand who these characters are, and I recommend streamlining the material.
- The story lacks succinct story, plot, and characters.

Criterion: The scale and scope of project is appropriate for a short film.

- Although there's a lot of work still to be done in terms of character and story development, this project does seem very producible in terms of logistics, scale, and scope.

Criterion: Team is able to continue the Development process (writers with a producer; producers with a writer and/or director).

- Don't really see that the team members are committed to complete the project.
- The producer was able to articulate what her connection was to the material (more than the writer was), and I think some of my suggestions will help them further develop the story and main character to reinforce the main theme.