
AN EXAMINATION OF HOLISTIC SCORING:
RESEARCH AND THEORY

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Because faculty view holistic scoring as the most economic, efficient, and flexible of all direct writing assessment procedures, it has become the most popular method for assessing student writing ability. Proponents of holistic scoring have claimed that most of the basic reliability problems inherent in direct writing assessment have been solved. However, increasing concern about the validity of holistic scoring procedures has been emerging in the last couple of years.

The panel presented a review of theory and research on holistic scoring and reported an ongoing research study of the validity of holistic scoring. The review aimed to place holistic scoring in a theoretical framework of educational measurement. The goal of the research study is to provide some validation of holistic scoring by examining the differential responses of expert and novice raters through the use of verbal protocols. Interestingly, expert raters appear to achieve a more personal reading and to be able to

read from a much wider range of stances than do novice raters.