Writing in the First-Year Seminar

A National Snapshot
Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience
February 16, 2014
WHY FOCUS ON WRITING IN THE SEMINAR?
# Faculty Assessment of Student Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>FY/Sophomore</th>
<th>Junior/Senior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use paragraphs</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write for different audiences</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a main idea</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write for different purposes</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize a paper</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use supporting evidence</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use correct grammar and syntax</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employ correct mechanics (e.g., spelling)</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record data and/or use detail</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesize information from multiple sources</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze data/ideas/argument</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quote and paraphrase appropriately</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use, cite, and document sources</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effects of Good Writing Practices on Seniors

• Deep Learning
  – Higher-order thinking
  – Integrative learning
  – Reflective learning

• Other outcomes
  – Personal and social development
  – Practical competence
  – General education

Embedding Writing Instruction in the First-Year Seminar

- Avoids perception of remediation
- Changes faculty & student views about writing and education in general
- “Introduc[es] students to academic discourse in a research-intensive context” (Brent, 2005, p. 263)
- Accomplishes WAC goals “in a WAC-resistant environment” (Brent, p. 264)
- Enhances faculty development opportunities
How Much Are Students Writing?

Source: NSSE 2013 Frequency Distributions by Class and Gender.
Writing Experiences in the First Year

• Prepared 2 or more drafts of a paper—51% (often or very often)
• Received feedback from faculty on draft or work in progress—65% (quite a bit or very much)

Source: NSSE 2013 Frequency Distributions by Class and Gender.
### What Are Students Writing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Type</th>
<th>Most/All Writing Assignments</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis or evaluation</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of methods or findings</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(student data)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain numerical/statistical data</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline-specific writing</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressed real or imagined audience</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** NSSE 2013 Topical Module: Experiences with Writing
Types of First-Year Seminars

- Extended Orientation
- Academic (Uniform)
- Academic (Variable)
- Basic Study Skills
- Pre-Professional
- Hybrid
- Other

2012-2013 vs 2009
Writing Skill as Seminar Goal

By Institutional Type and Control

- **Two-Year**
  - 2009: 6.4%
  - 2012-2013: 0.5%

- **Four-Year**
  - 2009: 13.9%
  - 2012-2013: 15.2%

- **Public**
  - 2009: 5.8%
  - 2012-2013: 2.7%

- **Private**
  - 2009: 18.5%
  - 2012-2013: 21.9%

[Image: Chart showing the percentage of writing skills as seminar goals by institutional type and control from 2009 to 2012-2013]
Writing Skills as a Seminar Goal

By First-Year Class Size

- Less than 500
- 501 - 1,000
- 1,001 - 2,000
- 2,001 - 4,000
- More than 4,000

2009
2012-2013
Writing Skills as a Seminar Goal

By Seminar Type

- EO: 3.1% (2009), 0.7% (2012-2013)
- AUC: 19.4% (2009), 13.5% (2012-2013)
- AVC: 37.6% (2009), 38.8% (2012-2013)
- BSS: 14.3% (2009), 3.6% (2012-2013)
- PRE: 3.1% (2009), 0.0% (2012-2013)
- Hybrid: 6.8% (2009), 6.5% (2012-2013)

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Writing Skills as Course Topic

By Seminar Type

- EO: 5.1% (2006), 5.1% (2009), 3.4% (2012-2013)
- AU: 37.3% (2006), 28.8% (2009), 23.6% (2012-2013)
- AV: 56.5% (2006), 52.6% (2009), 49.0% (2012-2013)
- BSS: 8.9% (2006), 9.5% (2009), 0.0% (2012-2013)
- PRE: 8.3% (2006), 3.1% (2009), 0.0% (2012-2013)
- Hybrid: 16.0% (2006), 12.9% (2009), 13.1% (2012-2013)
Opportunities to Produce & Revise Writing

Writing as HIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two-Year</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-Year</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opportunities to Produce & Revise Writing

- 50.0%
- 45.0%
- 40.0%
- 35.0%
- 30.0%
- 25.0%
- 20.0%
- 15.0%
- 10.0%
- 5.0%
- 0.0%

- < 500
- 501 - 1,000
- 1,001 - 2,000
- 2,001 - 4,000
- > 4,000

Blue line: HIP
Red line: Goal
Opportunities to Produce & Revise Writing

- EO: 0.7% (HIP) vs. 25.5% (Goal)
- AUC: 13.5% (HIP) vs. 54.7% (Goal)
- AVC: 0.0% (HIP) vs. 38.8% (Goal)
- PRE: 24.1% (HIP) vs. 71.4% (Goal)
- BSS: 3.6% (HIP) vs. 28.6% (Goal)
- Hybrid: 6.5% (HIP) vs. 42.1% (Goal)

(Areas not listed in percentages indicate opportunities not met.)
Where Do We See The Emphasis on Writing

• In academic seminars of both types ($p < .05$)
  – Less likely in extended orientation and pre-professional seminars ($p < .05$)
• When section size in less than 19 ($p < .001$)
• When tenure-track faculty serve as course instructors ($p < .001$)
  – Less likely when student affairs professionals are instructors ($p < .001$)
### Evidence of Meaning-Making Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EO ((n = 75))</th>
<th>AUC ((n = 81))</th>
<th>AVC ((n = 105))</th>
<th>Hybrid ((n = 45))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository writing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article review, critique, analysis</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline-specific writing assignments</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Other Types of Writing Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Writing Assignment</th>
<th>EO ((n = 75))</th>
<th>AUC ((n = 81))</th>
<th>AVC ((n = 105))</th>
<th>Hybrid ((n = 45))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career exploration/academic planning</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal exploration/reflection</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic writing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response papers</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of inventories</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career-related documents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business writing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence of Clear Expectations

• 44.3% of institutions that report seminars provides opportunities to produce and revise writing also assess writing as a course outcome

• 88.3% of institutions that identify development of writing skills also assess writing as a course outcome
For More Information

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