

Introduction to Academic Writing

Student Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate competency, clarity, coherence, and organization in their writing.

The Value of Introduction to Academic Writing

WRTR 1312 is the first course in a two-semester sequence. The course teaches students the foundations of university-level writing. In order to prepare students for more advanced critical reasoning in WRTR 1313, this course serves as a foundation for learning competent and effective writing and analytical reasoning skills. These skills form the basis for the ability to think critically and write clearly that are required for students to be successful in their university coursework. They are also two of the fundamental skills students need to be successful in life, regardless of their specific major or chosen career.

Supporting Skills

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to state a clear thesis and develop it through appropriate support in the body of the essay.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to develop paragraphs and organize them in a logical progression.
3. Students will craft sentences with attention to sentence variety, diction, grammar, mechanics, spelling, and punctuation.
4. Students will integrate ideas and information from other writing effectively into their own.

Course Content Criteria

1. Courses in this category focus on critical reading and written assignments, including expository writing and analysis of texts.
2. Courses in this category require 4500–6000 words of formal, closely graded, out-of-class writing (approximately 15–20 full pages, double-spaced, in Times New Roman 12).
3. Courses in this category introduce students to the idea that critical reasoning comprises analysis grounded in the evaluation of written sources. These skills will be further developed in WRTR 1313.
4. Courses in this category expect students to use all aspects of the writing process and include one-on-one writing conferences on major writing assignments.
5. Courses in this category use feedback and commenting language common to SMU writing courses.

Glossary

1. **Academic writing:** The relatively formal writing expected in most university-level courses. It is characterized by the use of standard written English and should not be confused with the specific disciplinary expectations of academic scholarship.
2. **Closely graded:** Graded with close attention to mechanics, grammar, and diction, as well to content. Instructors not only point out errors but also explain how to correct them. Feedback includes a terminal comment as well as in-text commentary. Instructors use the WRTR 1313 rubric as part of the grading process.
3. **Conferences:** A one-on-one meeting between student and instructor. These conferences review student writing and help students develop their ability to diagnose and correct their writing.
4. **Critical reading:** A mode of reading through which students analyze the construction of an argument and evaluate its claims and conclusions.
5. **Critical reasoning:** Following the lead of John Dewey, critical reasoning is the “active, persistent, careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends.” More specifically students who engage in critical reasoning analyze, conceptualize, interpret, synthesize, or evaluate information and ground their claims in appropriate internal evidence or external sources. It promotes the values of clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, validity, depth, breadth, and fairness.
6. **Diction:** Aptness of word choice, considering not only precision but also degree of formality and correct usage.
7. **Expository writing:** Non-fiction writing that analyzes, describes, clarifies, compares, contrasts, explains, or constructs a narrative from disparate facts and events.
8. **Internal evidence:** The materials within a work that, when analyzed, reveal the relations of its parts to the whole.
9. **Sources:** Works of art, computer code, peer-reviewed scholarship, data, public records, authoritative reference works, histories, experience, oral histories, electronic media, or other forms of knowledge accepted by scholars and practitioners in relevant fields.
10. **Standard written English:** The generally agreed-upon set of grammatical, syntactic, punctuation, and spelling patterns found in published expository writing in English. It abides by the rules and conventions stipulated in authoritative handbooks such as *The Little Seagull Handbook* designated for this course.
11. **Thesis:** The main claim or idea of the essay, briefly stated.
12. **Writing process:** The stages of writing, including pre-writing activities, drafting, editing, revising, and when relevant, the work of finding appropriate sources and integrating them into one's understanding.

Introduction to Academic Writing Assessment Rubric

Supporting Skills	Exemplary 5	Accomplished 4	Developing 3	Beginning 2	Absent 1
State a clear thesis and develop it through appropriate support in the body of the essay.	States a clear and fully developed thesis that responds effectively to the assignment. Effectively supports the thesis in the body of the essay.	States a generally clear thesis that responds to the assignment. Generally supports the thesis in the body of the essay.	States a thesis that is too broad to lead a focused essay, making a claim that is general, limited, or obvious. Partially supports the thesis in the body of the essay.	States an inconsistent thesis, theme, or topic, with faulty claims present in the main idea. Provides insufficient supporting details in the body of the essay. Analysis missing. Topic sentences contain no insight or structure.	States no thesis, or an underdeveloped or vague thesis, theme, or topic. Provides few, or no, relevant supporting details in the body of the essay.
Write well-developed paragraphs and organize them in a logical progression.	Constructs paragraphs that are focused, coherent, supported by substantial and concrete supporting detail, and led by a controlling argument. Provides logical transitions that reinforce the progress of the analysis. Constructs an introduction to strongly engage initial interest and a conclusion to close the essay in compelling fashion.	Constructs paragraphs that are coherent and reasonably well supported. Provides logical transitions that signal changes in direction. Constructs an introduction to engage initial interest and a conclusion to support without merely repeating.	Constructs paragraphs that are not always coherent. Supporting details are jumbled or missing, with limited analysis. Provides transitions that are functional but often formulaic. Constructs an introduction and/or conclusion that is mechanical rather than purposeful or insightful.	Constructs paragraphs that are fragmented or underdeveloped. Provides transitions that are unclear, inaccurate, or absent. Constructs an introduction that merely describes what is to follow and a conclusion that merely repeats what has been said.	Constructs paragraphs that lack a controlling idea, transitions, and coherence. Constructs an introduction and conclusion that do not satisfy any clear rhetorical purpose.
Craft sentences with attention to sentence variety, diction, grammar, mechanics, spelling, and punctuation.	Crafts sentences that are varied and purposeful, in which diction is precise and clear and grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling, and citations demonstrate a high degree of correctness and control. Pays close attention to detail and demonstrates a mastery of mechanics and presentation in support of a strong argument.	Crafts sentences that are generally varied and purposeful, in which diction is generally clear and there are occasional errors in grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling, and citation form. Pays attention to detail and demonstrates a fair level of mastery of mechanics and presentation. Minimal number of errors provides little distraction from overall content or credibility.	Crafts sentences that are competent but lack emphasis and variety, in which diction is sometimes faulty and there are several errors in grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling, and citation form. Pays little attention to detail and demonstrates a low level of mastery of mechanics and presentation. Multiple errors distract from content and undercut credibility.	Crafts sentences that lack necessary emphasis and variety, in which diction is vague and there are frequent errors in grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling and citation form. Demonstrates lack of attention to detail and marginal mastery of mechanics and presentation. Errors obscure content and diminish credibility.	Crafts incoherent or redundant sentences, in which diction is nonstandard and there are many serious errors in grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling, and citation form. Demonstrates no attention to detail or mastery of mechanics and presentation. Serious errors undermine content and credibility of the work, rendering it meaningless.
Effectively integrate ideas and information from other writing in written work.	Integrates ideas and information from other writing gracefully and accurately, and where appropriate, analyzes them effectively. Constructs in-text citations and a reference list that are virtually error-free.	Integrates ideas and information from other writing logically, and where appropriate, analyzes them sufficiently. Constructs in-text citations that usually appear where they should and a	Integrates ideas and information from other writing somewhat weakly, or without sufficient analysis. Constructs in-text citations and a reference list that contain consistent errors.	Rarely integrates ideas and information from other writing, or does so perfunctorily, with little analysis. Constructs in-text citations and a reference list that are highly inaccurate.	Does not engage with other written work or offers no analysis of it. Provides few or no in-text citations and references.

		reference list that is mostly accurate.			
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