

Writing

Student Learning Outcome: Students will demonstrate university-level writing proficiencies appropriate to their coursework.

The Value of Writing

We write not only to communicate what we know, but to understand ourselves better, to comprehend our world more fully, and to discover what we think. The ability to write well promotes success in college regardless of major; after college it enhances success in any field that involves sustained thought. Being able to write well is the mark of an educated person. But writing well is a skill that takes time to develop and requires practice. Writing courses give students further opportunities to practice what they have learned in the first-year Writing and Reasoning sequence (WRTR 1312 and 1313) and to advance their skills.

Supporting Skills

1. Students will **organize writing clearly at the sentence, paragraph, and whole-text levels to meet the intended purpose.**
2. **Students will use diction that is precise, appropriate, and suited to the purpose and audience.**
3. Students will **apply critical reasoning skills appropriate to the context and conventions of the discipline.**
4. **Students will demonstrate a writing style that is appropriate to the task, audience, and purpose.**

Course Content Criteria

1. Courses in this category are offered at the 3000 level or below and are open to all students.
2. Courses in this category provide multiple opportunities across the term for students to write and to receive careful feedback on writing assignments totaling 3600–4500 words. (This count is equivalent to approximately 12–15 full pages of text, double-spaced, in Times New Roman 12, *not including* tables, figures, illustrations, bibliographies, and other extra-textual components). In courses that focus on writing and editing and require multiple drafts, this total may include submissions that have been extensively revised and resubmitted.
3. Courses in this category address the writing process and provide opportunities to reflect on this process.
4. Courses in this category focus substantially on writing. In courses for which students submit collaborative projects, each student must also be evaluated and receive substantial feedback on writing produced independently.
5. Courses in this category use feedback and commenting language common to all SMU writing courses.
6. Courses in this category include an assessment assignment that requires students to demonstrate each of the skills in the Writing Assessment Rubric (below). This assessment assignment should be one of the following: an essay, a research paper, or an essay question on an exam.

Glossary

1. **Audience:** The intended reader or community of readers.
2. **Citation style:** E.g., AP, APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, or others produced for professional written work.
3. **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, those who engage in critical reasoning analyze, conceptualize, interpret, synthesize, or evaluate objects of study, and ground their claims in appropriate internal evidence or external sources. Critical reasoning promotes the values of clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, validity, depth, breadth, and fairness.
4. **Diction:** Aptness of word choice, considering not only precision but also degree of formality and correct usage.
5. **Formatting:** Matters of document preparation specified in the assignment, if any.
6. **Genre:** The kind of writing assigned, including but not limited to research papers; persuasive, analytical, and interpretive essays; literature reviews; proposals; creative writing; conference presentations; business plans; risk assessments; news releases; news reporting; formal reflection essays; and blogs.
7. **Internal evidence:** The materials within a work that, when analyzed, reveal the relations of its parts to the whole.
8. **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.
9. **Stylistic conventions:** General practices or explicit guidelines regarding abbreviations, contractions, technical language, pronoun choices, the presence or absence of self-referentiality, the manner of integrating quotations, and other matters that meet the objectives of the assignment and course.
10. **Well-organized:** Writing that suggests it has been edited before submission. Characteristics include but are not limited to appropriate diction, sentence clarity, paragraph cohesion, and the set of grammatical, syntactic, punctuation, and spelling

patterns emphasized in the first-year Writing and Reasoning sequence (WRTR 1312 and 1313).

11. **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.

Experience Criteria

Students may apply to fulfill the W requirement through a co-curricular activity. These criteria apply to experiences that meet the W curricular requirement and describe the characteristics of the experience, the steps a student must follow to petition the experience for approval, and the number and types of assignments students must submit to satisfy the requirement.

1. Students must obtain pre-approval for any activity used to satisfy this component. Approval must be obtained prior to the start of the activity.
2. Students must submit independent, third-party, verification of participation in the approved activity, by a supervisor or other authoritative individual, who is not a blood relation.
3. Student experiences must involve 15 hours of engaged interaction such as an internship, an engaged learning project, independent research, or work assisting a faculty member. A faculty mentor must provide detailed feedback on the student's written work.
4. This written work must involve a minimum of three opportunities across the duration of the experience for students to write and must total 3600–4500 words (approximately 12–15 full pages, double-spaced, in Times New Roman 12). It may include reflective genres such as blogs, journals, and first-person essays that record, describe, analyze, and evaluate the experience, but may also include other genres relevant to the experience. Such writing must be evaluated in accordance with the characteristics of well-organized writing, whether or not that evaluation includes a grade.
5. Students fulfilling Writing through an activity must submit a written reflection with the petition outlining what the activity is, how they anticipate the activity will fulfill the requirement, and what they expect to gain and learn from the experience.
6. Students fulfilling Writing through an activity must submit either copies of all written work completed during the course of the activity or a written reflection of approximately 1000 words that responds to the following prompt:

Please describe in detail the activity you used to complete the Writing requirement. In your reflection, answer the following questions. How did you meet the requirement of completing 3600-4500 words of writing? Who was the audience for your written work? What resources did you use to understand how best to improve your writing? How did you incorporate drafts and revisions into your writing process? Who provided feedback on your writing? How did your ability to communicate information in writing improve?

Writing Assessment Rubric

Supporting Skills	Exemplary 4	Accomplished 3	Developing 2	Beginning 1
Organize writing clearly at the sentence, paragraph, and whole-text levels to meet the intended purpose.	Demonstrates clear and logical organization at all three levels (sentence, paragraph/section, whole-text) that enhances the overall argument or purpose. Transitions are smooth, and the structure reflects careful planning to meet the expectations of the audience.	Demonstrates generally clear organization at all three levels (sentence, paragraph/section, whole-text), though transitions may occasionally be mechanical. The structure is logical but may show minor weaknesses in alignment with the overall purpose or audience expectations.	Demonstrates inconsistent organization, achieving clarity at only two of the three levels (sentence, paragraph/section, whole-text). Paragraphs or sections may lack a controlling idea, and sentences may be disjointed or unclear.	Demonstrates poor or absent organization, with unclear progression at all three levels (sentence, paragraph/section, whole-text). Sentences and paragraphs lack coherence, and divisions appear random, hindering communication.
Use diction that is precise, appropriate, and suited to the purpose and audience.	Demonstrates precise, varied, and rhetorically effective diction appropriate for the purpose and audience. Word choice shows excellent control, free of errors in meaning, formality, or tone.	Demonstrates appropriate diction with minor lapses in formality or tone. Word choice is generally effective, though some terms may lack precision or rhetorical effectiveness.	Demonstrates inconsistent diction, with occasional informal or unclear word choices that may obscure meaning or weaken the text's overall impact.	Demonstrates poor control of diction, with word choices that are often imprecise, informal, or unsuitable for the purpose and audience, significantly affecting meaning and clarity.
Apply critical reasoning skills appropriate to the context and conventions of the discipline.	Demonstrates comprehensive understanding and engagement with the material, using methods of reasoning and evidence that are fully appropriate to the discipline. Claims are well-grounded in evidence, and conclusions follow logically from them. When external sources are used, they are well-chosen and integrated effectively, according to the discipline's conventions.	Demonstrates good understanding and engagement with the material, using appropriate methods of reasoning and evidence. Claims are usually grounded in evidence, and conclusions are generally logical. External sources, when used, are sufficient and generally integrated effectively according to disciplinary norms.	Shows limited understanding and engagement with the material, applying reasoning that may not align with disciplinary standards. Claims are occasionally ungrounded or implausible, and conclusions may not follow logically. External sources, when used, may not be well-chosen or integrated effectively.	Shows minimal understanding and engagement with the material, applying reasoning that does not align with disciplinary standards. Claims and conclusions are ungrounded or rely on poor reasoning. External sources, when used, are poorly integrated or absent.
Demonstrate writing style that is appropriate to the task, audience, and purpose.	Demonstrates highly effective and appropriate tone, voice, and level of formality for the task and audience. The writing style enhances the argument or message, showing careful attention to purpose and audience expectations. Sentence structure is varied and sophisticated, contributing to clarity and engagement.	Demonstrates an appropriate tone, voice, and level of formality for the task and audience, with occasional lapses. Sentence structure is generally varied, and the writing is clear, though some minor adjustments could improve alignment with purpose or audience expectations.	Demonstrates inconsistent tone or voice, with some inappropriate shifts in formality or style for the task or audience. Sentence structure is mostly repetitive or overly simplistic, and these issues may affect clarity or engagement.	Demonstrates a writing style that is inappropriate for the task or audience, with frequent shifts in tone or formality that obscure the purpose. Sentence structure is overly simple or confusing, detracting from the overall communication and engagement.