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 present ideas in clear, well-organized writing that meets the assignment's genre and the needs of its audience.
2. Students will use critical reasoning skills relevant to the assignment's purpose.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the stylistic conventions, and where applicable, citation style and formatting appropriate to the course or assignment.

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.

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.

4. Courses in this category use feedback and commenting language common to all SMU writing courses.
5. 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 4500–6000 words (approximately 15–20 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 5	Accomplished 4	Developing 3	Beginning 2	Absent 1
Present ideas in clear, well-organized writing that meets the assignment's genre and the needs of its audience.	Presents writing that meets the needs and expectations of its audience. Organizes writing at all three levels (sentence, paragraph/section, whole) in a way that effectively suits the purpose, is rhetorically adept, and where appropriate, is thesis-driven. Uses diction that is precise and highly appropriate to the purpose, and employs grammar, syntax, punctuation, word choice, and spelling with a high degree of correctness and control.	Presents writing that usually meets the needs of its audience. Organizes writing at all three levels (sentence, paragraph/section, whole) in a way that generally suits the purpose, and where appropriate, is thesis-driven. Uses diction that is appropriate to the purpose, and displays minor errors in grammar, syntax, punctuation, word choice, and spelling that generally do not obscure meaning.	Presents writing that inconsistently meets the needs of its audience. Organizes writing at only two of the three levels (sentence, paragraph/section, whole) in a way that generally suits the purpose: the ordering of paragraphs/sections may be static or mechanical rather than purposeful, paragraphs/sections may lack a controlling idea, and/or sentences may lack organization, emphasis, and clarity. Uses diction that is excessively informal or obscures meaning.	Presents writing that conveys a poor understanding of its audience's needs. Organizes writing such that communication is impeded by two of the following: the ordering of paragraphs/sections is static or mechanical rather than purposeful, paragraphs/sections lack a controlling idea, divisions seem random. Displays frequent errors in grammar, syntax, punctuation, word choice, and spelling that undermine clarity and authority.	Presents writing that conveys no understanding of its audience's needs. Organizes writing such that communication is impeded by all of the following: the ordering of paragraphs/sections is haphazard rather than purposeful, paragraphing or division into sections is absent or random. Displays frequent errors in grammar, syntax, punctuation, word choice, and spelling that undermine clarity and authority.
Use critical reasoning skills relevant to the assignment's purpose.	Presents writing that reveals a comprehensive understanding of its materials and reflects the writer's full engagement with them. Where appropriate, fully and consistently grounds claims in evidence, and draws conclusions that follow logically from these claims. Includes external sources, where required, that are well-chosen and used effectively.	Presents writing that reveals a good understanding of its materials and reflects the writer's engagement with them. Where appropriate, usually grounds claims in evidence, and draws conclusions that usually follow logically from these claims. Includes external sources, where required, that are sufficient and generally used effectively.	Presents writing that reveals some understanding of its materials, but is compromised by superficial engagement with them, frequent misconstruction, ungrounded or implausible claims, or unwarranted conclusions, whether or not these are dependent on external sources.	Presents writing that reveals only a rudimentary understanding of or engagement with its materials, or is compromised by ungrounded claims and conclusions, whether or not these are dependent on external sources.	Presents writing that reveals almost no understanding of its materials, or only perfunctory engagement with them.
Use the stylistic conventions, and where applicable, citation style and formatting appropriate to the course or assignment.	Exhibits excellent control over the prescribed or expected conventions.	Exhibits good control over the prescribed or expected conventions, with only occasional lapses.	Exhibits some control over the prescribed or expected conventions, but with only a fair degree of consistency.	Exhibits a low level of control over the prescribed or expected conventions.	Exhibits no attempt to use the prescribed or expected conventions.