

## Written Communication in the Major

### Description and Learning Outcomes

Written communication is one of the foundation requirements of the Mason Core curriculum. Mason's nationally recognized writing program emphasizes writing as a process and as a tool for learning; it is not simply a way of communicating already formulated thoughts, but a way of discovering, exploring, and developing new ideas. On their way to completing a paper, students go through the recursive processes of researching, drafting, and revising.

This assessment of student writing draws samples from Mason's Writing Intensive (WI) courses. Students take WI courses in their major in their junior or senior year.

#### *What makes a course writing intensive?*

Writing Intensive (WI) in the Major courses instruct students in the main types of writing practiced by members of the discipline. The course must give students opportunities to draft and revise based on instructor feedback so that they can practice the writing processes, forms, and conventions expected in the field.

- Section size is limited to 35
- WI courses must be offered and taken in the major
- WI courses must carry 3-credits and be offered at the 300 or 400 level
- Faculty devote significant time to writing instruction
- Students receive instructor feedback on their writing
- Students revise at least one substantive assignment using feedback
- All writing assignments count substantially toward the final grades
- Students write at least 3500 words over two or more assignments

Writing Intensive courses are approved and guided by Mason's Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program and committee ([wac.gmu.edu](http://wac.gmu.edu)).

### Approved Courses and Enrollment

Students enroll in the approved Writing Intensive course for their major and degree program. Courses approved as Writing Intensive can be found in the University Catalog. WI courses enroll over 10,000 students each year with an average class size of 21 (see Table 30). Figure 88 shows enrollment trends over the past five years by college and school.

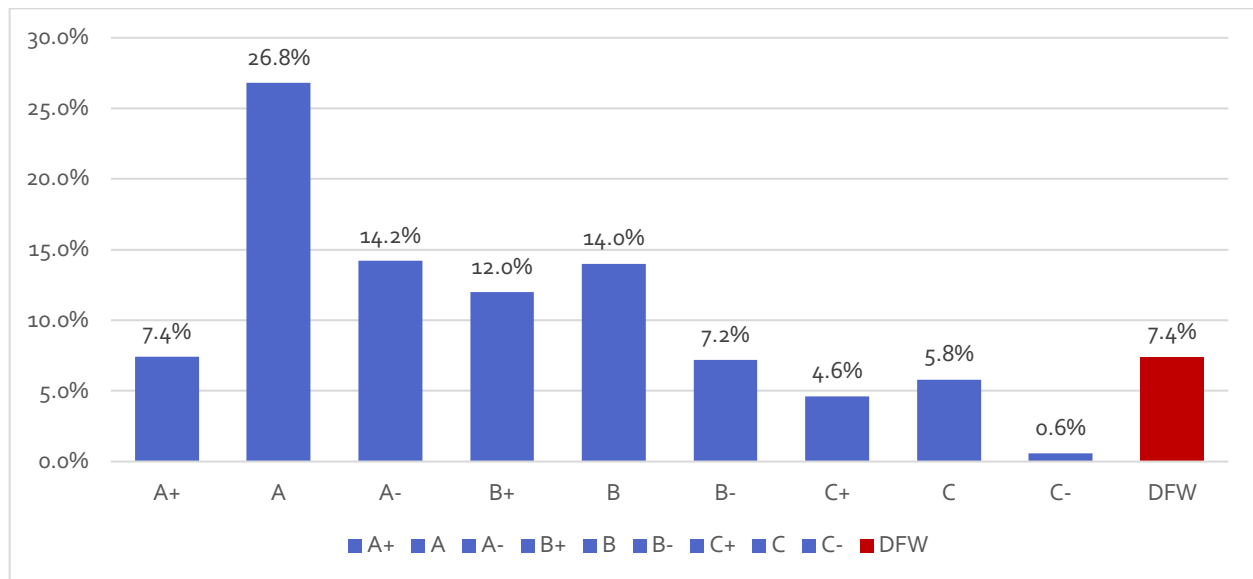
## Courses Included in Assessment

The assessment period included all sections of the 139 WI courses taught in spring 2018, Mason Korea in fall 2018, and Honors 353 in spring 2019 (see pp. 159-161 for a listing). All courses that were offered in the assessment period were expected to participate. Of the 160 course sections included in the assessment period, 72% submitted materials.

## Enrollment and Grades Distribution

A total of 4,257 students enrolled in courses across 55 subjects in the assessment period. Of these students, 93% passed their WI courses with a C- or above, and 81.5% of students earned A or B grades (see Figure 83).

Figure 83. Final Grades Distribution in the Assessment Period



## Assessment Methods

Student written work samples were requested from all course sections taught in the assessment period. Faculty were asked to submit samples that represented final student submissions completed in the final third part of the semester, and allowed students to demonstrate their learning on one or more of the expected course learning outcomes. Samples were selected using randomized course enrollment lists to insure the best possible representative sample. Table 29 shows samples by student primary college compared to spring 2018 undergraduate enrollment.

Table 29. Assessment Samples by Student Primary College, compared to Enrollment

Student Primary College	Samples		Spring 2018 Enrollment Degree-Seeking Undergraduates	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
BUS	51	11.3%	3,962	17.2%
CEHD	27	6.0%	858	3.7%
CHHS	38	8.4%	1,910	8.3%
CHSS	131	29.0%	6,065	26.4%
COS	59	13.1%	2,638	11.5%
CVPA	40	8.9%	1,288	5.6%
S-CAR	3	0.7%	174	0.8%
SSPG	15	3.3%	733	3.2%
UN	5	1.1%	44	0.2%
VSE	82	18.2%	5,302	23.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>451</b>		<b>22,974</b>	

The **AAC&U VALUE Rubric for Written Communication** was used for this assessment. The VALUE Rubric was selected in consultation with the WAC committee as a tool to assess written work on five learning tasks or outcomes (context and purpose for writing, content development, genre and disciplinary conventions, sources and evidence, and control of syntax and mechanics) across genres and writing styles. The rubric uses four performance descriptors: Benchmark, Emerging Milestone, Advanced Milestone, and Capstone, and an option for "no evidence." The performance descriptors are developmental, identifying student performance levels in a context of learning and growth. The rubric is intended to be used across all of the years of a student's college experience, and is not limited to a single course, assignment, or student class level. The VALUE Rubric has been used in a national assessment (cite McConnell & Rhodes, 2017) of student writing and allows for comparison of results to a national sample.

Using a process modeled after the VALUE Institute reviewer calibration, faculty reviewers were trained to use the rubric to assess student work. Reviews were normed to produce consistent ratings across reviewers. Reviewers met for an in-person, one-day training and review session and completed the reviews of student work by the end of the day. Reviewers were faculty members who have taught WI courses and represented a diversity of academic units. Reviewers earned a small stipend for their efforts.

Each student work sample was assessed twice. Results were analyzed for interrater reliability; discrepant reviews were resolved using a third review.

## Learning Outcomes Assessment Results

Figures 84 and 85 display results from 451 randomly selected student work samples rated on the **Written Communication VALUE Rubric**. A rating of “no evidence” was used when there was no evidence of the learning outcome; this could mean that either the assignment did not require application of the outcome, or that the student did not demonstrate it. A “no evidence” rating provides important information in aggregate but is given no value for an individual sample.

Figure 84. Assessment Results, Aggregated, including “No Evidence” Ratings

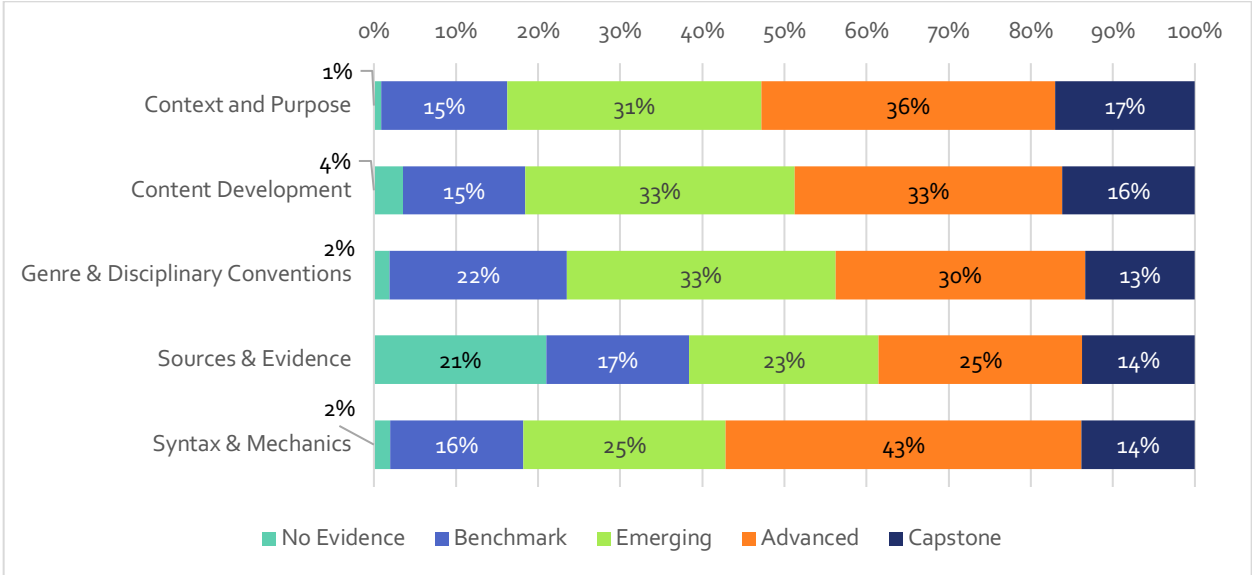
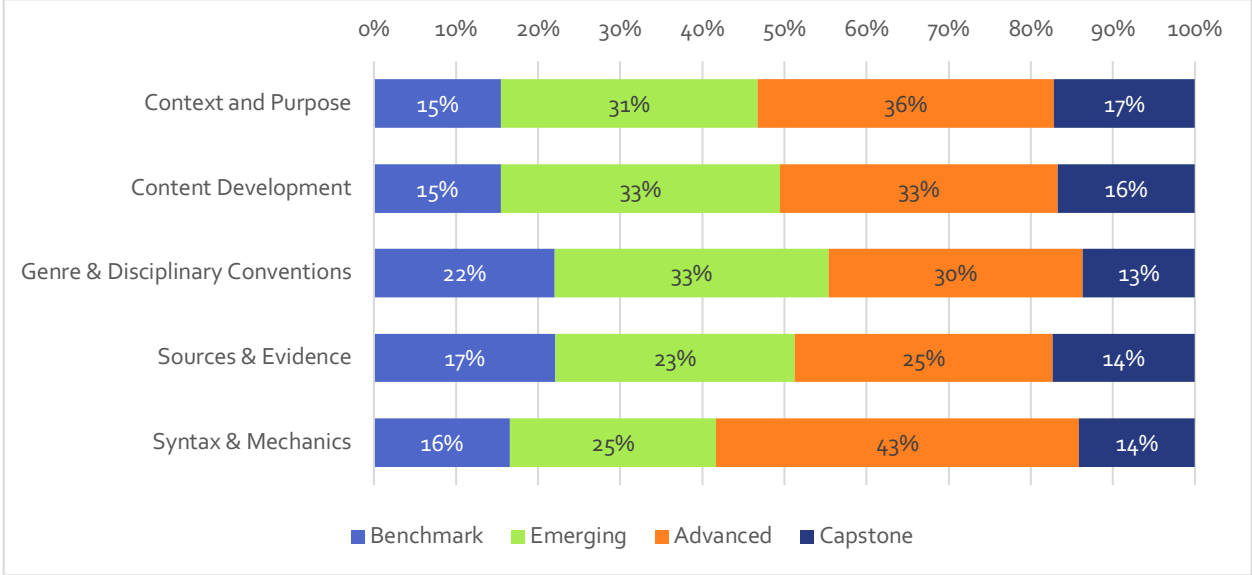


Figure 85. Assessment Results, Aggregated, excluding “No Evidence” Ratings



### *Highlights from Analysis of Results*

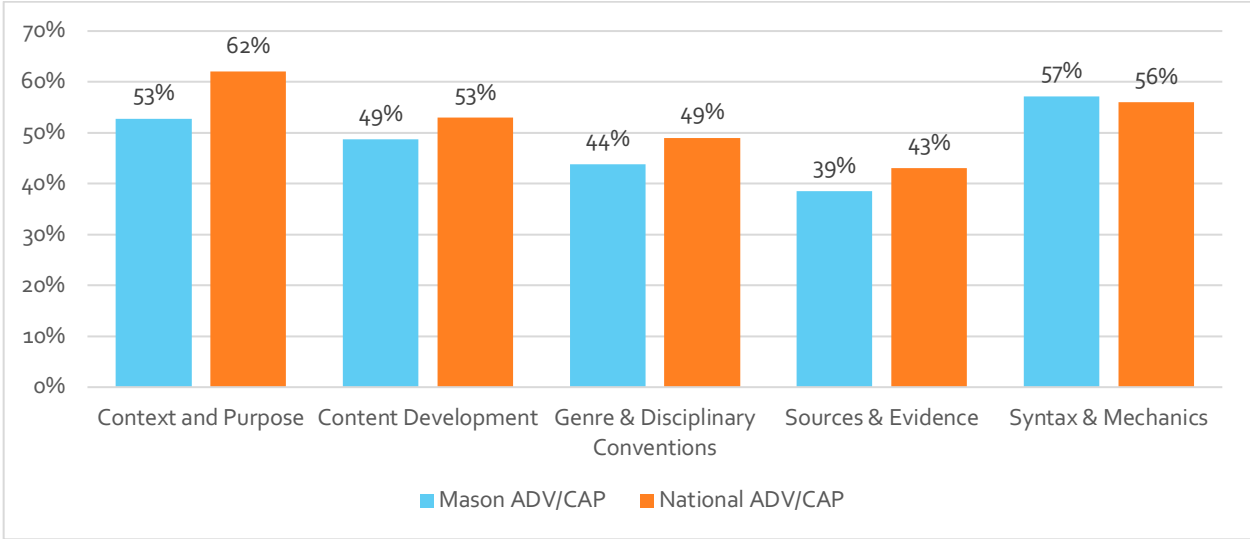
Results were analyzed to ascertain differences between certain demographic groups (i.e. gender, race, and transfer status). Comparison tests were conducted using nonparametric statistics because rubric data are ordinal; Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney  $U$ , ( $p < .05$ ) was used when analyzing differences between two groups, and Kruskal–Wallis  $H$  test was used when analyzing differences among three or more groups. Significant findings are marked with an asterisk (\*) and noted below.

- 21% of samples were rated as "no evidence" for the outcome "Sources & Evidence," meaning that students did not use sources or evidence in their writing sample, or the writing assignment did not require it. Not all forms of scholarly writing require use of sources and evidence (e.g. creative writing).
- Students who started at Mason as freshmen performed significantly higher on all written communication outcomes than did transfer students ( $n=218$  freshmen;  $n=229$  transfer).\*
- When groups were compared in the aggregate dataset, there appeared to be differences on all five outcomes based on gender and by race/ethnicity. However, when controlling for college/school of the student's major, all differences in performance disappeared. There were significant differences among colleges, indicating differences either in student performance or writing task across disciplines.
- There were no observed differences in performance between juniors and seniors on any of the written communication outcomes ( $n=87$  juniors;  $n=355$  seniors).

### *How do Mason Students Compare?*

In comparing results from a 2017 national study (McConnell & Rhodes, 2017) using samples of student work from seniors at 4-year institutions, this assessment suggests that Mason students perform somewhat less well overall than their peers on combined ratings of Advanced + Capstone. Similar to Mason, national data revealed that students were least likely to show that they used Sources & Evidence in their writing assignments. Note that this is an observational comparison; the raw data from the national study was not available to perform a statistical comparison. See Figure 86.

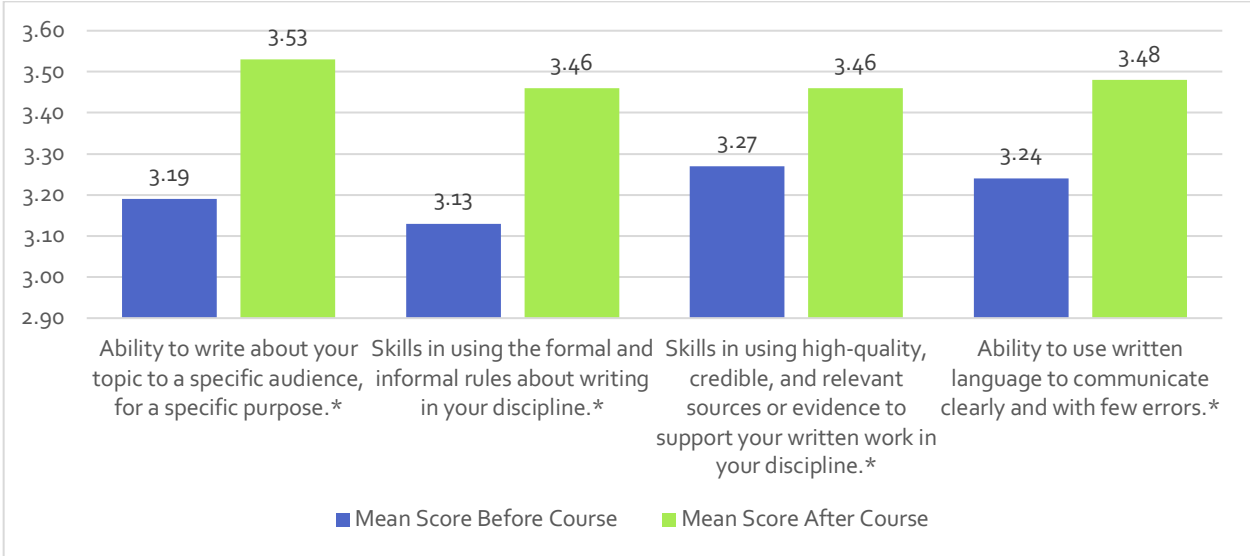
Figure 86. Mason Student Results Compared to National Results from 4-year Institutions



*Student Self-Assessment*

All students who were enrolled in a WI course during the assessment period received an online self-assessment survey at the end of the semester. The retrospective pre-post self-assessment asked students to rate their knowledge and skills on four learning outcomes at the beginning of the semester (pre), and then again at the end of the semester (post). In total, 743 students completed both the pre and post items, resulting in a 17% response rate. A t-test pairwise comparison showed significant perceived learning gains on all four outcomes (see Figure 87).

Figure 87. Mean Scores on Student Learning Self-Assessment



Mean scores, self-reported on a scale of 1-4, n=405, \* p < .05

## How do the Results Meet Expectations?

Because this was the first time that Mason used the **Written Communication VALUE Rubric** to assess student performance across the disciplines, these data provide baseline information. In post-assessment conversations with faculty, many expressed disappointment that scores were not higher overall for juniors and seniors, though it was noted that the score patterns follow similar patterns from the national data. Faculty expressed a desire for improved scores in the next assessment.

## How are Results Being Used to Improve Students' Educational Experience?

A series of open meetings (including an online option) were held in fall 2018 to share results. Participating faculty identified challenges regarding their own preparation for teaching writing in WI courses, and noted a need for better writing assignments, better assessment rubrics for their courses and programs, and strategies for helping students transfer learning from one course to the next. Several faculty also identified a need for training in how to work with multilingual and international students on their English-language writing skills. Faculty were encouraged to use the assessment information and VALUE rubric to review their courses and programs and develop a collective response to the needs of the students in their programs.

Assessment results are being used by an institutional coalition of the Writing Across the Curriculum program, the Composition program, the Writing Center, the Multilingual Learners Academic Support Committee, The Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning, and the Office of Undergraduate Education. Strategies for supporting faculty have been implemented, including online resources, targeted workshops in academic units, one-on-one coaching, and further review of WI courses. Collaborative efforts to improve WI courses and instruction are ongoing.

## Limitations of this Assessment

This assessment was the largest that Mason has ever done for writing in the majors. Written work was sampled at random and represents the general student population. Some considerations when reviewing these results:

- Mason enrolls a large population of students who were raised in homes in which English was not their first, primary, or only language. Faculty who teach WI courses and writing program administrators have requested that the assessment data be disaggregated to understand the performance of these multilingual students. As there is no marker to identify these students in the institutional data file, the analysis of assessment data cannot be done.
- Many disciplines use collaborative writing assignments. This assessment does not work for collaborative writing, and so those samples were not included. WAC is developing

resources for collaborative writing, and tools for effective assessment are being explored.

- The **VALUE Rubric for Written Communication** appears to be limited for assessing creative writing. Additional challenges may include assessing writing for computer science, information technology, and accounting.

For assessment of WI courses and research white papers produced by WAC, see <https://wac.gmu.edu/wi-course-resources/assessment-of-wi-courses/>

### Assessment Rubric(s)

AAC&U VALUE Rubric for Written Communication is reprinted with permission from "*VALUE: Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education*." Copyright 2019 by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. <http://www.aacu.org/value/index.cfm>.



## Writing Intensive Courses Offered in the Assessment Period

ACCT 461 Assurance and Audit Services  
ANTH 490 Theories, Methods and Issues II  
ARAB 331 Reading and Conversation II  
ARAB 440 Islam and the Modern Age  
ARTH 394 The Museum  
ARTH 420 Roman Imperial Sculpture  
ARTH 472 RS: Mexican Muralism  
AVT 385 EcoArt  
AVT 395 Writing for Artists  
AVT 497 Senior Project  
AVT 498 Senior Design Project  
BAS 491 Applied Sciences Capstone  
BENG 304 Mod/Contrl Physiological Systs  
BENG 492 Senior Adv Engr Design Proj I  
BENG 493 RS:Senior Adv Design Project II  
BENG 495 Bioengineering Senior Sem II  
BIOL 301 Biology and Society  
BIOL 308 Foundation Ecology/Evolution  
BIS 390 The Research Process  
BIS 490 RS: Bach Individual Study Proj  
BUS 498 Capstone Crs:Adv Bus Mod  
CDS 302 Scientific Data and Databases  
CEIE 301 Eng/Econ Models-Civil Eng  
CEIE 490 Sr Dsgn Proj: Urban Devel Dsgn  
CHEM 336 Physical Chemistry Lab I  
CHEM 465 Biochemistry Laboratory  
CHIN 355 Rdngs Chin Poetry/Poetic  
CLIM 408 Senior Research  
COMM 300 Foundations Public Communicatn  
COMM 362 Argument and Public Policy  
COMM 454 Free Speech and Ethics  
CONF 302 Culture, Identity, & Conflict  
CONF 490 RS: Integration  
CONS 490 RS:Integrated Conserva Strateg  
CONS 491 RS: Conservation Mgmt Plan  
CRIM 495 Capstone in Crim, Law, Society  
CS 306 Synt Ethics/Law for Comp Profe  
CS 321 Software Engineering  
CYSE 491 Engineering Senior Seminar  
CYSE 493 Senior Adv Design Project II  
DANC 391 Dance History II  
DANC 490 Senior Dance Seminar  
ECE 333 Linear Electronics I  
ECE 445 Computer Organization  
ECE 491 Engineering Seminar  
ECE 492 Senior Adv Design Proj I

ECE 493 RS: Senior Adv Design Proj II  
 ECON 309 Econ Problms and Publ Policies  
 ECON 345 Introduction to Econometrics  
 ECON 355 Political Eco Nonprofits Inst  
 ECON 365 Economic History  
 ECON 435 Economics of Energy  
 EDCL 490 Student Teaching in Education  
 ENGH 305 Dimensions Writing and Lit  
 ENGH 373 Film and Video Forms  
 ENGH 401 RS: Honors Thesis Writing Sem  
 ENGH 417 RS: Appalachian Folklore  
 ENGH 458 Kipling and Imperialism  
 ENGH 484 RS: Writing Ethnography  
 ENGH 486 RS: Writing Nonfic for Publictn  
 ENGH 495 Capstone and Thesis  
 EVPP 337 Envir Policy Making-Dev Cntry  
 EVPP 480 Sustainability in Action  
 FAVS 352 Ethics of Film and Video  
 FAVS 470 Film and Video Screenwriting  
 FAVS 496 Advanced Visual Storytelling  
 FAVS 497 Sr Film Practic: Video Editing  
 FAVS 498 Creative Producing/Development  
 FAVS 499 Senior Project  
 FNAN 498 Contemporary Topics in Finance  
 FREN 309 Reading and Writing Skills Dev  
 FRLN 385 Multilingualism, Identity/Power  
 FRSC 302 Forensic Trace Analysis  
 FRSC 304 Forensic Chemistry  
 GAME 332 RS: Story Design for Comp Games  
 GAME 490 Senior Game Design Capstone  
 GCH 411 Health Prgm Planning/Evaluatn  
 GEOL 305 Environmental Geology  
 GEOL 420 Earth Science and Policy  
 GGS 303 Geog of Resource Conservation  
 GGS 415 Seminar in Geography  
 GLOA 400 Global Crisis  
 GOVT 490 Synthesis Seminar(topics vary)  
 HAP 465 Integration Prof Skills/Issues  
 HAP 489 Pre-Internship Seminar  
 HAP 498 Healthcare Managemt Internship  
 HDFS 400 Advanced Family Processes  
 HDFS 401 Family Law/Public Policy  
 HIST 300 Introduction Historical Method  
 HIST 499 RS: Senior Seminar in History  
 HNRS 353 Technology in the Contemporary World (Topics)  
 INTS 334 Environmental Justice  
 INTS 391 Intro Integrative Studies  
 IT 343 IT Project Management  
 IT 492 Senior Design Project I  
 IT 493 Senior Design Project II  
 KINE 450 Research Methods  
 KINE 490 Kinesiology Internship III

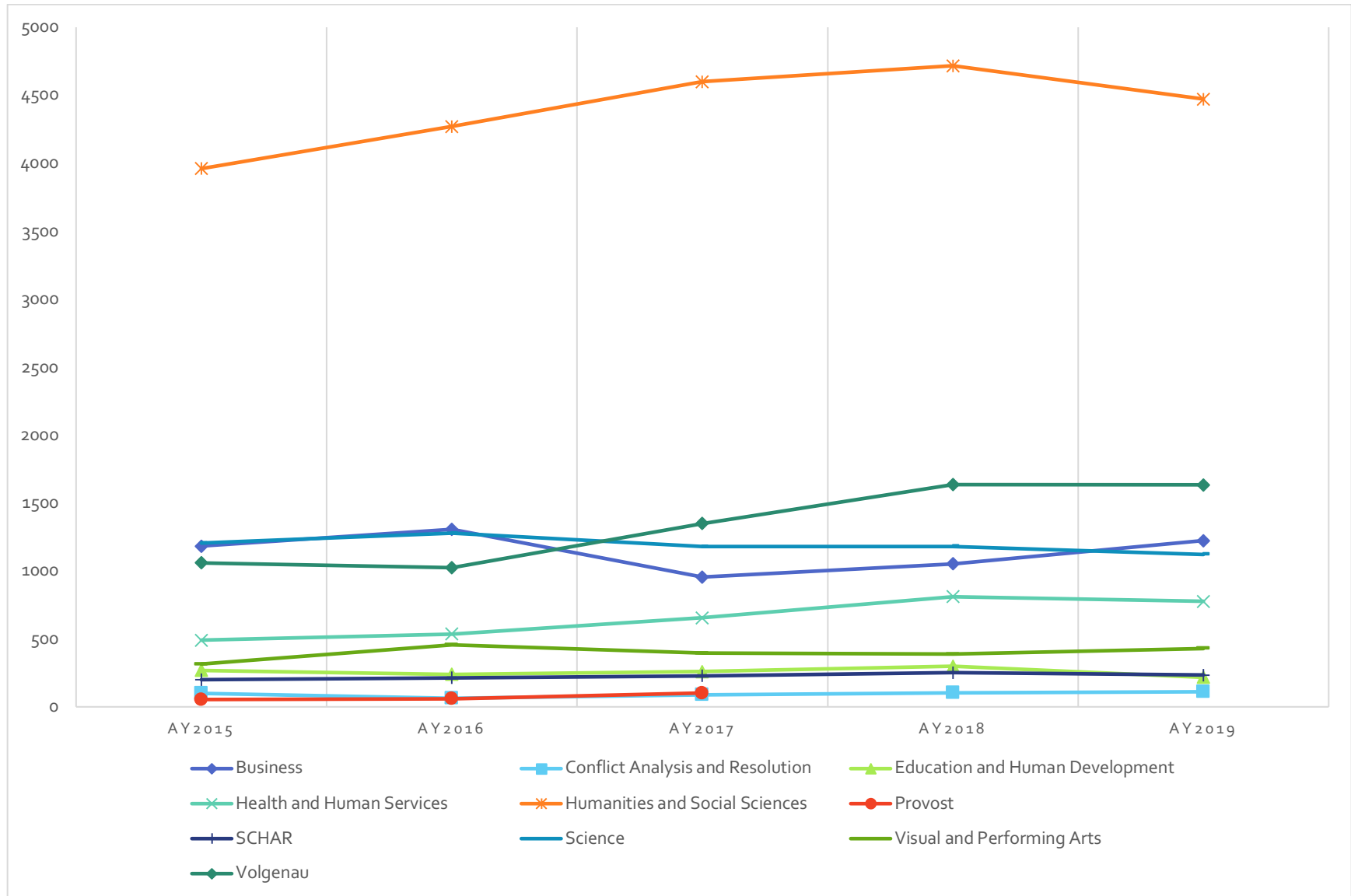
MATH 290 Intro to Advanced Mathematics  
MATH 400 History of Math (Topic Varies)  
ME 444 Mechanical Design II  
MGMT 313 Organizational Behavior  
MIS 330 Systems Analysis and Design  
MKTG 471 Marketing Management  
MLAB 300 Science Writing  
MUSI 324 Junior Recital  
MUSI 332 Music History Society II  
MUSI 424 Senior Recital  
MUSI 491 Musical Comm in Perform  
MUSI 495 Internship in Music Education  
NEUR 411 When Good Cells Go Bad  
NURS 465 Exam/Integrtn Prof/Hlthcre Iss  
PHED 340 Social and Cultural Issues PE  
PHED 415 Std Teach in Phys Educ  
PHIL 309 Bioethics  
PHIL 421 The Philosophy Of Hannah Arendt  
PHIL 422 The Philosophy Of Hannah Arendt  
PHYS 407 Sr Lab in Modern Physics  
PRLS 490 Recreation Managmnt Internship  
PSYC 301 Research Methods in Psyc  
PSYC 304 Principles of Learning  
PSYC 309 Sens/Percept/Info Proc  
PSYC 405 Mystery, Madness, and Murder  
PSYC 427 Community Engagement

RELI 420 Sr Sem: Wrld Relg Confl & Dial  
RHBS 499 Senior Capstone in Rehab Sci  
RUSS 353 Russian Civilization  
SOCL 377 Art and Society  
SOCL 412 Contemporary Soci Theory  
SOCL 485 RS:Sociological Analysis/Pract  
SOCW 375 Human Behavior/Family  
SOCW 472 RS: Integ Meth Social Actn/Chg  
SPAN 370 Spanish Writing and Stylistics  
SPMT 490 Internship  
SRST 450 Research Methods  
SYST 495 Senior Design Project II  
THR 350 Script Analysis  
THR 440 Adv Stud Dir/Dramaturgy  
TOUR 490 HTEM Internship

Table 30. Enrollment in Writing Intensive Courses by College/School, Excluding Independent Study and Courses with Enrollment Fewer than Five Students, AY2015-19

	AY2015		AY2016		AY2017		AY2018		AY2019	
	#Course Sections	Enroll	#Course Sections	Enroll	#Course Sections	Enroll	#Course Sections	Enroll	#Course Sections	Enroll
<b>Business</b>	43	1,183	49	1306	40	955	38	1,052	44	1,223
<b>Conflict Analysis and Resolution</b>	5	101	4	63	4	89	4	103	5	111
<b>Education and Human Development</b>	17	269	16	239	18	259	21	299	17	217
<b>Health and Human Services</b>	23	491	25	536	29	655	36	810	36	776
<b>Humanities and Social Sciences</b>	201	3,960	211	4,270	221	4,599	238	4,717	236	4,472
<b>Provost</b>	2	54	2	60	4	102				
<b>SCHAR</b>	8	200	10	214	10	229	13	252	11	234
<b>Science</b>	64	1,205	69	1,278	62	1,179	67	1,180	64	1,121
<b>Visual and Performing Arts</b>	16	315	21	456	19	395	21	387	23	430
<b>Volgenau</b>	37	1,059	34	1,024	44	1,349	50	1,635	55	1,633
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>8,837</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>9,446</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>9,811</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>10,435</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>10,217</b>

Figure 88. Five-Year Enrollment Trends in Writing Intensive Courses by College/School, AY2015-19



# WRITTEN COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

*for more information, please contact [value@aacu.org](mailto:value@aacu.org)*



The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can be shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

## Definition

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

## Framing Language

This writing rubric is designed for use in a wide variety of educational institutions. The most clear finding to emerge from decades of research on writing assessment is that the best writing assessments are locally determined and sensitive to local context and mission. Users of this rubric should, in the end, consider making adaptations and additions that clearly link the language of the rubric to individual campus contexts.

This rubric focuses assessment on how specific written work samples or collections of work respond to specific contexts. The central question guiding the rubric is "How well does writing respond to the needs of audience(s) for the work?" In focusing on this question the rubric does not attend to other aspects of writing that are equally important: issues of writing process, writing strategies, writers' fluency with different modes of textual production or publication, or writer's growing engagement with writing and disciplinarity through the process of writing.

Evaluators using this rubric must have information about the assignments or purposes for writing guiding writers' work. Also recommended is including reflective work samples of collections of work that address such questions as: What decisions did the writer make about audience, purpose, and genre as s/he compiled the work in the portfolio? How are those choices evident in the writing -- in the content, organization and structure, reasoning, evidence, mechanical and surface conventions, and citational systems used in the writing? This will enable evaluators to have a clear sense of how writers understand the assignments and take it into consideration as they evaluate.

The first section of this rubric addresses the context and purpose for writing. A work sample or collections of work can convey the context and purpose for the writing tasks it showcases by including the writing assignments associated with work samples. But writers may also convey the context and purpose for their writing within the texts. It is important for faculty and institutions to include directions for students about how they should represent their writing contexts and purposes.

Faculty interested in the research on writing assessment that has guided our work here can consult the National Council of Teachers of English/ Council of Writing Program Administrators' White Paper on Writing Assessment (2008; [www.wpacouncil.org/whitepaper](http://www.wpacouncil.org/whitepaper)) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication's Writing Assessment: A Position Statement (2008; [www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/123784.htm](http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/123784.htm))

## Glossary

The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- **Content Development:** The ways in which the text explores and represents its topic in relation to its audience and purpose.
- **Context of and purpose for writing:** The context of writing is the situation surrounding a text: who is reading it? who is writing it? Under what circumstances will the text be shared or circulated? What social or political factors might affect how the text is composed or interpreted? The purpose for writing is the writer's intended effect on an audience. Writers might want to persuade or inform; they might want to report or summarize information; they might want to work through complexity or confusion; they might want to argue with other writers, or connect with other writers; they might want to convey urgency or amuse; they might write for themselves or for an assignment or to remember.
- **Disciplinary conventions:** Formal and informal rules that constitute what is seen generally as appropriate within different academic fields, e.g. introductory strategies, use of passive voice or first person point of view, expectations for thesis or hypothesis, expectations for kinds of evidence and support that are appropriate to the task at hand, use of primary and secondary sources to provide evidence and support arguments and to document critical perspectives on the topic. Writers will incorporate sources according to disciplinary and genre conventions, according to the writer's purpose for the text. Through increasingly sophisticated use of sources, writers develop an ability to differentiate between their own ideas and the ideas of others, credit and build upon work already accomplished in the field or issue they are addressing, and provide meaningful examples to readers.
- **Evidence:** Source material that is used to extend, in purposeful ways, writers' ideas in a text.
- **Genre conventions:** Formal and informal rules for particular kinds of texts and/or media that guide formatting, organization, and stylistic choices, e.g. lab reports, academic papers, poetry, webpages, or personal essays.
- **Sources:** Texts (written, oral, behavioral, visual, or other) that writers draw on as they work for a variety of purposes -- to extend, argue with, develop, define, or shape their ideas, for example.

# WRITTEN COMMUNICATION VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact [value@aacu.org](mailto:value@aacu.org)



## Definition

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

*Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.*

	Capstone	Milestones		Benchmark
		Advanced	Emerging	
<b>Context of and Purpose for Writing</b> <i>Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).</i>	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	Demonstrates adequate consideration of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).	Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates minimal attention to context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).
<b>Content Development</b>	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.
<b>Genre and Disciplinary Conventions</b> <i>Formal and informal rules inherent in the expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields (please see glossary).</i>	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task (s) including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices	Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation	Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation.
<b>Sources and Evidence</b>	Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing.	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing.
<b>Control of Syntax and Mechanics</b>	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.