
NSSE 2022 Topical Module Report

Experiences with Writing

University of Houston-Downtown

This module is the result of an ongoing collaboration between NSSE and the Council of Writing Program Administrators. The questions touch on three aspects of good writing assignments—interactivity, meaning-making, and clarity. It complements questions on the core survey about how much writing students do, the nature of their course assignments, and perceived gains in written expression.

Comparison group details are in the online Selected Comparison Groups report, linked in the Data & Reports table on the Institution Interface. A PDF copy is also saved in your report download folder.

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First-Year Students

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				UHD		Writing Experiences		UHD	Writing Experiences	
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	Effect size ^d
1. During the current school year, for how many writing assignments have you done the following?										
a. Talked with a classmate, friend, or family member to develop your ideas before starting your assignment	WRI01a	1	No writing assignments	23	9	799	13	3.1	2.8 ***	.28
		2	Few writing assignments	50	19	1,629	25			
		3	Some writing assignments	86	33	2,345	35			
		4	Most writing assignments	74	28	1,496	21			
		5	All writing assignments	31	12	427	6			
		Total		264	100	6,696	100			
b. Received feedback from a classmate, friend, or family member about a draft before turning in your final assignment	WRI01b	1	No writing assignments	21	8	784	12	3.2	3.0 **	.17
		2	Few writing assignments	50	19	1,428	22			
		3	Some writing assignments	88	34	2,102	32			
		4	Most writing assignments	71	27	1,731	25			
		5	All writing assignments	32	13	615	9			
		Total		262	100	6,660	100			
c. Given feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline	WRI01c	1	No writing assignments	25	9	1,024	16	3.1	2.8 ***	.28
		2	Few writing assignments	41	15	1,490	22			
		3	Some writing assignments	102	39	2,245	33			
		4	Most writing assignments	64	24	1,488	22			
		5	All writing assignments	30	12	442	7			
		Total		262	100	6,689	100			
d. Summarized material you read such as articles, books, or online publications	WRI01d	1	No writing assignments	12	4	405	7	3.4	3.2 ***	.21
		2	Few writing assignments	32	12	1,073	17			
		3	Some writing assignments	94	37	2,358	35			
		4	Most writing assignments	82	31	2,213	32			
		5	All writing assignments	42	16	624	9			
		Total		262	100	6,673	100			
e. Analyzed or evaluated something you read, researched, or observed	WRI01e	1	No writing assignments	10	4	248	4	3.6	3.5	.07
		2	Few writing assignments	19	7	714	11			
		3	Some writing assignments	90	35	1,927	29			
		4	Most writing assignments	92	35	2,795	41			
		5	All writing assignments	50	19	989	15			
		Total		261	100	6,673	100			
f. Described your methods or findings related to data you collected in lab or field work, a survey project, etc.	WRI01f	1	No writing assignments	29	11	1,174	17	3.1	2.9 ***	.22
		2	Few writing assignments	39	14	1,345	20			
		3	Some writing assignments	99	38	2,044	31			
		4	Most writing assignments	68	26	1,620	25			
		5	All writing assignments	28	10	467	7			
		Total		263	100	6,650	100			
g. Argued a position using evidence and reasoning	WRI01g	1	No writing assignments	8	3	562	9	3.5	3.3 ***	.26
		2	Few writing assignments	29	10	931	14			
		3	Some writing assignments	85	33	2,087	31			
		4	Most writing assignments	96	37	2,232	33			
		5	All writing assignments	45	17	840	12			
		Total		263	100	6,652	100			

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (2-tailed); Refer to the endnotes page for the key to triangle symbols.

First-Year Students

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				UHD		Writing Experiences		UHD	Writing Experiences	
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	Effect size ^d
h. Explained in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data	WRI01h	1	No writing assignments	46	17	1,613	22	2.7	2.6 *	.13
		2	Few writing assignments	62	23	1,651	25			
		3	Some writing assignments	88	35	1,890	29			
		4	Most writing assignments	47	18	1,124	18			
		5	All writing assignments	18	7	371	6			
		Total		261	100	6,649	100			
i. Written in the style and format of a specific field (engineering, history, psychology, etc.)	WRI01i	1	No writing assignments	39	15	1,238	19	2.9	2.9	.06
		2	Few writing assignments	50	19	1,287	19			
		3	Some writing assignments	92	36	1,871	29			
		4	Most writing assignments	54	20	1,561	23			
		5	All writing assignments	28	11	690	10			
		Total		263	100	6,647	100			
j. Addressed a real or imagined audience such as your classmates, a politician, non-experts, etc.	WRI01j	1	No writing assignments	23	9	1,217	18	3.1	2.8 ***	.26
		2	Few writing assignments	58	21	1,366	20			
		3	Some writing assignments	83	33	2,037	31			
		4	Most writing assignments	60	23	1,440	22			
		5	All writing assignments	38	15	580	9			
		Total		262	100	6,640	100			
2. During the current school year, for how many of your writing assignments have your instructors done the following?										
a. Provided clear instructions describing what they wanted you to do	WRI02a	1	No writing assignments	7	3	169	3	3.9	3.8	.05
		2	Few writing assignments	24	9	472	7			
		3	Some writing assignments	51	20	1,459	22			
		4	Most writing assignments	93	36	2,739	40			
		5	All writing assignments	88	33	1,804	28			
		Total		263	100	6,643	100			
b. Explained in advance what they wanted you to learn	WRI02b	1	No writing assignments	6	2	247	4	3.8	3.7 *	.13
		2	Few writing assignments	25	9	713	11			
		3	Some writing assignments	67	25	1,792	27			
		4	Most writing assignments	85	33	2,274	33			
		5	All writing assignments	80	30	1,615	25			
		Total		263	100	6,641	100			
c. Explained in advance the criteria they would use to grade your assignment	WRI02c	1	No writing assignments	5	2	187	3	4.0	3.9 *	.13
		2	Few writing assignments	19	7	479	7			
		3	Some writing assignments	49	19	1,398	21			
		4	Most writing assignments	76	29	2,332	34			
		5	All writing assignments	113	43	2,251	35			
		Total		262	100	6,647	100			

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (2-tailed); Refer to the endnotes page for the key to triangle symbols.

Seniors

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				UHD		Writing Experiences		UHD	Writing Experiences	
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	Effect size ^d
1. During the current school year, for how many writing assignments have you done the following?										
a. Talked with a classmate, friend, or family member to develop your ideas before starting your assignment	WRI01a	1	No writing assignments	118	11	1,026	14	2.9	2.8 ***	.12
		2	Few writing assignments	223	21	1,837	25			
		3	Some writing assignments	387	37	2,611	33			
		4	Most writing assignments	245	23	1,624	21			
		5	All writing assignments	85	8	560	7			
		Total		1,058	100	7,658	100			
b. Received feedback from a classmate, friend, or family member about a draft before turning in your final assignment	WRI01b	1	No writing assignments	194	18	1,217	17	2.8	2.8	-.01
		2	Few writing assignments	240	23	1,870	25			
		3	Some writing assignments	334	32	2,352	31			
		4	Most writing assignments	211	20	1,625	20			
		5	All writing assignments	77	7	563	7			
		Total		1,056	100	7,627	100			
c. Given feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline	WRI01c	1	No writing assignments	241	22	1,520	21	2.6	2.6	.01
		2	Few writing assignments	244	23	1,903	25			
		3	Some writing assignments	330	31	2,519	33			
		4	Most writing assignments	182	17	1,317	17			
		5	All writing assignments	66	6	408	5			
		Total		1,063	100	7,667	100			
d. Summarized material you read such as articles, books, or online publications	WRI01d	1	No writing assignments	80	8	466	6	3.3	3.3	.00
		2	Few writing assignments	138	13	1,055	14			
		3	Some writing assignments	318	31	2,467	32			
		4	Most writing assignments	371	35	2,616	34			
		5	All writing assignments	147	14	1,045	13			
		Total		1,054	100	7,649	100			
e. Analyzed or evaluated something you read, researched, or observed	WRI01e	1	No writing assignments	52	5	284	4	3.5	3.7 **	-.11
		2	Few writing assignments	116	11	666	9			
		3	Some writing assignments	276	27	1,924	25			
		4	Most writing assignments	402	38	3,235	42			
		5	All writing assignments	207	19	1,549	20			
		Total		1,053	100	7,658	100			
f. Described your methods or findings related to data you collected in lab or field work, a survey project, etc.	WRI01f	1	No writing assignments	142	13	1,025	13	3.1	3.1	.05
		2	Few writing assignments	168	16	1,411	18			
		3	Some writing assignments	291	28	2,182	29			
		4	Most writing assignments	311	30	2,175	29			
		5	All writing assignments	141	13	842	11			
		Total		1,053	100	7,635	100			
g. Argued a position using evidence and reasoning	WRI01g	1	No writing assignments	117	11	797	10	3.2	3.2	-.06
		2	Few writing assignments	181	17	1,144	15			
		3	Some writing assignments	303	28	2,250	30			
		4	Most writing assignments	314	30	2,400	31			
		5	All writing assignments	137	13	1,049	14			
		Total		1,052	100	7,640	100			

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (2-tailed); Refer to the endnotes page for the key to triangle symbols.

Seniors

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				UHD		Writing Experiences		UHD	Writing Experiences	Effect size ^d
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
h. Explained in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data	WRI01h	1	No writing assignments	192	18	1,289	16	2.9	2.9	-.03
		2	Few writing assignments	208	19	1,681	21			
		3	Some writing assignments	328	32	2,301	30			
		4	Most writing assignments	233	22	1,719	24			
		5	All writing assignments	94	9	643	9			
		Total		1,055	100	7,633	100			
i. Written in the style and format of a specific field (engineering, history, psychology, etc.)	WRI01i	1	No writing assignments	166	16	900	12	3.1	3.4 ***	-0.19
		2	Few writing assignments	160	15	979	13			
		3	Some writing assignments	268	26	1,732	23			
		4	Most writing assignments	272	26	2,276	30			
		5	All writing assignments	184	17	1,747	22			
		Total		1,050	100	7,634	100			
j. Addressed a real or imagined audience such as your classmates, a politician, non-experts, etc.	WRI01j	1	No writing assignments	189	17	1,346	18	2.9	2.9	.05
		2	Few writing assignments	191	18	1,633	22			
		3	Some writing assignments	320	30	2,237	29			
		4	Most writing assignments	240	23	1,619	21			
		5	All writing assignments	112	11	794	11			
		Total		1,052	100	7,629	100			
2. During the current school year, for how many of your writing assignments have your instructors done the following?										
a. Provided clear instructions describing what they wanted you to do	WRI02a	1	No writing assignments	43	4	203	3	3.8	3.9 ***	-.13
		2	Few writing assignments	96	10	472	6			
		3	Some writing assignments	214	20	1,401	18			
		4	Most writing assignments	397	37	3,309	43			
		5	All writing assignments	303	29	2,249	29			
		Total		1,053	100	7,634	100			
b. Explained in advance what they wanted you to learn	WRI02b	1	No writing assignments	55	5	301	4	3.7	3.7	.00
		2	Few writing assignments	96	9	728	10			
		3	Some writing assignments	239	23	1,794	24			
		4	Most writing assignments	361	34	2,727	36			
		5	All writing assignments	303	28	2,077	27			
		Total		1,054	100	7,627	100			
c. Explained in advance the criteria they would use to grade your assignment	WRI02c	1	No writing assignments	48	5	225	3	3.9	4.0 *	-.08
		2	Few writing assignments	64	6	453	6			
		3	Some writing assignments	202	19	1,388	18			
		4	Most writing assignments	361	34	2,729	36			
		5	All writing assignments	379	35	2,836	37			
		Total		1,054	100	7,631	100			

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 (2-tailed); Refer to the endnotes page for the key to triangle symbols.

First-Year Students

Variable name	N	Mean		Standard error ^f		Standard deviation ^g		DF ^h	Sig. ⁱ	Effect size ^d
	UHD	UHD	Writing Experiences	UHD	Writing Experiences	UHD	Writing Experiences	Comparisons with: Writing Experiences		
WRI01a	263	3.14	2.83	.070	.011	1.13	1.10	10,757	.000	.28
WRI01b	262	3.18	2.98	.069	.011	1.11	1.15	10,708	.005	.17
WRI01c	261	3.15	2.82	.068	.011	1.11	1.14	10,751	.000	.28
WRI01d	262	3.43	3.21	.064	.010	1.03	1.04	10,717	.001	.21
WRI01e	260	3.58	3.50	.062	.010	1.00	1.01	10,717	.248	.07
WRI01f	262	3.11	2.85	.069	.012	1.11	1.18	276	.000	.22
WRI01g	262	3.54	3.25	.061	.011	0.99	1.12	279	.000	.26
WRI01h	260	2.75	2.59	.071	.012	1.15	1.18	10,668	.037	.13
WRI01i	262	2.94	2.86	.073	.012	1.18	1.25	276	.305	.06
WRI01j	261	3.14	2.82	.072	.012	1.16	1.21	10,673	.000	.26
WRI02a	262	3.87	3.82	.065	.010	1.06	1.01	10,678	.462	.05
WRI02b	262	3.80	3.65	.065	.011	1.04	1.09	10,666	.031	.13
WRI02c	261	4.05	3.91	.064	.010	1.03	1.06	10,681	.036	.13

Seniors

Variable name	N	Mean		Standard error ^f		Standard deviation ^g		DF ^h	Sig. ⁱ	Effect size ^d
	UHD	UHD	Writing Experiences	UHD	Writing Experiences	UHD	Writing Experiences	Comparisons with: Writing Experiences		
WRI01a	1,064	2.95	2.81	.034	.010	1.10	1.13	1,272	.000	.12
WRI01b	1,063	2.76	2.76	.036	.011	1.18	1.16	12,978	.850	-.01
WRI01c	1,070	2.62	2.61	.036	.010	1.18	1.14	1,252	.686	.01
WRI01d	1,061	3.33	3.34	.034	.010	1.11	1.08	13,005	.974	.00
WRI01e	1,061	3.55	3.66	.033	.009	1.07	1.02	1,236	.002	-.11
WRI01f	1,060	3.13	3.07	.038	.011	1.22	1.20	12,975	.125	.05
WRI01g	1,059	3.17	3.23	.037	.011	1.19	1.18	12,995	.084	-.06
WRI01h	1,061	2.86	2.90	.037	.011	1.21	1.19	12,983	.302	-.03
WRI01i	1,057	3.14	3.38	.040	.012	1.31	1.28	12,985	.000	-.19
WRI01j	1,060	2.92	2.86	.038	.011	1.24	1.24	12,978	.147	.05
WRI02a	1,060	3.77	3.89	.033	.009	1.09	0.99	1,219	.000	-.13
WRI02b	1,060	3.71	3.71	.035	.010	1.13	1.09	12,974	.998	.00
WRI02c	1,061	3.89	3.97	.034	.009	1.10	1.03	1,233	.019	-.08

Endnotes

- a. Column percentages are weighted by institution-reported sex and enrollment status (and institution size for comparison groups). Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Counts are unweighted; column percentages cannot be replicated from counts. Comparison group details are in the Selected Comparison Groups report, linked in the Data & Reports table on the Institution Interface.
- b. All statistics are weighted by institution-reported sex and enrollment status (and institution size for comparison groups). Unless otherwise noted, statistical comparisons are two-tailed independent *t*-tests. Items with categorical response sets are left blank.
- c. These are the values used to calculate means. For the majority of items, these values match the codes in the data file and codebook.
- d. Effect size for independent *t*-tests uses Cohen's *d*; *z*-tests use Cohen's *h*.
- e. Statistics are weighted by institution-reported sex and enrollment status (and institution size for comparison groups). Categorical items are not listed.
- f. The 95% confidence interval for the population mean is equal to the sample mean plus or minus 1.96 times the standard error of the mean.
- g. A measure of the amount individual scores deviate from the mean of all the scores in the distribution.
- h. Degrees of freedom used to compute the *t*-tests. Values differ from *N*s due to weighting and whether equal variances were assumed.
- i. Statistical comparisons are two-tailed independent *t*-tests or *z*-tests. Statistical significance represents the probability that the difference between your students' mean and that of the students in the comparison group is due to chance.
- j. Statistical comparison uses *z*-test to compare the proportion who responded (depending on the item) "Done or in progress" or "Yes" with all who responded otherwise.
- k. Mean represents the proportion who responded (depending on the item) "Done or in progress" or "Yes."

Key to symbols:

- ▲ **Your students' average** was significantly higher ($p < .05$) with an effect size at least .3 in magnitude.
- △ **Your students' average** was significantly higher ($p < .05$) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude.
- ▽ **Your students' average** was significantly lower ($p < .05$) with an effect size less than .3 in magnitude.
- ▼ **Your students' average** was significantly lower ($p < .05$) with an effect size at least .3 in magnitude.

Note: It is important to interpret the direction of differences relative to item wording and your institutional context. You may not see all of these symbols in your report.