
NSSE 2021 Topical Module Report

Experiences with Writing

University of New Hampshire at Durham

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.

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First-Year Students

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				UNH		all module ppts		UNH	all module ppts	Effect size ^d
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
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	43	10	287	13	2.8	2.8	-.01
		2	Few writing assignments	128	26	621	27			
		3	Some writing assignments	201	42	838	35			
		4	Most writing assignments	95	19	529	21			
		5	All writing assignments	15	3	146	6			
		Total		482	100	2,421	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	49	10	263	10	3.0	3.0	-.02
		2	Few writing assignments	92	19	482	21			
		3	Some writing assignments	177	37	775	33			
		4	Most writing assignments	132	27	653	27			
		5	All writing assignments	33	7	239	9			
		Total		483	100	2,412	100			
c. Given feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline	WRI01c	1	No writing assignments	46	10	312	12	2.9	2.9	-.02
		2	Few writing assignments	107	22	542	23			
		3	Some writing assignments	196	40	818	34			
		4	Most writing assignments	119	25	564	24			
		5	All writing assignments	15	3	184	8			
		Total		483	100	2,420	100			
d. Summarized material you read such as articles, books, or online publications	WRI01d	1	No writing assignments	14	3	96	4	3.2	3.3 *	-.10
		2	Few writing assignments	70	15	367	15			
		3	Some writing assignments	212	44	859	36			
		4	Most writing assignments	168	34	832	34			
		5	All writing assignments	19	4	259	10			
		Total		483	100	2,413	100			
e. Analyzed or evaluated something you read, researched, or observed	WRI01e	1	No writing assignments	9	2	42	2	3.5	3.6 **	-.14
		2	Few writing assignments	39	8	229	10			
		3	Some writing assignments	180	38	698	30			
		4	Most writing assignments	217	44	1,028	43			
		5	All writing assignments	39	8	418	16			
		Total		484	100	2,415	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	67	14	386	15	2.8	2.9	-.05
		2	Few writing assignments	105	22	470	20			
		3	Some writing assignments	174	36	785	32			
		4	Most writing assignments	116	24	600	26			
		5	All writing assignments	22	5	168	6			
		Total		484	100	2,409	100			
g. Argued a position using evidence and reasoning	WRI01g	1	No writing assignments	36	7	137	5	3.1	3.4 ***	-.26
		2	Few writing assignments	94	20	341	14			
		3	Some writing assignments	172	36	777	32			
		4	Most writing assignments	152	31	830	35			
		5	All writing assignments	30	6	324	13			
		Total		484	100	2,409	100			

First-Year Students

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				UNH		all module ppts		UNH	all module ppts	Effect size ^d
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
h. Explained in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data	WRI01h	1	No writing assignments	99	20	526	20	2.5	2.6	-.07
		2	Few writing assignments	133	28	623	26			
		3	Some writing assignments	160	34	729	32			
		4	Most writing assignments	79	16	398	17			
		5	All writing assignments	11	2	131	5			
		Total		482	100	2,407	100			
i. Written in the style and format of a specific field (engineering, history, psychology, etc.)	WRI01i	1	No writing assignments	80	16	418	17	2.8	2.9	-.09
		2	Few writing assignments	103	22	459	20			
		3	Some writing assignments	169	35	734	31			
		4	Most writing assignments	102	21	547	23			
		5	All writing assignments	29	6	251	9			
		Total		483	100	2,409	100			
j. Addressed a real or imagined audience such as your classmates, a politician, non-experts, etc.	WRI01j	1	No writing assignments	104	22	406	16	2.6	2.9 ***	-.24 ▽
		2	Few writing assignments	104	22	475	20			
		3	Some writing assignments	171	36	755	32			
		4	Most writing assignments	85	18	553	23			
		5	All writing assignments	16	3	219	9			
		Total		480	100	2,408	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	2	27	1	3.7	3.9 ***	-.16 ▽
		2	Few writing assignments	34	7	153	7			
		3	Some writing assignments	127	27	501	22			
		4	Most writing assignments	220	45	990	40			
		5	All writing assignments	94	20	740	30			
		Total		482	100	2,411	100			
b. Explained in advance what they wanted you to learn	WRI02b	1	No writing assignments	17	4	68	3	3.5	3.7 ***	-.20 ▽
		2	Few writing assignments	52	11	233	10			
		3	Some writing assignments	152	32	597	25			
		4	Most writing assignments	177	37	839	35			
		5	All writing assignments	83	17	669	27			
		Total		481	100	2,406	100			
c. Explained in advance the criteria they would use to grade your assignment	WRI02c	1	No writing assignments	6	1	46	2	3.8	4.0 ***	-.17 ▽
		2	Few writing assignments	36	7	150	6			
		3	Some writing assignments	121	25	493	20			
		4	Most writing assignments	194	39	818	35			
		5	All writing assignments	125	26	901	37			
		Total		482	100	2,408	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		
				UNH		all module ppts		UNH	all module ppts	Effect size ^d
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
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	61	10	420	15	2.9	2.8 **	.11
		2	Few writing assignments	139	21	723	24			
		3	Some writing assignments	266	41	1,038	33			
		4	Most writing assignments	156	24	656	20			
		5	All writing assignments	30	5	229	7			
		Total		652	100	3,066	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	83	13	545	19	2.8	2.7 **	.11
		2	Few writing assignments	146	22	739	25			
		3	Some writing assignments	238	37	937	30			
		4	Most writing assignments	158	24	605	19			
		5	All writing assignments	27	4	231	7			
		Total		652	100	3,057	100			
c. Given feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline	WRI01c	1	No writing assignments	91	14	666	23	2.7	2.5 ****	.16
		2	Few writing assignments	159	24	770	26			
		3	Some writing assignments	262	40	990	32			
		4	Most writing assignments	125	20	490	15			
		5	All writing assignments	15	2	157	5			
		Total		652	100	3,073	100			
d. Summarized material you read such as articles, books, or online publications	WRI01d	1	No writing assignments	22	4	204	7	3.3	3.3	.03
		2	Few writing assignments	86	14	429	15			
		3	Some writing assignments	228	35	1,007	32			
		4	Most writing assignments	261	39	1,009	33			
		5	All writing assignments	55	9	417	14			
		Total		652	100	3,066	100			
e. Analyzed or evaluated something you read, researched, or observed	WRI01e	1	No writing assignments	12	2	130	4	3.6	3.6	.00
		2	Few writing assignments	53	9	266	9			
		3	Some writing assignments	186	29	823	26			
		4	Most writing assignments	307	47	1,240	40			
		5	All writing assignments	92	14	610	20			
		Total		650	100	3,069	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	68	10	454	15	3.0	3.0	.03
		2	Few writing assignments	125	19	534	18			
		3	Some writing assignments	217	34	929	30			
		4	Most writing assignments	203	30	815	26			
		5	All writing assignments	41	6	330	11			
		Total		654	100	3,062	100			
g. Argued a position using evidence and reasoning	WRI01g	1	No writing assignments	42	7	341	11	3.3	3.2	.04
		2	Few writing assignments	110	17	488	16			
		3	Some writing assignments	210	32	886	29			
		4	Most writing assignments	217	33	948	31			
		5	All writing assignments	75	12	401	14			
		Total		654	100	3,064	100			

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

Seniors

				Frequency Distributions ^a				Statistical Comparisons ^b		
				UNH		all module ppts		UNH	all module ppts	
Item wording or description	Variable name	Values ^c	Response options	Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	Effect size ^d
h. Explained in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data	WRI01h	1	No writing assignments	65	9	554	17	3.0	2.8 ***	.16
		2	Few writing assignments	145	21	724	23			
		3	Some writing assignments	224	35	882	29			
		4	Most writing assignments	172	27	658	22			
		5	All writing assignments	45	7	242	9			
		Total		651	100	3,060	100			
i. Written in the style and format of a specific field (engineering, history, psychology, etc.)	WRI01i	1	No writing assignments	59	9	402	13	3.4	3.3 *	.08
		2	Few writing assignments	97	15	401	13			
		3	Some writing assignments	140	21	699	23			
		4	Most writing assignments	229	36	878	29			
		5	All writing assignments	127	20	681	22			
		Total		652	100	3,061	100			
j. Addressed a real or imagined audience such as your classmates, a politician, non-experts, etc.	WRI01j	1	No writing assignments	112	17	581	19	2.7	2.8 *	-.09
		2	Few writing assignments	172	26	678	22			
		3	Some writing assignments	208	32	882	29			
		4	Most writing assignments	126	20	612	20			
		5	All writing assignments	33	5	304	10			
		Total		651	100	3,057	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	8	1	95	3	3.9	3.9	-.01
		2	Few writing assignments	26	4	203	7			
		3	Some writing assignments	139	21	574	18			
		4	Most writing assignments	348	54	1,284	42			
		5	All writing assignments	132	20	907	29			
		Total		653	100	3,063	100			
b. Explained in advance what they wanted you to learn	WRI02b	1	No writing assignments	19	3	138	5	3.6	3.7 *	-.08
		2	Few writing assignments	63	10	276	9			
		3	Some writing assignments	188	28	737	24			
		4	Most writing assignments	261	40	1,054	35			
		5	All writing assignments	120	19	850	27			
		Total		651	100	3,055	100			
c. Explained in advance the criteria they would use to grade your assignment	WRI02c	1	No writing assignments	11	2	100	3	4.0	4.0	.02
		2	Few writing assignments	27	5	187	6			
		3	Some writing assignments	118	18	578	19			
		4	Most writing assignments	295	45	1,062	35			
		5	All writing assignments	201	31	1,131	37			
		Total		652	100	3,058	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
	UNH	UNH	all module ppts	UNH	all module ppts	UNH	all module ppts			
WRI01a	482	2.79	2.80	.044	.017	0.97	1.08	634	.809	-.01
WRI01b	483	3.02	3.04	.049	.018	1.08	1.12	616	.688	-.02
WRI01c	483	2.90	2.92	.045	.018	0.99	1.12	639	.718	-.02
WRI01d	483	3.21	3.30	.039	.015	0.85	0.98	645	.023	-.10
WRI01e	484	3.47	3.60	.038	.015	0.84	0.94	638	.002	-.14
WRI01f	484	2.83	2.89	.049	.018	1.08	1.14	4,492	.304	-.05
WRI01g	484	3.08	3.35	.046	.017	1.02	1.05	614	.000	-.26
WRI01h	482	2.54	2.61	.048	.018	1.06	1.14	624	.150	-.07
WRI01i	483	2.78	2.88	.051	.019	1.13	1.21	4,489	.071	-.09
WRI01j	480	2.59	2.88	.051	.019	1.11	1.19	4,489	.000	-.24
WRI02a	482	3.74	3.90	.041	.015	0.91	0.95	4,491	.001	-.16
WRI02b	481	3.54	3.74	.046	.017	1.01	1.06	4,478	.000	-.20
WRI02c	482	3.82	3.99	.043	.016	0.95	1.00	4,484	.001	-.17

Seniors

Variable name	N	Mean		Standard error ^f		Standard deviation ^g		DF ^h	Sig. ⁱ	Effect size ^d
	UNH	UNH	all module ppts	UNH	all module ppts	UNH	all module ppts			
WRI01a	651	2.91	2.80	.040	.017	1.02	1.13	900	.006	.11
WRI01b	651	2.83	2.70	.042	.018	1.06	1.18	900	.004	.11
WRI01c	650	2.71	2.53	.039	.017	1.00	1.13	906	.000	.16
WRI01d	651	3.35	3.31	.037	.016	0.94	1.10	926	.377	.03
WRI01e	649	3.62	3.62	.035	.016	0.90	1.05	919	.939	.00
WRI01f	653	3.04	3.01	.042	.018	1.08	1.22	913	.463	.03
WRI01g	653	3.26	3.21	.042	.018	1.08	1.19	896	.278	.04
WRI01h	650	3.02	2.83	.042	.018	1.07	1.20	904	.000	.16
WRI01i	651	3.43	3.33	.048	.020	1.21	1.31	886	.048	.08
WRI01j	650	2.70	2.81	.044	.019	1.11	1.24	903	.020	-.09
WRI02a	652	3.86	3.87	.033	.015	0.83	1.02	956	.737	-.01
WRI02b	649	3.61	3.69	.039	.017	1.00	1.11	894	.050	-.08
WRI02c	651	3.97	3.95	.036	.016	0.93	1.05	915	.616	.02

See the endnotes on the last page of this report.

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.