

Topical Module: Experiences with Writing

This module, updated in 2025, is the result of an ongoing collaboration between NSSE and the Council of Writing Program Administrators. The questions touch on various aspects of good writing assignments—interactivity, meaning-making, and clarity. Revisions also include questions about the use of generative AI, the use of writing portfolios, and courses on writing. The questions on this module complement questions on the core survey about how much writing students do, the nature of their course assignments, and perceived gains in written expression.



For these questions, a writing assignment is broadly defined to include not only written papers but also lab reports, multimedia projects, blogs, online discussions, posters, PowerPoint presentations, and so on.

Earlier, you answered some questions based on one particular undergraduate course section that you are teaching or have taught during this academic year. Thinking again about that course, please respond to the following.

1. In your selected course section, about how often have you encouraged students to do the following when completing writing assignments?

Response options: Very often, Often, Sometimes, Never

- Discuss their ideas with a classmate, friend, or family member before starting the assignment
- Seek feedback from you or another instructor about their plans, organization, or content before turning in the assignment
- Seek feedback from a writing center or tutoring service on their plans, organization, or content
- Seek feedback from a classmate, friend, or family member on their plans, organization, or content
- Review their plans, organization, or content for potential revision before turning in the assignment
- Provide feedback to a classmate about their plans, organization, or content in their written assignment

2. In your selected course section, about how often have you asked students to do the following when completing writing assignments?

Response options: Very often, Often, Sometimes, Never

- Analyze or evaluate something they read, researched, or observed
- Argue a position using evidence and reasoning
- Write in the style and format specific to a field (psychology, history, biology, nursing, etc.)
- Address a real or imagined reader such as a politician, employer, customer, etc.
- Describe methods or findings related to data they collected from interviews, focus groups, surveys, lab work, field work, etc.
- Explain in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data

3. In your selected course section, to what extent have you done the following for your writing assignments?

Response options: Very much, Quite a bit, Some, Very little, Not at all

- Provided clear instructions describing the expectations for the assignment
- Explained in advance what you wanted students to learn from the assignment
- Explained in advance the criteria you would use to grade your assignment
- Supplied an example of a completed assignment, either by you or a previous student

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4. A writing portfolio is an organized collection of a student's work, including a written reflection on their growth as a writer. How important is it to you that undergraduates at your institution create a writing portfolio before they graduate?

Response options: Very important, Important, Somewhat important, Not important

5. Some artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Google Bard, and Microsoft Copilot can generate brand-new text, lists, images, and other content based on your requests. While designing your writing assignments during the current school year, to what extent have you done the following?

Response options: 4 Very much, 3 Quite a bit, 2 Some, 1 Very little, 0 Not at all

- a. Clearly explained how generative AI tools could assist your undergraduates in achieving the learning goals of your writing assignments.
- b. Clearly explained what would be considered unacceptable uses of generative AI tools for your undergraduate writing assignments.