

**Department of English, Theatre, and Communications**  
**Writing Assessment Policy**

**Writing Expectations for Sophomores**

By the end of their sophomore year, students majoring in English are expected to be proficient enough writers to succeed in their upper-division coursework. In particular, their writing is expected to demonstrate sophomore-level proficiency in the following areas of expository writing:

**Content.** The student must be able to enunciate and demonstrate a clear, worthwhile thesis—to clearly and efficiently make a point worth making. Outside sources should be used appropriately to support the thesis.

**Organization.** The student must be able to organize facts and observations and use them as evidence supporting a unified, coherent argument.

**Diction and style.** The student must be able to write in a register appropriate to a given audience/genre/subject and with a stylistic maturity appropriate to the sophomore level. The student must be able to illustrate abstract points with concrete examples.

**Grammar.** The student must be able to write clear, grammatical sentences.

**Mechanics.** The student must demonstrate appropriate spelling and punctuation skills, and the ability to use MLA style (or another documentation style such as APA or Chicago) and properly format a paper.

**Assessment Procedure**

At least four weeks before the end of the semester in which they take Eng 210, students majoring in English must submit a portfolio of four writing samples to the department head. (Transfer students with 60 hours or more of college credit must submit the portfolio four weeks before the end of the first semester they declare a major in the department).

All work submitted in the portfolio must be the student's own. The portfolio must include two substantial essays written in Eng 101 or Eng 102, one substantial in-class essay examination, and one substantial essay written in Eng 210. ("Substantial" here means an essay of approximately 500 words.) The portfolio must consist of at least 2,000 words total and must be prefaced with a typed, 500-word introduction briefly summarizing each work and appraising its quality.

Each semester, the department head shall appoint two ETCFL faculty on a rotating basis to evaluate the portfolio to determine if the student meets departmental writing expectations as outlined above. With the aid of the attached rubric, the appointed faculty shall evaluate the portfolio holistically and assign it a grade of Pass or Fail. Split decisions shall be resolved by a third reader appointed by the department chair. Students who are not judged as proficient writers must earn a B or better in ENG 290 or a C or better in ENG 363 by the time they complete the semester in which they attain 75 credit hours. These same students shall have the right to consult with the faculty who evaluated their portfolio.

Evaluation of the portfolios shall be guided by the attached rubric, which shall be periodically reviewed and, if necessary, revised by the ETCFL faculty as a whole. This rubric shall be made available to students as they are preparing their portfolios.

Each portfolio will be kept by the department. When it is time to build the Senior Portfolio, the student will retrieve the Sophomore Portfolio and review its contents prior to writing the Senior Portfolio's cover letter (see below). The student will then combine the two portfolios to provide a comprehensive record of achievement in the program. (The Sophomore Portfolio is not to be broken up but added as is to the Senior Portfolio.) This combined portfolio will remain on file in the department.

### **Writing Expectations for Graduating Seniors**

By the time they graduate, students majoring in English (that is, with an emphasis in Liberal Arts, Creative Writing, Secondary Education, or Communications) are expected to be proficient writers and perceptive readers. In particular, their writing is expected to demonstrate senior-level proficiency in the area of Expository Writing, which includes the areas of Content, Organization, Diction and Style, Grammar, and Mechanics outlined in "Writing Expectations for Sophomores" above.

In addition, all students graduating in English must demonstrate senior-level proficiency in the following areas:

**Critical thinking.** The student should be able to acknowledge the existence of alternative or conflicting viewpoints and engage opposing arguments. In addition, the student should be able to objectively summarize an argument, identify its grounds and warrant, and analyze its logic and use of evidence.

**Inquiry and research.** The student should demonstrate evidence of original intellectual exploration rather than merely rehashing familiar positions, and should be able to locate appropriate secondary sources, cite them properly, and use them effectively to further an argument.

**Grammar and history of English.** The student should demonstrate a knowledge of the elements of English grammar and the historical roots of the main varieties of contemporary American English.

Finally, all students graduating in the English program must demonstrate senior-level proficiency in their particular area of emphasis:

**Analysis of literature (Liberal Arts emphasis).** The student should demonstrate a senior-level understanding of the specifically literary qualities of the work being analyzed. Basic literary terms and concepts (plot, theme, metaphor, irony, etc.) should be used appropriately and accurately. Outside sources should be authoritative and relevant to the thesis. Primary material should be quoted accurately and analyzed in a way that demonstrates its relevance to the thesis.

**Analysis and teaching of literature (Secondary education emphasis).** The student should demonstrate a senior-level proficiency in the areas outlined for "Analysis of literature" above, as well as an understanding of the use of a variety of literature (including adolescent literature) in secondary education.

**Creative writing (Creative Writing emphasis).** The student should demonstrate basic proficiency in writing poetry, fiction, and other creative prose forms, as well as senior-level proficiency in writing in a chosen genre (either poetry or prose). In addition, the student should demonstrate a sense of aesthetic standards and the ability to use them in evaluating creative writing, both their own and that of others.

**Journalism (Communications emphasis).** The student should demonstrate basic proficiency in media writing as well as an understanding of the history of American media, media theory and

criticism, and media law and ethics. In addition, the student should demonstrate senior-level proficiency in a chosen area of applied journalism (either print or broadcast media).

### **Assessment Procedure**

At least four weeks before the end of the semester in which they graduate, students majoring in English must retrieve their Sophomore Portfolio and review its contents. The student will then assemble a second portfolio documenting work done as a junior and senior. The two portfolios will be combined in order to provide a comprehensive record of achievement in the program. (The Sophomore Portfolio is not to be broken up or otherwise altered, but added “as is” to the Senior Portfolio.) This combined portfolio will remain on file in the department.

The completed portfolio must contain the following items:

A typed, 500-word cover letter that begins by briefly summarizing each work and appraising its quality. This letter should go on to summarize more generally what the student has accomplished at ASC and assess the student’s achievements in the areas of expository writing, critical thinking, inquiry and research, grammar and linguistics, and the area of emphasis (Liberal Arts, Creative Writing, Communications, or Secondary Education). This letter should refer to the Sophomore Portfolio as it assesses the student’s growth in the program.

A variety of academic work in the major, including at least four (but no more than six) items selected from the following: term papers, shorter analytic papers, projects, exams (including grammar and linguistics courses), creative or scholarly work (video or audio tapes are acceptable), and recordings or evaluations of oral presentations.

A résumé including name, address, professional goals, academic degree expected, work experience, awards, honors, and names of references.

The completed portfolio must be submitted to the department head prior to graduation. If possible, the student should include both rough drafts and final drafts of papers to give an idea of progress made on individual assignments. These items may be submitted in the form in which they were prepared for class; there is no need for any revision graded papers or assignments with instructor comments are welcome.

Ideally, the completed portfolio (both Sophomore Portfolio and Senior Portfolio) should span the four years of the student’s college career. If necessary, the student should attach a note to each piece indicating the class requirement for which it was originally submitted. The student should also include one example of work outside the major. Photocopies are acceptable, as are original copies with instructor comments.

Evaluation of senior portfolios shall be guided by a rubric, which shall be periodically reviewed and, if necessary, revised by the English faculty as a whole. This rubric shall be made available to students as they are preparing their portfolios.