

University Learning Goals

Eastern Illinois University Council on Academic Affairs

Revised Writing and Critical Reading University Learning Goal Adopted

On January 16, 2014, the EIU Council on Academic Affairs adopted revised undergraduate University Learning Goals, which become effective during the Fall 2014 semester. Among the goals is one focused on Writing and Critical Reading:

EIU graduates write critically and evaluate varied sources by:

- Creating documents appropriate for specific audiences, purposes, genres, disciplines, and professions.
- Crafting cogent and defensible applications, analyses, evaluations, and arguments about problems, ideas, and issues.
- Producing documents that are well-organized, focused, and cohesive.
- Using appropriate vocabulary, mechanics, grammar, diction, and sentence structure.
- Understanding, questioning, analyzing, and synthesizing complex textual, numeric, and graphical sources.
- Evaluating evidence, issues, ideas, and problems from multiple perspectives.
- Collecting and employing source materials ethically and understanding their strengths and limitations.

The Revised Goal and Connections

The revised learning goal refines the previous broad learning goal of communication by establishing more specific details about writing and reading tasks. The learning goal connects writing, reading, and critical thinking and aims to help Eastern students be questioning, analytical readers who craft cogent writing for a variety of purposes and audiences.

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Learning Goals Workshop Series

Introduction

February 20, 10 am-noon
Arcola-Tuscola Room

Writing and Critical Reading

February 25, 2-4 pm
Arcola-Tuscola Room

Speaking and Listening

March 3, 2-4 pm
Arcola-Tuscola Room

Critical Thinking

March 21, 11 am –1 pm
1103 Buzzard Hall

Responsible Citizenship

March 24, 2-4 pm
Arcola-Tuscola Room

Quantitative Reasoning

April 1, 10 am-noon
Arcola-Tuscola Room

Revised Writing and Critical Reading Learning Goal

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Reading

The revised learning goal addresses the importance of close, critical reading. The three learning objectives that address analytical reading (and writing) are the following:

- Understanding, questioning, analyzing, and synthesizing complex textual, numeric, and graphical sources.
- Evaluating evidence, issues, ideas, and problems from multiple perspectives.
- Collecting and employing source materials ethically and understanding their strengths and limitations.

These objectives address the goal that students should be **active readers and critical thinkers**. Students need to develop into rigorous, analytical readers who question, evaluate, synthesize, and respond to others' work. Class discussions, in-class activities, and writing assignments demand and document critical thinking related to course content.

Writing

The revised learning goal coheres with the core tenets of writing across the curriculum and writing in the disciplines programs and initiatives across the nation. In courses where writing is instrumental to critical thinking, instructors use the following:

- **A Writing Process Approach** (multiple drafts, peer review, revision, explicit instruction about writing in a discipline/profession) not only has students become stronger writers through practice but also has students learn course content through composing diverse writing assignments.
- **Writing-to-Learn Activities** make students learn course content more effectively and support student-centered classrooms.

These core tenets are also articulated in "Writing as Learning Through the Curriculum," published in 1983 by C. H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon. As they state in that article, instructors should use writing as a means for learning and for reflection about their learning:

"We would like to recommend a broader concept of writing-across-the-curriculum, one that makes writing central to courses in the disciplines other than English, one that accommodates the expertise of the historian, the biologist, and the engineer, and one that finds justification for writing, not in concern for displaying commonplace ideas in prefabricated forms, but instead in the potential for new learning implicit in the act of writing itself." (466)

The point about using writ-

ing as a way to understand course content also connects to Janet Emig's scholarly work on how writing acts as a "mode of learning" (12). Classrooms that incorporate the writing process and various writing activities encourage students to learn the essential ideas, concepts, and conversations in diverse disciplines and to practice writing for varied audiences and appropriate reasons.

Also, reinforcing rhetorical principles and the craft of writing covered earlier in the curriculum (first-year composition) helps students grow as critical readers and writers because "[t]eaching process in a single class—freshman comp—cannot ultimately be successful unless the writing in that course is reinforced by the same kind of approach to learning in other courses (Jones and Comprone 59).

Writing-centered and writing-intensive courses at Eastern are positioned to reinforce the critical importance of writing and reading for the academy and beyond.

Why Incorporate Writing?

Writing is simply one the best ways to provoke, evaluate, and assess student learning. Incorporating writing into your classrooms will benefit student learning by promoting deeper

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discussion and understanding of course concepts.

Writing Promotes and Captures Critical Thinking

No matter the discipline or major, writing assignments and exercises can be used to stimulate understanding and increase critical understanding of course content. Writing promotes active thinking because not only must students think about course content when writing, but they must also do something with their ideas. Instructors of any discipline can use writing assignments and activities to augment and improve their courses. Furthermore, writing is not something that must always be evaluated on the correctness of grammar and punctuation because instructors can use writing-to-learn and short writing assignments to generate thoughts and capture how students understand course content.

Writing Challenges How We Communicate What We Know

Knowledge and application are two different situations. Writing assignments strengthen the academic goals of any classroom because they can challenge students to communicate and apply what they know, which creates a deeper awareness and understanding of course content.

Writing as a Process for Growth

Like getting stronger through weightlifting or becoming a better golfer, becoming a stronger writer is a process that takes time and practice. So creating a process approach in the classroom (brainstorming, drafts, peer review, individual or group conferences, revision) teaches students about the craft of writing, and a process approach typically results in stronger student writing. Like we know from our own writing projects the writing process shows us there is almost never a clear-cut path from beginning to its end, but rather it is often a back and forth process of thinking, writing, and revising, which results in a more polished and intelligent final product. Students need to go through the same process of thinking, writing, and revising to produce critical thinking and effective writing.

Works Cited

Emig, Janet. "Writing as a Mode of Learning." *College Composition and Communication* 28 (1977): 12-28.

Jones, Robert, and Joseph J. Compone. "Where Do We Go Next in Writing Across the Curriculum?" *College Composition and Communication* 44.1 (1993): 59-68.

Knoblauch, C. H., and Lil Brannon. "Writing as Learning Through the Curriculum." *College English* 45.5 (1983): 465-74.

Resources for Faculty

Below are writing- and reading-related resources for classrooms across the curriculum:

Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking and Active Learning in the Classroom, 2nd ed. by John C. Bean: Bean's book, often known as the "WAC Bible," is a compre-

hensive text that provides strategies, assignments, and activities to use in diverse classrooms.

Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment in College, 2nd ed. By Barbara Walvoord and Virginia Johnson Anderson: This guide provides substantial advice about how to use grading as a productive tool for learning and program development.

Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers by Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross. This text provides guidance on how to foster close reading and strong writing. The authors provide 50 classroom assessment techniques instructors can use in their courses.

The EIU WAC Handbook: Eastern's WAC Handbook, which provides advice, strategies, and tactics of how to use writing in diverse classrooms, can be downloaded from the main page of EIU WAC webpage. There is also an appendix that provides sample materials. Link: <http://castle.eiu.edu/~writcurr/>

Resources for Faculty page of the EIU WAC webpage: This page offers materials and links about responding to student writing, crafting assignments, creating good discussions, and supporting ELL writers. Link: <http://castle.eiu.edu/~writcurr/resourcesforfaculty.php>

An Introduction to Writing Across the Curriculum: This Intro on the WAC Clearinghouse site covers the basics of using writing in the diverse college classrooms. Link: <http://wac.colostate.edu/intro/>

The WAC Clearinghouse Teaching Exchange: This webpage provides sample assignments, lesson plans, activities, and tip sheets for faculty across the curriculum. Link: <http://wac.colostate.edu/teaching/>

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Resources for Students

Students can take advantage of the following resources as they work on writing assignments and do close, analytical reading.

EIU Writing Center: The writing center provides one-on-one consulting for students in all academic majors and disciplines at any stage of the writing process. Link: <http://castle.eiu.edu/writing/index.php>

Resources for Writers webpage of the EIU Writing Center: This webpage offers materials and links for students when they are working on papers. Link: <http://castle.eiu.edu/writing/links.php>

Purdue OWL: The Purdue Online Writing Lab is a comprehensive guide about writing in college and beyond. Link: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu>

Reading Strategies from St. Mary's College of California: This webpage offers strong guidance and techniques for reading rigorous material. Link: <https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/academics/academic-resources-support/student-academic-support-services/tutorial-academic-skills-6>

Textbook Reading Strategies from the Office of Support Programs at Baylor University: Because so much of college reading is working with textbooks, this link offers good advice about how to navigate textbooks successfully. Link: http://www.baylor.edu/support_programs/index.php?id=42443

Reading Comprehension Tips from the Office of Academic Services at Providence College: This webpage offers easy-to-use tactics to help students become active readers. Link: <http://www.providence.edu/academic-services/academic-skills/Pages/reading.aspx>

Active Reading Strategies by the Academic Services Department at Slippery Rock University: This handout offers sound advice about how to become an active reader. Link: http://www.sru.edu/academics/enrollment/academicservices/Documents/College_Success_Resources/College_Success_Brochures/Active_Reading.pdf

For More Information



EIU Council on Academic Affairs:

<http://castle.eiu.edu/eiucaa/>

CAA Learning Goals Website:

<http://www.eiu.edu/learninggoals/>

CAA Learning Goals Report:

www.eiu.edu/learninggoals/pdfs/CAA_Learning_Goals_Review_Report_Final.pdf

EIU Committee for the Assessment of Student Learning (CASL):

<http://www.eiu.edu/~assess/caslhome.php>

EIU Office of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs:

<http://castle.eiu.edu/acaaffair/>

EIU Strategic Plan:

<http://www.eiu.edu/strategicsummary/>

EIU NCA Self-Study (Accreditation):

<http://www.eiu.edu/nca2014/>
