

Discipline Based Writing Assignments: Less Pain, More Gain

A Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Workshop

Lead by: Koni Stone, Professor of Chemistry

First workshop: January 21st 10-12. Are you thinking about that next great writing assignment that you are designing for your Spring semester class? Or maybe you are balking at the thought. Perhaps you are directing master's students as they write their theses. Please come to this workshop to find ways to make writing more effective for student learning and less stressful for you. A chemist will lead you, (no periodic tables will be involved), audience participation is expected and this will be a dynamic exchange of ideas on how to improve student writing and maintain faculty sanity.

Second workshop: February (date and time TBD by doodle poll of first workshop participants). Efficient grading and effective developmental feedback can be enhanced with the use of rubrics. Tools for writing and using rubrics will be demonstrated (mostly turnitin.com). Also in-class peer review and out of class peer review strategies will be explored.

Third workshop: (date and time TBD by doodle poll of first workshop participants) Celebration of Excellence! Come show off your successful writing assignments. Share what worked, what you learned, what you did with all your new found free time.

Writing Assignment Development Plan

Learning Goal(s)	Deadline	Specific Skills Needed	Strategies or Approaches Needed to Build Skills
Learn about a biochemical topic in depth, understand the data that supports the current understanding of that topic, and produce a high quality Literature review of your topic that will be published on the web.	May 15, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find relevant literature• Understand the experiments that generated the data• Critically analyze the data and the conclusions based on the data• Effectively communicate understanding in writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enlist a librarian to run a seminar for finding relevant literature.• Students meet with instructor to discuss experiments/data that are confusing• Students attend class and complete in class peer review exercises• Students and faculty meet deadlines

Writing Assignment Development Plan

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Learning Goal	Deadline	Specific Skills Needed	Strategies or Approaches Needed to Build Skills

25	26 Faculty Institute 8:30-2:30	27 First day of classes!	28	29	30	31
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Feb Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Groundhog Day	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 Lincoln's Birthday	13	14 St. Valentine's Day
15	16 President's Day	17	18 Ash Wednesday	19 Chinese New Year	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4 Purim	5	6	7
8 Daylight Savings Begins	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19	20 Spring Begins	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29 Palm Sunday	30	31				

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	April Wed	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 April Fool's Day	2	3 Passover	4
5 Easter Sunday	6 Spring Break	7 Spring Break	8 Spring Break	9 Spring Break	10 Spring Break	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22 Earth Day	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	May Friday	Saturday
					1 May Day	2
3	4	5 Cinco de Mayo	6	7	8	9
10 Mother's Day	11	12	13	14	15	16 Armed Forces
17	18 Victoria Day	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 Memorial Day	26	27	28	29	30
	31					

Here is a writing self-assessment worksheet (from Northwestern University)

Assessing Intentions

- Why am I writing?
 - Who are my readers? What key characteristics are important?
 - What is my main point?
 - What do I want readers to do/believe as a result of reading this?
 - What general strategy am I taking?
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Assessing Writing

Focus

- Where do I make central points or questions clear to readers?
- How is each section/paragraph related to the central point?

Development

- Will readers understand/believe points or do I need additional definitions, evidence, or reasoning?
- Where might the readers raise questions or challenges? Have I addressed them?

Organization

- What is the general pattern of organization?
- How are ideas grouped?
- At any point does the organization become unclear?

Style and Mechanics

- Is the tone appropriate for my purpose/audience?
- What sentences seem most effective?
- What sentences could use most work?
- Are there persistent grammatical/mechanical problems or questions?



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Resources for Project Planning

1. Independent Development Plan (IDP) Resources

- Building an Independent Development Plan: A Guide for Undergraduate Students from SACNAS (<http://sacnas.org/about/stories/sacnas-news/summer-2013/building-your-IDP>)
- *Science Careers* myIDP (<http://myidp.sciencecareers.org/>)
- *Science Careers* article: [Improve your Productivity in Graduate School](#)

2. Project Management Resources

- *from PMI Educational Foundation: Project Management Skills for Life* (downloadable for free with registration: <http://www.pmi.org/pmief/learningzone/Com-lifeskills.asp>)
“...a guide that provides an introduction to the basics of project management as well as tools and techniques to help develop skills to become a great project manager leading successful projects. A basic understanding of project management concepts will help your team effectively create a plan, organize activities and train individuals to complete simple to very complex projects.”
- *Science Careers* articles: Project Management for Scientists (Part I) http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2002_05_31/nodoi.7969639087689908393
& Project Management for Scientists (Part 2) http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2002_06_14/nodoi.14574432916945155484

3. Mentoring Resources

- “A Shared Vision of Mentoring from Different Perspectives,” American Society for Cell Biology, article from November 2011 Newsletter (<http://www.ascb.org/files/1111WICB.pdf>)

Resources for Writing

- Gopan & Swan, “[The Science of Science Writing](#).” 1990, *American Scientist*.
- Duke Graduate School, [Scientific Writing Resource](#)
- Northwestern University, [Performing a Writing Self-Assessment](#)