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# **NSSE 2018 Topical Module Report**

## **Experiences with Writing**

St. Olaf College

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## About This Topical Module

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. Complementary FSSE set available.

## Comparison Group

This section summarizes how this module's comparison group was identified, including selection criteria and whether the default option was taken. This is followed by the resulting list of institutions represented in the 'Writing - Selective' column of this report.

Group label	Writing - Selective
Date submitted	5/15/18
How was this comparison group constructed?	Your institution customized this group by selecting institutional characteristics as follows:  Basic Classification (Bac/A&S); UG Profile (FT 4yr/MoreSel/LowTrans)
Group description	No description provided

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## Writing - Selective (N=8)

Colby College (Waterville, ME)\*  
Denison University (Granville, OH)\*  
Furman University (Greenville, SC)  
Harvey Mudd College (Claremont, CA)  
Hope College (Holland, MI)  
Saint Anselm College (Manchester, NH)\*  
Vassar College (Poughkeepsie, NY)\*  
Westminster College (Fulton, MO)\*

## First-Year Students

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values <sup>c</sup>	Response options	Frequency Distributions <sup>a</sup>				Statistical Comparisons <sup>b</sup>		
				St. Olaf		Writing - Selective		St. Olaf	Writing - Selective	Effect size <sup>d</sup>
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
<b>1. During the current school year, for how many writing assignments have you done the following?</b>										
a. Talked with a classmate, friend, or family member to develop your ideas before starting your assignment	WRI01a	1	No writing assignments	27	8	86	7	<b>3.1</b>	3.0	.06
		2	Few writing assignments	68	21	294	22			
		3	Some writing assignments	115	35	508	39			
		4	Most writing assignments	90	28	369	27			
		5	All writing assignments	27	8	64	5			
		Total		327	100	1,321	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	15	5	74	6	<b>3.1</b>	3.2	-.04
		2	Few writing assignments	69	21	229	18			
		3	Some writing assignments	121	37	475	36			
		4	Most writing assignments	96	29	435	32			
		5	All writing assignments	25	8	105	8			
		Total		326	100	1,318	100			
c. Given feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline	WRI01c	1	No writing assignments	17	5	93	8	<b>3.1</b>	3.0	.08
		2	Few writing assignments	64	20	270	21			
		3	Some writing assignments	147	45	566	42			
		4	Most writing assignments	82	25	340	26			
		5	All writing assignments	17	5	50	4			
		Total		327	100	1,319	100			
d. Summarized material you read such as articles, books, or online publications	WRI01d	1	No writing assignments	6	2	30	2	<b>3.4</b>	3.3	.08
		2	Few writing assignments	38	12	170	13			
		3	Some writing assignments	130	40	529	40			
		4	Most writing assignments	123	38	494	38			
		5	All writing assignments	30	9	96	7			
		Total		327	100	1,319	100			
e. Analyzed or evaluated something you read, researched, or observed	WRI01e	1	No writing assignments	2	1	4	0	<b>3.8</b>	3.8	-.01
		2	Few writing assignments	9	3	48	4			
		3	Some writing assignments	83	25	314	24			
		4	Most writing assignments	179	55	713	54			
		5	All writing assignments	54	17	235	17			
		Total		327	100	1,314	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	69	21	233	18	<b>2.5</b>	2.8 **	-.19 ▽
		2	Few writing assignments	90	28	258	20			
		3	Some writing assignments	97	30	482	37			
		4	Most writing assignments	60	18	290	22			
		5	All writing assignments	9	3	53	4			
		Total		325	100	1,316	100			
g. Argued a position using evidence and reasoning	WRI01g	1	No writing assignments	4	1	18	2	<b>3.7</b>	3.8	-.08
		2	Few writing assignments	29	9	84	6			
		3	Some writing assignments	84	26	350	27			
		4	Most writing assignments	158	48	592	44			
		5	All writing assignments	51	16	274	20			
		Total		326	100	1,318	100			

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

## First-Year Students

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values <sup>c</sup>	Response options	Frequency Distributions <sup>a</sup>				Statistical Comparisons <sup>b</sup>		
				St. Olaf		Writing - Selective		St. Olaf	Writing - Selective	Effect size <sup>d</sup>
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
h. Explained in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data	WRI01h	1	No writing assignments	96	30	281	21	<b>2.3</b>	2.5 ***	-.24
		2	Few writing assignments	93	29	357	27			
		3	Some writing assignments	89	27	437	34			
		4	Most writing assignments	41	13	202	16			
		5	All writing assignments	6	2	39	3			
		Total		325	100	1,316	100			
i. Written in the style and format of a specific field (engineering, history, psychology, etc.)	WRI01i	1	No writing assignments	57	17	153	11	<b>2.8</b>	3.1 ***	-.25
		2	Few writing assignments	66	20	200	15			
		3	Some writing assignments	103	32	439	33			
		4	Most writing assignments	80	24	403	31			
		5	All writing assignments	21	6	123	9			
		Total		327	100	1,318	100			
j. Addressed a real or imagined audience such as your classmates, a politician, non-experts, etc.	WRI01j	1	No writing assignments	47	14	188	14	<b>2.7</b>	2.9 *	-.13
		2	Few writing assignments	96	30	305	23			
		3	Some writing assignments	97	30	429	33			
		4	Most writing assignments	73	22	279	21			
		5	All writing assignments	12	4	110	8			
		Total		325	100	1,311	100			
<b>2. During the current school year, for how many of your writing assignments have your instructors done the following?</b>										
a. Provided clear instructions describing what they wanted you to do	WRI02a	1	No writing assignments	1	0	4	0	<b>3.9</b>	3.9	-.03
		2	Few writing assignments	21	6	36	3			
		3	Some writing assignments	47	14	280	22			
		4	Most writing assignments	197	60	724	55			
		5	All writing assignments	60	18	273	21			
		Total		326	100	1,317	100			
b. Explained in advance what they wanted you to learn	WRI02b	1	No writing assignments	7	2	35	3	<b>3.5</b>	3.5	.03
		2	Few writing assignments	48	15	169	12			
		3	Some writing assignments	95	29	441	34			
		4	Most writing assignments	119	37	479	37			
		5	All writing assignments	56	17	194	15			
		Total		325	100	1,318	100			
c. Explained in advance the criteria they would use to grade your assignment	WRI02c	1	No writing assignments	2	1	14	1	<b>3.7</b>	3.8	-.08
		2	Few writing assignments	39	12	110	8			
		3	Some writing assignments	83	25	344	26			
		4	Most writing assignments	130	40	540	41			
		5	All writing assignments	73	22	310	24			
		Total		327	100	1,318	100			

## Seniors

Item wording or description	Variable name	Values <sup>c</sup>	Response options	Frequency Distributions <sup>a</sup>				Statistical Comparisons <sup>b</sup>		
				St. Olaf		Writing - Selective		St. Olaf	Writing - Selective	Effect size <sup>d</sup>
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
<b>1. During the current school year, for how many writing assignments have you done the following?</b>										
a. Talked with a classmate, friend, or family member to develop your ideas before starting your assignment	WRI01a	1	No writing assignments	17	7	104	8	<b>3.1</b>	3.0	.12
		2	Few writing assignments	44	19	297	23			
		3	Some writing assignments	99	41	503	38			
		4	Most writing assignments	60	25	349	26			
		5	All writing assignments	18	8	63	5			
		Total		238	100	1,316	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	21	9	142	11	<b>3.0</b>	2.8 **	.20
		2	Few writing assignments	54	23	366	28			
		3	Some writing assignments	82	35	471	36			
		4	Most writing assignments	66	28	278	21			
		5	All writing assignments	14	6	57	4			
		Total		237	100	1,314	100			
c. Given feedback to a classmate about a draft or outline	WRI01c	1	No writing assignments	20	8	146	11	<b>2.7</b>	2.7	.06
		2	Few writing assignments	68	28	358	28			
		3	Some writing assignments	109	47	574	43			
		4	Most writing assignments	36	15	218	16			
		5	All writing assignments	5	2	21	2			
		Total		238	100	1,317	100			
d. Summarized material you read such as articles, books, or online publications	WRI01d	1	No writing assignments	2	1	33	3	<b>3.4</b>	3.4	.04
		2	Few writing assignments	32	14	159	12			
		3	Some writing assignments	93	38	498	38			
		4	Most writing assignments	86	37	494	37			
		5	All writing assignments	24	10	130	10			
		Total		237	100	1,314	100			
e. Analyzed or evaluated something you read, researched, or observed	WRI01e	1	No writing assignments	2	1	13	1	<b>3.9</b>	3.8	.13
		2	Few writing assignments	9	4	70	5			
		3	Some writing assignments	44	19	295	23			
		4	Most writing assignments	131	54	664	50			
		5	All writing assignments	52	23	276	21			
		Total		238	100	1,318	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	39	16	174	13	<b>2.9</b>	2.9	-.09
		2	Few writing assignments	45	18	245	19			
		3	Some writing assignments	85	37	446	34			
		4	Most writing assignments	59	25	367	28			
		5	All writing assignments	10	5	83	6			
		Total		238	100	1,315	100			
g. Argued a position using evidence and reasoning	WRI01g	1	No writing assignments	4	2	35	3	<b>3.9</b>	3.7 *	.16
		2	Few writing assignments	10	4	101	8			
		3	Some writing assignments	53	22	315	24			
		4	Most writing assignments	114	48	566	42			
		5	All writing assignments	56	24	301	23			
		Total		237	100	1,318	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 <sup>c</sup>	Response options	Frequency Distributions <sup>a</sup>				Statistical Comparisons <sup>b</sup>		
				St. Olaf		Writing - Selective		St. Olaf	Writing - Selective	Effect size <sup>d</sup>
				Count	%	Count	%	Mean	Mean	
h. Explained in writing the meaning of numerical or statistical data	WRI01h	1	No writing assignments	46	18	209	16	<b>2.7</b>	2.8	-.08
		2	Few writing assignments	51	21	311	23			
		3	Some writing assignments	86	37	425	32			
		4	Most writing assignments	47	20	303	23			
		5	All writing assignments	8	4	70	5			
		Total		238	100	1,318	100			
i. Written in the style and format of a specific field (engineering, history, psychology, etc.)	WRI01i	1	No writing assignments	14	6	82	7	<b>3.6</b>	3.6	.03
		2	Few writing assignments	22	9	137	10			
		3	Some writing assignments	63	27	308	24			
		4	Most writing assignments	93	39	521	40			
		5	All writing assignments	46	20	267	20			
		Total		238	100	1,315	100			
j. Addressed a real or imagined audience such as your classmates, a politician, non-experts, etc.	WRI01j	1	No writing assignments	29	13	172	13	<b>3.0</b>	2.9	.06
		2	Few writing assignments	47	19	305	23			
		3	Some writing assignments	88	36	425	32			
		4	Most writing assignments	50	21	296	22			
		5	All writing assignments	24	10	114	8			
		Total		238	100	1,312	100			
<b>2. During the current school year, for how many of your writing assignments have your instructors done the following?</b>										
a. Provided clear instructions describing what they wanted you to do	WRI02a	1	No writing assignments	1	0	12	1	<b>3.9</b>	3.9	-.06
		2	Few writing assignments	5	2	35	3			
		3	Some writing assignments	49	21	236	18			
		4	Most writing assignments	149	62	768	58			
		5	All writing assignments	34	15	264	20			
		Total		238	100	1,315	100			
b. Explained in advance what they wanted you to learn	WRI02b	1	No writing assignments	7	3	34	3	<b>3.4</b>	3.4	-.04
		2	Few writing assignments	37	15	199	15			
		3	Some writing assignments	82	34	411	31			
		4	Most writing assignments	87	37	512	39			
		5	All writing assignments	24	11	157	12			
		Total		237	100	1,313	100			
c. Explained in advance the criteria they would use to grade your assignment	WRI02c	1	No writing assignments	2	1	22	2	<b>3.9</b>	3.8	.11
		2	Few writing assignments	12	5	109	8			
		3	Some writing assignments	49	21	310	24			
		4	Most writing assignments	127	53	576	44			
		5	All writing assignments	46	20	299	22			
		Total		236	100	1,316	100			

#### First-Year Students

Variable name	N	Mean		Standard error <sup>f</sup>		Standard deviation <sup>g</sup>		DF <sup>h</sup>	Sig. <sup>i</sup>	Effect size <sup>d</sup>
	St. Olaf	St. Olaf	Writing - Selective	St. Olaf	Writing - Selective	St. Olaf	Writing - Selective	Comparisons with: Writing - Selective		
WRI01a	327	3.07	3.00	.06	.02	1.07	0.98	445	.325	.06
WRI01b	326	3.14	3.19	.05	.03	0.99	1.01	1,923	.490	-.04
WRI01c	327	3.05	2.98	.05	.02	0.93	0.96	1,925	.173	.08
WRI01d	327	3.41	3.34	.05	.02	0.88	0.88	1,923	.185	.08
WRI01e	327	3.84	3.84	.04	.02	0.75	0.76	1,917	.890	-.01
WRI01f	325	2.54	2.75	.06	.03	1.10	1.10	1,917	.002	-.19
WRI01g	326	3.68	3.75	.05	.02	0.88	0.91	1,921	.210	-.08
WRI01h	325	2.29	2.54	.06	.03	1.08	1.07	1,918	.000	-.24
WRI01i	327	2.82	3.11	.06	.03	1.17	1.13	1,922	.000	-.25
WRI01j	325	2.71	2.86	.06	.03	1.08	1.15	1,912	.039	-.13
WRI02a	326	3.90	3.93	.04	.02	0.78	0.75	1,920	.608	-.03
WRI02b	325	3.52	3.49	.06	.02	1.01	0.97	1,922	.617	.03
WRI02c	327	3.71	3.79	.05	.02	0.96	0.94	1,924	.199	-.08



## Seniors

Variable name	N		Mean		Standard error <sup>f</sup>		Standard deviation <sup>g</sup>		DF <sup>h</sup>	Sig. <sup>i</sup>	Effect size <sup>d</sup>
	St. Olaf	Writing - Selective	St. Olaf	Writing - Selective	St. Olaf	Writing - Selective	St. Olaf	Writing - Selective			
WRI01a	237	236	3.08	2.96	.07	.03	1.02	1.01	1,444	.098	.12
WRI01b	236	236	3.01	2.79	.07	.03	1.05	1.03	1,441	.004	.20
WRI01c	237	237	2.75	2.69	.06	.03	0.89	0.93	1,445	.430	.06
WRI01d	236	236	3.42	3.39	.06	.03	0.89	0.92	1,442	.611	.04
WRI01e	237	237	3.94	3.84	.05	.02	0.79	0.85	351	.064	.13
WRI01f	237	237	2.85	2.95	.07	.03	1.11	1.11	1,444	.220	-.09
WRI01g	236	236	3.89	3.74	.06	.03	0.87	0.99	364	.013	.16
WRI01h	237	237	2.70	2.79	.07	.03	1.10	1.12	1,447	.236	-.08
WRI01i	237	237	3.58	3.56	.07	.03	1.08	1.11	1,444	.707	.03
WRI01j	237	237	2.96	2.89	.08	.03	1.16	1.15	1,441	.377	.06
WRI02a	237	237	3.89	3.93	.04	.02	0.68	0.76	1,444	.372	-.06
WRI02b	236	236	3.38	3.42	.06	.03	0.96	0.97	1,441	.567	-.04
WRI02c	235	235	3.87	3.77	.05	.03	0.81	0.95	368	.086	.11

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## 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.
- 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.