

Tips for including more writing into business courses

Faculty members in the College of Business and Economics are encouraged to include more writing in their courses. Some faculty members are reluctant to include writing assignments because they fear that the grading load will be too onerous, they think their expertise in writing instruction is lacking, and they won't have enough time to cover course content and writing assignments. Below are some ideas for increasing the amount of writing in a course while meeting other course objectives.

Shorter Papers best for students

1. Give students shorter, focused workplace writing assignments. Make assignment that a student might get as a first-year associate in your discipline. A short assignment will help students with basic business writing skills and reinforce course content without the faculty member having to grade 30, 15-page papers.
2. Assign writing that will be later used as part of a larger paper. As part of a larger situational analysis in BUSX 301, the instructor first asked the write a memo explaining a trend in the industry market in the last three years. Later, the students were asked to write a memo on the profitability of individual companies in the industry. Each of these short assignments allows the faculty member to discuss the larger assignment and help the student understand the significance on the information.
3. Use blogs or online comments to encourage student writing and thinking. Blackboard and other on-line course management systems allow students to write comments or make blog posts. In some classes, the instructor posts a video, news article, or editorial and asks the students comment, explaining that the comment needs to be written in coherent paragraphs and adhering to rules of grammar. These comments could be graded as pass/fail or on a simple, 1, 3, 5.
4. In-class writing assignments can help students' writing and content. If there is time at the beginning or ending of a class, ask students to write a question about the day's class, write a paragraph about the main issues discussed in class, or answer a question applying the knowledge obtained in class or based on homework. These short paragraphs can be graded or used as a way to help students better understand content, and the faculty can use the short assignments to point out specific writing issues.

Grading Papers does not need to be onerous.

5. Use the writing rubric to comment on papers. The CBE Writing Rubric provides 10 basic, business writing issues or criteria that students who have taken Cornerstone should have some knowledge of. Instead of making extensive comments, the faculty member could direct the student to a particular writing issue, putting the responsibility for reviewing the rubric standards and correcting the issue with the student. Moreover, the students have many other resources

to help them deal with the particular writing issue. For instance, the rubric explains that information sources should be cited in APA style. Mention the basic rubrics number and instruct the student to comply. However, the faculty member must gain some understanding of the rubric standards.

6. Don't grade all of the papers of every assignment. All students should have direct feedback on their writing assignments, but not necessarily on every assignment. In many instances, the faculty member need not grade every papers assigned. Often, the faculty member can grade a representative number of papers, providing feedback; then, the faculty member can use 10-15-minutes of class time discussing some of the important business writing issues, directing the students to rewrite, revise, and visit the writing lab before resubmission. Some faculty will make the assignment to the entire class, and grade a limited number, grading different students on another assignment. Then, the faculty member can review the paper in a more general fashion.

Writing, revising, and editing are key skills that students develop using this process. In addition, while discussing the writing, the faculty member can reinforce course content that is covered in the writing assignment.

7. Ask student to submit papers electronically. The faculty member can create a list of common comments, definitions, grammar rules, and insert them into papers as comments. To make helpful edits or make suggestions, track changes can be used as well. Electronic submissions can be checked for plagiarism a little easier.

All faculty members can be effective at giving feedback

8. Faculty members must accept the fact that they don't need to be grammar experts in order to be effective in holding students accountable to write well. If an expert commented on every issue found in a paper, the comments would overwhelm the paper and the student, so that is not necessary. The faculty member does need to acquaint themselves with the most common issues her or she may confront in responding to student papers. The faculty member should prioritize, commenting on higher order concerns such as content, completeness, support, basic organization. Comment on what you know, use handbooks, and BUSX301 materials, and build skills.

According to the Harvard College Writing Project guide to responding to student papers, "You don't have to comment on every little thing that went wrong in a paper. Instead, choose two or three of the most important areas in which the student needs to improve, and present these in order of descending importance. You may find it useful to key these weaknesses to such essay elements as Thesis, Structure, Evidence, and Style. Give specific examples to show the student what you're seeing. If possible, suggest practical solutions so that the student writer can correct the problems in the next paper."

<http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic526629.files/BG%20Responding%20to%20Student%20Writing.pdf>

9. Seek help from a BUSX 301 faculty member or graduate student on responding to student papers. Some faculty members have expressed doubt of their expertise as writing instructors. Faculty need not be experts on writing instruction, but there are some basic issues that writing teachers encounter that business faculty can easily learn to apply.