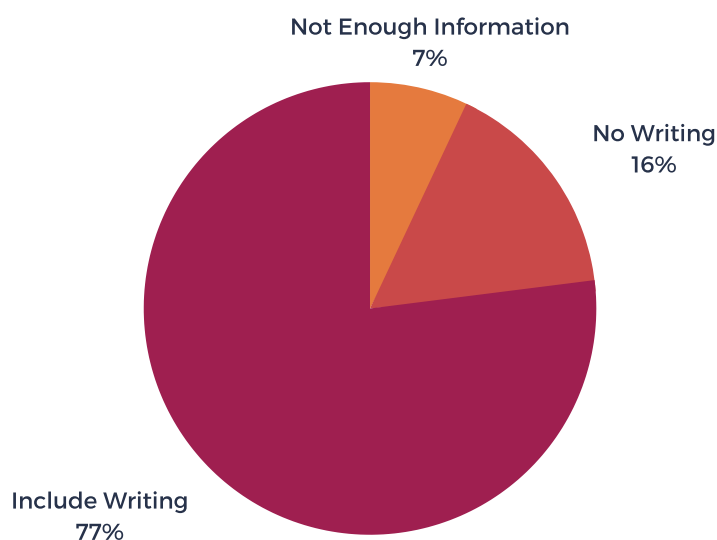


Writing in Mason Core

HOW MUCH WRITING DO FACULTY ASSIGN IN GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES AT MASON?

Thomas Polk, Acting Director, Writing Across the Curriculum
Data compiled by John Walter, Graduate Assistant Director



Percentage of syllabi assigning writing

399 OF 518 (77%) SYLLABI ASSIGN WRITING PROJECTS

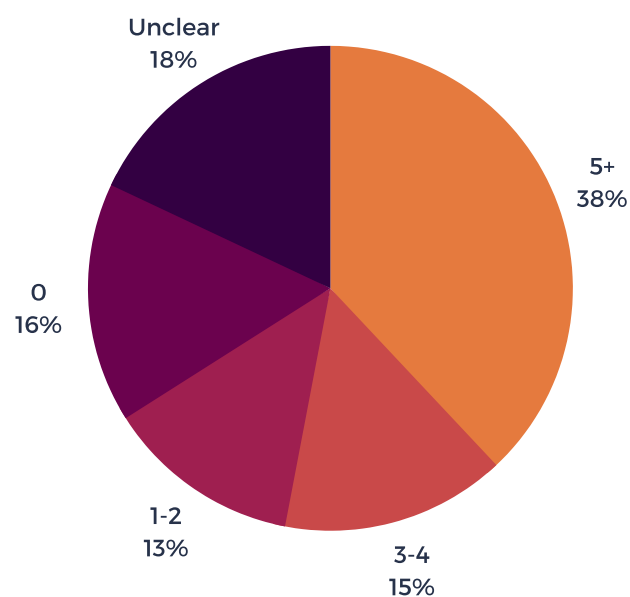
364 of the 518 syllabi (70%) include significant amounts of writing, accounting for at least 10% of the final grade. 35 syllabi (7%) include some minor writing assignments, and 83 syllabi (16%) do not assign writing. The remaining 36 syllabi (7%) do not include information about assignments.

198 OF 518 (38%) ASSIGN 5 OR MORE WRITING PROJECTS

A majority of syllabi (53%) assign at least 3 writing projects during the semester, including 1 or more high stakes assignment.

198 OF 518 (38%) INTEGRATE WRITING THROUGH AT LEAST 7 WEEKS OF THE SEMESTER

39 syllabi (8%) integrate writing for 4-6 weeks; 36 syllabi (7%) integrate writing for 1-3 weeks. The remaining 47% do not include enough scheduling information.



Number of writing projects included on syllabi

This report does not include courses fulfilling the Written Communication requirement (ENGH 101, ENGH 302 & writing-intensive courses). Natural Sciences and Oral Communication courses have not yet been reviewed; these numbers will be updated after their review.

While syllabi contain important information regarding the amount and kinds of writing assigned in these courses, most syllabi are not comprehensive enough to provide a complete account. For example, a syllabus might indicate 10 discussion forum posts of 250-words representing 10% of the course grade but provide no information regarding the number and length of the “papers” that account for 40% of the course grade.

WRITING IN GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES

Writing in Core Categories

47 of 49 (96%) of **Capstone** syllabi include writing assignments.

69 of 72 (96%) of **World History and Global Understanding** syllabi include writing.

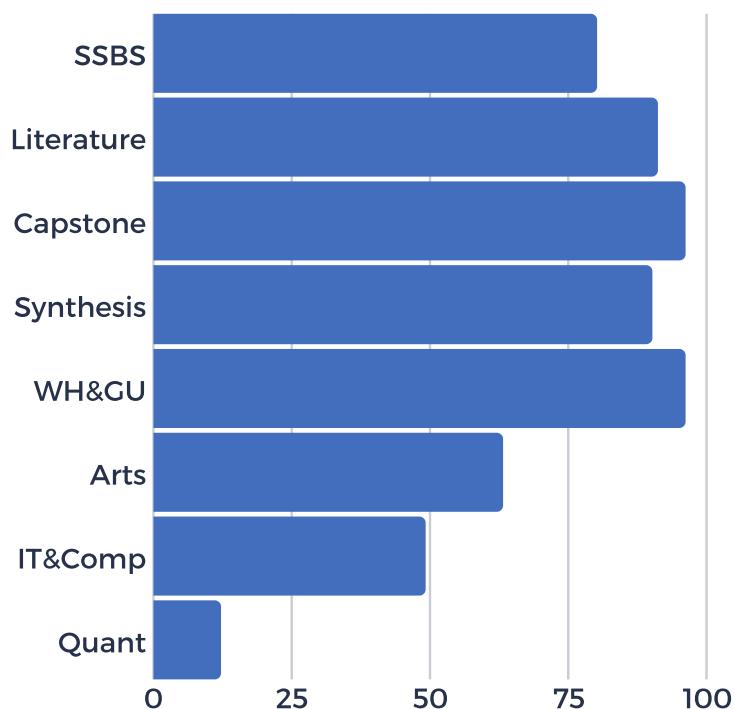
54 of 60 (90%) of **Synthesis** syllabi include writing.

Characteristics of Writing Assignments

92% of syllabi that assign writing use **high stakes** writing projects.

49% of syllabi that assign writing use **low stakes** writing projects.

30% of syllabi **scaffold assignments** across multiple steps.



Percentages of syllabi including writing by Core category

A WRITING-ENRICHED CURRICULUM

Writing-intensive courses have been identified as a **high-impact educational practice**, but writing is frequently assigned in other courses to assess student learning. Research demonstrates that writing assignments enhance student engagement and promote critical thinking, but the quality of the assignment design, including interactions with more advanced writers, matters more than the amount of writing assigned. Furthermore, **writers develop gradually through continuous, varied, and deliberate practice across contexts**.

Faculty in Mason's Core curriculum assign frequent and varied writing projects, but the infrequent use of low stakes writing and scaffolded assignments suggests that students might benefit more from these writing experiences. Composition and Writing-intensive courses provide foundational learning experiences, and **writing-enriched general education courses can reinforce and extend the learning** students acquire.

To further integrate writing into the Core curriculum, courses can:

- Develop a **writing outcome** that recognizes the writing already present in the course and articulates the purposes for teaching with writing
- Adopt **writing process pedagogies** that provide students the opportunity to develop projects over multiple steps and revise writing based on faculty feedback