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Writing Assignments and Instruction at Ontario's Publicly Funded Universities: A View from Three Disciplines – Appendix

Jordana Garbati, Kelly McDonald,
Lindsay Meaning, Boba Samuels, Cory Scurr,
Wilfrid Laurier University



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1 Yonge Street, Suite 2402
Toronto, ON Canada, M5E 1E5

Phone: (416) 212-3893
Fax: (416) 212-3899
Web: www.heqco.ca
E-mail: info@heqco.ca

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**Authors listed in alphabetic order*



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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Writing Assignments and Instruction in Ontario Publicly Funded Universities:
A Case Study of Three Universities
PI: Dr. Boba Samuels, Co-PI: Dr. Jordana Garbati

SUBJECT LINE: Invitation to participate in a writing assignment and instruction project.

MESSAGE: You are invited to participate in a research study about your perceptions of student writing, including amount, quality of writing, and types of writing assignments as well as your pedagogical approaches to writing. We are interested to learn from faculty and instructional staff their perceptions about the in-class writing instruction they provide to address writing assignments. We value your professional opinions and experiences.

This project has been funded by the Higher Education Council of Ontario (HEQCO). If you agree to participate in this research project, your involvement would consist of one or both of the following components:

- a) completing a short online survey which can be found by clicking on the following link:
https://wlupsychology.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0wDbrUPZf9O9U1L
- b) participating in a focus group that will take place at your institution

If you are willing to participate in the focus groups, you can indicate your interest at the end of the survey (see link above) or reply directly to this email. You will be contacted shortly regarding the date and location of the focus groups. For more information about the focus group, please see the attached consent form.

If you would like more information about being involved in this research project, please contact us at XXXX or XXXX.

This project has received REB approval (REB #4238) from Wilfrid Laurier University.

Kind regards,

Boba Samuels, PhD
XXXX phone number
XXXX email address

Jordana Garbati, PhD
XXXX phone number
XXXX email address

Appendix B: Summary of the Information Collected from Each Writing Assignment

Information Coded	Description of code
Year Level	Four levels of undergraduate courses are available: first year (Level 1), second year (Level 2), third year (Level 3) and fourth year (Level 4)
Genre	The genre of the assignment as labeled <i>by the professor</i> in the course syllabus (e.g., paper, lab report, essay, presentation, etc.)
Nested	Writing assignments that contained two or more different components were coded as being nested assignments
Mark Value	The percentage of the students' final grade allotted to the assignment
Group Assignment	If students completed the assignment with a group or individually
Description	If a description of the assignment was provided to students and whether that description was found in the course syllabus or a separate document
Learning Goal	If the syllabus contained an explicit statement of the learning goal or objective of the writing assignment
Length	The number of words/pages required for the assignment
Topic Choice	If students were able to choose the topic for their assignment or whether it was given to them
Time to Complete	The number of weeks that students were given to complete the assignment
Audience	If the audience of the assignment was specified (not a teaching assistant or professor) and, if so, who the audience was
Plagiarism	If there was a plagiarism warning listed in the syllabus
Feedback	If students were given feedback about their assignment prior to submission of the assignment for grading
References	If references were required in the assignment, and the number required
Style Manual	If the style manual of the assignment was specified and, if so, which one (e.g. APA, Chicago Style, MLA, etc.)
Resources	If external resources or sources were suggested to aid students in the completion of their assignments
Exemplar	If an exemplar, prototype or a sample of a completed assignment was provided to students
Rubric	If a rubric for the assignment was given to students and, if so, the format of the rubric (e.g., written statement, weighted table) and the number of evaluation criteria used for assessment

Source: Graves, Hyland & Samuels (2010)

Appendix C: Faculty Survey

**WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY
ONLINE SURVEY FOR FACULTY AND INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF**

**Writing Assignments and Instruction in Ontario Publicly Funded Universities:
A Case Study of Three Universities**

Boba Samuels, PhD, Principal Investigator
Jordana Garbati, PhD, Co-principal Investigator
Faculty Survey

Insert letter of information/statement of consent for online survey
(to appear as the first slide in the online survey)

Information about you

1. Your discipline/department: _____
2. Courses You Teach in 2014/15 (name + level):

3. Please indicate your status:
 - Tenured
 - Probationary
 - Limited-term
 - Sessional
 - Part-time

Information about your assignments:

4. Do you require students to write in your classes?
 - Yes
 - No

If you answered yes, please indicate the types of writing you assign.

- short answer quizzes
- multiple choice quizzes
- brief responses (1-2 sentences)
- longer responses (1-2 paragraphs)
- other: _____

5. Do you provide specific in-class instruction for the writing assignments you assign in your classes?
Please describe below:

- Yes
 - No
-
-

6. Do you provide supplemental material about your writing assignments to the students outside of the course syllabus?

- Yes
- No

If you answered yes, please check any and all that apply

- In-class, written instructions
- Web-based instructions
- Marking grids/rubrics
- Out-of-class, written explanations (e.g. answers to email requests)
- In class, oral explanations, answers to questions
- Out-of-class, oral explanations or answers to questions

7. Do you provide feedback or require students to seek feedback on their writing assignments before these assignments are marked?

- Yes
- No

If you answered yes, what is the form of that feedback?

- Written comments on unmarked first draft
- Written comments on marked first draft
- Voluntary, office-hour oral consultations
- Required, office-hour consultations
- In-class, written peer review
- In-class, oral peer review
- Out-of-class, oral peer review
- Out-of-class written peer review
- Other _____

8. What is the biggest barrier or challenge to including writing instruction in your classes?

9. How competent do you feel to teach writing to your FIRST and SECOND year students?

Information about your Academic Department

10. Does your department hold any formal or informal discussions about writing assignments or writing instruction for undergraduate students?

- Yes
 No

11. Do you participate in these discussions within your department about writing assignments or instruction?

- Yes
 No
 N/A

12. Does your department provide instruction or discuss strategies for grading assignments?

- Yes
 No

If your department does provide instruction or discuss strategies for grading assignments, do you participate in these assignments?

- I participate
 I do not participate

13. Does your department have guidelines or recommendations about expectations for undergraduate student writing skills?

- Yes
 No

14. Do you have any other information you wish to share about your expectations for undergraduate student writing or writing instruction in your department?

15. We invite you to participate in a focus group interview with your peers at your institution (date will be determined). The purpose of the focus group is to give faculty and instructional staff an opportunity to share their perceptions and ideas about current university writing expectations. If you are interested in participating in the focus group, please leave your email address in the space below.

Appendix D: Focus Group Interview Protocol

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

Writing Assignments and Instruction in Ontario Publicly Funded Universities:

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Boba Samuels, PhD, Principal Investigator

Jordana Garbati, PhD, Co-principal investigator

Welcome. My name is Jordana Garbati/Boba Samuels/Kelly McDonald/Cory Scurr. We work at Laurier's Writing Centre. Thank you for participating in this project. We invite you to share your ideas and opinions about undergraduate writing assignments and instruction.

We have a few questions to ask you during this focus group. Feel free to respond or not to any particular question. We welcome you to share other ideas or experiences too. This session will be approximately 1.5 hours. If you prefer to leave before the end of the session, you may leave at any time. This session will be audio-recorded. If you prefer not to be audio-recorded, you may leave now. Your comments will be transcribed by a research assistant. Direct quotations of your comments will only be used if you provide us with permission to use them. You will be assigned a pseudonym to protect your identity.

We will use the findings from this project to provide an analysis and description of current writing instruction across departments at three publicly funded universities in Ontario. There are no known risks to your participation. This project has been approved by the university Research Ethics Board.

You have all read and received a copy of the consent letter. Do you have any questions about this project before we continue?

Okay. Let's get started. *(Researchers will use a semi-structured format and will be guided by the following questions)*

Introduction:

- 1) Please introduce yourself.
 - a. What is your name?
 - b. What department are you from?
 - c. What first and second year courses do you currently teach?
 - d. How long have you been a faculty member/instructor (at this institution or elsewhere)?

Assignments and expectations:

- 1) How many writing assignments do you give your first and second year students? Why this many?
- 2) What types of writing assignments do you think are most helpful for your first and second year students?
- 3) Do students do any writing in your class/lecture/tutorials? What do they write?

Instructional practices:

- 1) Do you include writing instruction in your courses? If so, describe this instruction.
- 2) Do you provide rubrics/feedback/assessment guidelines to students about your expectations for the writing assignments in your first and second year courses before the due date?
- 3) What do you spend the most time explaining to students about their writing assignments?
- 4) Do you usually work with teaching assistants?
 - If so, what role do they play in providing writing instruction?
 - Do you provide your TAs with ideas/instructions on how to help students with their writing?
- 5) Have you ever taken a writing course? In undergrad? Grad school?
- 6) What are the challenges or barriers you face when assigning writing?
- 7) Does your department have any guidelines regarding the writing skills first and second year students need to learn as undergraduates?
- 8) Do you ever discuss writing instruction or assignment design with faculty colleagues, teaching support staff, writing faculty/staff, or others?
- 9) Do you feel competent to teach writing to your students?

Perceptions of student writing:

- 1) What are your expectations about students' writing abilities in first and second year courses?
- 2) Do you know of any writing resources available to students at your institution?
 - If so, do you promote these resources to your students? How?
 - Do you think students use these resources? Why/why not?

Other:

- 1) Do you have any additional comments about writing instruction in your department or at your institution?
- 2) Would you like to review your quotations before we use them in this project?



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