

Directed Self-Placement (DSP) and Accelerated Learning (AL): Measures for Student Self-Efficacy

Prior to Fall 2014

Accuplacer

Semester 1: Developmental Reading and Writing I 3 credits

and

Semester 2: Developmental Reading and Writing II + First-Year Composition 5 credits

- 52% of Developmental Reading and Writing students passed in their first year.
- One year later, their average cumulative GPA was 2.74.
- 69% of Developmental Reading and Writing students ever completed their requirement.

Beginning Fall 2014

Directed Self-Placement (DSP) using multiple measures

Online preparation:

- ✓ a sequence of writing prompts
- ✓ reading/writing/language inventory
- ✓ information about HS GPA and SAT scores
- ✓ detailed information about the two courses/pathways available

On-site placement day:

- ✓ impromptu writing (scored by Writing Program faculty, plus review of online writings)
- ✓ Accuplacer
- ✓ focused, explicit advising

Semester 1: First-Year Composition 3 credits

or

First-Year Composition + Reading And Writing Process For College Composition 6 credits

- 84% of 6-credit students passed in their first semester.
- One year later, their average cumulative GPA was 2.92.
- 90% of 6-credit students ever completed their requirement.

Sample DSP materials (2014)

STEP 5: DIRECTED SELF-PLACEMENT RESULTS

The process of selecting how many First Year Composition credits you need relies on your willingness to take a careful look at where you stand, and to do some honest assessment of your own reading and writing experience. As you consider your options and make the best choice for you, these guidelines should be helpful:

- take the number of credits that best suits your needs: the correct placement will be the one that provides you the best opportunity to learn *and* the best opportunity to be successful
- selecting more credits than you need will place you in a class below your level; you will probably feel unchallenged and uninspired
- selecting fewer credits than you need will place you in a class for which you are not prepared; you may have a frustrating and disappointing experience
- reading and writing are foundational skills you will use throughout your academic career and beyond; choosing the right number of credits will help you build the most solid foundation.

With your Advisor's guidance, enter your results in the chart below and make a decision about which writing course or courses you will enroll in for your first semester:

	WRIT 101	WRIT 101 + WRIT 100
Step 1: IMPROMPTU WRITING SAMPLE ADVISORY SCORE		
Step 2: YOUR WRITING INVENTORY RESULTS FROM PAGE 6		
Step 3: YOUR UB WRITING COURSE SELECTION FROM PAGE 8		
Step 4: YOUR ACCUPLACER RECOMMENDED PLACEMENT SCORE FROM PAGE 9		
YOUR SELF-PLACEMENT		

Sample 6-Credit Class Plan

3 credit	6 credit
<p>Class 1: Basic definitions of discourse as a term; context for discourse communities. Discuss broad range of DC examples. Students will free-write what they currently understand about DCs: define, describe, give one example.</p> <p>HW: Read John Swales' "The Concept of Discourse Community;" and Elaine Chaika's "Discourse Routines." Bring typed responses to guiding questions.</p>	<p>Class 1: Teach annotation strategies. Discuss comprehension skills, strategies, and levels of annotation. Discuss reading environments; reflect on reading/environment challenges; problem-solve. Freewrite to explore more examples of DCs, academic, professional, and personal.</p>
<p>Class 2: Compile lists of similarities and differences between how these two authors define a DC. Small groups: Propose specific DC examples: work through/evaluate each example using Swales' terms.</p> <p>HW: Post a one-page reflection about this group experience in Sakai. Process peer feedback and incorporate it into their thinking about their proposed community.</p>	<p>Class 2: Review comprehension of Swales and Chaika; reflective freewrite on reading/environment strategies tried; focus on comprehension of key phrases using resources—share freewrite with small group. Discuss writing process strategies: begin drafting the HW reflection in class focusing on defining a selected DC.</p>
<p>Class 3: Identify two distinct DCs that they are involved in. Using matrix provided, compile a list of discursive characteristics for each DC. Groups: generate possible interview questions in groups.</p> <p>HW: compile interview questions and identify potential DC participants.</p>	<p>Class 3: Review DC terms/vocab. Reflect on writing process strategies tried. Read HW reflections in pairs: practice providing guided feedback following a script provided. Mock interview each other: follow up by discussing information gaps--generate ideas for places to search for information. Write plan for completing draft in time for Class 6.</p>
Classes 4 & 5: drafting, org strategies, citation tips	drafting strategies, citation/integration, feedback
<p>Class 6: Peer review of essay draft, focusing on clear organization, effective use of terminology, and relevant supporting details and examples.</p>	<p>Class 6: Guided peer review of essay draft following script. Follow up with discussion of writing process/environments; write revision plan including strategies for incorporating feedback.</p>

Sample #1 Guided Peer Feedback Script

Evidence/Effective and Adequate Support

1. Where is the most effective use of support in this draft? Explain why it is so effective.
2. Where is the least effective use of support in this draft? Suggest a strategy to make one specific improvement to a supporting point.
3. Identify at least four examples of different ways in which supporting evidence is used in this draft: for example, expert, quotation, paraphrase, example, definition.
4. How much explanation and analysis does the writer provide for expert evidence? Identify specific places where the reader may need more explanation and analysis.
5. What assumptions are made in this draft about what the reader knows or believes?
6. Note here one most effective use of attribution in this draft. Describe the strategy used in making this attribution so effective.
7. Note here one less effective or ineffective use of attribution in this draft. Explain what could be done to improve this attribution.
8. How does the writer provide citation for outside source material? Does the writer follow a specific documentation style? Which one? Is the citation method consistent throughout the document? What resources to help with citation can you recommend?

Reflective Freewrite:

On the back of your own workshop draft, describe how this workshop activity has informed your understanding of this assignment, and consider which two or three of the above guided feedback areas are most likely to be the focus of your own revising.

Sample #2 Guided Peer Feedback Script

Academic Discourse Terminology

1. How effectively is academic terminology, such as vocabulary from the assigned readings, used in this draft?
2. Identify a few key terms that are defined. Explain how useful each of those definitions might be for the reader.
3. Identify a few key terms that are left undefined or unexplained. Suggest a strategy for deciding when a term needs to be explained.
4. Note any acronyms or abbreviations used in this draft. *Typically, if a writer uses acronyms or abbreviations, they first appear in parentheses after spelling it out entirely once, like so: "This report examines the attitudes of University of Baltimore (UB) students."* Is there any place in the document where the writer could usefully add a description of acronyms or abbreviations? Is there any place where acronyms or abbreviations could make reading less cumbersome?
5. Note other terms that may stand out in some way, such as by use of italics, or by use of quotation marks without citation. *Are these quoted titles or information, or is the writer using them to distance him or herself from the implications of the terms quoted?* Suggest a strategy for incorporating key terms or tricky concepts into a writer's own argument.

Reflective Freewrite:

After discussing your feedback with your workshop partner, write down the terms that have given you the most difficulty in your own draft, and describe two strategies you will use to improve your use of those terms to help your next draft meet the expectations of an academic audience.

Sample DSP materials (2015)

STEP 1: COURSE INFORMATION AND DESCRIPTIONS

To complete your first-year writing requirement, you will select one of the two pathways available. The best path for you will depend on your own level of experience and skill with academic writing. The following descriptions are designed to help you understand what each option involves.

WRIT 101: College Composition

This course is designed to introduce you to college-level writing; it will give you a lot of practice in writing the kinds of documents you will create throughout college. The workload for this class is high, involving not only writing, but also reading and research. The reading load for this class is substantial: you will often be assigned to read three or four professional articles in one week. College-level articles can frequently be difficult, requiring that you take the time to read and re-read several times in order to fully grasp the meaning. This course also involves intense research assignments, in which you will be required to locate and select academic and professional articles from scholarly databases, read them thoroughly, and write about them. During the course, new reading strategies and research skills will be taught; you will be expected to apply those strategies quickly and effectively in your assignments, and you will be graded on how successfully you use those strategies in all your assignments.

There are several major assignments in this class. You will take the whole semester to draft, revise, and polish four major assignments for inclusion in your First-Year Composition Course Portfolio. One major assignment is a rhetorical analysis paper, in which you will write formal analysis of complex documents to describe and interpret their purpose, audience, context, persona, and tone. Another major assignment in this class is a report, in which you will gather and assess information from academic and professional sources. One more major assignment is a research paper, in which you will identify, research, and take a position on an important issue. The last major assignment is a reflection paper, in which you will detail your writing life over the course of this class and explain how you have met the learning outcomes of the class. Taken together, these four major assignments, along with early drafts and notes, will comprise your Course Portfolio: these written documents will determine the grade you earn in WRIT101.

WRIT101 is a good class for students who have a high level of confidence in their writing abilities. In order to have a chance of success in this course, you should feel prepared to take on complex writing assignments which incorporate a lot of scholarly reading and research. Students are generally successful in this class when they revise their documents several times; often, a student's best paper is the result of several peer reviews which are followed by substantial changes to the document. If you are someone who enjoys reading, who is familiar with scholarly research, and who has a lot of experience writing and revising long academic documents, then WRIT101 is probably a good class for you. If you are accustomed to sharing your rough drafts and making significant revisions to your writing based on feedback from peers, then you are likely to do well in this class. If you enjoy reading over your own work, and are comfortable revising and editing your own work without a lot of feedback from your instructor, then you have a good chance of being successful in this class.

How would you benefit from taking WRIT 101?

What questions do you have about WRIT 101?

WRIT 100: College Composition Co-Requisite

Students who would prefer a little more support with their reading, research, and writing also take WRIT 100: College Composition Co-Requisite, which is a 3-credit course to be taken along with WRIT 101. According to the UB Course Catalog, "this course helps students use reading, writing, discussion, and research for discovery, intellectual curiosity, and personal academic growth: students will work in collaborative groups to share, critique, and revise their reading and writing. This course also helps students learn to adopt and adapt recursive writing processes."

This course is designed to help you identify and practice strategies for college-level reading, research, and writing. For example, since revising your papers based on feedback is a strategy for success in academic writing, this course provides many opportunities to get feedback on your rough drafts, and offers support as you learn to improve your WRIT101 papers using effective strategies to revise your own work. Similarly, this course offers additional opportunities to read, discuss, and understand the WRIT101 assigned readings, and to get help as you move through the scholarly research process. All the activities in this class support your success in the major assignments for WRIT101: this course is structured like a writing studio where you have additional instructional time, with more feedback, to help you be successful in all the reading and writing you are doing in WRIT101.

If you do not have a high level of confidence about your ability to understand difficult articles, to complete scholarly research, or to write long academic papers, this course may work well for you. If you usually prefer to get a lot of guidance and assistance about your writing from your instructor, this is probably the best course for you. If you don't know many good strategies for revising your own work, or if you are someone who does not normally spend much time revising your own work based on feedback, we recommend you take this course.

How would you benefit from taking WRIT 100?

What questions do you have about WRIT 100?

CHECKPOINT #1

Based on what you know so far about First Year Composition at UB, which path do you think is best suited for you? *

You will be free later to change your decision.

- ☐ WRIT 101 (3 credits)
- ☐ WRIT 101 + WRIT 100 (6 credits)

Sample DSP materials

STEP 2: WRITING INVENTORY

On the following pages, you will answer questions about your attitudes, experiences, and habits with writing. It's important not to take much time to think about your answers with questions on inventories like this. It is better to answer each question with your first natural response – that's usually the most accurate answer.

WRITING INVENTORY: Area 1

What are your attitudes about writing?

	Mostly Yes	Mostly No	I don't know
Are you confident about your ability to write effective essays and reports?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If asked, could you describe your own writing processes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you comfortable identifying strengths and weaknesses of your drafts without feedback from your teacher?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you enjoy writing for school assignments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you write for reasons other than school assignments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

WRITING INVENTORY: Area 2

How much experience do you have with giving and getting feedback on your writing?

	Mostly Yes	Mostly No	I don't know
Are you comfortable receiving critical feedback on your writing, even if you don't necessarily agree with the feedback?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Mostly Yes	Mostly No	I don't know
Are you experienced in giving feedback to classmates about their writing projects?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you feel comfortable giving suggestions to classmates about how to improve their early drafts?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you generally comfortable working on a task collaboratively with a partner or a small group?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you think of yourself as an effective writer?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

WRITING INVENTORY: Area 3

What strategies do you use for generating drafts?

	Mostly Yes	Mostly No	I don't know
Do you have some strategies that help you find ways to outline your ideas or organize your writing?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can you generally find ways to relate your own ideas to the ideas of others?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you have research skills for locating and evaluating academic sources?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, do you trust yourself to think of good ideas to write about?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you have strategies for identifying the expectations of a particular audience?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

WRITING INVENTORY: Area 4

What strategies do you use for reading difficult texts?

	Mostly Yes	Mostly No	I don't know
Do you know some strategies for approaching very difficult readings so that you can understand them?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you often read for fun or relaxation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you normally have a clear understanding of the vocabulary used in school reading assignments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you normally have a clear understanding of the main point in school reading assignments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you generally able to remember what you have read by the time you get to class?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

WRITING INVENTORY: Area 5

What revision tactics do you use to improve your drafts?

	Mostly Yes	Mostly No	I don't know
Do you have experience in revising your writing after changing your mind about major things you wrote in your paper?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, are you comfortable looking for problems in your own reasoning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you normally expect to write more than one draft of a school assignment?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Mostly Yes	Mostly No	I don't know
Are you comfortable improving your own drafts without relying on feedback from your teacher?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you comfortable using suggestions from your teacher or another reader to improve your drafts?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

WRITING INVENTORY: Area 6

How effective are your writing skills in formal academic English?

	Mostly Yes	Mostly No	I don't know
Do you have much experience of writing in formal academic English?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you generally have a clear understanding of directions for writing assignments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you have strategies for identifying sentence-level errors in your own writing?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you have experience using editing resources such as a handbook, an online grammar guide, or a spelling checker?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can you generally make spelling and grammar corrections without relying on feedback from your teacher?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

CHECKPOINT 2: WRITING INVENTORY SUMMARY

You have completed the writing inventory portion of DSP. Next, you will make a preliminary decision about your placement based on what you have learned. You are not bound by this decision, and you will make a final decision on campus in consultation with your adviser.

Based on your experience with online DSP, which path sounds like the one which gives you the greatest chance of success?

This is not a final decision but will help you reach a decision.

- ☒ WRIT 101 (3 credits)
- ☒ WRIT 101 + WRIT 100 (6 credits)

What most influenced your decision based on the self-inventory you just took?

PLACEMENT DAY: IMPROMPTU WRITING PROMPT

Welcome to the UB campus! You have read information about the two options for composition at UB -- WRIT 101 (3 credits) or WRIT 101 + WRIT 100 (6 credits). You have also made some preliminary decisions about which course path you think is best for you. Now you will complete another piece of writing; review the checklist below to see what your readers—writing professors—will look for when they make a placement recommendation for you based on your DSP materials. Your writing should:

- ✓ Address the assignment task
- ✓ Provide support using relevant examples and/or details
- ✓ Display awareness of and purpose in communicating for an academic audience
- ✓ Display evidence of effective editing for mechanics, grammar, usage, and spelling.

WRITING PROMPT

What are your expectations for First Year Composition? Write a letter addressed to your future instructor in which you describe your expectations for the course: the workload, the expectations, the types of writing, and the reading.

Guided Peer Feedback: Workshop Script

The main purpose of UB's Directed Self-Placement materials is to help our first-time college students make an informed choice about the best FYC course(s) while comprehending the ramifications of this choice.

With your conference session partner, skim quickly through the Sample DSP materials (pages 6 to 12), and together choose just one section to review: select pages 6 and 7, pages 8 and 9, pages 10 and 11, or page 12 from this packet. Focusing on your selected section, collaborate to answer the following questions, using the spaces to keep brief notes.

1. What useful information does this section include? How much of the information is explicit, and how much implicit? How might that balance be improved in order to be as clear as possible to the reader?
2. What does the reader need to know in order to usefully apply the information in this section? What is clear or not yet clear? What needs to be added?
3. How does this section help the reader learn about, apply, or reflect on her/his rhetorical knowledge – the ability to analyze and act on understandings of audiences, purposes, and contexts in creating and comprehending texts?
4. How does this section help the reader learn about critical thinking – the ability to analyze a situation or text and make thoughtful decisions based on that analysis, through writing, reading, and research? How does it help the reader apply or reflect on that ability?
5. How does this section help the reader learn about writing processes – multiple strategies to approach and undertake writing and research? How does it help the reader apply or reflect on that ability?
6. How does this section help the reader learn about conventions – the formal and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct and appropriate, or incorrect and inappropriate, in a piece of writing? How does it help the reader apply or reflect on that knowledge or ability?
7. How does this section help the reader learn about composing in multiple environments – from traditional pen and paper to electronic technologies? How does it help the reader apply or reflect on that ability?
8. How might this section help inform your work as you consider writing placement at your own institution?

Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing

Executive Summary

The concept of “college readiness” is increasingly important in discussions about students’ preparation for postsecondary education.

This Framework describes the rhetorical and twenty-first-century skills as well as habits of mind and experiences that are critical for college success. Based in current research in writing and writing pedagogy, the Framework was written and reviewed by two- and four-year college and high school writing faculty nationwide and is endorsed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project.

Habits of mind refers to ways of approaching learning that are both intellectual and practical and that will support students’ success in a variety of fields and disciplines. The Framework identifies eight habits of mind essential for success in college writing:

- Curiosity – the desire to know more about the world.
- Openness – the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world.
- Engagement – a sense of investment and involvement in learning.
- Creativity – the ability to use novel approaches for generating, investigating, and representing ideas.
- Persistence – the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short- and long-term projects.
- Responsibility – the ability to take ownership of one’s actions and understand the consequences of those actions for oneself and others.
- Flexibility – the ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands.
- Metacognition – the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge.

The Framework then explains how teachers can foster these habits of mind through writing, reading, and critical analysis experiences. These experiences aim to develop students’

- Rhetorical knowledge – the ability to analyze and act on understandings of audiences, purposes, and contexts in creating and comprehending texts;
- Critical thinking – the ability to analyze a situation or text and make thoughtful decisions based on that analysis, through writing, reading, and research;
- Writing processes – multiple strategies to approach and undertake writing and research;
- Knowledge of conventions – the formal and informal guidelines that define what is considered to be correct and appropriate, or incorrect and inappropriate, in a piece of writing; and
- Ability to compose in multiple environments – from traditional pen and paper to electronic technologies.

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