

Department of Economics
Statement of Writing in the Major
May 24, 2005

The Economics Department strongly supports the Writing Committee's model of writing instruction in the new curriculum. We are committed to providing the appropriate kinds of information and advice that developing writers require throughout all levels of their coursework in economics. We understand that effective writing instruction is a gradual progression, and to be successful, it must be a responsibility shared by all members of the Department. It is our collective goal to graduate economics majors who can write clearly, concisely, and knowledgeably about economics so that they may communicate effectively in the various written formats in which economists exchange ideas.

100- Level Courses

At the introductory level, because of expected large class sizes, writing assignments will be short in length and usually analytical in nature. They may include: 1-2 page discussion papers, journal entries, newspaper article summaries, and essay exams. The writing instruction provided at this level may include: in-class discussion of assignments, in-class discussion of effective essay exam strategies, handouts of successful examples of newspaper review articles, and in-class discussion of papers being returned.

Large 200 & 300 Level Courses (more than 40 students)

Once again, large class sizes limit the amounts and types of writing that can be assigned for these courses. However, because of the more advanced knowledge of our students at this level, group research papers and critical types of writing, such as journal article critiques, may be introduced in these courses. Additional forms of writing support may now include: handouts that explain successful elements of a research paper, provision of a checklist for evaluation criteria, discussion of appropriate use of sources, and peer responses to early drafts.

Medium 200 & 300 Level Courses (20 – 40 students)

More manageable class sizes allow for new types of writing experiences to be included in these courses. Book reviews, mini- literature reviews, abstracts, regulatory case briefs, and individual research papers may be added to the written assignments in these courses. Further guidance to support these writing assignments may include: review of appropriate citation practice, extensive instructional comments in response to students' writing and instructional feedback from writing tutors.

Small 200 & 300- Level Courses (1 –20 students)

In our smallest, non-seminar, upper level courses, additional writing assignments may now include multi-draft assignments and greater use of informal writing. Individual conferences and instructor responses to students' un-graded informal writing may be used to provide additional feedback to students about their writing in these courses

400 -Level Courses

Senior seminars provide a capstone experience for our majors, with an extensive amount of writing being required for these courses. It is normally at this level that we first require students to assess evidence for and against a position and then to persuasively write a paper based upon their own position. At this stage students write short position statements, legal case briefs, and editorials based upon class-assigned readings. They also write a longer research position paper (including an outline and annotated bibliography) based upon their own library research. In addition to individual conferences the instructional support normally added for these courses includes multi-stage assignments and detailed instruction on citation practice.