



What assignments do university professors ask Nursing students to write?

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I'm new to the University of Alberta, having come from the University of Western Ontario where I was Director of the Program in Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. In my new position here I'll be working with faculty and students across the university as part of the Writing Across the Curriculum initiative. I will also be working with students and faculty in the Department of English and Film Studies.

I am the author, co-author, or editor of five books and 29 articles, including *Writing Instruction in Canadian Universities*. My current research interests include the development of doctoral student writing, writing assignments across disciplinary fields, and rhetorical approaches to text encoding. Currently I serve as co-Vice-President of the Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing (CASDW) and a member of the Executive Board of the Canadian

Recent presentations
This page contains links to pdfs of slides displayed at presentations I've given.

Books
This page displays the covers and descriptions of books I've authored, co-authored, or co-edited

Blog: Thinking About Writing
A new blog on writing-related issues

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~graves1/index.html>



Research questions

- What range of genres of writing assignments are Nursing students asked to write?
- Does this range vary over the 4 year program?
- Do these assignments get longer and more common in upper years of the program?
- How might instructors scaffold writing assignments within a course to help students achieve the course goals and develop their writing skills?



Canada: A primer

- No tradition of first-year composition; writing historically taught through the study of literature
- WAC programs that support faculty members are few and far between; WAC programs more commonly support students (“How to write a psychology paper” workshops for students)
- Disciplinary support for writing more common—not **across** the curriculum but **in** the discipline



WAC at U of A

- Faculty development, individually and in group workshops
- Classroom support for instructors in the disciplines: getting their students started on writing assignments
- Research: writing “inventories” to describe how departments use writing now (baseline data) and to inform discussions of how to expand, direct, or improve the use of writing for learning

Faculty of Nursing Writing Assignment Analysis



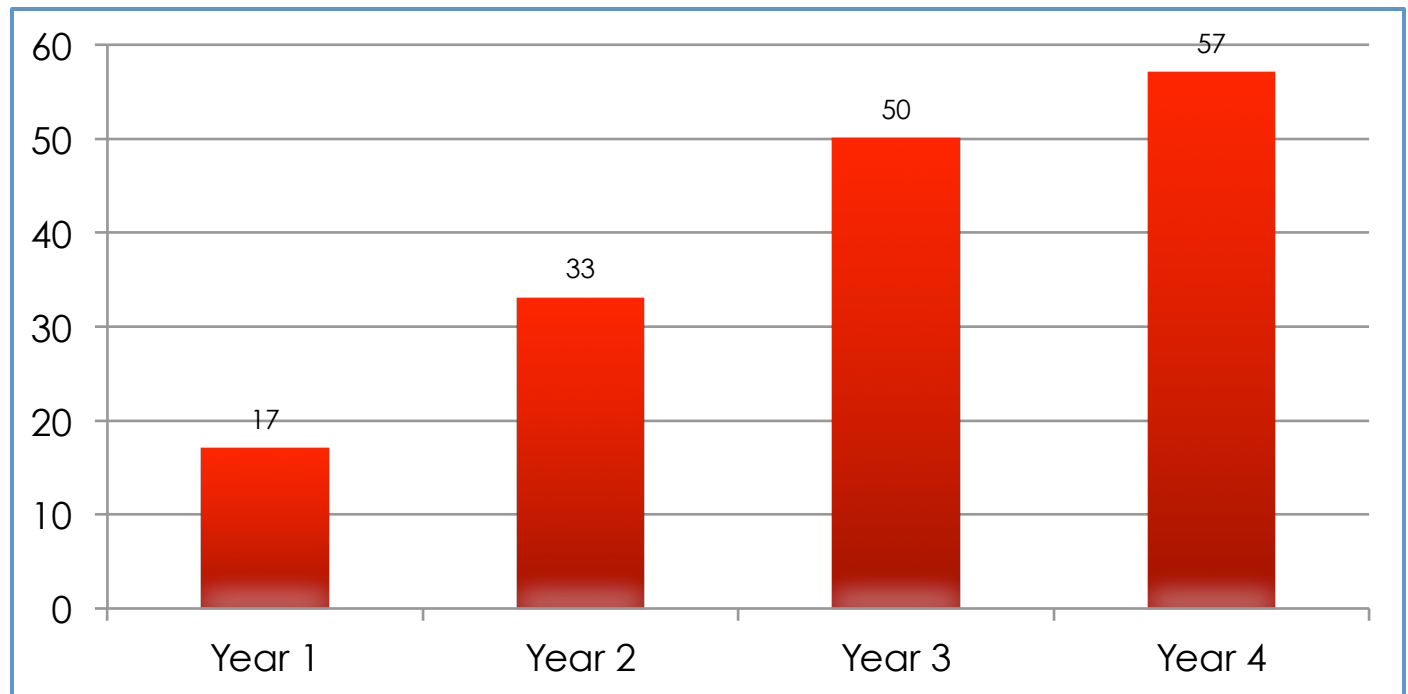
Analysis Overview

Number of courses analysed	42
Number of courses with writing assignments	36
Number of writing assignments	157
• writing assignments in Year 1	17
• writing assignments in Year 2	33
• writing assignments in Year 3	50
• writing assignments in Year 4	57

Courses not analysed: 192, 193, 292, 408, 410, 461, 492, 498, 499
Reason: no current syllabus provided



Number of writing assignments by year level



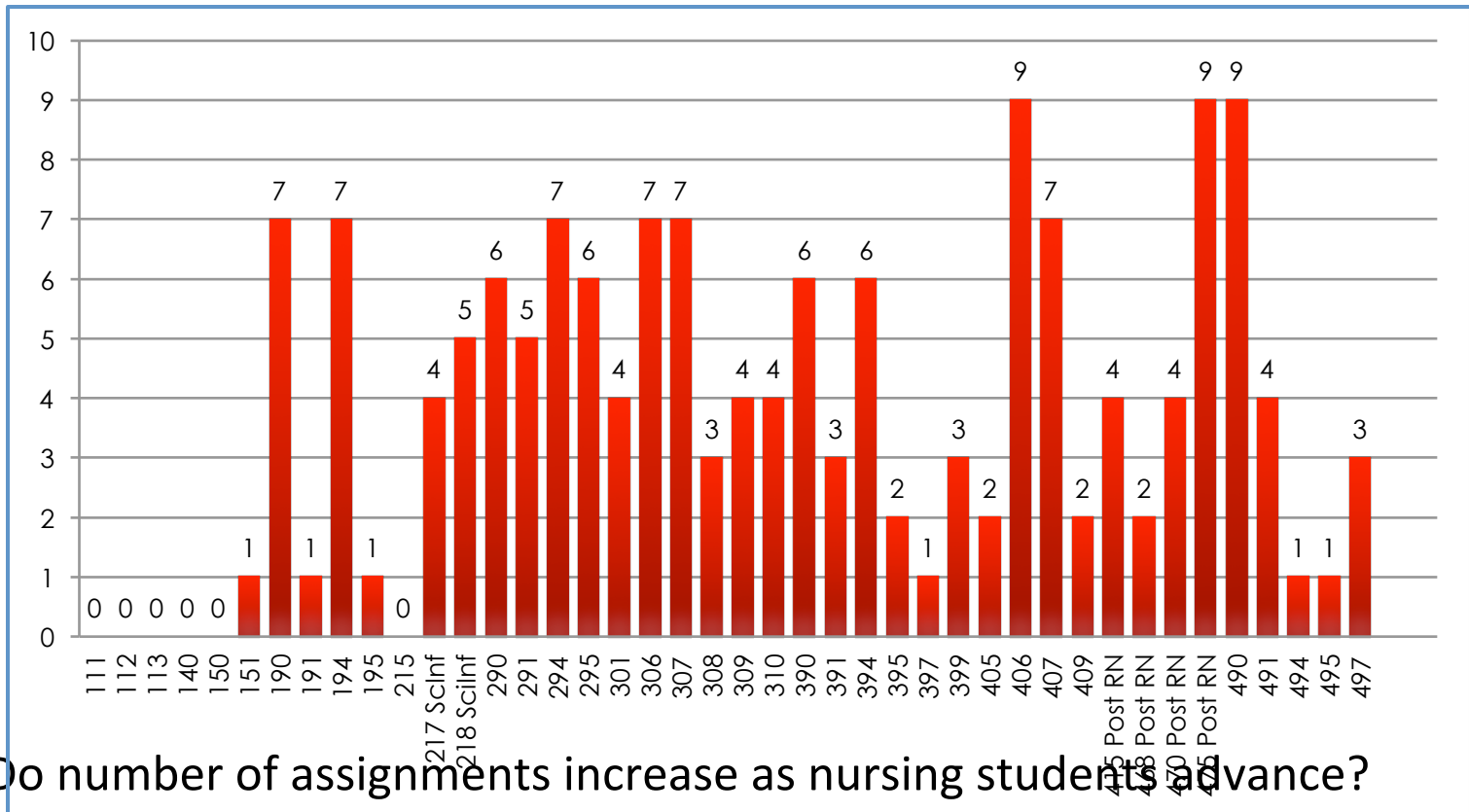


Number of courses with writing assignments

Year	%	Total number of courses (n=42)
1	50%	5 out of 10 courses
2	86%	6 out of 7 courses
3	100%	12 out of 12 courses
4	100%	13 out of 13 courses



Number of writing assignments per course



Do number of assignments increase as nursing students advance?

YES



Types of writing assignments

Types of Writing Assignments

Self Evaluation	38
Paper	29
Handout	17
Personal Goals	12
Journal	12
Report	12
Peer Evaluation	11
Group Email	11
Presentation	8
Outline	3
Annot. Biblio.	2
Proposal	1
Field Notes	1



Assignment type grouped by year level

Assignment	Total	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Self Evaluation	38	4	11	8	15
Paper	29	4	2	14	9
Handout	17	2	6	7	2
Personal Goals	12	2	2	5	3
Journal	12	0	3	4	5
Report	12	0	2	1	9
Peer Evaluation	11	2	2	4	3
Group Email	11	2	2	5	2
Presentation	8	1	2	2	3
Outline	3	0	0	0	3
Annot. Biblio.	2	0	1	0	1
Proposal	1	0	0	0	1
Field Notes	1	0	0	0	1
Totals	157	17	33	50	57



Nested writing assignments

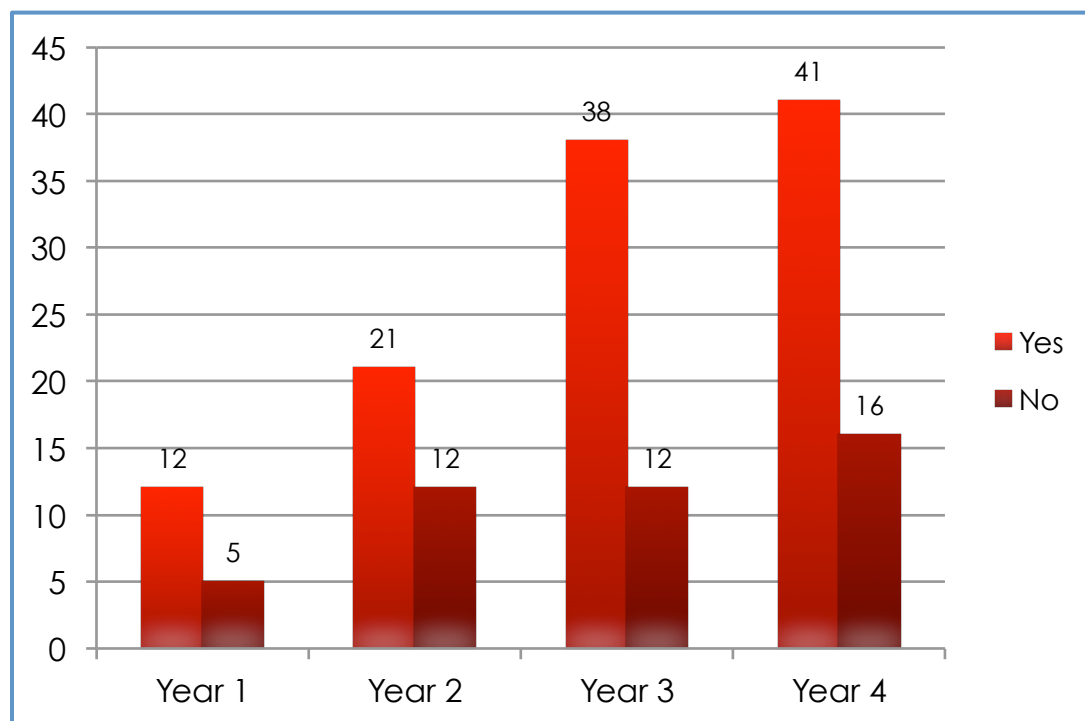
Nested 4	Total	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Yes	112	12	21	38	41
No	45	5	12	12	16

How many nested assignments are there in the nursing student's programme?

$$112 = 72\%$$



Nested writing assignments grouped by year level



Do assignments get progressively more nested as nursing student advance?

YES



Length of writing assignment grouped by year level

Do assignments get
longer as nursing
students advance?

*Writing assignments do
not get longer, but they
increase 400% between
Year 1 and 4*

Length	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
500	0	5	5	5
750	0	7	4	8
1000	4	3	2	13
1500	1	1	0	0
1750	0	0	4	1
2000	2	0	0	1
2250	0	0	0	3
2500	1	1	0	1
3250	0	0	0	1
3500	0	0	1	0
4500	0	0	1	0



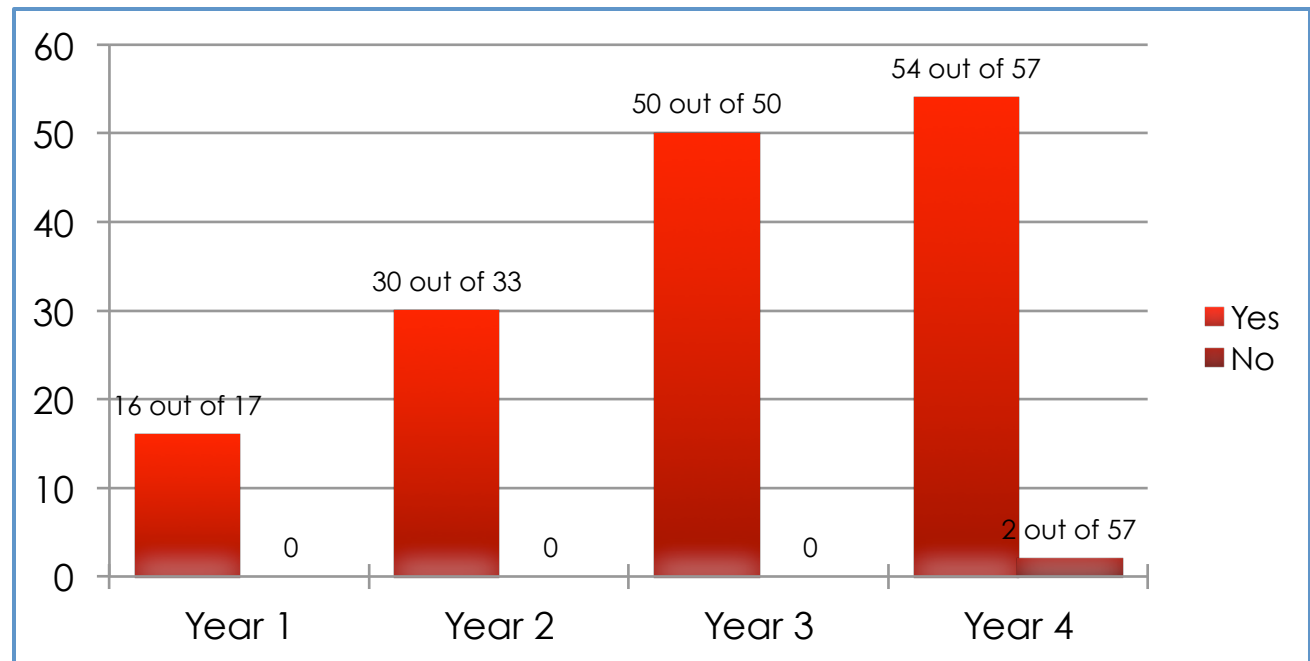
Audience of writing assignment grouped by year level

Who are the nursing students writing for?

The professor, marker, or peers

Audience	Total	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
In Class	149	16	27	50	56
Outside Class	1	0	0	0	1
No data	7	1	6	0	0

Feedback on writing assignments grouped by year level



Do nursing students get feedback early in their programme?

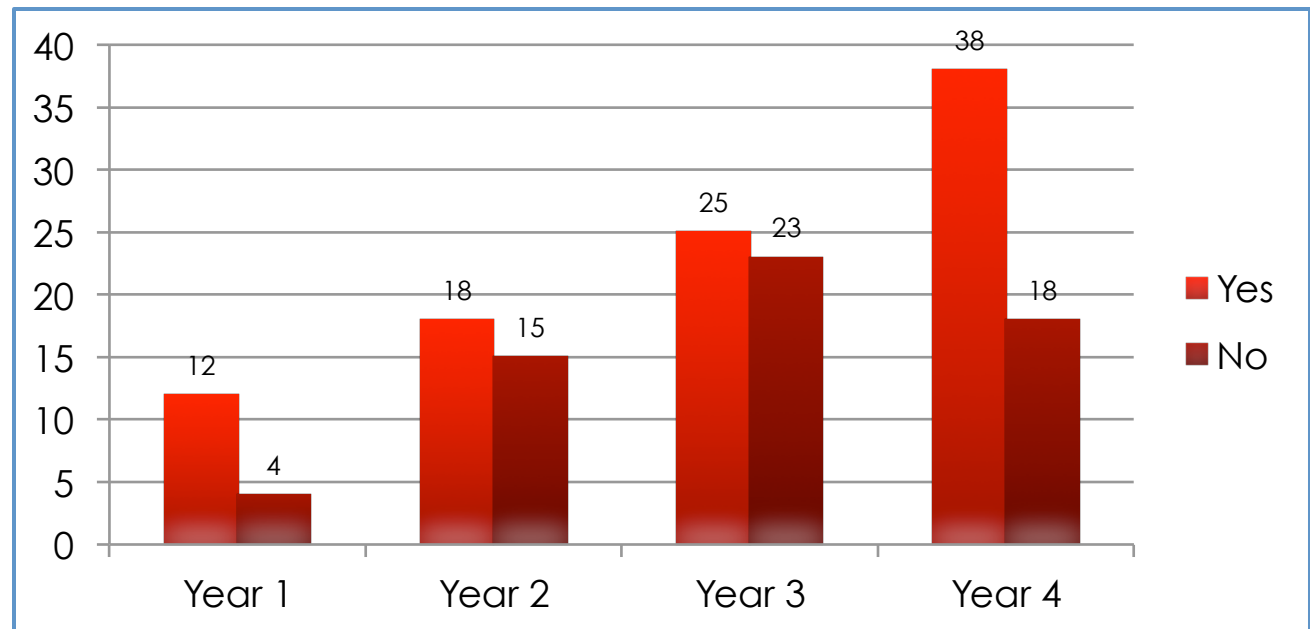
YES



Rubric for writing assignments grouped by year level

Are rubrics provided for nursing students throughout their programme?

60% of the time





Discussion questions

- What types of writing assignments facilitate student engagement and learning?
- How might instructors, departments, and faculties organize writing assignments over the course of a 4 year undergraduate program to help students develop their writing abilities? How might instructors scaffold writing assignments within a course to help students achieve the course goals and develop their writing skills?