

Writing throughout the curriculum Ontario

How much writing is assigned in undergraduate arts and social science courses?

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Objectives

- To list and describe the range of writing assignments that students are required to produce in a given discipline.
- To determine how the assignments for upper years differ from the assignments for the lower years.
- To determine:
 - faculty expectations of the writing skills of the students in each undergraduate year
 - the manner in which these expectations are revealed to the students.
- To determine the implications of these findings for teaching.

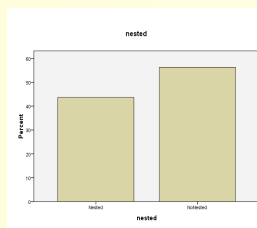
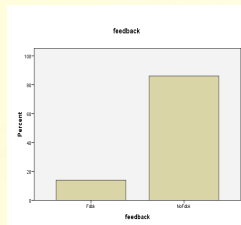
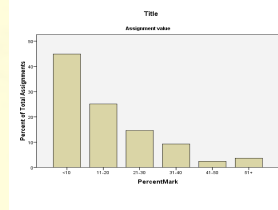
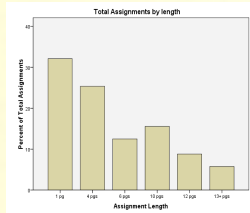
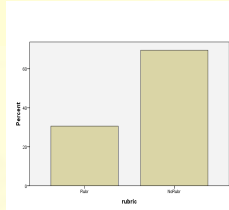
Assignments by Discipline

Department	Courses	Assignments	Assign/ Course
Philosophy	19	75	3.95
International and Comparative Studies	18	70	3.89
Interdisciplinary Studies	2	7	3.50
History	14	48	3.43
French	13	34	2.62
Management and Organizational Studies	7	16	2.29
Political Science	11	25	2.27
Religious Studies	4	9	2.25
English	24	51	2.13
Psychology	13	21	1.62
Chinese	11	17	1.55
Economics	20	25	1.25
Japanese	4	4	1.00
Hebrew	2	2	1.00
Mathematics	2	2	1.00

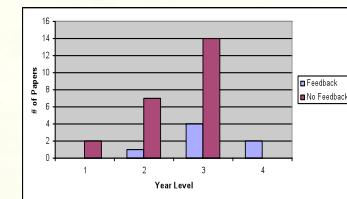
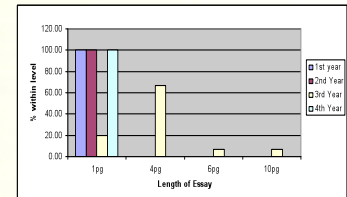
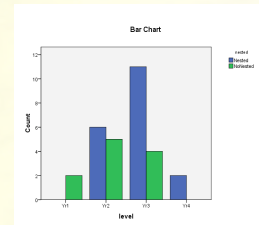
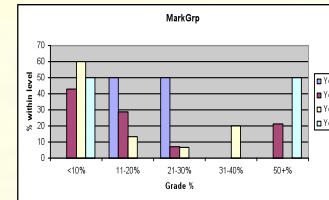
Assignments by Level

Level	# Courses	Assignments
Yr 1	28 (16%)	17%
Level 100	23 (13%)	9%
Yr 2	61 (34%)	34%
Yr 3	47 (26%)	28%
Yr 4	19 (11%)	12%

Overall Results



Case: Psychology



Implications



- 11-14% of university graduates have inadequate prose literacy
- http://www.td.com/community/literacy_matters_report.jsp

[S]tudent engagement with the subject matter being taught increases significantly when they are more frequently asked to write about that subject, particularly in courses in their junior and senior years.

Richard J. Light. "Writing and Students' Engagement" *Peer Review* 6.1 (Fall 2003): 28-31.

Discussion questions

- The length and weighting of assignments doesn't change significantly over the four years of the curriculum: should they?
- A wide variety of distinct genres confront students: How do we communicate clearly what we want students to write?
- Students in some disciplines write a lot: over 90 assignments in Philosophy. Other students write very little: to what extent is this a problem?