

ENGLISH 109 LEARNING OUTCOMES AND TEACHING GUIDE

**Composed by Dr. Frankie Condon, Chair,
Committee for the English Department's
Design and Implementation of the Math Initiative**

**Department of English Language and Literature
University of Waterloo**

Revised and updated: July 2015

ENGLISH 109 LEARNING OUTCOMES AND TEACHING GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Welcome to the teaching of ENGL 109: Introduction to Academic Writing. Many of you will be teaching this course for the first time. This guide is intended to give you support as you design your syllabus and assignments for your course. In addition to the guide, however, a variety of other teaching resources are available to you:

Please plan to attend the teaching orientation for the course that will be offered during the week preceding the start of classes in the fall. Dates, times, and locations will be forthcoming.

The Center for Teaching Excellence provides a variety of resources and programs for the University's faculty, instructors, and graduate students assigned to teaching assistantships or to independent teaching. The Faculty Liaison for Arts and Humanities is **Victoria Feth** (victoria.feth@uwaterloo.ca).

The English Department provides a Teaching Portal where you can access a variety of excellent resources. <https://uwaterloo.ca/english-teaching-portal/>

Professor Frankie Condon serves as your Departmental liaison for the teaching of ENGL 109 and may be reached by email at fcondon@uwaterloo.ca. Throughout the year, you will receive emails from Dr. Condon that include recent scholarship on best practices in the teaching of writing.

ABOUT ENGL 109

ENGL 109, Introduction to Academic Writing, provides students and their instructors to work closely together in a more personalized and collaborative environment than larger courses can afford. Capped at twenty-five students per section, you have the opportunity to get to know your students and to engage them in a highly interactive and dialogic learning experience.

This course provides you with an excellent opportunity to experiment with and/or hone student-centred teaching. By keeping lectures to a minimum and focusing on experiential and practice-based learning, past instructors of ENGL 109 have reported a renewed enjoyment of teaching and appreciation for student persistence, curiosity, and intellectual engagement with the work of academic writing.

Consistency in course requirements across sections of ENGL 109

You are welcome to design a syllabus for your section of ENGL 109 that both plays to your strengths as a teacher and seems to you to serve your students well. In addition to this Guide, you will be provided with a variety of sample syllabi on which you may choose to model your course or from which you are free to borrow.

Please do note, however, that we do seek some consistency across sections of this course and read the following information carefully.

Learning Outcomes for all sections of ENGL 109

The following learning outcomes have been developed by the English Department's Design and Implementation Committee for ENGL 109. Please include them in your syllabus and use them to guide you as you develop your course and assignments.

- To help you to think critically and communicate effectively
- To learn and practice a variety of strategies for inventing, drafting, and editing texts
- To learn and practice writing in a variety of academic genres
- To learn to read critically
- To learn to write persuasively by effectively employing elements of formal argumentation
- To help you give and receive useful feedback on writing for the purposes of revision
- To learn and practice communicating to a variety of academic audiences

Student Enrollment

You may have been assigned one of three different kinds of sections of ENGL 109. Some sections will be enrolled with students majoring in a math-related field. Others will be enrolled with students from Arts. Many sections, however, will be more traditionally enrolled with a mix of students from across the disciplines. If you don't know which sort of section you have been assigned, please contact Jenny Conroy.

Each section of ENGL 109 is capped at 25 students. This number already exceeds the enrollment cap recommended by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Do not allow students to enroll in your section over the cap. If you are approached by a student who wants or needs to enroll in ENGL 109, please refer them to Jenny Conroy in the English Department for assistance.

Students enrolled in all writing courses – particularly in the first year of study – are well served by the individualized instruction that is only possible when enrollment caps are in place. Because writing courses are labour-intensive for instructors, smaller class-sizes are imperative to maintain the quality of instruction.

The enrollment cap for ENGL 109 should ensure that you are able to design unique and challenging writing assignments and to provide meaningful feedback at multiple stages of each student's writing process.

Dedicated MATH Sections of ENGL 109

Each incoming Math student has participated in a process called Directed Self Placement. This is a web-supported decision-making process designed to help students choose a first year course in speaking or writing in which to enroll. Having answered a variety of questions about their strengths and challenges in spoken and written English and having composed a short reflective essay, students may choose from among the following courses:

ESL 101R Oral Communications for Academic Purposes

This course teaches the organizational, vocal, listening, and critical skills required for oral communications. It features intensive work on spoken English in all contexts, from conventional gambits to public speaking, including an emphasis on phonology and prosody to improve comprehensibility. Minimum of four hours of instruction each week.

ESL 102R Error Correction in Academic Writing

This course offers sentence-level instruction in grammar and idiom to teach students to produce, evaluate, and edit writing under time constraints. It emphasizes readability and error reduction in sentences and paragraphs. Minimum of five hours of instruction each week.

ESL 129R Written Academic English

This writing skills course provides instruction in grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, elements of composition and academic essay writing, including a focus on theme, development of central ideas, exposition and argumentation.

SPCOM 100 Interpersonal Communication

Focuses on the one-to-one, face-to-face communication in both the personal and professional realms. Such topics as verbal and non-verbal interactions, listening, and the better management of interpersonal communication will be studied.

SPCOM Public Speaking

Theory and practice of public speaking. A workshop course involving design and delivery of various kinds of speeches, and the development of organizational, vocal, listening and critical skills. Students will be videotaped.

ENGL 109 Introduction to Academic Writing

The course will explore a variety of issues in academic writing such as style, argument, and the presentation of information. Frequent written exercises will be required.

The DSP instrument was carefully designed to assist students in making the best choice among these courses. However, there may be a few students in your class who really would be better served and achieve greater success by taking another course (an ESL course, in particular). The reflective writing students completed during their DSP process will, we hope, be forwarded to you. These may be used alongside conversations with students and short in-class writing assignments to assist you and each of your students to determine whether they are in the right course.

However, not all students for whom English is a second (third or fourth) language need an ESL course. Many ESL students whose writing bears signs of second language usage are very well prepared for a first year writing course like ENGL 109. Please exercise care in referring students to other courses, particularly since students who move between courses can fall behind and never catch up on the work in their new class. Do trust the DSP process and help us minimize movement between courses after the start of term. If you feel you need to refer a student to another course, you may refer them back to the Math Advisors and/or contact me and I will assist you both.

Sections of ENGL 109 (Math) are capped at 25. We will not over-enroll these sections. Please do not give overrides to any student. Jenny, our undergraduate administrator, won't keep any wait-lists and won't over-ride any students either. If students want to enroll in 109, they need to do that online or through MATH advising. Our aim is to keep this movement to a minimum. We do not want students switching sections of ENGL 109. Please explain to your students that the demands of ENGL 109, regardless of section, begin on the first day of class. Students who move between sections and get behind in their work because of that move will find it extremely difficult to catch up.

BEST PRACTICES FOR TEACHING WRITING

Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing

The following CCCC Executive Statement may be helpful to you as you work on conceptualizing and crafting your section of ENGL 109. The statement may be read in full at <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/postsecondarywriting>.

Conference on College Composition and Communication January 2001, revised November 2009, reaffirmed November 2014

For the over 25 million students enrolled in America's colleges and universities, postsecondary writing instruction is critical for success in college and beyond. In writing courses, students gain experience analyzing expectations for writing held by different audiences and practice meeting those expectations. This experience contributes significantly to the development of productive writing practices and habits of mind that are critical for success in different contexts, including academic, workplace, and community settings.

For the many stakeholders working to meet the challenges of this enterprise—among them faculty, program directors, deans, and college and university administrators—this statement presents a distillation of principles for sound instruction in postsecondary writing. These principles extend from empirical research in the fields of English Language Arts and Composition and Rhetoric and from existing statements developed by the field's major organizations (including the Conference on College Composition and Communication, the National Council of Teachers of English, the Two Year College English Association, the Council of Writing Program Administrators, and the National Writing Project). They presume that sound writing instruction is provided by professionals with degree-based credentials in Writing Studies, Composition and Rhetoric, or related fields, or that have been provided with and/or have sought out professional development in this area. This particular statement is endorsed by CCCC (the largest professional organization representing two- and four-year writing instruction) and offers guiding principles and enabling conditions for sound writing instruction.

Guiding Principles. Sound Writing Instruction:

- emphasizes the rhetorical nature of writing;
- considers the needs of real audiences;
- recognizes writing as a social act;
- enables students to analyze and practice with a variety of genres;
- recognizes writing processes as iterative and complex;
- depends upon frequent, timely, and context-specific feedback from an experienced postsecondary instructor;
- emphasizes relationships between writing and technologies; and
- supports learning, engagement, and critical thinking in courses across the curriculum.

Enabling Conditions. Sound writing instruction:

- provides students with the support necessary to achieve their goals;
- extends from a knowledge of theories of writing (including, but not limited to, those theories developed in the field of composition and rhetoric);
- is provided by instructors with reasonable and equitable working conditions; and
- is assessed through a collaborative effort that focuses on student learning within and beyond writing courses.

Specific Principles for the Teaching of ENGL 109

The principles below, distilled from current research on writing pedagogy, apply to all sections of ENGL 109 at the University of Waterloo. Please attend to these specific guidelines as you develop your course.

Since the best way for students to learn about writing is to get a lot of practice, students enrolled in ENGL 109 should produce fifteen to twenty pages (4500-6000 words) of revised and polished prose over the course of each term. Individual instructors may determine the scope and length of individual writing assignments. For example, students may write several shorter assignments of varying length leading up to one or more extended compositions, or they may write a series of short writing assignments collectively equaling the page requirement for revised and polished prose.

To teach students about the complexities and rewards of the writing process, students should compose all extended writing assignments in multiple drafts, using feedback from either or both peers and instructors for the purposes of revision. Students should receive some form of feedback from instructors (oral or written) at least once during the composing process for every extended or formal writing assignment prior to final revision and grading. Instructors are urged to consider scaffolded assignments that build toward a culminating writing task (see guide below).

Students should be offered opportunities in and outside of class to write informally, in low-stakes contexts, for the purposes of both writing practice and writing to learn. Informal writing might include writing in preparation for class discussion, in-class writing warm-ups or prompt-based writing, or other forms of quick-writing.

Students should be given direct instruction in peer review and principles for giving useful feedback prior to peer review sessions or in-class workshops. By learning to be careful and thoughtful readers of each other's work, students can become more effective at revising their own writing and at analysing published writing. For example, students should be taught to provide both formative and summative feedback, to tailor the feedback they provide to the stage of the writing process at which feedback is offered, and to provide explanations for both formative and summative feedback (see guide below).

Teaching Multilingual Writers

The students in your section of ENGL 109 are likely to be linguistically as well as culturally diverse. During the teaching orientation and throughout the year, you will be provided with a variety of teaching resources to assist you in working effectively with students who are multilingual and/or whose home language is not English.

Attending to the linguistic and cultural needs of multilingual students is a critical responsibility for teachers of writing. What follows are some general principles for course design that is responsive to the needs of linguistically diverse student-writers. You may read more about the teaching of second language writers by following these links:

Teaching Second Language Writers and Writing:

<http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/secondlangwriting>

Students' Right to Their Own Language:

<http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Groups/CCCC/NewSRTOL.pdf>

Second Language Writing and Writers: General Principles

Please avoid topics for assignments that rely heavily on background information or culturally specific content that will not be covered in your course. You may choose to provide a range of assignment topics in order to provide your students with the ability to choose a topic that suits their needs, interests, and abilities.

Please ensure that your students are fully introduced to culturally specific concepts in writing such as argumentation, structure (organization as well as paragraphing) writing from research (including quotation, summary, and paraphrase), and the citing of sources.

Please ensure that your students have multiple opportunities to draft and revise and that they receive both peer and instructor feedback as they work toward polished drafts.

For all of your students, focus your initial feedback on matters related to content, to rhetorical matters associated with critical and research-based academic writing. To the extent that you provide feedback at the sentence level, please focus first on errors that really do impede the communication of meaning. Look for patterns of error in your students' writing and focus first on those patterns, rather than marking every instance of an error. Provide direct instruction to all of your students where you see patterns of error that are common in the writing of many or most of your students.

To the extent that you can, reserve time either during class or office hours to meet with students individually or in small groups. Give students time to ask you clarifying questions about assignments or about your feedback.

As you grade student writing, consider rewarding not only the quality of a final, polished draft, but also the degree to which students demonstrate learning (the accomplishment of the course learning objectives) and improvement. As you grade, take note of the effective rhetorical choices students have made rather than focusing exclusively on those choices you perceive to be in error or to be problematic.

GUIDE TO DESIGNING SCAFFOLDED ASSIGNMENTS

You may design assignments that seem to you to best serve the learning outcomes listed above and that align with the elements and principles above. Scaffolding assignments is a particularly effective teaching strategy. In this section, you will find an explanation of scaffolded assignments and how to design and teach them.

Scaffolding learning involves breaking complicated concepts down into smaller, manageable parts that gradually increase in complexity and providing support for students as they work through the assignment sequence.

The practice of scaffolding is supported by learning theory developed by Lev Vygotsky, founder of the school of cultural-historical psychology. Briefly, Vygotsky termed the mental region between what students already know and what they do not yet know at all the “zone of proximal development.” He demonstrated that student learning is most powerful when the work students are asked to do in and outside of class is designed to call them to this zone and is offered with structured support for learning.

Getting Started

To begin to build scaffolded assignment in a series, consider the prerequisite knowledge and skills required to complete the final or culminating task well. Design in-class discussions and mini-assignments to provide opportunities for students to strengthen, develop, and practice using their prior knowledge and skills as well as developing new knowledge and skills to build toward the crafting of a culminating assignment. As you design assignments that build on one another, map the relationship of each to the culminating assignment. Craft learning goals for each chunk that you can make available to students. They, too, should be able to see the relationship of each smaller task to the whole in service of accumulating meta-knowledge as they proceed through the sequence of assignments.

For Example: The Critical Essay

In order to write a five page critical essay students will need to understand the base text. You might build mini-assignments and in-class activities that help students learn to analyze a text for meaning and significance. You might ask students to gloss the text, identifying key terms and ideas, noting their meanings and significance to the text as a whole. You might ask students to paraphrase a key moment or concept in the text. You might ask students to summarize the key conclusions. In class, you might ask students to compare their work, discussing similarities and differences between their interpretations of the base text and describing to each other what textual clues they used to arrive at those interpretations.

You might provide students with models for the kind of critical essay you hope they will learn to write themselves. Spend time in class helping them not only to understand what that model says, but also how it is structured—its essential elements and key critical terms. Ask them to identify the primary thesis or predicative claims in the model. Ask them to draft one or more statements about their own base text that assert a relationship between two or more of its elements and that make a critical or

interpretive claim. Give students class time to debate their statements, identifying the strengths and arguable points of those statements with their classmates and exploring how each might lead readers to expect or require certain kinds of pursuant claims and supports in order to be convinced or to arrive with the writer at a desired conclusion.

Give students opportunities to draft and workshop their essays, to receive feedback in class from their peers, and, either in writing or in individual conferences, from you. Ask them to use that feedback to revise their essays. Take some time in class to teach students to recognize the difference between summative (this is good/bad) feedback and formative feedback that helps writers recognize how their drafts are working, where they are not working, and why for the purposes of revision.

Marking Scaffolded Assignments

There is no single way to go about marking scaffolded assignments. You may choose to offer a final grade for the collection of assignments, with each element constituting a certain percentage of that final grade. If you offer students not one, but several moderately sized series of scaffolded assignments, you might ask students to collect their work into a final course portfolio, assigning each scaffolded series of assignments a percentage of the portfolio grade and each element of each series a weight within the percentage value of that series. You might choose to mark each element separately. Be sure that you attach grade weights to scaffolded elements that reflect without over determining the complexity of each successive task. You might choose to include some ungraded informal assignments as part of your scaffolding. Be sure you address these through class discussion, in workshops, or through the provision of feedback so that students understand their value and usefulness to the process of producing a completed larger assignment. Students will want to know how well their work is measuring up as they move from task to task. You might choose to offer students “ghost grades” or provisional grades with feedback, giving them opportunities to revise prior to submission for a final grade.

As you mark, return to the learning outcomes you have established for the course as a whole as well as to the learning goals you have articulated for each scaffolded element. Use those outcomes and goals as measures of the quality of each student’s work. If you are grading by criteria that fall outside of those articulated outcomes and goals, be sure you have spelled those out for students in your assignment description. Err on the side of being too explicit rather than what you might think of as “commonsense.”

GUIDE TO GIVING FEEDBACK ON WRITING

Providing feedback on your students' writing is an essential component of teaching writing. Feedback during the writing process allows you to teach your students how to be effective writers because it offers them a chance to put your suggestions into practice immediately as they revise. In contrast to feedback on a final assignment, which research indicates many students don't even read, feedback on drafts allows students to do something with your ideas and suggestions.

Managing Feedback and Marking

Generally speaking, students are unlikely to use (or arguably to even read) extensive feedback offered at the time of final grading. Frontload your labour in producing feedback to student writing so that you are providing formative feedback during the time students are actually composing and revising their essays.

Tailor your formative feedback to the stage of the composing process where students actually are. For example, don't spend significant amounts of time correcting sentence level errors on essays that are likely to be significantly revised. Such errors may, in fact, be more an affect of students working out ideas than a symptom of lack of grammatical knowledge. Focus your most significant feedback on what students are saying, on the structure of their arguments, on the warrants underlying their claims and on the quality, integrity, and organization of claims and supports. Peers may offer formative feedback during in-class workshops. You may choose to meet individually with students for short conferences and provide oral feedback as a substitute for written feedback at one stage during the composing process. Individual conferences can help you and your students build effective learning relationships, provide opportunities for give and take dialogues rather than top-down, mastery-based feedback, and can give students who learn better through talking than reading teacher comments access to usable forms of feedback more directly tailored to their individual learning needs.

Explain to your students in class why copyediting prior to publication or submission for grading is critical to their success as writers and teach them how to do it. When you do comment on sentence level errors, notice that typically a single student will make one or two errors over and over. Note those errors where they first occur. Explain why they are errors and how to correct them at that first point of occurrence. Give a model of a corrected version of the sentence where the error first occurs. In following occurrences, simply mark the error and refer to your previous note rather than explaining or correcting the same error-type repeatedly. Don't, in other words, copyedit student papers as part of either your formative or summative feedback delivery.

At the point of final marking, focus your summative feedback on what students did well and those aspects of their writing craft on which they should continue to work. Use the language of your established learning goals for the assignment to provide summative feedback that connects the grade you assign to the course learning outcomes.

The following categories may be helpful to you in developing your own feedback on student writing. You might also choose to print and distribute this table for your students as they prepare for peer writing workshops in your class.

Feedback Type	Definition	Timing
<i>Silence</i>	Listening to a writer narrate her aims, ideas, challenges, conclusions without interruption or intervention [non-evaluative]	Early in the writing process, particularly during brainstorming and conceptualization of theses and key arguments
<i>Say-back</i>	Paraphrasing or summarizing for a writer (“I hear you arguing that ...”) [non-evaluative]	Early in the writing process as writers work out their ideas; Also, after a complete draft has been composed, when writers are testing what they think they’ve written against what a reader might receive from their text
<i>Movie of the mind</i>	Narrating, for the writer, the experience of reading their draft (when you wrote that xxx, I expected that yyy. The claim that followed surprised me ...”) [non-evaluative]	As the writer prepares to revise. This form of feedback helps writers move from writer-based prose to reader-based prose
<i>Skeleton-finding</i>	Narrating for the writer the primary and supporting claims of a text, the evidence, and warrants—the skeleton upon which the argument of a text is formed [primarily non-evaluative, but may make visible gaps or flaws in reasoning]	Useful both early and midway through the composing process, as writers conceptualize their arguments and frame them for a reader in a full draft
<i>Organization</i>	Helping a writer discern whether and how well their chosen organizational scheme works for or against the persuasiveness of their argument; guidance in glossing paragraphs for both internal coherence and overall logical progression [evaluative and non-evaluative]	Middle to late in the composing process, as writers revise and before they become too committed to any particular order of ideas, claims, or supports
<i>Problematizing</i>	Pointing to gaps or absences in reasoning or evidence, to unacknowledged prior research, or to unimagined scenarios or possibilities—to that for which the primary argument may not account [evaluative and non-evaluative]	In the middle of the composing process as writers draft a complete argument or in response to a full draft. This form of feedback should <i>never</i> be offered early in the writing process, as writers are forming ideas or conceptualizing, but only as they work toward refining their argument
Feedback Type	Definition	Timing
<i>Critique</i>	Narrating for a writer what	At the conclusion of the writing

	works and doesn't work in their text and why. [evaluative]	process as part of the evaluative process
<i>Reading aloud</i>	Listening to and reading along with a writer reading aloud— helping writers become conscious of the moments when they correct for error automatically, marking with the writer sections of text that need to be addressed for the purposes of correctness [non-evaluative and evaluative]	Late in the composing process as the writer prepares a polished, final version of the text for submission or publication
<i>Identifying patterns of error</i>	Helping writers to recognize where they are making the same grammatical error repeatedly within the same text, to understand the rule or established practice they have been violating, as well as how to address that pattern and correct their text [non-evaluative and evaluative]	Late in the composing process as the writer prepares a polished, final version of the text for submission or publication
<i>Pointing or error spotting</i>	Helping writers to recognize where they may have failed to complete an in-text edit or made a sentence level error [non-evaluative and evaluative]	Late in the revision process as the writer prepares a polished, final version of the text for submission or publication
<i>Copyediting</i>	A skill to be taught rather than a form of feedback	Copyediting may be used in very select circumstances to model the correct or understandable version of a sentence, but should be used very sparingly and never as a substitute for more richly formative feedback

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Centre for Teaching Excellence: Information for Instructors (see especially course outline requirements):
<https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/support-faculty-and-staff>
- Department of English: Teaching Portal:
<https://uwaterloo.ca/english-teaching-portal/>
- University of Waterloo Writing Centre:
<https://uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre/>
- Library Liaison for Department of English: Nancy Collins
Ext. 32446
Email: ncollins@uwaterloo.ca
- Conference on College Composition and Communication Position Statements:
<http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions>