Writing across the curriculum

Assisting international students in writing successfully in the disciplines
What might be new/challenging for international students?

- **Expectations of assignments**
  - Meanings of directives (analyze, discuss, evaluate, etc.)
  - Appropriate framing of theses/controlling ideas
  - What constitutes appropriate/effective supporting evidence in different disciplines/genres
  - Expectations regarding language accuracy/mechanics

- **Organizational structures of genres across disciplines**
  - Observational report, lab report, critical review, comparative review, etc. – often very different from secondary and first-year composition writing

- **Writing conventions**
  - Identifying organizational features via headers, other signals
  - Citation conventions
Cultures of Learning: What is good academic writing?

Valuing Written Accents: International Voices in the U.S. Academy (George Mason Univ.)

See this document for international students’ commentaries on the following.

• Role of writer’s opinion
• Critical thinking
• Use of others’ Ideas
• Argument structure
• Style
One example of cultural difference: Role of the writers’ opinion

- **Sandarshi**

  What’s good writing here can be completely nonsense in my country …. If I take an essay that an American student wrote and show it to a professor in my home country, they would say “what is this? This is not academic writing. This is someone’s personal view? I don’t care what that person’s personal view is. This is not what I have taught.”

- (From *Valuing Written Accents: International Voices in the U.S. Academy*)
Suggestions for creating and evaluating assignments

• Provide explicit instructions for assignments
• Colorado State Writing Studio Guide
  • Questions for design and evaluation
• Offer models/examples of well-written assignments done by other students
• If a specific genre of writing is important to your course, provide an annotated example:
Sample annotated paper

- Econometrics Paper
Building in process

- Break up an assignment into stages or steps that can be evaluated during the quarter (e.g., a proposal, a thesis, a draft prior to final paper)
- Encourage students to write a zero draft to generate ideas – a draft only they will see.
- Identify students who may need to improve their writing and let them know what areas are problematic; refer them to appropriate resources (e.g., CLAS, internet resources)
- Identify issues of potential plagiarism; show writers how to paraphrase and cite sources (perhaps in TA sections if part of the course)
Rubrics for guidance and evaluation

- Rubrics included with assignment directives can provide a checklist for students as they draft and revise.
- The same or similar rubrics can be used for evaluating submitted writing assignments.
Assessment of source use

Plakans & Gebril (2015)
Responding to language issues

• Simply telling students to get help with grammar will not help the student on the next writing assignment.
• Giving feedback on papers: respond to unclear expression as a reader rather than as a grammarian; make a note on what the passage leads you to wonder (e.g., “Do you mean…?” rather than “Unclear” or “awkward”)
• Discuss language issues with students in office hours
  • As a reader, I can’t clearly see the connections and relationships between these points – some transitions would help here.
  • As a reader, I’m having trouble understanding this section because the time being expressed isn’t always clear. Could you check your verb tenses?

From C. Holten Working with Bilingual Writers, Challenges & Opportunities
Writing from Sources: Multiple challenges

- **Linguistic strategies**, namely paraphrasing and referencing;

- **Rhetorical issues** such as knowing how to incorporate, build on and critique other’s work;

- **Disciplinary knowledge** – knowing what is ‘general’ knowledge and therefore does not need referencing;

- **Identity**, developing an academic voice, finding or simulating an authoritative voice with which to critique others;

- **Cultural values** assumptions about ownership of knowledge.

Anna Magyar (2009), from Schmitt (2016)
Promoting Academic Honesty

• As mentioned earlier, have students submit parts of larger papers in parts or stages for review rather than “one-shot” paper submissions.
• Require students to submit the preliminary materials (proposal, drafts, working bibliography) with the final paper.
• Limit choice of topics; don’t allow last minute substitutions of topics without discussing reasons/preparation
• Schedule classroom sessions (TA sections?) on research process; have students bring work-in-progress
• Invite specialist librarians to class to show students how to conduct research in your field, using specific examples.
Promoting Academic Honesty

- Try to get an in-class writing sample from students so that you know what their writing looks like without “assistance.” Tell them you will have this writing sample on file.
- Make clear to students the limits of what is appropriate help from tutors, friends, editors, proofreaders, translators. Show examples of appropriate, inappropriate help.
- Provide guidelines or resources about citation conventions.
Promoting Academic Honesty

- Offer class time/TA sections for showing students how to integrate text from source materials, what constitutes appropriate vs. inappropriate paraphrase and how to cite sources appropriately.

- If you suspect plagiarism:
  - Ask the student to discuss with you the process of writing the paper—developing ideas, refining the language.
  - Ask the student to explain key concepts without access to the paper itself.

Suggestions adapted from Stanley, 2015
## Promoting Academic Honesty

### Use of sources and referencing: (max = 30)

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<th>8-10</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Paraphrasing, Summarizing, Quoting, in-text referencing and bibliography</strong></td>
<td>A considerable amount of material may be copied from the source texts.</td>
<td>Paraphrasing and summarising are attempted, but may be unacceptably close to the original source text, although not copied verbatim. There may be some limited copying from the source texts which is not cited as a direct quote, nor would be appropriate as a direct quotation. Direct quotation may be over-used or poorly handled. In-text citation is used, but there are a number of problems with formatting and/or mechanics. A bibliography on a separate page is provided but it has many problems.</td>
<td>Paraphrasing and summarising are well executed in most cases. There are only limited instances where citations are too close to source texts. Direct quotes, where used, are well chosen and are appropriate in most cases. Most of the sources referred to in the essay are acknowledged in the text. In-text citation is used appropriately, but a few problems with formatting and/or mechanics. A bibliography on a separate page is provided with only occasional problems.</td>
<td>Paraphrasing and summarizing are well executed throughout the essay. Direct quotes, where used, are well chosen and used appropriately. All sources referred to in the essay are correctly acknowledged in the text. In-text citation is used appropriately. There may be the occasional proofreading error. There is a completely accurate bibliography written on a separate page.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Selection of evidence from sources</strong></td>
<td>Very little or almost no evidence from the sources is used to support the argument.</td>
<td>The essay may be overly reliant on evidence from 1 or 2 source texts. The evidence selected may not always support the argument. The evidence may not be well synthesised.</td>
<td>Evidence has been selected from several different source texts. This is relevant in most cases and generally supports the argument. The evidence is fairly well synthesised.</td>
<td>Relevant evidence which supports the argument has been selected from a wide range of source texts. This evidence is well synthesised.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Selection of additional sources</strong></td>
<td>No additional sources are used. Possible plagiarism.</td>
<td>Additional sources are used, but they are not academically or topically appropriate.</td>
<td>Additional sources are used, these are mostly appropriate to the task. They may not contribute substantially to the argument.</td>
<td>Additional sources are used which demonstrate wide reading and careful selection for the task.</td>
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Sources and Acknowledgements

Econometrics sample paper:  

Valuing Written Accents: International Voices in the U.S. Academy, George Mason University,  
http://writtenaccents.gmu.edu/


WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) Clearinghouse  http://wac.colostate.edu/

Thanks to UC Berkeley College Writing Programs colleagues Michelle Baptiste, Maggie Sokolik and Margi Wald for many of the suggestions (gleaned from UCB workshop presentations for faculty on working with multilingual and international students )
Questions? Comments? Please feel free to contact me.

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