
OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
WRITING COMPETENCY

Definition of Competency:

The [mission](#) of Old Dominion University requires that “[e]very Old Dominion undergraduate student follow a general education program that is designed to develop the intellectual skills of critical thinking and problem solving and to encompass the breadth of understanding needed for personal growth and achievement and for responsible citizenship.”

In addition, Objective 1.3 of the [Old Dominion University Strategic Plan: 2000-05](#), states that the University will “[c]ontinue to offer a high-quality general education curriculum to all undergraduate degree-seeking students and assess the general education program for quality and effectiveness . . . by monitor[ing] the general education requirements implemented in 1998 to review their effectiveness.”

All undergraduate students, who are completing baccalaureate degree programs at Old Dominion University, are required to demonstrate that they can write competently in an academic/professional setting prior to the conferral of the degrees. Passing the Exit Examination of Writing Proficiency (EEWP) is a University graduation requirement that has been in place since 1980.

Students must demonstrate their writing competency by passing the EEWP. To complete the requirement, students write an essay that reflects critical thinking on a complex topic and a maturity of expression, including a varied syntax and vocabulary appropriate to the task. The essay will be reasonably free from mechanical errors.

Standards for Competency:

Specific competencies include the ability to write an essay that includes the following components:

1. A clearly stated objective
2. Ability to present supporting evidence
3. Clarity in sentence structure and word choice
4. Logical consistency
5. Reasonable freedom from mechanical errors

Overall competency is demonstrated by a score of at least three (3) – Satisfactory – on each of the five essay criteria listed above. The scoring values used for these criteria are 4 = Very Good; 3 = Satisfactory; 2 = Unsatisfactory; and 1 = Poor.

Description of Methodology Used to Gather Evidence of Competency:

Old Dominion's measure of writing competency is the pass rate on the EEWP. The EEWP is a three-hour proctored essay examination. When students register for the EEWP, they are provided with a list of topics for the examination. They choose two topics from this list. Different sets of topics are used for different examination dates. There are three general topics and two topics from a list for the colleges. Students choose their two topics two to four weeks in advance of their scheduled test date. From the two, the student then chooses the topic he or she wishes to address in the essay.

The EEWP is given eleven times per calendar year, on the third Saturday of every month except December. Students may take the EEWP as many times as necessary in order to achieve a passing score.

Two trained evaluators evaluate every essay examination. They use "[Evaluation of the Exit Examination of Writing Proficiency](#)" as the guide for their grading. In the event of disagreement on whether the student has achieved passing scores on all of the criteria, the examination is sent to a third evaluator.

Students are informed by the University's Writing Center whether they have passed the EEWP. The Center also provides information on opportunities for obtaining assistance with improving writing skills for those who did not achieve the necessary passing grade.

The writing competency rate for Old Dominion will be reported annually in June and is defined as the percentage of all senior undergraduate students who applied for graduation at the previous August, December and May commencements and passed the EEWP.

	Number taking EEWP	Percent
N, % pass	2,782	93.8%
N, % unacceptable	183	6.2%
Total	2,965	100.0%

Summary: (75 words) (Provide brief analysis of results)

As demonstrated by the 93.8% pass rate for academic year 2001, Old Dominion University's writing curriculum is highly effective in preparing graduates to be competent writers. It should also be noted that the remaining 6.2% are advised to improve their writing skills and retake the EEWP, as all students are required to pass the exam as a graduation requirement. Thus all recipients of undergraduate degrees from Old Dominion are considered competent with regard to writing.