

## The BSU Core Writing Requirement & Placement Essay

During orientation, you will register for your first semester of classes which will include your Core Writing Requirement. In order to fulfill the Core Writing Requirement, most students at BSU take either ENGL 101 or ENGL 101E Writing Rhetorically in their first semester, followed by ENGL 102 Writing Rhetorically with Sources in their second semester. Some students place out of ENGL 101 or 101E entirely and move directly into ENGL 102.

You are placed in one of those three courses based on your SAT Verbal scores, High School GPA, and your writing on the placement essay that you will take. That placement essay will be read and evaluated for placement purposes by the writing faculty teaching ENGL 101, 101E, and 102.

## Preparing to take the Placement Essay

By writing the strongest essay you can write for the placement essay, you help to insure correct placement in your first year writing class.

To help you to be as prepared as possible to do your best work, we are including a number of documents here:

1. A copy of a previous writing prompt on the value of a liberal arts education.
2. Three sample student placement essays with commentary. The commentary comes from the faculty evaluating the placement exams and indicates why a particular essay received a particular placement.
3. Course descriptions for ENGL101, 101E & 102.
4. Learning outcomes for ENGL101, 101E & 102.

## Advice for writing your placement essay

- Read the sample placement essays with placement explanations prior to reading this year's prompt.
- Read the prompt carefully, as well as the source material that is included with the prompt question.
- Spend some time planning your response.
- As you plan, consider carefully how you will **use the sources** given to you **as you construct your argument** and how you will balance using your personal experience with using information from the sources **to prove a thesis or main idea**.
- Take the time to revise as necessary, and remember to spell-check and edit your work before submitting it.

**This is not a timed test. You can take as long as you need to plan, draft, and revise your essay before you submit it.**

**\* ONCE YOU SUBMIT YOUR ESSAY THROUGH THE ONLINE SYSTEM YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE CHANGES TO YOUR ESSAY. \***

### ***The Placement Essay & Academic Integrity***

The University has as strict academic integrity policy that all students, including incoming students are expected to abide by. You can read it [here](#). Students who are found to have plagiarized any part of their placement essay will be subject to the policy and brought before the disciplinary board. Additionally, since the placement essay is designed to place you in the course that will help you be a successful student and writer at the university, it is in your best interest that the essay you submit is your own, and only your own, work.

### ***What your readers will look for as they evaluate your essay***

The questions surrounding this topic are complex with no right or wrong answers. A satisfactory essay should BE of sufficient length to develop a central idea or a thesis in response to the prompt that serves as a main argument for your essay. Ideas in the essay should be organized into logical paragraphs which include specific details that come from the sources included with the prompt. Although there may be some errors, most sentences in the essay should be clearly written. Remember, though, that content is more important than error-free sentences. Though there is no specific wordcount requirement for the placement essays, most successful essays are 500 words or more.

We want writers to do the following:

- **Make a central claim** in direct response to the question the prompt asks;
- **Provide supporting reasons and evidence from the sources provided** as well as your own personal experience;
- Display competence in the **organization of your argument**;

Display competence in **sentence variety, paragraph development, and language usage**.

## **Writing Proficiency Essay 2015 Bridgewater State University**

### ***What You Should Know about the Writing Proficiency Essay***

The English professors who will read your essay want you to do as well as you possibly can, and, therefore, want to provide you with information about what we will look for in a successful essay.

A satisfactory essay should develop a central idea in response to the prompt that serves as a main argument for your essay. Ideas in the essay should be organized into logical paragraphs which include specific details that come from the reading included with the prompt. Although there may be some errors, most sentences in the essay should be clearly written. Remember, though, that content is more important than error-free sentences or perfect handwriting. Don't waste time copying your essay over. You may, however, want to write only on every other line, leaving room for some revision.

You will have an hour to complete your essay. After you've read the prompt carefully, spend 5-10 minutes planning your response. You may want to make a quick outline on the inside cover of your blue book. Save time to read over your writing before handing your essay in.

***What your readers will look for as they evaluate your essay:***

The questions surrounding this topic are complex with no right or wrong answers.

We want writers to do the following:

- Make a central claim about the topic;
- Provide supporting reasons and evidence from the sources provided for all claims;
- Recognize the complexities of this topic, addressing more than one of them;
- Display competence in logical development and organization;
- Display competence in sentence variety, paragraph development, and usage.

As an incoming student to Bridgewater State University, you, like most college students across the country, will be required to take a number of introductory courses in a wide range of academic fields in addition to the classes you will take in your major; you might take courses in English or Mathematics, Biology or Art, History, Sociology, Anthropology, or Political Science, just to name a few. These courses make up what is called a liberal arts education. In a college career that requires 120 credit hours to graduate, roughly 1/3 or 45 credit hours of your education will be in the liberal arts. Currently, there is national debate on the value of a liberal arts education. We are asking you to weigh in on that debate. **Make an argument about the contribution or value of a liberal arts education as part of your overall college education and qualifications for a future career.** To help you form an opinion and develop an argument, read the following statements from educators and policy-makers. You should use this material as evidence to prove your argument as you write.

- “A degree does not guarantee . . . a good job anymore. . . .Yet old-guard academic leaders are still clinging to the status quo -- and loudly insisting that a four-year liberal arts degree is a worthy investment in every young American's future. We keep telling young Americans that a bachelor's degree in history is as valuable as, say, a chemical engineering degree -- but it's just not true anymore. All degrees are not created equal. And if we . . . maintain this narrow-minded approach, then we are not just failing young indebted Americans and their families. We are harming the long-term vitality of our economy.”

**From Scott Gerber, Founder of the Young Entrepreneur Council, co-founder of Gen Y Capital Partners, “How Liberal Arts Colleges Are Failing America” *The Atlantic* 9.24.2012**

- “Unfortunately, demands for a more efficient, practical college education are likely to lead to the opposite: men and women who are trained for yesterday's problems and yesterday's jobs, men and women who have not reflected on their own lives in ways that allow them to tap into their capacities for innovation and for making meaning out of their experience. Under the guise of "practicality" we are really hearing calls for conformity, calls for conventional thinking that will impoverish our economic, cultural and personal lives.”

**From Michael S. Roth, PhD, Professor of History and the Humanities and President of Wesleyan University, “Declaring Our Independence Through Education” *Huffpost College* 7.03.2014**

- “Employers recognize capacities that cut across majors as critical to a candidate’s potential for career success, and they view these skills as more important than a student’s choice of undergraduate major. Nearly all those surveyed (93%) agree, ‘a candidate’s demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than a student’s undergraduate major’.”

**From *It Takes More Than A Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success*, a survey of US Employers conducted by Hart Research Associates for the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AACU), 2013**

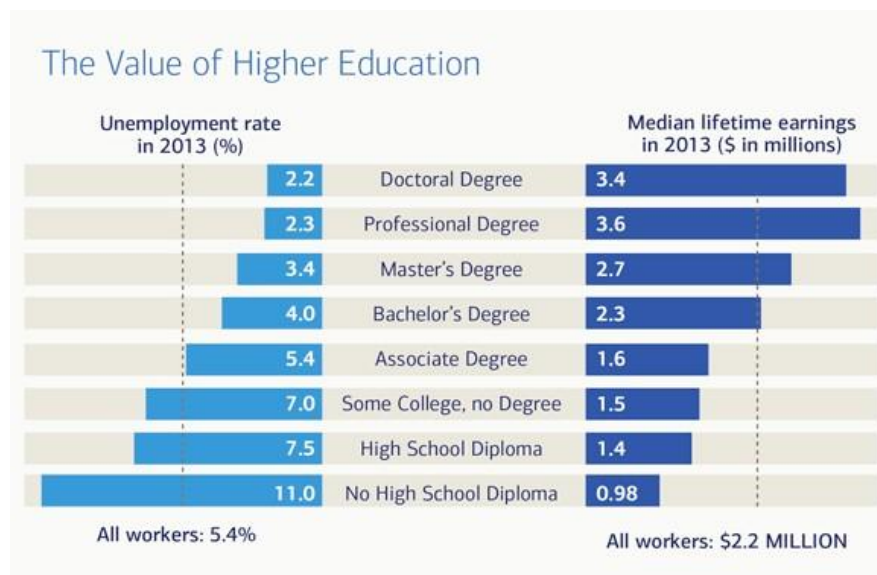
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- “Talent can come in so many different forms and be built in so many nontraditional ways today, hiring officers have to be alive to every one — besides brand-name colleges. Because [according to Lazlo Block, CEO of Google] “when you look at people who don’t go to school and make their way in the world, those are exceptional human beings. And we should do everything we can to find those people.” Too many colleges, he added, “don’t deliver on what they promise. You generate a ton of debt, you don’t learn the most useful things for your life. It’s [just] an extended adolescence.”

From Thomas L. Friedman, Columnist for The New York Times, “How To Get A Job at Google” *The New York Times* 2.22. 2014.

- The ways of thinking and communicating that literature, history, philosophy, and science teach us make us better able to understand and to change the world around us. As [Matthew Arnold] put it, they give us "increased sympathy" and an ability to act out of disinterestedness (a lack of self-interest) instead of "doing as one likes." It's a good prescription for trying to make sense of the complexities of the Middle East or climate change or Ebola, or any of the challenges we . . . are likely to face in our lifetimes.

From Paula Krebs, PhD, Dean of the School of Humanities at Bridgewater State University “Ferguson and the Liberal Arts” *Vitae* 12.02.2014



Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 24, 2014

**Sample Placement Essay:**  
***SAMPLE 102 PLACEMENT***

Online school has become the new normal over the past year. Since the pandemic, students from elementary school to college have been forced to adapt to virtual classes. For some, this might be a dream come true, but for others, it's their worst nightmare. School is meant for more than just learning new material; it's also the growth of students' social skills and the introduction of real-world problems. The drawbacks of online schooling will make these skills challenging to improve, especially in early education. This shift to online education will impact the gap between those getting a better quality education and those who aren't.

Although some might argue making the transfer to online school will be cheaper, it doesn't seem to be true. Colleges are not dropping the prices for those who are choosing to attend school online. Derek Newton in Forbes points out that "In fact, many online programs cost more than their on campus, in-person counterparts." If you are not someone with lots of self-motivation and drive to get work done, online school might be a struggle for you. That would be a decision that is not worth the risk for the same amount of money to take an in-person course. It is very easy to get into bad habits and become less engaged when you are in your own home. Being in a classroom with classmates to share ideas with and a teacher's help with just a hand raise gives students a better education.

Some courses online are set up to teach with independent work and self-taught lessons. In cases like this, you are most likely expected to learn the material on your own. This might be a reasonable option for those students who are self-driven and have the technology resources. Peter C. Herman for Inside Higher Ed explains the downfall of this system by sharing what his students complained: "It's like paying tuition to watch YouTube videos." Although you can learn at your own pace and anywhere you want, you are paying for an education you could probably find off of a free video online. This system is also based off of an honors system, and students might be getting degrees for courses they could have found answers to online.

The economy today is volatile. The economic gap is increasingly more significant between classes. Some families are much more technically advanced in resources than others. This might have not been such an eye-opening issue until online schooling started to become more popular. The gap between those who do not have access to these devices and those who do will become more of an issue when those who do not fall even further behind because now those devices are a key to education also. A report by the United Nations Conference of Trade and Development claimed that "This situation has significant development implications that cannot be ignored. We need to ensure that we do not leave those who are less digitally equipped further behind in a post-

coronavirus world.” Those who cannot afford new technology to fit the education requirements will become a more significant problem down the road when the gap in education between the different classes is more apparent.

Although some restrictions are being lifted, the pandemic and online education options don't seem to be disappearing any time soon. It is much safer to be learning from home to prevent more outbreaks and the spread of corona-virus. With that being said, when this pandemic ends, so should learning entirely online. Many students, even those who are driven, have become lazy with this option of online schooling. Continuing these ways of learning after the pandemic will risk that students are not leaning to their full potential or even cheating their way through classes. It will also be an issue when families given resources and technology because of this pandemic no longer have access after all the borrowed technology is taken away. Although we have the technology and knowledge to make online classes an option, the education system needs in-person classes to give everyone a fair chance to learn at their full potential. It is understandable for some classes to become online courses, but students should not be taking all courses online. The social aspect of school will also be affected if this is the case. Online education will start a ripple effect of many other issues.

**Why this is a ENGL 102 placement:**

This student responds to the prompt they were asked to respond to—how does a shift to online education affect the knowledge gap? Does it increase or decrease it? This student has a clear thesis. This student uses that thesis to carefully organize the paper. This student incorporates the sources provided in ways that support her argument— they do not simply shove them in to the essay wherever and the quotes do not overwhelm her own argument. Finally, this students sentences are easily understood and relatively error free.

**Sample Placement Essay:**  
***SAMPLE 101 PLACEMENT***

The Coronavirus pandemic has forced us to adapt to new methods of going about our daily lives. Things such as masks and curbside pickup are examples of new things we had to get used to as a society. One of the most drastic changes to routine life was the change in schooling from being in person to almost entirely remote and online. It is estimated that 1 in 4 college students in 2021 is taking at least one class remotely. Such a big change to the learning and teaching environment is difficult for students and educators to adapt to. The remote learning style has its pros and cons, but is overall creating an environment where some students may not have as high quality of a learning experience as other people.

Switching to online classes was a big change in routine for almost all students. Sitting at home or in a dorm room while doing school online is a lot different than physically being in the classroom with other students and having the professor teach in front of you for you to be able to absorb the information presently. Some may say that online class feels less productive and that it does not really feel like actual school. It is far easier to get distracted doing something other than school during class time at home than it is to be distracted with other things to do in the classroom. The classroom environment gives students no other choice but to be present and engaged with the material, which unfortunately is not the case with online learning. It is inevitable that a college student bored in online class on their computer will open other tabs to be distracted with things such as social media and online shopping. This shows that a student doing school remotely has a higher chance of not being as engaged as they would be in a physical classroom setting.

Another thing to take into account when regarding online learning is the fact that some students may be at an unfair disadvantage. It is not a guarantee that every student will have the devices, technology, and internet access to be able to keep up with online school at the same rate as their peers who do have that sort of technological advantage. It should be up to the schools to be able to provide students that may not have the ability to participate in class and their academic work with the tools and materials necessary to do so.

As a student with a learning disability, I find that I always do my very best when I am present in class sitting up front with my undivided attention on the teacher. However, online class does not have that same present feeling. I do not feel as connected to the teacher than if I was in the classroom. I cannot help but sympathize with my fellow students with learning disabilities because online class is not always providing those students who need extra help with the resources and tools they need to be as successful as they can be.



With the severity of the Coronavirus seeming to simmer down with rapid vaccination and partial re-opening of schools and businesses, I can only hope that schooling can return to some form of normality with in-person learning making a comeback. Some students and educators may admire the simplicity aspect of remote learning, but as someone who cares about getting the best education they possibly can I strongly am in favor of less remote learning and more in-person work. Schools should be giving their students the best teaching methods they can to be setting up their students for success. Online school may have its positive aspects, but overall it is detrimental to the learning process.

**Why this is a ENGL 101 placement:**

This student responds to the prompt they were asked to respond to—how does a shift to online education affect the knowledge gap? Does it increase or decrease it? This student has a thesis that responds to the prompt; however, the rest of the essay mostly talks about whether or not they liked online education, which is not their thesis. This student did not use any of the sources to make their argument and relies mostly on their own experience. While using the sources does not guarantee placement in ENGL 102, choosing not to use them will automatically mean you will not be placed in ENGL 102. While the sentences are fairly informal, they are still clear and easy to understand.

## Sample Placement Essay:

### ***SAMPLE 101E PLACEMENT***

I will be writing to you about the difficulties, rewards, experience, all what I learned from challenges. I will start with the difficulties. The one major difficulty for most people is eating. You must keep your weight minimal or you shouldn't even show up. What you learn from this is discipline. The second is fear with anxiety. You may want this actually before a match. You get scared and prepare better. Your anxiety gives you speak and strength when you get on the mat. This teaches you how to use your weakness.

The last difficulty is physical pain and endurance. The best way to deal with it is to ignore it. Your mind is whats telling you it hurts and you need to stop. Tell it to ignore it and over time it will. This teaches you the more important thing which is you can do anything if you believe you can. Those are some of the Difficulties and lessons you learn from wrestling.

The rewards you experience are great. The greatest reward is self greatness. When you train and win you feel accomplished. You also have respect from your team and coach. It feels like you have some power. The last reward is the body. You get a great body from it and you feel great. Girls will often give you attention for having it. Those are some of the rewards of wrestling.

Over all high school wrestling is a great way to improve yourself. I have learned many skill and discipline from it. I have changed my life because of it. There will always be difficulties but you will always get something out of it. That is what I have to discuss on my activity.

#### **Why this is a ENGL 101E placement:**

This student does not address the question in the prompt. There is no thesis, thus, the organization in the paper is hard to follow. This is the biggest reason for a 101E placement. This student does not use any of the sources included with the prompt. The student has trouble with writing complete sentences which sometimes makes it hard to understand what they are writing about.

## Sample Placement Essay:

### Course Descriptions & Learning Outcomes:

***ENGL 101/ENGL 101E Writing Rhetorically and ENGL 102 Writing Rhetorically with Sources***

#### **ENGL 101/101E\* - Writing Rhetorically**

(3 credits)

Prerequisite: First-Year Writing Placement Exam or consent of Academic Achievement Center

By intensive practice in composing persuasive texts, writers explore various techniques for discovering, developing and organizing ideas in relation to rhetorical context. Special attention is given to developing an effective writing process and an awareness of the relationships among text, audience and purpose. Meets the Core Writing Requirement.

\*Corequisite: Students enrolled in ENGL 101E must also enroll in the corequisite course ENGL 144.

#### **ENGL 144 - Academic Strategies Colloquium**

(1 credit)

Prerequisite: First-Year Writing Placement Exam or consent of Academic Achievement Center Corequisite: ENGL 101E

Under faculty supervision, students acquire strategies such as reading texts, developing thesis into argument and integrating opinion into argument, which will enhance their success in the corequisite course. Successful completion of ENGL 144 requires successful completion of the corequisite ENGL101E.

#### **ENGL 102 - Writing Rhetorically with Sources**

(3 credits)

Prerequisite: ENGL 101 or placement test

Continuing to develop knowledge of persuasive writing and rhetoric, the writer learns and practices various approaches to conducting research and to integrating the ideas of others into one's own text. Emphasis is on writing longer and more substantive texts that incorporate a variety of sources. Meets the Core Writing Requirement.

## English Department Course Outcomes

### English 101/English 101E: Writing Rhetorically

In this course, students will

- Develop rhetorical awareness by understanding how to analyze the purpose and audience for specific writing situations and use this analysis to guide their writing and reading.
- Formulate a focused, arguable thesis and support this thesis in an effectively organized essay with evidence drawn from class readings, class discussions, and their knowledge and experience.
- Approach writing as a recursive process which involves inventing, composing, revising and editing.
- Compose in a voice appropriate for the genre, goals, and target audience.
- Critically read and respond to a variety of texts, including published texts, their peers' texts, and their own texts.
- Use technology to write, revise, and deliver documents.
- Demonstrate facility in using the conventions of Standard Written English, including the conventions of sentence structure, usage, and punctuation.

### English 102: Writing Rhetorically with Sources

In this course, students will

- Continue to grow as a writer and reader in relation to the ENGL 101 outcomes.
- Become familiar with conducting research through the use of electronic academic research tools, such as Maxwell Library's online catalogue and electronic research databases.
- Locate both primary and secondary source materials and evaluate their credibility.
- Approach research as a recursive process, consisting of a series of tentative hypotheses that are then tested and affirmed or revised.
- Effectively integrate secondary sources into their own texts, using an appropriate citation style, while demonstrating a clear awareness of the relationship of these sources to the writer's central point and a clear distinction between the ideas and language of the writer and those of the sources.