

**Old Dominion University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)**  
**Improving Disciplinary Writing**  
**Executive Summary**

Contact: Worth Pickering, Assistant Vice President for Assessment, [jpickeri@odu.edu](mailto:jpickeri@odu.edu)

Old Dominion University's (ODU) Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is intended to improve upper-division undergraduate students' disciplinary writing – that is, writing that demonstrates a reasoning process supported by research and reflection on a problem, topic or issue – through two faculty development and engagement initiatives. Writing is a critical skill that goes beyond demonstrating proficiency with the mechanics and structure of writing *per se*. Writing is a means to communicate what has been learned.

Skill in writing is demonstrated by six student learning outcomes that will be assessed through evaluation of written artifacts. Students will be able to:

- Clearly state a focused problem, question, or topic appropriate for the purpose of the task
- Identify relevant knowledge and credible sources
- Synthesize information and multiple viewpoints related to the problem, question, or topic
- Apply appropriate research methods or theoretical framework to the problem, question, or topic
- Formulate conclusions that are logically tied to inquiry findings and consider applications, limitations, and implications, and
- Reflect on or evaluate what was learned.

ODU intends to improve students' disciplinary writing skills through the implementation of two faculty initiatives: (1) Faculty Workshops designed to teach faculty the techniques identified as the best practices to teach and assess writing, and (2) Action Projects designed to encourage academic programs to develop and implement best practices to improve writing.

ODU's QEP emerged from analysis of the University's institutional effectiveness data, and from campus and community-wide conversations with faculty, staff, students, alumni and employers. Both sources support the choice of writing as the focus of ODU's QEP. In addition, the QEP Team took other actions to seek input and maximize interest and involvement across the campus. The Team reviewed the general education assessment data, especially the data on writing; solicited ideas from the community; established an informational website; conducted presentations, and organized events. As a result, the QEP Team found that while all graduates must pass the University's Exit Examination of Writing Proficiency, faculty surveys and discussions in all Colleges revealed that faculty remained unsatisfied with students' writing skills.

Progress towards achieving the QEP goal and meeting student learning outcomes will be assessed by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (IRA), working with the QEP Director, using the QEP Writing Rubric, national surveys of students and faculty, and ODU surveys and focus groups of faculty and programs participating in the QEP. The QEP Director will compile an Annual QEP Report that analyzes the assessment data and will allow the QEP Director and Advisory Board to fine tune the QEP as needed to assure progress towards meeting the goal and learning outcomes.

In order to manage implementation of the plan and assure sufficient support for all QEP activities, the Provost will appoint the Advisory Board, appoint a QEP Director who will report to the Vice Provost of Faculty and Program Development, and establish an office that will manage all QEP-related activities. The University has allocated over \$2.9 million in new, base-budgeted, and in-kind resources to support implementation of its QEP.