

Writing Skills in the School of Information

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Have you referred students to Pratt's Writing Center?

Students who work with writing center produce better papers, but often I am not in the loop when any of my students chose to use help from a writing center

I teach at Pratt Manhattan and assumed that the Writing Center is in Brooklyn and not easy for students to access. if that's not the case, maybe better outreach would help?

I learnt of the writing center last semester but am not yet familiar with the policies and procedure around referring students to it. This survey has reminded me to do so, thanks.

This is great to know that Pratt has a writing center!

I told the class about it, but since we're in Manhattan and don't have a dedicated resource in person, I doubt they've utilized it virtually. I did reach out to the writing center to ask about a real person and they offered to do a presentation about it to my class, but it was later in the semester so it felt too late for me. I've considered having them join the first class for 15 minutes next semester!

Part 3: Students' Writing Skills

Based on what you've observed, which of these writing activities do students struggle with the most?

In your opinion, when you think about most students in your School of Information classes, how would you describe your impression of their writing skills?

What are the biggest challenges or problems you see in students' writing?

Detailed Statements about Writing Skills

Acknowledgements

Project Overview

Goals

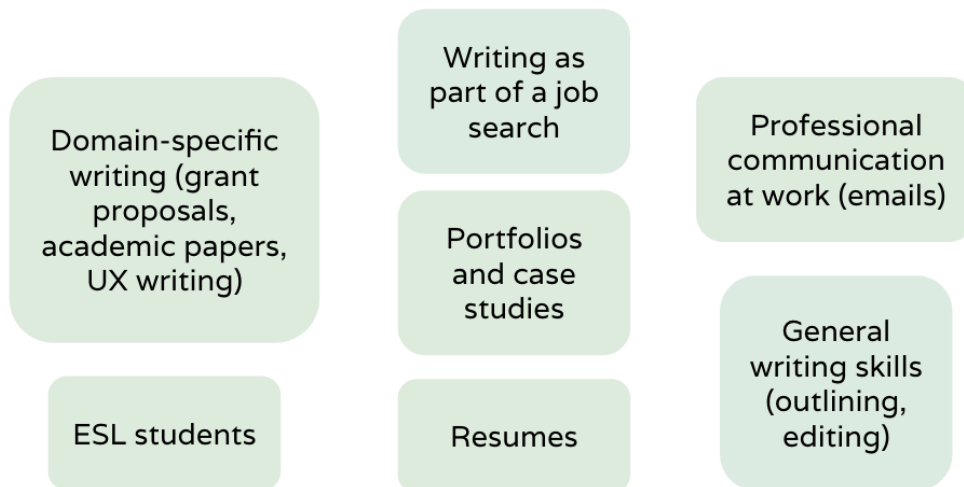
This project takes stock of the “writing skill ecosystem” of students in the School of Information to learn more about:

- How students perceive their writing skills
- How faculty members perceive student writing skills
- What resources students currently have at their disposal
- What additional resources might help students advance their skills

To explore some of these questions, I created two surveys (one for faculty, one for students). I aimed to uncover any problems that students face in their writing, and identify fruitful areas to provide more support.

Origins of the project

I’m a visiting assistant professor in the School of Information, and in 2021, I submitted a proposal to the School of Information curriculum committee that eventually became a course called “Writing for Digital Experiences”. The proposal sparked useful discussion around what role this course should fulfill. As we discussed these questions, I started to tease apart a few threads. Writing shows up in many places, and students might need support in different areas like these:



This project became a way to explore these questions and take a snapshot of how School of Information students were doing with writing.

Survey design

Student survey

[View \(or take\) an example survey here.](#)

To create the student survey, I worked with two instructional designers who helped me work through the challenges of asking students to evaluate their own writing skills.

The resulting survey contained single-select, multi-select, and open-ended questions about students' writing backgrounds and skills. Most questions offered an option for students to compose their own responses and leave open-ended feedback. All questions were optional.

Student survey details:

- 34 questions
- Of these, 15 are statements that students evaluated on a Likert scale
- Emailed to student population twice, on April 27 and Sept. 27, 2023
- 51 total respondents

Faculty survey

[View \(or take\) an example survey here.](#)

To create the faculty survey, I mirrored the student version and made adjustments so it aligned with the faculty perspective. This allowed me to compare similar parts of the survey to look for alignment or a differential.

Faculty survey details:

- 26 questions
- Of these, 12 are statements that faculty evaluated on a Likert scale
- Emailed to faculty on Oct. 8, 2023
- 17 total respondents

On Oct. 6, 2023, I shared preliminary findings at a CTL Faculty Spotlight session. I created a FigJam board with notes on Pratt's overall writing ecosystem, and participants contributed ideas and insights. [See FigJam board here.](#)

Quick Results

Students - 51 respondents

- **Language diversity:** Pratt's SI students are very multilingual, with 72.5% speaking at least one language in addition to English, and 25 languages represented.
- **Writing background:** Most students are coming to the program with writing-specific education. A small percentage of students (13.7%) hadn't taken writing classes in college.
- **Many engaged writers:** Almost half of the respondents (47.1%) have their own personal writing projects, like blogs or creative writing.
- **Experience with types of writing:** Almost every respondent (98%) reported experience with cover letters, resumes, or CVs. The majority reported experience with professional emails and messages (92.2%), academic writing (82.4%), design presentations or pitch decks (78.4%), portfolio content (76.4%), or research writing (70.6%).
- **Perceived proficiency:** When asked to describe their proficiency with written English, 80.8% of students chose "professional" or "advanced." When asked about their writing skills in a different way, 45.1% agreed they were "highly skilled," and 45.2% felt their writing was "average" or "good enough."
- **Rating writing statements:** On a Likert scale, students rated 15 statements about their writing skills highly, with the lowest average score of 3.67, and the highest 4.57.
- **First-year vs second-year students:** Looking at average self-ratings for first year students, versus students in their second year or more, revealed a slight improvement:
 - Average of 3.9 out of 5 for first-year students, with a range of 2.3 to 4.9
 - Average of 4.1 out of 5 for second-and-above years, with a range of 3.2 to 4.9
- **More writing help:** The top two categories that students wanted more help with were cover letters, resumes or CVs, and portfolio content (both 58.8%). Overall, students wanted more help with their writing; only two respondents said they didn't want more help. More than two-thirds were interested in short webinars or workshops. Over half were interested in one-on-one coaching and online resources.

Faculty - 17 respondents

- **Courses represented:** SI faculty respondents taught a broad coverage of the curriculum; respondents taught a total of 22 courses.
- **Engaged faculty:** Faculty respondents left robust comments and many expressed interest in the outcome of the survey.
- **Writing content in course curriculum:** About one third of faculty (35.5%) agreed with the statements that writing-specific content was *outside* the scope of their course, while a little less than one-third (29.4%) said writing was a *large part* of their course.
- **Types of writing in courses:** The most common were presentations (76.5%), portfolio content (64.7%), research-related writing like survey questions (47.1%), and academic writing (41.2%). No faculty members taught cover letters, resumes, or CVs as part of their courses. (Faculty advisors help with this, outside the scope of the classroom.)
- **Citations:** The majority of faculty members (70.6%) expected students to already know how to cite properly. In addition to this expectation, faculty members do provide support around citations, either directly through in-class teaching and discussion, or by providing students with resources.
- **Feedback offered:** Faculty try to give students feedback on their writing; sometimes on an as-needed basis, or triaging their attention for the students who need the most help.
- **Perceived proficiency:** respondents chose the options that described students as Intermediate and Advanced, but no one selected Novice or Professional.
- **Writing skills overall:** Overall, faculty added comments throughout the questionnaire that indicated students occupy all parts of the “bell curve.” Many commented on the gap between native English speakers and international students who speak English as a second language. Some useful quotes:

“I don't think they can be rated as a group. There are excellent writers at Pratt SI, but there is a big gap between the excellent writers and the struggling writers, with a solid section of students doing okay in the middle.”

“For every answer, please read as 25% of students struggle, 25% of students excel, and 50% of students are in between.”

“My responses reflect the fact that most of my classes are split. I have students who are very articulate and write well and other students who have difficulty writing for different types of assignments.”

“Overall, I do see that the traditional LIS and Museum students are far better prepared in their writing and language skills than those in the IXD or DAV tracks, though that's not a blanket statement that can be applied to all students from those tracks.”

Comparing student and faculty statement rating

The surveys were designed to surface differences in opinion between students and faculty. Overall, students rated their writing skills higher than faculty rated students' writing skills.

	Student Statements	Faculty statements	Student % out of 5	Faculty % out of 3
Grammar	I feel confident with grammar and punctuation.	Overall, students are able to use appropriate grammar and punctuation.	83.2%	77.1%
Self-editing	After I write something, I can improve it by reviewing and editing my own work.	Students are able to review and edit their own work.	87.4%	75.0%
Research	When I have to write about data or research, I can effectively describe or summarize it.	When they write about data or research, they can effectively describe or summarize it.	77.2%	60.4%
Outlining	I am able to plan an outline or sections for something I'm writing.	They are able to plan an outline or sections for longer works.	80.4%	64.6%
Clarity	The ideas in my writing are clear and organized.	Overall, the ideas in their writing are clear and organized.	80.0%	66.7%
Concision	My writing is not too rambling or wordy.	In general, their writing is not too rambling or wordy.	73.4%	70.8%
Citation	When I incorporate research into my writing, I know when and how to cite the source.	When they incorporate research into their writing, they cite sources appropriately.	81.6%	62.5%
Tone	I can adjust the tone of my writing so it's appropriate for different audiences and purposes.	They can adjust the tone of their writing so it's appropriate for different audiences and purposes.	77.2%	56.3%
Vocabulary	My vocabulary is good enough that I can usually find the right word to use.	Students generally have a robust vocabulary level.	80.8%	68.8%
Plagiarism	I am confident that I don't plagiarize anything I write.	Students know how to avoid plagiarism.	91.4%	75.0%
Voice	My writing is interesting and has a sense of my personal "voice" in it.	Their writing is interesting and has a sense of personal "voice" in it.	75.2%	66.7%
Storytelling	I understand what storytelling is, and I can incorporate a sense of story into my writing.	They can incorporate a sense of storytelling into their writing.	79.2%	56.3%

(Note on the table: The student survey's Likert scale was 1 to 5, while the faculty survey's Likert scale was 1 to 3. The number in the table represents averaging the scores for each, converting to a percentage, and then comparing the percentage.)

Recommendations

Overall Pratt SI considerations

- Currently, individual faculty members provide resources to students for citation guidelines and plagiarism prevention. Is it useful to **create a centralized toolkit of resources for students, so that current and future faculty are pointing students to standardized content?**
- Similarly, does it benefit students to **create a collection of vetted writing resources?** Many already exist, like the [Purdue OWL site](#).
- Because students rated their skills highly, but faculty were more moderate, it might be the case that students aren't aware of their issues. **How can we help students self-assess?**
- The surveys surfaced a bit of a complicated story around professional documents:
 - Students wanted the most help with cover letters, resumes or CVs (58.8%). However, almost every student (98%) reported previous experience with these.
 - No faculty members reported offering support for cover letters, resumes or CVs as part of their course curriculum. However, 64.7% of faculty members taught portfolio content as part of their course curriculum. What's more, many faculty members give this kind of support during advising.
 - **What's the best way to close up the gap between support that is available, and how students perceive or participate with what's available?**
- While there was only a slight difference in average self-rating from first-year students to longer-established students, is there any benefit to **sending a short version of this survey year over year, or looking at a cohort longitudinally?**

Writing for Digital Experiences considerations

- When faculty rated student writing skills, two of the lowest skills were Tone (56.3%) and Storytelling (56.3%). These are two areas addressed in this course. Is it useful to **create a video version of these lectures, or offer live extracurricular workshops on these topics, available to all SI students?**
- Because students want more help with professional documents, **add an in-class activity that combines editing and giving feedback, applied to resumes**, so that students get more in-depth practice with thinking objectively about these documents.

Student survey results

Part 1: Demographics and Writing Background

What is your degree program?

Key findings: Out of the 4 degree tracks in the School of Information, the majority of respondents are in the Information Experience Design program, with Library and Information Science in second place.

Degree	#	%
Information Experience Design, MS	27	51.9%
Library and Information Science, MS	15	28.8%
Data Analytics and Visualization, MS	4	7.7%
Museums and Digital Culture, MS	4	7.7%
IXD and DAV	1	1.9%

How far along are you in your program?

Key findings: The largest category of respondents are in their first year.

	#	%
First year	22	43.1%
Second / graduating	15	29.4%
Second / not graduating	5	9.8%
Third or more	2	3.9%

Do you know any languages in addition to English?

Key findings: The majority (72.5%) of respondents speak at least one language in addition to English.

Number of languages	#	%
At least 1 language in addition to English	37	72.5%
Only English	14	27.5%

What languages do you speak?

Key findings: Across multilingual students, 25 languages were represented.

Languages spoken (in alphabetical order):

1. Ancient Greek
2. Arabic
3. Bulgarian
4. Chinese
5. English
6. French
7. German
8. Gujarati
9. Hindi
10. Italian
11. Japanese
12. Kannada
13. Korean
14. Latin
15. Mandarin
16. Māori
17. Marathi
18. Portuguese
19. Russian
20. Serbo-Croatian
21. Spanish
22. Taiwanese
23. Tamil
24. Tatar
25. Vietnamese

Most common languages spoken (listed by frequency, highest to lowest):

- English
- Hindi
- Spanish
- French
- Russian
- Mandarin
- German
- Marathi

Throughout your life, what experiences helped you learn to write in English?

Key findings: Most respondents got writing experience throughout their schooling (80.4%), with specific classes that focused on writing (72.5%).

Almost half of the respondents (47.1%) have a personal writing project.

About a third of respondents have had either a writing-related job (39.2%), or a degree that specifically relates to writing (29.4%).

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
I did a lot of writing in school (things like academic papers, applying for grants, working for a school paper or website, etc.)	41	80.4%
I took classes in school that focused on writing.	37	72.5%
I have my own personal writing projects (like a blog, essays, a novel or short stories, etc.)	24	47.1%
I have had writing-related jobs.	20	39.2%
I worked with a teacher or tutor who helped me with writing.	16	31.4%
I earned a degree that relates to writing.	15	29.4%
I attended a writing “boot camp” or cram school.	2	3.9%
None of these.	2	3.9%
<i>No writing specific tutoring other than our English language classes in high school</i>	1	2.0%
<i>Reading a lot of (good) academic writing.</i>	1	2.0%
<i>My father and Grandfather were professional writers so I had lots of advice and critique from family.</i>	1	2.0%
<i>I have always enjoyed writing even as a child</i>	1	2.0%
<i>Reading helped me learn more words to use in writing</i>	1	2.0%
<i>I started a degree that relates to writing but transferred to a different program</i>	1	2.0%

Check all options that are true for your undergraduate experience.

Key findings: Most students (70.6%) had written academic papers as part of their undergraduate education.

Almost a quarter of students (23.5%) weren't required to take any writing classes for their major.

A small number of students (11.8%) majored in creative writing.

Responses	#	%
I was required to write academic/research papers for my major.	36	70.6%
I took one or a few basic writing courses of any type.	22	43.1%
I was not required to take courses that involved academic or creative writing for my major.	12	23.5%
I didn't take any writing classes in college.	7	13.7%
I majored in creative writing (fiction, poetry, nonfiction, screenwriting, etc.)	6	11.8%
None of these.	0	0.0%

What types of writing do you already have experience with?

Key findings: Almost every respondent (98%) had experience with cover letters, resumes, or CVs.

The majority had experience with professional emails and messages (92.2%), academic writing (82.4%), design presentations or pitch decks (78.4%), portfolio content (76.4%), or research writing (70.6%).

About half of the respondents (52.9%) had experience with social media.

Students had the least exposure to writing grants (29.4%).

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
Cover letters, resumes or CVs	50	98.0%
Professional emails and messages	47	92.2%
Longer form academic writing, like papers	42	82.4%
Design presentations or pitch decks	40	78.4%
Portfolio content, like a bio and case studies	39	76.5%
Job-search communications, like emailing recruiters	38	74.5%
Research-related writing, like creating interview questions or survey questions	36	70.6%
Personal or professional social media	27	52.9%
Annotating mockups	23	45.1%
Writing for digital products (UX writing, microcopy, etc.)	17	33.3%
Grant proposals or applications for prizes, awards, funding, etc.	15	29.4%
<i>product requirement documents</i>	1	2.0%
<i>I write poetry, at work I have to occasionally write assessments, and write weekly progress notes about my patients, usually 11-13 per week.</i>	1	2.0%
<i>Fiction</i>	1	2.0%

Part 2: Self-describing Writing Skills

In your own opinion, how would you describe your proficiency in written English?

Key findings: Most respondents (80.8%) described their proficiency as professional or advanced. Only one respondent described their proficiency as novice.

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
Professional	26	50.0%
Advanced	16	30.8%
Intermediate	7	13.5%
Novice	1	1.9%
<i>Can write fluently, but not at the level required in academic research paper writing</i>	1	1.9%

Select the statement that you feel best describes your writing skills overall.

Key findings: Almost half of the respondents (45.1%) described themselves as highly skilled in writing.

Almost half of the respondents (45.2%) described their writing skills as about average or good enough.

A small fraction (9.8%) described their writing as needing improvement or as a major challenge.

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
I am highly skilled in writing.	23	45.1%
My writing is about average.	11	21.6%
My writing is good enough for school and work.	10	19.6%
My writing feels like something I need to improve.	3	5.9%
I feel like writing is a major challenge for me.	2	3.9%
<i>I think my writing is above average, but I don't know if I'd call myself "highly skilled"</i>	1	2.0%
<i>My writing skills feel above average, but I wouldn't say that I am highly skilled.</i>	1	2.0%

What challenges, if any, do you experience with your writing?

Key findings: Students described many types of writing challenges, across many topics. The most frequently mentioned challenge was concision (n=6). [Link to FigJam board here.](#)



Detailed Statements about Writing Skills

≈Students rated 15 statements on a Likert scale of 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). Students rated the statement about plagiarism the highest (4.57), and the statement about self-reviewing and editing second highest (4.37).

Students rated the statement about concision lowest (3.67), and the statement about writing voice second lowest (3.76).

Detailed bar graphs for each response can be [found in these Google slides](#).

Statement	Avg
I am confident that I don't plagiarize anything I write.	4.57
After I write something, I can improve it by reviewing and editing my own work.	4.37
I feel confident with grammar and punctuation.	4.16
Once I have a draft, I can edit it to make it more concise.	4.16
When I incorporate research into my writing, I know when and how to cite the source.	4.08
My vocabulary is good enough that I can usually find the right word to use.	4.04
I am able to plan an outline or sections for something I'm writing.	4.02
When I read other people's writing, I can offer specific feedback on things they can improve.	4.00
The ideas in my writing are clear and organized.	4.00
I understand what storytelling is, and I can incorporate a sense of story into my writing.	3.96
It's usually easy to get my ideas "on paper."	3.86
When I have to write about data or research, I can effectively describe or summarize it.	3.86
I can adjust the tone of my writing so it's appropriate for different audiences and purposes.	3.86
My writing is interesting and has a sense of my personal "voice" in it.	3.76
My writing is not too rambling or wordy.	3.67

Part 3: Writing in Your Pratt Classes

What do you think about the feedback from your teachers about your writing?

Key findings: About a third of respondents (33.3%) felt like they got the feedback they needed, and another third (35.3%) said they didn't usually get writing-specific feedback.

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
When an assignment requires writing, I don't usually get feedback about my writing itself.	18	35.3%
I get the feedback that I need.	17	33.3%
I get some feedback, but I would like more.	8	15.7%
I don't do much writing in my classes.	2	3.9%
I have tried to get more feedback and I wasn't able to.	0	0.0%
<i>I haven't always gotten feedback on the things I feel like I need feedback on; I've often gotten feedback on things I'm more confident about!</i>	1	2.0%
<i>I haven't received any feedback yet!</i>	1	2.0%
<i>I haven't submitted any assignment about writing yet.</i>	1	2.0%
<i>Outside of grammatical errors or word count requirements, feedback for writing structure would be helpful. This would apply in terms of of form and flow of the piece that is being written.</i>	1	2.0%
<i>This is going to sound arrogant, but most of the time my professors at Pratt given me a lot of praise for my writing. They have been very encouraging, and I needed that.</i>	1	2.0%

Have you ever gotten support from Pratt's Writing Center?

Key findings: About a third of respondents didn't know Pratt had a writing center. Almost two-thirds knew about the writing center, but hadn't engaged. Three respondents had been to the writing center.

Responses	#	%
Yes	3	5.9%
No	32	62.7%
I didn't know that Pratt had a Writing Center.	15	29.4%

Of the 3 students who had been to the Writing Center:

Responses	#
I got the help that I needed.	2
I got some help, but I wanted more.	1

At Pratt, what have you tried to help with your writing?

Key findings: The most common ways to get writing help were using spell- or grammar checks (64.7%), asking for help from someone they knew (49%), using online resources (43.1%), or using AI-based solutions to help (37.3%).

Less than one-quarter (21.6%) of respondents had asked a professor for writing-specific help.

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
Used spellcheck or grammar check	33	64.7%
Asked for help from a partner, family member, or friend outside of Pratt	25	49.0%
Found online resources to help	22	43.1%
Used an AI-based writing or editing program to correct my grammar or improve my writing	19	37.3%
Asked a professor for writing-specific help	11	21.6%
I haven't tried to get writing support outside of class.	11	21.6%
Asked for help from other Pratt students	7	13.7%
I don't know where I can get help with my writing.	0	0.0%
<i>Asked professors for department-specific style guidance (preferred terminology, citation style etc)</i>	1	2.0%
<i>Exposure to other people's writing styles</i>	1	2.0%
<i>The question reminds me of getting help from professors on my portfolio and cover letter writing.</i>	1	2.0%

What types of writing do you wish you got more help with?

Key findings: The top two categories that students wanted more help with were cover letters, resumes or CVs, and portfolio content (both 58.8%).

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
Cover letters, resumes or CVs	30	58.8%
Portfolio content, like a bio and case studies	30	58.8%
Job-search communications, like emailing recruiters	19	37.3%
Longer form academic writing, like papers	19	37.3%
Design presentations or pitch decks	17	33.3%
Writing for digital products (UX writing, microcopy, etc.)	17	33.3%
Research-related writing, like creating interview questions or survey questions	16	31.4%
Grant proposals or applications for prizes, awards, funding, etc.	15	29.4%
Professional emails and messages	13	25.5%
Annotating mockups	10	19.6%
Personal or professional social media	9	17.6%
<i>coding writing</i>	1	2.0%

What would be your preferred way of getting more writing help?

Key findings: Overall, students wanted more help with their writing; only two respondents said they didn't want more help.

More than two-thirds were interested in short webinars or workshops. Over half were interested in one-on-one coaching and online resources. Ten students were interested in a semester-long writing class.

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
Short webinars or workshops about writing-related topics	33	64.7%
One-on-one coaching	29	56.9%
Online resources I can refer to	28	54.9%
More writing help from faculty in the classes I'm already taking	25	49.0%
A semester-long class I could enroll in	10	19.6%
I don't want any more help with writing	2	3.9%
<i>I usually only need someone to bounce ideas off of, and a review for copyediting to catch small errors</i>	1	2.0%
<i>non-judgemental therapy writing -- write how you feel, read it back at a later time, and figure out ways to help self, seek it out , and be encouraged to continue working through the exercise or asking for help.</i>	1	2.0%

Faculty Survey Results

Part 1: Demographics and Teaching Experience

About how many years have you taught at Pratt?

Key findings:

- 3 respondents had 1 - 2 years of experience
- 4 respondents had 4 - 6 years of experience
- 6 respondents had 11 or more years of experience

What is your title?

Key findings:

- 1 respondent was the Dean
- 1 respondent was an Assistant Professor
- 4 respondents were Associate Professors
- 8 respondents were Visiting Assistant Professors
- 3 respondents weren't specific

In the last year or two, which courses have you typically taught?

Key findings: respondents provided broad across the School of Information curriculum, representing 22 courses.

Course #	Course Title	#
INFO 601	Foundations of Information	2
INFO 607	Leadership and Management	1
INFO 608	Human Information Interaction	1
INFO 609	Introduction to Spatial Thinking and GIS	1
NFO 612	Advanced GIS	1
INFO 630	Human-Centered Research Design & Methods	1
INFO 641	Visual Communication & Information Design	2
INFO 642	Content Strategy	1
INFO 643	Information Architecture	2
INFO 644	Usability Theory and Practice	3
INFO 645	Advanced Usability and UX Evaluation	1
INFO 646	Digital Product Design	1
INFO 650	Speculative Design	1
INFO 652	Reference & Instruction	1
INFO 653	Knowledge Organization	1
INFO 657	Digital Humanities	1
INFO 658	Information Visualization	2
INFO 663	Metadata Design	1
INFO 665	Projects in Digital Archives	1
INFO 671	Sustainable Interaction Design	1
INFO 672	UX Design Systems	1
INFO 684	Museum Information Management	1

Part 2: Writing in Your Course

As part of the course(s) you teach, which of these writing activities do you assign to your students?

Key findings: The most common were presentations (76.5%), portfolio content (64.7%), research-related writing like survey questions (47.1%), and academic writing (41.2%).

No faculty members taught cover letters, resumes, or CVs as part of their courses. (Faculty advisors help with this, outside the scope of the classroom.)

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
Design presentations or pitch decks	13	76.5%
Portfolio content, like a bio and case studies	11	64.7%
Research-related writing, like creating interview or survey questions	8	47.1%
Longer form academic writing, like papers	7	41.2%
Annotating mockups	4	23.5%
Professional emails and messages	4	23.5%
Grant proposals or applications for prizes, awards, funding, etc.	2	11.8%
Job-search communications, like emailing recruiters	1	5.9%
Writing for digital products (UX writing, microcopy, etc.)	1	5.9%
Personal or professional social media	0	0.0%
Cover letters, resumes or CVs	0	0.0%
<i>Writing a report on digital work that has been already completed, explaining decisions that have been made, etc. I also have them create discussion board posts each week: 1-2 paragraphs.</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Short-form exercises based on prompts and requiring students to complete their responses</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Blog posts of usability critique</i>	1	5.9%
<i>short answer questions on technical topics; content for a website</i>	1	5.9%

<i>technical reports</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Written reports</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Design critiques, blog posts</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Students are sometimes asked, in the context of a design project, to just write continuously for 10 minutes in class, responding to prompts given by me, as a means of expanding their thoughts on a project. I do not see the results of this writing.</i>	1	5.9%
<i>The biggest writing assignment for my course is the final comprehensive recommendations presentation delivered to the client at the end of the semester.</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Short reflection pieces as part of specific assignments, exit tickets that ask students to reflect on what they learned that day</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Professional looking reports, strategic plans, lesson plans</i>	1	5.9%

Please review these statements about addressing citations and plagiarism in your course(s).

Key findings: The majority of faculty members (70.6%) expected students to already know how to cite properly. In addition, faculty members report giving students exposure to these topics, directly through in-class teaching and discussion, or by providing students with resources.

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
I expect that students will already know how to cite properly.	12	70.6%
I discuss in-class how to avoid plagiarism with my students.	8	47.1%
I give my students resources to review in their own time about these topics.	6	35.5%
I would like to help students with remedial training on these topics, but I don't want to devote class time to it.	6	35.5%
I explicitly teach my students how to cite properly.	4	23.5%
I wish students had more training on these topics, prior to my class.	4	23.5%
I don't teach my students about these topics, but I notice they have issues with them.	1	5.9%
<i>I include a library instruction section in 601 covering sources and citation</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Because all the assignments in my course are specifically bespoke to the client, I do not run into issues with plagiarism.</i>	1	5.9%
<i>I spend some amount of class time explaining that I consider these skills important and I direct them to resources such as library guides and the writing center.</i>	1	5.9%

In the course(s) you teach, which statements describe the role of writing?

Key findings: About one third of faculty agreed with the statements that writing-specific content was outside the scope of their course, while a little less than one-third said writing was a large part of their course.

About one third agreed that they didn't have time to provide writing help.

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
Teaching writing-specific content is not relevant or outside the scope of my course.	6	35.5%
I would like to see students improve, but I don't have time to provide writing help.	6	35.5%
Writing is a large part of my course(s).	5	29.4%
I would like to spend more class time on writing.	3	17.6%
<i>Our assignments don't require significant formal writing, but they require the students to understand the context and write appropriately for different audiences and situations.</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Writing is a modest part of the course; not the most important, although important for actually completing the course.</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Writing-specific instruction is not the focus of my courses. But I do teach professional writing more generally, in the context of teaching about research design (e.g. I have a series of workshops on how to write X part of a study, such as a research question, a methodology, or data documentation</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Our time is so focused on getting them up to speed on design, we usually run out of time for writing.</i>	1	5.9%
<i>I am in the process of revising INFO 642 and in subsequent course offerings I am planning on incorporating more short-form expository exercises/assignments that will require the students to produce response papers and demonstrate basic proficiency in short-to-medium form content.</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Writing is a lot of my course and since it's at the graduate level, I assume they are able to write. Perhaps that's incorrect!</i>	1	5.9%

In the classes you teach, which statements describe the writing-specific feedback you provide?

Key findings: Faculty try to give students feedback on their writing; sometimes on an as-needed basis, or triaging their attention for the students who need the most help.

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
I give some writing feedback, but on an as-needed, per-student basis.	8	47.1%
I give my students explicit feedback on the writing they do.	7	41.2%
I don't give feedback specifically on their writing, because my class focuses on a different element.	4	23.5%
I don't give writing feedback because I feel like I don't have enough time to focus on it.	2	11.8%
I only give writing feedback if students specifically request it.	1	5.9%
I don't have specific training in teaching writing, so I don't feel qualified to give focused advice on it.	0	0.0%
<i>It depends, if the writing is generally clear, no detailed feedback on writing; when the writing is poor, I give more detailed feedback</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Per above, I don't literally assess composition skills or quality of prose. But I do provide feedback on professional writing within the context of providing feedback about research design.</i>	1	5.9%
<i>The writing I assign is in the form of a final paper, so while I give feedback, I don't have an opportunity to see whether it has helped.</i>	1	5.9%

Have you referred students to Pratt's Writing Center?

Key findings: About a third of faculty didn't know Pratt had a writing center, but half were aware of it and had sent students to it.

Responses	#	%
Yes, I have.	9	52.9%
No, I have not (although I know it exists).	3	17.6%
I have not referred students, because I didn't know Pratt had a writing center.	5	29.4%

Comments:

<i>Students who work with writing center produce better papers, but often I am not in the loop when any of my students chose to use help from a writing center</i>
<i>I teach at Pratt Manhattan and assumed that the Writing Center is in Brooklyn and not easy for students to access. if that's not the case, maybe better outreach would help?</i>
<i>I learnt of the writing center last semester but am not yet familiar with the policies and procedure around referring students to it. This survey has reminded me to do so, thanks.</i>
<i>This is great to know that Pratt has a writing center!</i>
<i>I told the class about it, but since we're in Manhattan and don't have a dedicated resource in person, I doubt they've utilized it virtually. I did reach out to the writing center to ask about a real person and they offered to do a presentation about it to my class, but it was later in the semester so it felt too late for me. I've considered having them join the first class for 15 minutes next semester!</i>

Part 3: Students' Writing Skills

Based on what you've observed, which of these writing activities do students struggle with the most?

Key findings: Faculty observed that students struggled with academic writing and portfolio content the most. (These are also two of the most commonly assigned areas.)

A few (n=3) faculty members observed that students struggled with professional emails and messages.

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
Longer form academic writing, like papers	4	23.5%
Portfolio content, like a bio and case studies	4	23.5%
Design presentations or pitch decks	3	17.6%
Professional emails and messages	3	17.6%
Research-related writing, like creating interview questions or survey questions	2	11.8%
Grant proposals or applications for prizes, awards, funding, etc.	2	11.8%
Personal or professional social media	1	5.9%
Annotating mockups	0	0.0%
Job-search communications, like emailing recruiters	0	0.0%
Cover letters, resumes or CVs	0	0.0%
Writing for digital products (UX writing, microcopy, etc.)	0	0.0%
<i>Making any kind of argument is a challenge</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Haven't noticed many struggles yet</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Reflection</i>	1	5.9%

In your opinion, when you think about most students in your School of Information classes, how would you describe your impression of their writing skills?

Key findings: respondents chose the options that described students as Intermediate and Advanced, but no one selected Novice or Professional.

Overall, faculty added comments throughout the questionnaire that indicated students occupy all parts of the “bell curve.” Many commented on the gap between native English speakers and international students who speak English as a second language.

Responses (<i>write-in responses in blue italic</i>)	#	%
Novice	0	0.0%
Intermediate	8	47.1%
Advanced	5	29.4%
Professional	0	0.0%
<i>All of the above, I see students in all of these categories</i>	1	5.9%
<i>Based on my response to the prompt "What are the biggest challenges or problems you see in students' writing?" I would surmise somewhere between Intermediate and Advanced.</i>	1	5.9%
<i>I don't teach students in programs like IXD, who have a good proportion who are international. It is hard to make a generalization on the entire school since it varies so widely.</i>	1	5.9%
<i>I don't think they can be rated as a group. There are excellent writers at Pratt SI, but there is a big gap between the excellent writers and the struggling writers, with a solid section of students doing okay in the middle. I think it could help to have new students take a screening exam when they enter Pratt SI. Some could be routed to a research writing course if their scores are low.</i>	1	5.9%

What are the biggest challenges or problems you see in students' writing?

Key findings: Most faculty topics aligned with student topics. A handful of topics appeared only in the faculty comments: AI, citations, level of detail, and summarizing. Two faculty members spoke highly of students' writing skills. [Link to FigJam board here.](#)



Detailed Statements about Writing Skills

Key findings: Faculty members rated 12 statements on a Likert scale of 1 (Most students struggle) to 3 (Most students excel).

Faculty members rated the statements about grammar, self-editing, and plagiarism the highest (2.3). Faculty members rated the statement about tone and storytelling the lowest (1.9).

Detailed bar graphs for each response can be [found in these Google slides](#).

Note: One respondent only answered 2 questions, so I removed their response to this section to keep consistent.

Statements	Avg
Overall, students are able to use appropriate grammar and punctuation.	2.3
Students are able to review and edit their own work.	2.3
Students know how to avoid plagiarism.	2.3
Students generally have a robust vocabulary level.	2.1
In general, their writing is not too rambling or wordy.	2.1
Overall, the ideas in their writing are clear and organized.	2.0
Their writing is interesting and has a sense of personal “voice” in it.	2.0
When they incorporate research into their writing, they cite sources appropriately.	1.9
They are able to plan an outline or sections for longer works.	1.9
When they write about data or research, they can effectively describe or summarize it.	1.8
They can adjust the tone of their writing so it’s appropriate for different audiences and purposes.	1.7
They can incorporate a sense of storytelling into their writing.	1.7

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Thanks for reading “Writing Skills in the School of Information.”

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