 **BENCHMARKS for WRITING, CRITICAL THINKING and INFORMATION LITERACY SKILL IN GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES**

Office of General Education

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|  | **Learning Outcome** | **Benchmark for Level I courses (1st year)** | **Benchmark Level II courses (2nd year)** |
|  | **Typical assignments** | **Level I**: summary and response, description, narration | **Level II**: reports, summary and response, researched critical analysis with argument |
| Writing Skills | **Context of and Purpose for Writing** | Begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions | Demonstrates awareness of context, audience, purpose, and to the assigned tasks(s) |
| **Thesis/Main idea** | Thesis is clearly stated **/** expressed as a main idea | Thesis is clearly stated / defended with argument |
| **Structure and Organization** | -Has a coherent introduction though it might lack some focus to set up the thesis  -Progression of thought within paragraphs is clear and logical but not necessarily from paragraph to paragraph  -Has a coherent conclusion though it might need greater focus | -Has a focused introduction that effectively sets up the thesis  -Progression of thought both within and between paragraphs is clear and logical  -Has a clear and focused conclusion |
| **Evidence and Development** | -Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work  -Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing | -Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work.  -Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing |
| **Control of Syntax and Mechanics** | Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity; writing may include some errors | Uses straightforward language that conveys meaning to readers and has few errors |
| Critical Thinking Skills | **Explanation of issues** | Issue/ problem to be considered critically is stated (might leave some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, backgrounds unknown | Issue/ problem to be considered critically is stated clearly delivering all relevant information Target 20% |
| **Evidence /Analysis and Synthesis** Selecting & using info to investigate a point of view/conclusion | Information is taken from source(s) though with not interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis/synthesis | Information is taken from source(s) with at least some interpretation/ evaluation |
| **Conclusions and related outcomes (implications and consequences)** | Conclusion is logically tied to information (although information might not be chosen to fit the desired conclusion); some related outcomes are identified clearly | Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related outcomes are identified clearly  Target 20% |
| *Optional, depends on class*  **Context /Assumptions**  **Student’s position** | N/A | -Analyze own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.  -Formulate and argue a clear position on an issue taking into account different points of view |
| Info. Literacy Skills | **Demonstrates a clear understanding of info needs and is able to search efficiently** (within assigned texts and/or by source search) | -Understands the research question but may not be fully confident in identifying search term(s)  -Has knowledge of an information source  -Might need assistance in interpreting the information collected | -Understands the research question  -Has knowledge of an information source  -Might need assistance in interpreting the information collected |
| **Effectively evaluates information sources** | -Demonstrate an understanding of scholarly sources  -Uses scholarly databases | Understands and reviews information sources, considers whether the amount of information is sufficient to address the issue. |
| **Articulates credibility of sources** | If appropriate to the discipline, mentions one aspect of credibility (authority, affiliation of author, timeliness, bias) | If appropriate to the discipline, articulates 2 or more aspects of credibility of sources (authority, affiliation of author, timeliness, bias) |
| **Uses information ethically** | -Uses appropriate citation style; might need improvement in formatting the bibliographies and footnotes  -Does not plagiarize | Uses appropriate citation style; might need improvement in formatting the bibliographies and footnotes  -Does not plagiarize |

**Benchmarks** per Level

**Level I** courses reinforce skills students learn in FIQWS/ENGL 110; Students will compose essays such as personal narratives/reflections, summary and response, and critical analysis accomplishing the following:

Writing: 70% of students will reach Milestone 1 (score 2)

* Present Context of and state purpose for writing
* Develop appropriately organized essay containing a clear thesis statement and credible, relevant evidence
* Use appropriate language that conveys meaning and is grammatically correct

Critical Thinking: 60% of students will reach Milestone 1 (score 2)

* Clearly state issue/problem
* Analyze and/or synthesize evidence derived from appropriate sources
* Develop logical conclusions based on evidence

Information Literacy: 60% of students will reach Milestone 1 (score 2)

* demonstrate a clear understanding of information needs and ability to search efficiently (within assigned texts and/or by source search)
* Demonstrate an understanding of scholarly sources (library visit)
* Articulate credibility of sources or as appropriate to the discipline
* Use information ethically by citing sources and not plagiarizing

**Level II** courses build upon skills students learn in FIQWS/ENGL 110 and reinforce skills students learn in ENGL 210; Students will compose essays such as reports, summary and response, and researched critical analysis including an argument accomplishing the following:

Writing: 80 (75?)% of students will reach Milestone 1 (score 2) and 20% will reach Milestone 2

* Present context of and state purpose for writing
* Develop appropriately organized essay containing a clear thesis statement (argument) and credible, relevant evidence
* Use appropriate language that conveys meaning and is grammatically correct

Critical Thinking: 70% of students will reach Milestone 1 (score 2) and 20% will reach Milestone 2

* Clearly state issue/problem delivering relevant information
* Formulate and argue a clear position on the issue taking into account different points of view
* Analyze and/or synthesize evidence derived from appropriate sources
* Analyze own and others’ assumptions *(optional, depends on class*)
* Develop logical conclusions based on evidence taking into account opposing points of view

Information Literacy: 70% of students will reach Milestone 1 (score 2)

* Demonstrate a clear understanding of information needs and ability to search efficiently (either within assigned texts or by source search)
* Understand and review information sources, consider if amount of information is sufficient to address the issue
* Articulate credibility of sources (as appropriate to the discipline)
* Use information ethically by citing sources and not plagiarizing