

Reminder: Curriculum Request for your review

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To: Writing Program Director <wp_dir@stetson.edu>

CAUTION - External Email -

REQUEST #479 | RECIPIENTS: 2 of 9 | NOV 04, 2021

New and Existing Course Proposal

Writing Director- Please review this proposal for approval

You have been requested to review the following:

Requestor:	jrasp@stetson.edu
Submitter Name:	John Rasp
Which program will house this course?:	Business Systems Analysis (BSAN)
Is this a new course or a change to an existing course?:	Existing
Current Course Title:	Forecasting
Course Change Requested::	Drop/Add Writing Enhanced Designation
Justification for Drop/Add Writing Enhanced Designation:	The proposal is to ADD the "Writing Enhanced" designation to an existing course, STAT 440Q (Forecasting). While the major focus of the course is mastery of a technical skill in statistics (regression analysis), an important subsidiary goal is to improve students' ability to communicate technical information clearly and effectively. Stetson's Writing Program emphasizes writing across the curriculum, including a significant component in disciplinary areas. Currently few upper-division business courses, and no upper-division quantitative courses, are designated "writing enhanced." This proposal aims to remedy that deficit.

Does this change affect another major/minor?:	No
College/School- Faculty with no affiliation chose the School/College that is most closely affiliated to your course.:	School of Business Administration
If yes, please list major/minor affected and correspondence with department chair/director.:	N/A
Please go to the Writing Program website for additional information on Writing Enhanced courses. Your proposal will be sent to the Director of the Writing Program for approval. Referring explicitly to the goals of a WE course, explain how the course merits the WE designation::	<p>The course included three levels of writing assignments.</p> <p>LOW-STAKES WRITING. A short review assignment is made after each class, to be submitted at the beginning of the following class. The goal is ongoing reinforcement of course content. These daily review assignments include some quantitative work, but also include some short-answer questions aimed at course concepts and interpretation of statistical results. ("What does this p-value tell us about the relationship between the two variables?" "If we were to add an additional predictor variable to the model, how would that affect it's predictive ability, and why?") Daily review assignments are simply checked for reasonable degree of completion.</p> <p>MEDIUM-STAKES WRITING. As part of the course, students read a popular-press book that deals with course-related topics. (Currently, this book is "The Signal and the Noise" by Nate Silver, prominent for his work on political and sports analytics.) There is a weekly writing assignment based upon that week's reading (typically of a book chapter). This is a one-page reaction paper - the student is asked not simply to summarize the content of the text, but to write a short reflective essay giving their thoughts, opinions, and/or reactions to the reading or some portion thereof. These essays are (briefly) commented on, but generally receive full credit as long as there is some sort of meaningful interaction with the text.</p> <p>HIGH-STAKES WRITING. There are two occurrences of high-stakes writing in the course.</p> <p>(1) An essay examination. There are three "regular" tests in the class, plus a final exam. The last one of the three "regular" tests is an essay exam. (Essay exams may be common in some fields, but they are most definitely NOT the</p>

norm in statistics, where the usual test focuses on computations.) Students are given a scenario and asked to identify meaningful data-driven questions within that scenario, to propose reasonable data variables that will provide information on the question, and to indicate appropriate methods of analysis. This is typically a take-home test. It is graded for depth of insight and appropriateness of analysis. It is generally not graded for grammar, style, and organization, although egregious problems in these regards will warrant comment and grade penalty.

(2) A course project. Students undertake a data-analysis project on a topic of their choosing. I describe it to them as a "mini-SeniorResearch" - involving the same sorts of learning goals, but on an appropriately smaller scale. Specifically, the student identifies and refines a research question of interest, conducts a small-scale review of literature on the topic, identifies and locates relevant data to answer the research question (normally, using existing published data sources), analyzes the data, and writes a discipline-appropriate research paper in a style suitable for an undergraduate research journal in their field. Since the class draws students from a wide variety of majors (business, psychology, biology, mathematics, etc.) they are asked to use the citation conventions and style manual of their own field. A typical paper runs eight to fifteen pages (depending on the number of tables and diagrams; there is no page-length quota). This paper is graded primarily on the appropriateness and insight of the analysis, but also upon clarity of presentation, grammar, and style.

Cumulatively, these several writing assignments address all areas of the university's rubric for written communication. Specifically:

(A) Context and Purpose. Student writing incorporates a variety of purposes: summary writing showing familiarity with basic concepts (the low-stakes daily assignments), interactive writing where the students respond to the presentation of ideas (the medium-stakes reflective essays), integrative writing where students bring together material from the whole range of the course (the high-stakes essay exam), and professional writing (the course project paper).

(B) Content/Development. As we move up the "stakes" ladder in the writing, we also move up the "development"

ladder in terms of complexity of thought. The low-stakes daily writing aids understanding of basic ideas. The medium-stakes reflective essays provide for connection of concepts ("what Nate Silver is saying in this chapter is exactly what we were talking about in my accounting class the other day"). The high-stakes essay and course project show development of statistical thinking and integration of course material.

(C) Genre/Discipline. The rubric specifically notes "expectations for writing in particular forms and/or academic fields." The course project paper specifically addresses the norms of formal academic disciplinary writing. Other assignments allow for other voices - the medium-stakes reflective essays on the book reading explicitly allows for a more informal prose.

(D) Sources/Evidence. Specifically addressed at a basic level in the low-stakes review assignments, where students are asked to interpret a number or finding. The course project asks students to use published literature on the project topic.

(E) Syntax/diction/mechanics. This is the area that is least emphasized. It is of course part of the grading of the course project paper, and a flagrant problem in other writing tasks is at least commented on.

Describe how this course serves to strengthen student written communication or what specific disciplinary writing features the course teaches::

Quite frankly, the primary way this course strengthens student written communication is that the student is doing a LOT of writing. There's probably forty or fifty pages or more. Most of it is low stakes and informal or semi-formal. But you can't exercise your 'writing muscles' that much without becoming a little bit better (or at least more comfortable) with it.

My primary goal with the writing is the 'writing across the curriculum' model. That is, I want to use the writing to deepen understanding of the course material. Too often students emerge from statistics classes with little more than algorithmic knowledge - "here's the formula and here's what you plug into it." Writing creates structures whereby students articulate WHY they are undertaking these particular computations, and WHAT those numerical results mean.

Students should also come out of the class with better skills in disciplinary writing (sometimes, with their first and only exposure). But that is really a secondary purpose.

Describe how revision is incorporated into writing assignments; which writing projects will require revisions; and how feedback will be provided and by whom::	<p>The course project paper incorporates significant revision.</p> <p>The project assignment is divided into stages, with intermediate due dates. (A brainstormed list of five possible project ideas by Week 3, a specific proposal by Week 5, a literature review by Week 8, etc.) Feedback with expectation of revision is given at the following stages.</p> <p>(A) The project proposal. This is a one-page document. The student identifies the research topic of interest, and suggests potential sources of data for the project. They are given verbal feedback on this written proposal at a scheduled one-on-one conference with the instructor. Typically this sharpens/clarifies the research question (normally very vaguely stated on first draft). A revised proposal is submitted one week later.</p> <p>(B) The literature review. For many students in the class, the course project is their first exposure to disciplinary writing. Accordingly, it is not surprising that the first version of this section of the project paper needs significant work to comply with norms for academic writing. Written feedback from the instructor, followed by a revised submission of the literature review section of the paper.</p> <p>(C) Revised project proposal. Many (not all) students will revise their project proposal, in light of the literature review. (Typically, they have chosen a topic that is too broad, and hence are narrowing it appropriately.) Feedback from the instructor (either in writing on the literature review draft, or verbally in conversation with the student as the project progresses) prompts this revision.</p>
As a percentage, please describe how much of the final course grade is derived from student writing.:	50%
Current Course Number (Number only, no prefix):	440
Is this course being fast-tracked?:	No
Describe how students will be finding, evaluating, and incorporating outside source material into their written texts.:	<p>The course project explicitly involves use of outside source material. The project's literature review requires students to identify existing research related to the topic. This will involve use of library databases of academic writing. However, many student projects are in fields (such as sports analytics) where significant work is done in less formal venues (such as the blogosphere) and so standard search-engine identification of sources may be involved as well. Another key "outside source</p>

material" dynamic is the identification of appropriate data sets and variables for use in the project analysis. (This falls somewhat outside the normal purview of 'writing' dynamics, however.)

Course Level: Undergraduate

Approval history

In progress

Approved by faugusti@stetson.edu

Approve

Decline

Comment

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