

Write Well, Finish Well: Improving Students' Academic Writing

"For every beginning there is an ending, with every ending there is a new beginning" (English proverb). Regarding academic writing, *Write Well, Finish Well* is designed to ensure that by the *end* of students' academic careers at King University they are equipped well for the *beginning* of their professional careers and beyond. Learning to write well can be challenging. It is a skill set, however, that can be cultivated, and the University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is designed to cultivate those skills. There are three student learning outcomes (SLOs) associated with *Write Well, Finish Well*: 1) Students will write a researched essay that is effective and professional, 2) Students will demonstrate proficiency in using proper documentation, and 3) Students will demonstrate proficiency in using conventions of academic discourse. King believes that the accomplishment of these SLOs shall facilitate the achievement of its mission, which is to "prepare students in our Christian academic community to excel as thoughtful, resourceful, and responsible citizens" (King University, 2017, p. 1).

Interventions to aid students in obtaining these SLOs will be applied in and outside of the classroom. The primary interventions will occur inside the classroom. Examples of these interventions include writing instruction and feedback from faculty and librarians. Secondary interventions occurring outside of the classroom will consist of training materials on King's learning management system, librarian instruction, and assistance provided by King's Academic Center for Excellence (ACE). To help faculty and support units determine what interventions they should employ, they will be presented with information on the specific strengths and weaknesses of King's incoming students, as determined by a pre-test. Additionally, to ensure faculty and support staff have the knowledge and skills to address these SLOs, all faculty and appropriate support staff will be provided training on a routine basis. Faculty's self-evaluation of their own writing strengths and weaknesses, best practice literature, and students' writing assessment results will guide faculty development.

King shall assess the effectiveness of its interventions using multiple methods. A pre-test will help determine the specific strengths and challenges of the students entering the University. Then, as students progress through their programs of study (and interventions are applied), they will write two researched essays in select classes. One essay will be written in an identified writing-intensive course within the student's academic program. The second essay will be written in RELG1001, Foundations of Christian Thought and Practice. (All undergraduate students are required to take this course.) The professor will grade each essay for a course grade. Additionally, a stratified random sample of the essays will be assessed by QEP graders to determine progress toward attaining the QEP SLOs. Finally, as students graduate, they will participate in an exit exam. The exit exam will include questions that will also help the University determine students' attainment of the learning outcomes. The results of all of the aforementioned assessments shall help to inform and customize the interventions as the plan progresses.

To facilitate the successful implementation of *Write Well, Finish Well*, the University will implement its third and final pilot in Year One. Then, over the next four years, all undergraduate programs will be phased in, with approximately 11 programs (or program learning platforms) being phased in annually. In Year Two, the University will likely target academic programs within the College of Arts and Sciences. Strategically implementing the plan in academic programs that also support King's general education core will fast-track the interventions to the maximum number of students.

Organizationally, King's Strategic Planning Executive Committee (SPEC) provides oversight for the QEP, and the SPEC has charged the QEP Steering Committee and its five subcommittees with responsibility for the day-to-day implementation and assessment of the plan. This structure shall ensure that King's students ***Write Well*** and ***Finish Well!***