

# Writing Beyond the University

Preparing Lifelong Learners  
for Lifewide Writing

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and Paula Rosinski*

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Elon, North Carolina  
[www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org](http://www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org)

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Series editors: Jessie L. Moore and Peter Felten  
Copyeditor and designer: Jennie Goforth

### **Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Bleakney, Julia | Moore, Jessie L. | Rosinski, Paula

Title: Writing Beyond the University / Julia Bleakney, Jessie L. Moore, and Paula Rosinski

Description: Elon, North Carolina : Elon University Center for Engaged Learning, [2022] | Series: Center for engaged learning open access book series | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022945867 | ISBN (PDF) 978-1-951414-08-5 | ISBN (PBK) 978-1-951414-09-2 | DOI <https://doi.org/10.36284/celelon.oa5>

Subjects: LCSH: English language – Rhetoric – Study and teaching | Business writing

Classification: LCC PE1404.W75 2022 | DDC 808.066

## SECTION 2

# SUPPORTING THE WRITING AND WRITING EXPERIENCES OF LIFELONG LEARNERS

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This section explores how writers adapt their writing strategies for new contexts and how higher education faculty and staff can help prepare students for lifelong and lifewide writing. The section's first three chapters examine students' experiences as they navigate writing as college students, but significantly, the chapters also acknowledge that much of that writing happens beyond the classroom.

*“Students’ writing development is much more complex and sophisticated than is ordinarily reported in the existing literature; more specifically, students’ writing development is located in many spheres beyond the university.” (Chapter 4)*

In **“There is a Lot of Overlap’: Tracing Writing Development Across Spheres of Writing”** (chapter 4), Kathleen Blake Yancey, D. Alexis Hart, Ashley Holmes, Anna V. Knutson, Íde O’Sullivan, and Yogesh Sinha (members of a 2019–2021 research seminar team) document students’ writing in and across several contexts in the United States, Ireland, and Oman. As their case studies illustrate, students’ spheres of writing include community contexts, internships and other workplace settings, and cocurricular experiences. Their student participants perceive relationships among the spheres, which should facilitate students’ ability to transfer and adapt prior writing knowledge to new writing contexts, and the chapter authors offer recommendations for fostering this writing recursivity.

*“In order to prevent lengthy periods of unsystematic trial and error, faculty teaching in WIL [work-integrated learning] contexts need to debunk the myth of transience (i.e., the idea that writing can be learned once and for all and then statically imported to address any writing situation).”*  
(Chapter 5)

In **“Writing Across Professions (WAP): Fostering the Transfer of Writing Knowledge and Practices in Work-Integrated Learning”** (chapter 5), another 2019–2021 research team focuses specifically on students’ transition from curricular contexts to work-integrated learning settings like internships and other work placements. Michael-John DePalma, Lilian W. Mina, Kara Taczak, Michelle J. Eady, Radhika Jaidev, and Ina Alexandra Machura highlight data from interviews conducted in the United States and Germany, and they propose a curricular model to support students’ repurposing of writing knowledge and practices as they move among these spheres.

*“The need for student writing support should be recognized by university program coordinators. Both in EFL and non-EFL contexts, the students are rich resources who can serve as support for themselves and for one another. . . . If institutions want their students to write better at the university and continue developing writing skills for academic and professional success, they need to help their students make use of sustainable resources and approaches.”* (Chapter 6)

In **“Examining the Effects of Reflective Writing and Peer Feedback on Student Writing In and Beyond the University”** (chapter 6), Ha Thi Phuong Pham and Dominique Vola Ambinintsoa examine the longitudinal impact of two specific curricular strategies—facilitated reflection and peer feedback—on Malagasy and Vietnamese students’ writing as they move through subsequent coursework.

The remaining chapters in this section shift attention from writing in higher education to writing in the workplace.

*“Both professors and students navigate a range of writing genres (e.g., email, PowerPoint slides, academic writing) for a range of audiences and yet, like the respondents in our survey, research indicates that many believe the myth of transience. As with professionals, both professors and students are likely relying on tacit knowledge and routines, making it difficult for them to adapt to new contexts.” (Chapter 7)*

“**Bridging Academic and Workplace Writing: Insights from Employers**” (chapter 7) highlights results from a survey of employers to illustrate how workplace perspectives on writing compare to writing practices often enacted in college classrooms. Jeffrey Saerys-Foy, Laurie Ann Britt-Smith, Zan Walker-Goncalves, and Lauren M. Sardi, representing three US institutions, share strategies for bridging this divide with incremental instruction and practice in writing across the curriculum.

Complementing this employer perspective, the final three chapters in this section look at new professionals’ experiences with workplace writing.

*“The workplace—with its various cues, structures, and relationships (or the lack thereof)—can affect how new workplace professionals develop as writers and respond to the writing they are asked to do in their jobs.” (Chapter 8)*

In “**Navigating Workplace Writing as a New Professional: The Roles of Workplace Environment, Writerly Identity, and Mentoring and Support**” (chapter 8), Ann M. Blakeslee, Jennifer C. Mallette, Rebecca S. Nowacek, J. Michael Rifenburg, and Liane Robertson (members of a 2019–2021 research seminar team) highlight the experiences of eight early-career alumni from five US institutions to illustrate how supports in college and the workplace can prepare students for more successful transitions into workplace writing as alumni.

*“We can see that both interviewees are writing in difficult situations—confined within complex systems and limitations*

*on their writing and composing to audiences that each want something that is difficult or impossible to provide. In order to be successful in their communications, each must negotiate a balance between the ideal and the realistic, for the sake of efficacy.” (Chapter 9)*

Next, **“I’ll Try to Make Myself Sound Smarter than I Am’: Learning to Negotiate Power in Workplace Writing” (chapter 9)** explores the experiences of two US-based workplace writers as they grapple with new kinds of writing and learn on the job. Brian Fitzpatrick and Jessica McCaughey interviewed over fifty participants, and in this chapter, they focus on two illustrative cases that look at the writing responsibilities and experiences of professionals who are not hired as “writers” but who write regularly for their jobs.

*“Static heuristics learned in college do not acknowledge the dynamic nature of workplace writing, where alumni encounter different audiences with a variety of expectations about demands for writing.” (Chapter 10)*

Finally, in **“What One Learns in College Only Makes Sense When Practicing It at Work’: How Early-Career Alumni Evaluate Writing Success” (chapter 10)**, Neil Baird, Alena Kasparikova, Stephen Macharia, and Amanda Sturgill (another 2019–2021 research seminar team) examine the school-to-work transitions of twelve early career alumni from the United States, Kenya, and the Czech Republic and suggest a framework for supporting college students through that transition.

Collectively, these chapters offer college educators a better understanding of the writing that students and alumni do beyond the university—whether in concurrent contexts while still enrolled in postsecondary study or in workplace settings after they graduate. This knowledge is critical to developing curricular and cocurricular supports for current students, as well as alumni programming, to prepare students for lifelong and lifewide writing.