

# Writing Beyond the University

Preparing Lifelong Learners  
for Lifewide Writing

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

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## SECTION 3

# FACILITATING WRITERS' ONGOING SELF-AGENCY AND NETWORKED LEARNING

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In the final section of this collection, three chapters explore writers' ongoing self-agency as writers take what they learned in college and move into writing beyond the university contexts. The chapters in this section examine tools and practices that help students develop writerly agency in preparation for their workplace writing contexts, including practices that help students make sense of the writing situations they are moving into (and the connections to prior writing experiences and learning contexts), use writing to communicate their professional identities, and use social media to build networking relationships.

*“The majority of students . . . were ready to engage in writing on their placement and . . . anticipated that they would engage in new types of writing.” (Chapter 11)*

In **Chapter 11 “Writing Transitions Between Academic and Professional Settings,”** Nadya Yakovchuk, Ryan Dippre, Lucie Dvorakova, Alison Farrell, Niamh Fortune, and Melissa Weresh (a 2019–2021 research team) draw on data from across three higher education institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ireland, and across a range of programs—a graduate-level law school and undergraduate programs in education and in nursing, midwifery and paramedic science—to understand how students in pre-placement learning contexts make sense of the writing demands they will face in their placements. The authors are curious how these

sense-making acts connect to both the kinds of writing students have done and the writing instruction they've received. Yakovchuk et al. note the benefits to students of both practicing (completing familiar writing tasks) and experimenting (with elements of the writing process) as they move to writing beyond the university. The authors also found that students in all three contexts had an understanding and appreciation that writing in new contexts would be different than in their university contexts.

*“Writing assignments that deeply engage students in a public health issue, challenge them to tailor their communication style to the intended readers, and prompt them to decide which information is most relevant to include will help them to . . . further develop their professional identity.” (Chapter 12)*

Ella August and Olivia S. Anderson, in *“A Framework for Designing Effective Writing Assignments in Public Health,”* offer an evidence-based method for developing effective writing assignments in public health (and in other fields) that enables students to partner with the community and prepare written documents that have “real-world” relevance. August and Anderson’s framework offers eight recommendations for faculty and staff designing writing assignments, with recommendations such as “Require a document format used in the workplace” and “Allow for a process to support writing through specific tasks” that may be familiar to writing instructors but less so for faculty incorporating writing into other disciplinary curricula. The authors discuss their own application of this framework to “The Real-World Writing Project,” a project that requires public health students to create a written product for an external public health practice partner.

*“Learning how to learn socially and share knowledge with others while critically analyzing information not only disrupts hierarchical concepts of expertise but also asks*

*students to carefully consider what it means to be in conversation with peers—learning, teaching, advocating.” (Chapter 13)*

In “‘And Sometimes We Debate’: How Networking Transforms What Professional Writers Know,” US-based researchers Benjamin Lauren and Stacey Pigg argue that social media networking is essential for building writers’ self-agency and suggest ways to teach networking as a transformative writing practice in the classroom. In addition, by learning about networking as a transformative practice, student networkers can then think critically about who is or is not in their networks, how to amplify underrepresented voices and ideas, and how to network ethically, as well as learn and practice the various writing and rhetorical practices involved with networking. Ultimately, Lauren and Pigg show the value of practicing how to have more intentional conversations among professional networks.

Across these chapters, the authors discuss how students prepare for the challenges of writing beyond the university by developing skills that help them make sense of new writing situations; approach those situations with a critical, inclusive stance; and foster productive collaborations.