Teacher Education Writing Exam

Objective: to assess a student’s spontaneous writing ability. Teachers are always involved in ‘on-the-spot’ writing situations, this exam will focus on this skill.

1. Taking and passing the Teacher Education Writing Exam is required for admission to the Teacher Education Program at Utah State University.

2. The exam will be given during the first five weeks of Fall and Spring Semesters (Summer Semester may vary.) During Fall and Spring Semesters the writing exam will also be administered during the 15th week of classes. It is administered in the YETC in the Education Building and at selected extension sites throughout Utah. Student may attempt writing exam only ONCE per session.

3. We strongly encourage you to follow the five-paragraph essay format:
   The introductory paragraph, which includes a thesis or main idea. The job of the introductory paragraph is to create interest and to introduce the three main points that will be made and supported in the body of the essay.

   The second, third, and fourth paragraphs support the main idea presented in the introductory paragraph. Each of these paragraphs deal with one of the specific points introduced in the first paragraph, in the same order. These paragraphs are constructed with a topic or transitional sentence first, followed by an illustration or example of that point, and finally an explanation or application of the specific example. This is the elaboration or development that the reader is looking for. This is called the PIE model: point, illustration, explanation.

   The fifth or concluding paragraph, ties it all together and uses new language (to avoid redundancy) to summarize the point made.

4. All exams are corrected on campus at Utah State University by a minimum of two readers.

5. Students are e-mailed and advisors are sent a copy of the test results. The exam is returned to the student if they fail.

6. The definition of the criteria the readers will be looking for is on the reverse side.

7. Students who fail the exam after their first attempt and will be required to view the online Writing Exam Workshop. This training session will focus on providing students with strategies to enhance the success of students who attempt the teacher education writing exam. No fee payment is required to view the Teacher Education Writing Examination On-line Workshop.

   Students who fail the writing exam after viewing the Teacher Education Writing Examination On-line Workshop will be required to begin USU’s Writing Center’s Proficiency Skills Development Process. The Proficiency Skills Development fee for Teacher Education students will be $100 beginning Fall 2004. This fee will cover a period of 15 weeks only from the time the student completes his/her entrance interview. At the end of the 15 weeks, he/she will retake the test, ready or not. If the student does not pass, he/she will pay another $100 fee to restart or continue the process.
College of Education and Human Resources
Writing Examination
Definitions of Assessment Criteria

Remember you’ll need to write a long enough piece (at least a full page of writing) for readers to judge your writing skills—organization, development, fluency, accuracy, and clarity of message. A definition of these skills follows:

**Organization:** All good writing is organized around a central idea from which the supporting ideas radiate in some order—chronological or logical. Readers will be looking for your ability to state clearly the purpose of your document, to choose supporting ideas that are linked to your central purpose, and to provide a suitable order for the ideas, culminating in a conclusion that ties the ideas together.

**Development:** Good writing has sufficient detail for its ideas. These details come from a number of sources: life’s experiences, reading, discussion in classrooms or with friends, and television. Your readers will be looking for your ability to use detailed material in a manner that gives credence to your document.

**Fluency:** Good writing flows easily from the central point to the supporting points and then to details used to give authority to the document. Fluency comes from the writer’s ability to use key words set up in the main point of the document and from transitional words and phrases that link the individual paragraphs to each other and to the central point or thesis. The readers will be looking for your ability to use techniques such as these to provide a sense of unity of purpose and coherence between and among the various ideas you are presenting.

**Accuracy:** All good writing conforms to common English written standards so that errors do not interrupt the fluency of the piece for the reader. In addition, good writers want to present themselves in a manner that will encourage readers to take them seriously. Accuracy of presentation is, therefore, essential. Writers should take special care to proofread the document for accuracy of spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Readers will be looking for your ability to present yourself as an educated and careful writer.

**Clarity:** Good writers want their message to make an impact on the intended audience. Interesting information, a clear message, and adherence to the standards of the form of your piece will impress the reader. Graders will be looking for your ability to present your message interestingly, clearly, and succinctly.
The exam is timed. You have an hour to complete it.

If the computer lab is noisy, be assertive. Tell those around you that you are taking an exam and ask them to quiet down.

The objective of the exam is to test your ability to write extemporaneously. An A in English 1010 or other English classes does not necessarily prepare you for this exam.

The exam is scored in five categories:

1. **Logical Organization:** The first paragraph should contain a thesis statement that sets out the three main points you wish to make. Paragraphs 2 - 3 should each address one of the three main points—in the same order. Paragraph 5 ties it all together and uses new language to summarize the points made. **Remember: No matter what format the question asks for, they want a 5 paragraph essay.**

2. **Accuracy:** Proofread carefully. Print it out. Look for your known problem areas. Use spell check.

3. **Fluency:** Each paragraph should flow smoothly into the next. Use transition sentences to get from one paragraph to another. Misspelled words, misplaced commas, and other problems with accuracy affect fluency. Eighty percent of those who fail accuracy also fail fluency.

4. **Development and Elaboration of Ideas:** Following the topic sentence in paragraphs 2-4, give an example or illustration of that paragraph’s point and follow it with an explanation or application of the specific example from your own experience, observation, or reading. Fully develop all paragraphs (3-5 sentences per paragraph).

5. **Clarity:** Sound like someone who knows what they are talking about. Support your ideas with clear, logical sentences. Make sure the paper hangs together—stick to the topic. Think like a teacher.
Other helpful hints:

- Plan to take the exam early.
- Be on time and try to enter the exam relaxed.
- Bring a dictionary, scratch pad, and pencil with you.
- Read the prompt carefully.
- **Organize your time**: Brainstorm = 5-10 minutes; Write = 20-25 minutes; Re-write = 10-20 minutes; Proofreading = 15-20 minutes.
- Write, write, write. Try not to edit until you have it all written. Then go back and make changes by revising and proofreading.
- Check the meaning of words you aren't sure of. If you don't know how to use a word, choose another one that you do know how to use. Pay particular attention to homonyms (for example: there, their, they're; to, too, two). Spell Check can't fix those mistakes.
- If you don't know how to use commas, take time before the exam to brush up on their use.
- Practice writing hour long essays. Use this prompt or others on the Writing Center website (http://writingcenter.usu.edu). The more you practice ahead of time, the more likely you are to pass the exam. The following prompt will not appear on the exam, but it is in the same general format as the prompt you will receive.

**Writing Background**

Much has been said about schools as a place for learning. However, not all students learn equally well in traditional school settings. In fact, some students learn more quickly and retain their learning longer if it occurs outside that place called school. Some students have benefitted from internships, career-ladder opportunities, home schooling, or office assistantship.

**Writing Situation**

Assume that you are such a student and that you would like to convince school authorities that learning experiences outside the regular classroom should be encouraged and should be counted toward graduation requirements. Review your own learning experiences or those of others outside the classroom. Identify at least one particular instance where you believe such learning was especially "educational" and possibly as valuable as some in-class learning. Use this experience as the major part of your argument addressed to the local school board in which you make a persuasive presentation for why credit should be given for "real life learning."

Remember that your audience is likely to be skeptical and will need concrete evidence about what learning took place and how that learning complemented or took the place of core curriculum values.

**Good Luck!**
Students who PASS the exam will be notified by email. You will only be mailed results if you FAIL the exam. These results should arrive approximately four weeks from the date you took the exam. Your advisor will be sent a copy of your results.

If you PASS the exam the date that you attempt the exam will be your passing date. Please remember this date for your admission application.

Instructions:
This exam provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate your writing skills to the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services faculty. Competency in writing is required for admission to all Teacher Education programs at USU. We urge you to take the exam seriously.

Teaching in public schools requires teachers to have basic writing skills, as they must communicate with a variety of audiences with multiple purposes. They have access to the latest technology, but most often write under limited time constraints. In addition, teachers are expected to model for students and the general public, clear and accurate communication skills. Since the ability to write is developmental, students entering a Teacher Education Program must have basic skills to continue to develop at higher levels of competency.

The writing exam is part of the admissions process to Teacher Education at Utah State University and any evidence of academic dishonesty will be handled in compliance with Article VI, Section 2 “Discipline Regarding Academic Dishonesty Violation” of the Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at USU.

REMEMBER: Your essay should demonstrate your ability to plan an organized piece and to write clearly and accurately. Two university faculty members will independently assess your work, judging it on five criteria: logical organization, development, fluency, accuracy, and clarity. (See reverse side for the definition of each criteria.) The exam is scored passed or failed. To pass you must pass all five criteria.

*YOU HAVE ONE HOUR TO COMPLETE THE EXAM. You may use any available computer and word processor. You may also use available computer-aided tools, or hard copy dictionaries, etc. If you have computer problems, please notify the lab assistant.

*Put your name, A Number, date, and Writing Prompt number at the top of your first page.

*When you finish, ensure that the lab assistant has accurately documented your “time in” and “time out” on the sign-in sheet. The lab assistant should print out two (2) copies of your exam. All copies will be sent for evaluation.

* We strongly encourage you to follow the five-paragraph essay format.

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The fifth or concluding paragraph, ties it all together and uses new language (to avoid redundancy) to summarize the point made.

*If you have computer problems, please contact the lab assistant so that they may make a note of the problem on the sign-up sheet. 

More information on back
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**Evaluation:** The evaluation rubric will correspond with the five characteristics stated above. Each characteristic will be graded pass or fail. A ‘fail’ on one or more of the characteristics is a failing paper. All failing papers and grading rubrics will be returned to the student.

**Retake:** If you receive a failing grade on the essay and desire a retake, you will either view the Writing Exam Retake Video or follow a specific proficiency skills development coordinated by the English Writing Center at USU. **STUDENTS MAY ATTEMPT THE WRITING EXAM ONLY ONCE PER TEST ADMINISTRATION SESSION.**