

HEIghten™ Written Communication

Test at a Glance

Description of the Examination

The *HEIghten*™ Written Communication examination evaluates college students' ability to demonstrate four key dimensions of written communication: **Knowledge of Social and Rhetorical Situations**, **Knowledge of Conceptual Strategies**, **Knowledge of Language Use and Conventions**, and **Procedural Knowledge and Skills**.

- For the **Knowledge of Social and Rhetorical Situations** dimension, students must demonstrate skills in (1) *writing for particular purposes, tasks, or contexts*, which can include crafting a well-supported argument that defends a clear position or identifying the aspects of a text that are relevant to its purpose, task, and context; and (2) *audience awareness*, which can include identifying or writing to address particular audiences (e.g., experts vs. general public).
- For the **Knowledge of Conceptual Strategies** dimension, students must use (or identify the use of) content knowledge to support writing through (1) *use and citation of sources and textual evidence*, which includes responding to and incorporating source texts into written products, using appropriate attributions; and (2) *content development and organization*, which includes the ability to develop ideas and support them with relevant evidence and examples and to compose well-structured and logically organized text.
- For the **Knowledge of Language Use and Conventions** dimension, students must demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard Written English in terms of both (1) *word choice, tone, voice, and style*, which may include composing or revising texts to enhance the clarity of meaning or to achieve a desired rhetorical effect; and (2) *grammar, usage, mechanics and syntax*, which includes the ability to produce or revise texts so that they are relatively error-free.
- Finally, the **Procedural Knowledge** dimension includes two aspects of the writing process: (1) *drafting*, i.e., students' ability to compose fluent text; and (2) *revision*, i.e., students' ability to identify flaws and select appropriate modifications to existing texts. In many cases, an assessment item may simultaneously capture more than one of the above-referenced skills.

Format of the Examination

The *HEIghten* Written Communication assessment features two types of tasks.

Passage-based Sets each present a series of selected-response questions based on a short text stimulus that discusses authentic, non-specialist topics. The stimulus passages may contain linguistic or conceptual errors that students must identify and correct; students may also answer questions about the passages' social and rhetorical features (e.g., intended audience), organization and development, or tone, style, or other linguistic elements.

Supplementing the Passage-based Sets in each test is a **Direct Writing Measure**—a constructed-response task that features a short text supporting a claim about a particular issue. Students must compose an original response which adopts and defends a position on the claim presented

in the passage, using information from the source, as well as the student's own reading and experiences, to develop an organized, logical, and cohesive argument. In order to be relevant to a broad range of higher education programs, the assessment items are embedded in a variety of contexts, including humanities, natural sciences, social sciences, and workplace/everyday situations. In addition, the tone of the arguments and discussions presented in the items includes both formal (e.g., academic text) and informal (e.g., trade publication, editorials) registers.

Knowledge and Skills Required

The knowledge and skills assessed in the *HEIghten* Written Communication examination follow. The numbers in parentheses indicate the approximate percentages of exam questions in those dimensions. The bulleted lists under each dimension are meant to be representative rather than prescriptive.

Knowledge of Social and Rhetorical Situations (20%)

- *Purpose*: Students are able to identify the intended purpose of or in a text, or to compose or revise a text to achieve a particular purpose.
- *Audience and Context*: Students can determine the intended audience of a text, and can demonstrate knowledge and use of rhetorical strategies (i.e., emotional appeals) to persuade a specific audience, or to effectively address a specific context.
- *Genre-Specific Conventions*: Students are able to adhere to genre conventions such as argument and exposition/explanation in writing or revising texts.

Knowledge of Conceptual Strategies (40%)

- *Using Sources*: Students are able to critically evaluate and use appropriate source material and textual evidence to support a position or develop an argument, without distorting or misrepresenting the information from the source material.
- *Documenting Sources*: Students are able to recognize and employ appropriate methods for documentation of sources (including, but not limited to, MLA, APA and Chicago manuals of style).
- *Development and Support*: Students are able to support ideas and arguments with appropriate and sufficient reasons, examples, and evidence.
- *Organization*: Students are able to create or revise texts so that they present ideas and supporting information in an organized, logical, and coherent sequence and structure.

Knowledge of Language Use and Conventions (40%)

- *Concision*: Students demonstrate the use of economy in word choice and the ability to avoid redundancy and wordiness.
- *Language Precision*: Students demonstrate appropriate word choice in terms of purpose, context, and genre.
- *Style and Tone*: Students demonstrate consistency in style and tone within a passage and the appropriate usage of style and tone in a particular context or for a particular purpose.

- *Syntax*: Students demonstrate the use of various sentence structures to accomplish specified purpose.
- *Conventional Expression*: Students demonstrate knowledge of correct idiomatic words, phrases and expressions.
- *Frequently Confused Words*: Students demonstrate proper use of frequently confused words.
- *Logical Comparison*: Students demonstrate knowledge of grammatical and logical correctness of a comparison between two terms.
- *Modification*: Students demonstrate grammatically correct placement of modifiers or modifying phrases within sentences, or are able to correct the lack of subject in a modifying word group.
- *Noun Agreement*: Students demonstrate knowledge of correct agreement between nouns in terms of number.
- *Parallel Structure*: Students demonstrate the grammatically correct use of parallel structures.
- *Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement*: Students demonstrate knowledge of correct agreement between a pronoun and its antecedent.
- *Pronoun Clarity*: Students demonstrate the use of pronouns with clear and unambiguous antecedents.
- *Pronoun Number and Person*: Students demonstrate consistency in pronoun number and person within and between sentences.
- *Sentence Boundaries*: Students demonstrate the use of grammatically correct sentence structures.
- *Subject-Verb Agreement*: Students demonstrate knowledge of correct agreement between a verb and its subject.
- *Subordination and Coordination*: Students demonstrate the use of proper subordination and coordination to create grammatically correct sentences.
- *Verb Tense*: Students demonstrate consistency in verb tense within and between sentences.

Procedural Knowledge

Note: The skills measured in this fourth dimension are embedded in the three dimensions listed above. These skills are assessed throughout the Written Communication test through both selected-response and constructed-response questions.

- *Drafting*: Students are able to compose fluent text.
- *Revision*: Students are able to identify flaws and determine appropriate modifications to existing texts.