

# Research and Practice of Whole Process Writing Skills Training for College Students

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**Abstracts:** The writing skills is an important requirement of future job for college students. However, most Chinese universities only use writing courses to improve students' theoretical writing level, and don't train their writing skills from the perspective requirements of career development. This study starts from the requirements of employers for students' writing ability and looks for the entry point for improving students' writing ability from the whole process of students' growth and success. It forms a system for training writing ability during the whole process of university, which has a positive effect on improving the adaptability of students to social needs.

**Keywords:** Writing Ability; College Student; Training

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The writing ability is an important part of the required skills and one of the requirements of future jobs for college students. For example, you need to write process flow and product descriptions for production, essays for job evaluation, and work reports in your daily work, all of which require strong writing skills. However, the phenomenon that college students are subjectively unwilling to write and objectively unable to write is very prominent. Their writing ability has not been improved during college. Some students write less than 1,000 words in a year. The problems such as poor logic, incoherent sentences, lack of clarity, indiscriminate use of punctuation, deliberate mixing of English and Chinese, and misuse of internet buzzwords are observed in their papers.

With the spread of computers, mobile phones and internet, reading has become a kind of fast food. Internet buzzwords are frequently used, making the misuse of language more prominent, especially among college students. At the same time, information is more easily accessible, and most students prefer to find ready-made resources from the internet for various writing assignments, some of which are submitted directly without revision. What's more, professional online writers have emerged. All these have led to a decline in the quality of students' writing. On the other hand, schools pay little attention to writing training. They offer a limited number of courses with writing training and the quality of the courses is not high. Most courses require students to submit only formulaic assignments and few review and research assignments are demanded. Students do not have the opportunity to express their professional ideas in a systematic and logical language, making them with no significant improvement in their writing skills.

At present, the employment situation is severe. On the one hand, many college graduates cannot find suitable jobs, on the other hand, employers are in urgent need of high-quality talents including "penmen". Many employers particularly welcome college graduates who are good at writing. Therefore, training students to be able to write is not only a basic requirement for the comprehensive quality of college students, but also a "shortcut" to enhance their employability.

## 1. Responses to enhance college students' writing skills

### 1.1 Domestic universities

In response to current situation of the weak writing ability of college students, many Chinese universities have made useful explorations to improve their writing ability from different angles.

Renmin University has increased the weight of basic writing courses to ensure their students master the writing basics. A writing test is administered upon entry and students are divided into two levels: universal and advanced. Tiered teaching were carried out for different levels<sup>[1]</sup>. The students in Guilin University of Technology were cultivated their scientific and technical paper writing skills through college students' innovation and entrepreneurship projects. The students are often organized to study the relevant review literature, focusing on the national and international research progress of the project they are applying for before guiding them to apply for the projects. This enables students to understand the current state and develop their own ideas for writing a declaration, which helped them to enhance their awareness and competence in research-based learning<sup>[2]</sup>. In Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, in order to train engineering students to write scientific and technical papers, review papers have been used as a

way to test students' mastery of the course in public elective courses such as "New Developments in Machining". Active practice in improving essay writing skills was provided in the classroom<sup>[3]</sup>.

## 1.2 European and American universities

Outstanding universities abroad place great emphasis on dissertation writing skills<sup>[4]</sup>, with equally stringent requirements in science and technology disciplines. In the USA, for example, more than 123 universities have established dissertation writing courses and have strict assessment requirements. Columbia University and Princeton Engineering College have made thesis writing a compulsory course. Harvard University has explicitly stated the assessment requirements for writing. The situation is similar in countries such as Japan and Singapore.

Foreign universities often use classroom teaching models such as collaborative learning, problem-based discussion and lecture-based teaching. These methods demand students to have a high level of reading and writing skills. Students are required to read a large number of books and provide a considerable amount of independent writing assignments. The assignments carry a considerable weight in course assessment. If the assignments are not passed, they do not even qualify for the final exam. Around 90% of Chinese students (either from international classes or general high schools) say that the biggest challenge they encounter at university (especially in their first year) is reading and writing.

The flexibility of writing curriculum in leading foreign universities is also worthy of consideration. Given the diversity of science and technology majors, writing courses are flexible and varied. For example, writing courses are offered in the first year, writing theory courses and writing practice courses are added in the senior year, and postgraduate students have courses on writing scientific and technical papers. The rich courses provide students with a wide range of options. There are also many years of experience in the development of foreign teaching materials, which is currently unmatched by domestic universities.

In general, most research on writing skills training for Chinese university students is focused on improving students' theoretical level of writing by using relevant courses in the classroom. And the current situation of students being "reluctant to write and writing less" fail to address. It is impossible to develop writing skills from the perspective of students' career development requirements. Thus, there are positive lessons for domestic university to learn from foreign universities.<sup>[5]</sup>

## 2. Practical exploration of whole process writing skills training system in Qilu University of Technology

The whole-process writing ability training has been launched among students from School of Energy and Power Engineering of Qilu University of Technology, which has stimulated students' intrinsic motivation and built a whole-process writing ability training system by carrying out writing training in various ways.

### 2.1 Composition and principles of the training system

The system analyzes the whole process of university life to find the entry point for cultivating students' writing ability. Through university curriculum, daily life of college students, extra-curricular practice, innovative and entrepreneurial activities to design ways to improve writing ability, so as to build a comprehensive writing ability training system, as shown in Figure 1.

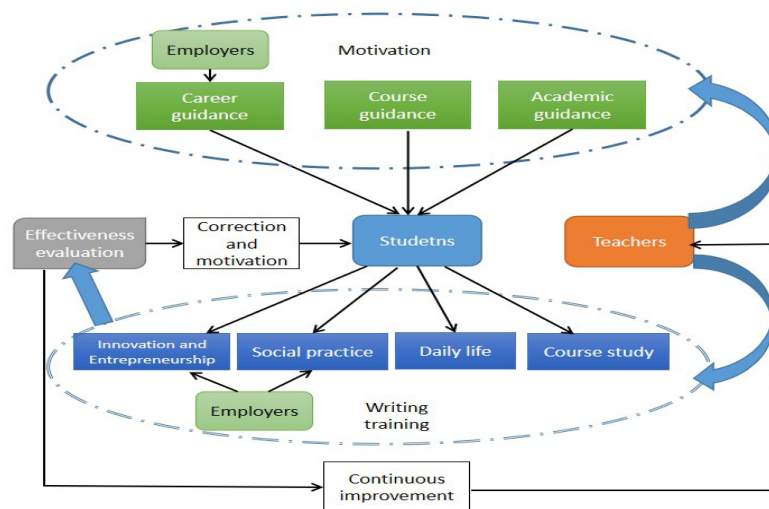


Figure 1 Model of writing skills training system for college students

The system is based on motivating students to consciously improve their writing skills. Firstly, the importance of writing in their academic growth is emphasized through specific guidance from tutors and academic advisors in sessions such as orientation at the beginning of the first year, which makes students consider writing as an important skill. Secondly, the writing ability of college students is required from the perspective of talent demands. The requirements from various positions are investigated through visits and data collection, and are analyzed in conjunction with the career planning of college students, so as to obtain the general and personalized requirements of different positions. The market demand is communicated to students in an effective way so that college students can closely link their future career choices to the development in writing skills. Writing skills are developed in an employment-oriented manner, thus stimulating an endogenous motivation to actively develop them. Thirdly, the writing requirement is embedded in the

curriculum. Some courses are selected and the weight of writing assignments is increased so that students can further understand the importance of writing in the process of completing their coursework.

## 2.2 Effectiveness in practice

This study was conducted with undergraduate students from 2018 and 2019 classes of energy and power specialists (80 students in total). Writing was integrated into the whole process of their university study and life, and they were trained in all aspects. During two years, a series of writing exercises were carried out (shown in Table 1).

Table 1 writing exercises for students

Training category	Training Contents	Percentage of student participation
Daily writing	Academic year program summary, Daily activity summary, Other daily writing exercises	100%
	Party civics assignment	40%
	Class and student council officer promotion training	20%
Practice reports	Winter and summer social practice	100%
	Professional internship reports	100%
Course	General studies electives “Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development” and “Learning to Run from Scratch”	20%
	Compulsory course “Career planning for university students”	100%
	Specialized courses such as “Engineering Thermodynamics” and “Fundamentals of Computer Culture”	100%
Innovation and entrepreneurship	Innovation and entrepreneurship activity report	20%

During the winter break in 2020, training in writing social practice reports was carried out, resulting in the compilation of winter break practice reports such as “My Winter Break” and “Walking through 2019”, respectively. In the first half of 2020, due to the impact of New Crown epidemic, all course writing was conducted online, and in the general elective course “Learning to Run from Scratch”, all 360 students, including 32 students from the College of Energy and Motion, participated in writing training. Their final assignments were compiled into “Running to 2020 from Zero”, which systematically summarized their gains and experiences from the course. With the cooperation of the course teachers, a pilot was conducted in the compulsory courses “Computer Basics” and “Engineering Thermodynamics”, and the students finished their course overviews. In the winter social practice “Village Environment Research”, all students completed their research work as required and formed a compilation of research reports.

Since the project was implemented, each student completed an average of 15,000 words of writing, which was more than five times that of the average amount. Because all kinds of assignments needed to be written basing on personal study and life, the plagiarism rate has dropped significantly and students’ writing ability has been greatly improved. For example, two sophomore students won the gold medal in province competition of Challenge Cup, and 17 students won the third prize in the national competition of social practice and technology for energy conservation and emission reduction.

## 3. Conclusion

This study starts from the requirements of employers for students’ writing ability, addresses the problem of weak writing ability of college students, finds the entry point for cultivating college students’ writing ability from the whole process of students’ growth, and forms a system for training writing ability throughout the college life, which has a positive promotion on improving the adaptability of talent training to social needs.

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