# logo clear long blue.fw**Writing Development Initiative**

# **2021‐2022 Proposal Application Form**

Please answer all of the following questions as clearly and concisely as possible, filling in your responses immediately below each question.

When you have answered the questions, please indicate Chair approval in the space provided at the end of the form, and send the completed version of the form as a Word document to Michael Kaler ([michael.kaler@utoronto.ca](mailto:michael.kaler@utoronto.ca)).

If you would like to see proposals from previous years, there is a selection here: <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/wdi-archives>.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact Michael.

**Deadline:** Proposals must be submitted by **April 16th, 2021.**

1. Please indicate the course code:

ANT313 H5 S

1. Please briefly (150 words maximum) introduce the course, its position in its program, and writing assignments or instruction that have typically been used.

ANT313 introduces East Asian archaeology with focuses on the diverse trajectories for the development of agriculture, sedentism, pottery, social complexity, and state formation in various geographic regions in prehistoric East Asia. The course is one of 12 third-year courses recommended for students pursuing an Anthropology (Sci) major.

Students are required to write an argumentative essay broken down to 2-4 of the following scaffolding writing assignments: (1) essay topic and references (ETR), (2) annotated bibliography or five annotations, (3) thesis statement and essay outline (TSEO), and (4) final essay.

The course provides writing guidelines, marking rubrics, writing exercises, common errors in past student submissions and solutions to guide students through each assignment. Drs. Tyler Evans-Tokaryk and Michael Kaler from RGASC run 1-2 in-class writing workshops each year to familiarize students with the planning, preparing, writing, and grading process of the writing assignments. When schedule permitted, I also provided feedback to early submissions and allowed students to submit a revised manuscript for grading.

(Note: I would be happy to provide the WDI Committee with copies of the teaching materials that I have developed/will develop and have the appropriate materials posted in the WDI Archive if such arrangements are desired).

1. Please indicate the desired learning outcomes for the proposal (as distinct from the course as a whole), and how these learning outcomes relate to the course or program’s learning outcomes: that is, indicate how the proposal complements student learning viewed holistically.

These writing assignments help students to develop:

* an in-depth understanding of the topic they write about in their essay
* an understanding of how anthropologists engage in the research and writing process
* ability to locate high-quality research articles in East Asian archaeology and critically analyze them to determine their reliability to solve relevant academic issues and identify gaps in current knowledge and practice in the field
* ability to select and justify their evidence and structure arguments like an anthropologist
* ability to respond to/engage with published scholarship in the field of anthropology

1. Please provide a basic overview of the strategies that will be used to improve students’ writing.

The strategies developed in the past years with assistance from experts from the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre and TAs effectively improved students’ writing skills. These strategies include (1) providing clear instructions verbally and in writing, (2) sharing marking rubrics with students, (3) sharing a list of common errors in past student submissions and suggesting improvement solutions, (4) running in-class writing workshops with writing exercises to deepen students’ understanding of the writing requirements and enable them to put them into practice, and (5) providing detailed feedback to early submissions. Students expressed appreciation for these supports in their course evaluations and verbal feedback.

Interestingly, though both students and I felt that their writing skills had improved, their grades for the subsequent writing assignments did not necessarily reflect such improvements. I suspect that this was to do with a combination of the following factors: (1) the grades for each assignment reflected the positive outcomes of the relevant guidelines, workshops, and exercises, which reduced the room for score improvement between two assignments; (2) the TAs and I provided feedback but inadequate feedforward (i.e., suggestions for future assignments based on the evaluated piece) on student submissions; (3) the workload for students in this course was too heavy (this is reflected in course evaluation and student verbal feedback). Preparing for tests pulled students away from investing adequate time in their writing assignments, so their writing qualities did not accurately represent their greatest abilities to demonstrate what they had learned. Therefore, I suspect that removing tests from the evaluation scheme will be more conducive to student learning than the typical combination of exams and writing assignments.

Based on these understandings, I will implement the following strategies to improve student writing (**with bold sections indicating those requesting WDI support**).

1) Remove tests and make the four writing assignments the only requirements for the course.

**2) Continue to work with** RGASC experts and **TAs to update and improve the developed materials (e.g., writing guidelines and marking rubrics) and create new writing exercises.**

3) Deliver writing workshops at the best timing, and **request the TA to attend these workshops**.

We have discovered that running the writing workshops about two weeks before the relevant assignment’s due date maximizes student learning).

**4) Provide students with detailed feedforward** in addition to regular feedback and general comments on their submissions.

5) Hold writing retreats for students to work on the assignments and raise questions.

In particular, I or the TA will hold a 45-minute writing retreat each workday in Week 3 to 12. Optional for students, each writing retreat will dedicate 30 mins for writing and 15 mins for Q&A. This will provide the students with the accountability for progressing their writing assignments, give them timely assistance, and form a sense of community. These retreats will be mainly online to allow student participation from anywhere, with at least two retreats both in-person and online per week when it is safe to do so.

To ensure each student will benefit from at least one writing retreat per week, I will (1) explain the purpose, procedure, and expected outcomes of the writing retreat to students in Week 1 and 2, (2) work with students to schedule the retreats to maximize attendances, and (3) encourage students to sign up for specific retreats early on while keeping it flexible and accommodating of student needs to switch to other retreats or skip retreats in the future. I anticipate that once students attend the retreats and have a positive experience, they will keep coming and encourage their peers to participate.

6) Encourage early submissions for feedforward and allow a revised submission for grading.

7) Last but not least, reinforce iteration between writing assignments to motivate students to do their best to incorporate feedback/feedforward into their future submissions, which will also improve students’ retention of skills/knowledge.

For example, I will break the big assignment of an annotated bibliography into (1) essay topic and thesis statement, (2) five annotations spreading over five weeks, and (3) *revised* thesis statement and essay outline.

The iteration strategy has proven fruitful in 2020, at least for students who struggled the most in their first annotations (see details in the appendix). When implemented with the other strategies discussed above, especially with daily/weekly writing retreats and releasing students from competing assignments in the future, I believe it will improve *both* strong and weak students’ writing throughout the semester.

1. As of September 2020, UTM has begun offering a first-year writing course, ISP100H5 *Writing for University and Beyond: Writing About Writing*. For the 2021-2022 school year, this course will be required by the Departments of Anthropology, Chemical and Physical Sciences, Mathematics and Computer Science, and Visual Studies for admission to some of their Specialist and Major programs. If you are proposing a project for a first-year course in any of these Departments, please be sure to consider how the project would complement or reinforce instruction offered in ISP100H5. For further details about ISP100H5, please contact Michael Kaler ([michael.kaler@utoronto.ca](mailto:michael.kaler@utoronto.ca)).

N/A

1. Please indicate how Teaching Assistants will be used in the project.

1) Assist in revising writing requirements, guidelines, and updating marking rubrics.

2) Assist in updating/creating new writing exercises using former students’ writing samples.

3) Hold two weekly writing retreats per week for students to progress the writing assignments and provide immediate guidance during the last 15 minutes of each retreat. (Not requesting WDI support; will use TA hrs previously allocated for grading exams)

4) Grade student submissions with detailed feedforward (in addition to regular feedback and general comments).

5) Write brief reports about common errors and strengths seen in student submissions. (Not requesting WDI support; TAs use their normal TA hrs to do this)

1. Please indicate whether additional TA training (beyond the WDI Writing TA Training session for new TAs) will be required and, if so, indicate the number of hours/TA (maximum 4), content of the training, and its relationship to the proposed student assessment or instruction.

Yes, TAs will need 2 hrs of extra training in giving course-specific feedforward and hosting writing retreats.

1. Please describe the writing tasks incorporated as a direct result of the additional funding requested, and provide details on any writing instruction to be provided that relates to these tasks. If the funding is supporting an increased number of graded writing assignments, please indicate the number of additional words students will write.

As discussed in my responses to Items 2&4, I have made ANT313 a writing-intensive course before this WDI application. The WDI funding will allow me to fully implement the strategies discussed in Item 4 for improving student writing. In particular, the WDI funding will support the extra TA hours needed for the following tasks.

1) Assisting in updating writing guidelines and marking rubrics, revising previous writing exercises, and creating new ones. (20 hrs)

2) Participating in the two 50-min in-class writing workshops. (2 hrs)

The TA will hear the verbal instructions the RGASC experts and I give to students, the concerns/questions students raise, and contribute insights from the TA’s perspective during the workshops.

3) Providing detailed feedforward *in addition to* the standard feedback and general comments on each student submission. (40 hrs)

5 mins x 40\* students x 6 assignments per student (5 annotations + 1 ETR) = 20 hrs

10 mins x 40 students x 1 TSEO = 6.7 hrs

20 mins x 40 students x 1 essay = 13.3

These estimations are based on 40 students. As explained in my answer to Item 9 below, ANT313 has 28-47 end-of-term enrolled students. I will ask the TA to grade up to 40 students’ assignments, and I will grade the rest when the enrolment is above 40.

1. Please clearly state the number of students participating in the project, if the proposed project is course‐based. Indicate the maximum enrolment for the relevant course(s) and the final enrolment in the courses the last time they were offered. Please also indicate the course’s relationship to the broader program of study.

The course capacity is 50 students. The end-of-term enrolments were 45 in 2016, 48 in 2017, 42 in 2018, 24 in 2019, and 29 in 2020. The relatively low enrolments in 2019 and 2020 were primarily due to the heavy workload with increased scaffolding writing assignments without effectively reducing the requirements related to other evaluation methods such as tests.

As explained in my response to Item 4, I plan to remove tests from the evaluation scheme and make the four writing assignments the only requirements for the course. I anticipate removing the tests and implementing the additional support to student writing (such as writing retreats and providing detailed feedforward) will bring the end-of-term enrolment to 40 students or more.

1. Please provide details on how the funded activities will impact and support students, if the proposed project is not restricted to a specific course (or courses).

N/A.

1. Please indicate any other resources you will use to support your project (library, RGASC, online resources, etc.).

As detailed below, I have been collaborating with experts from RGASC and the anthropology librarian liaison to support student writing, and I expect these collaborations to continue.

I have worked closely with Dr. Tyler Evans-Tokaryk in 2015 and Dr. Michael Kaler since 2016 to develop, expand, and improve the writing guidelines, marking rubrics, writing exercises (using former students writing samples with their permissions), common errors in past student submissions and suggested solutions to guide students through each writing assignment.

Drs. Evans-Tokaryk and Kaler have also been running 1-2 writing workshops (50 mins each) in ANT313 each year to familiarize students with the planning, preparing, writing, and grading process of the writing assignments. Besides, Dr. Kaler dedicates drop-in hours to help ANT313 students with the writing assignments.

I have also collaborated with the anthropology librarian liaison Joanna Szurmak to provide students with the most updated reference guideline.

1. Please provide a detailed budget.

As detailed in my response to Items 6-8 and summarized in the table below, ANT313 will need additional 64 TA hours to fully implement the strategies discussed in my response to Item 4.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Tasks | WDI-funded hrs |
| Updating/improving/creating documents | 20 |
| Participating in writing workshops | 2 |
| Providing feedforward on student submissions | 40 |
| Extra TA training | 2 |
|  | **Total: 64** |

1. Please include this sentence in your application: “I confirm that I approve this proposal.”

I confirm that I approve this proposal.

1. Please also include this sentence in your application: “I confirm that my Chair supports this proposal.”

I confirm that my Chair supports this proposal.

**Appendix. Use of iteration strategy** **and its outcomes in 2019 and 2020**

I reinforced the iterative nature of research and writing by assigning two annotated bibliographies instead of one in 2019. As this appeared to be too heavy for students resulting in no clear pattern in student improvement (Tables 1 & 2 below), I revised the relevant assignment to what I thought was an equivalent to one annotated bibliography with multiple steps that maximized iteration in 2020: 5 annotations, 1 ETR, and 1 TSEO. I requested the TA to provide students with detailed feedback on their submissions. To support me with the trial run (with the expectation that I will seek support from WDI in subsequent years), the Department of Anthropology used the Undergraduate Educational Fund to provide me with additional 42 TA hours (on top of the regular 40 hrs) to assist in providing more feedback to 29 enrolled students’ writings.

The mark distribution in 2020 clearly shows the positive effect of iteration with detailed feedback on the annotations, particularly in the second annotations by the students who did relatively poorly in their first annotations (Table 3). The 3rd annotations and later submissions by these students didn’t show clear patterns for improvement. I discussed a combination of reasons that might have led to scores not reflecting student improvements in my response to Item 4; one reason was that students had more competing assignments to juggle later into the semester. Interestingly, the students who did relatively well in their first annotations did not show clear improvement patterns in their 2nd submissions (Table 4), a puzzle worth further investigation in my future teaching. Nonetheless, the fact that the iteration and detailed feedback assisted the students who struggled the most in their first submissions warrants future applications. I believe that implementing the additional strategies discussed in Item 4 will enable participating students to benefit from the iteration strategy and the extra feedforward and demonstrate their improvements more clearly throughout the semester.

**Table 1**: Outcome of 10 lowest score (out of 10 pts) students for the first Annotated Bibliography (2019)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Student | Annotated Bibliography 1 | Annotated Bibliography 2 |
| 1 | 5.1 | 6.55 |
| 2 | 6.05 | 5.8 |
| 3 | 6.1 | 5.1 |
| 4 | 7.2 | 8.2 |
| 5 | 7.2 | 7.35 |
| 6 | 7.25 | 6.85 |
| 7 | 7.4 | 8.15 |
| 8 | 7.4 | 7.4 |
| 9 | 7.6 | 8.5 |
| 10 | 2.25 | 2.6 |

Note: green marks indicate improvement from the previous assignment; red marks indicate a dropback.

**Table 2**: Outcome of 10 highest score (out of 10 pts) students for the first Annotated Bibliography (2019)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Student | Annotated Bibliography 1 | Annotated Bibliography 2 |
| 1 | 8.86 | 9 |
| 2 | 8.15 | 8 |
| 3 | 7.95 | 8.1 |
| 4 | 7.95 | 6.4 |
| 5 | 7.9 | 8.35 |
| 6 | 7.85 | 8.65 |
| 7 | 7.85 | 7.1 |
| 8 | 7.75 | 7.5 |
| 9 | 7.7 | 8 |
| 10 | 7.7 | 6 |

Note: green marks indicate improvement from the previous assignment; red marks indicate a dropback.

**Table 3**: Outcome of 10 lowest score students for the first annotation (2020)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student | Annotation 1 | Annotation 2 | Annotation 3 |
| 1 | 1.51 | 2.32 | 2.42 |
| 2 | 2 | 2.43 | 2.14 |
| 3 | 2.1 | 2.4 | 2.49 |
| 4 | 2.1 | 2.03 | 2.18 |
| 5 | 2.13 | 2.51 | 2.2 |
| 6 | 2.16 | 2.62 | 2.45 |
| 7 | 2.17 | 2.51 | 1.69 |
| 8 | 2.22 | 2.8 | 2.07 |
| 9 | 2.24 | 2.57 | missed |
| 10 | 2.25 | 2.6 | 2.57 |

Note: green marks indicate improvement from the previous assignment; red marks indicate a dropback.

**Table 4**: Outcome of 10 highest score (out of 3 pts) students for the first annotation (2020)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student | Annotation 1 | Annotation 2 | Annotation 3 |
| 1 | 2.75 | 2.35 | 2.75 |
| 2 | 2.72 | 2.6 | 2.75 |
| 3 | 2.62 | 2.5 | 2.02 |
| 4 | 2.58 | 2.59 | 2.68 |
| 5 | 2.49 | 2.16 | 1.47 |
| 6 | 2.47 | 2.68 | 2.53 |
| 7 | 2.42 | 2.2 | 2.36 |
| 8 | 2.38 | 2.47 | 2.1 |
| 9 | 2.35 | 2.29 | 2.31 |
| 10 | 2.33 | 2.32 | 1.4 |

Note: green marks indicate improvement from the previous assignment; red marks indicate a dropback.

*\* Last Updated: January 2021*