

EXAM  
CODE **434**

CATALOG  
NUMBER **ENGx111**

# English Composition

CREDIT  
HOURS

**6**

LEVEL

**LOWER**

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## SECTION ONE

# Preparing for the Exam

## Before You Choose This UExcel Exam

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### Uses for the Examination

- Excelsior College, the test developer, recommends granting six (6) semester hours of lower-level undergraduate credit to students who receive a letter grade of C or higher on this examination. The examination can be used to fulfill the written English requirement (WER) of Excelsior College degree programs.
- Other colleges and universities also recognize this exam as a basis for granting credit or advanced standing.
- Individual institutions set their own policies for the amount of credit awarded and the minimum acceptable grade.

Examinees who have applied to Excelsior College should ask their academic advisor where this exam fits within their degree program.

Examinees **not enrolled** in an Excelsior College degree program should check with the institution from which they wish to receive credit to determine whether credit will be granted and/or to find out the minimum grade required for credit. Those who intend to enroll at Excelsior College should ask an admissions counselor where this exam fits within their intended degree program.

For more information on exam availability and actual testing information, see the [Exam Registration and Information Guide](#).

### Examination Length and Scoring

The examination consists of three (3) extended response questions (writing prompts). You should expect to prepare college-level essays in response to these prompts. Students who receive high ratings tend to have responses that are approximately 500–600 words in length. However, a long response is not automatically a good one. But ratings at the upper end of the scale require demonstration of higher-order analytical and evaluative skills, and the ability to work through complex rhetorical issues in writing. It is difficult to provide good evidence of these skills in few words. Your score will be reported as a letter grade. You will have three (3) hours to complete the exam. Because the English Composition exam requires grading by writing faculty, you will not receive a grade at the time of the exam. Your grade will be sent to you 45 days after the date of your exam. Please plan your transcribing needs accordingly.

Vantage Learning evaluators WILL score your answers to the English Composition exam even if your answers in the prewriting and essay sections are put in the wrong sections.

### Rating Scale

On page 20 is a copy of the rating scale used to grade each of the three responses you will write to the prompts. If you are using the guided learning package for English Composition, the scale appears as Appendix G in the current edition of the Course Guide.

### Time allocations

The recommended times to spend on each prompt are:

Prompt 1 (Argumentation)	1 hour and 10 minutes
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Prompt 2 (Analysis/Response)	1 hour and 10 minutes
Prompt 3 (Revision Strategies)	40 minutes

The content outline, along with the learning outcomes for this exam and recommended textbooks, will serve as your primary resources.

## UExcel Exam Resources

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### Excelsior College Bookstore

The Excelsior College Bookstore offers recommended textbooks and other resources to help you prepare for UExcel exams.

The bookstore is available online at (login required): [www.excelsior.edu/bookstore](http://www.excelsior.edu/bookstore)

### Excelsior College Library

Library services are available to students enrolled in a degree program at Excelsior College. Created through our partnership with the Sheridan Libraries of The Johns Hopkins University, the library provides access to journal articles, books, websites, databases, reference services, and many other resources. To access the Excelsior College Library, visit [www.excelsior.edu/library](http://www.excelsior.edu/library) (login is required). Access to the library is available 24/7.

## Take Charge of Your Own Learning

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At Excelsior College, independent, self-directed study supported by resources we help you find is not a new concept. We have always stressed to students who take exams that they are acting as their own teacher, and that they should spend as much time studying for an exam as they would spend in a classroom and on homework for a corresponding college course in the same subject area.

Begin by studying the content outline contained in this content guide, at its most detailed level. You will see exactly which topics are covered, and where chapters on those topics can be found in the Recommended Resources. You will see exactly where you might need to augment your knowledge or change your approach.

### How Long Will It Take Me to Study?

Study for a UExcel exam is comparable to an equivalent college-level course. As an independent learner, you should study and review as much as you would for the same subject in a campus-based college course. If you already have a background in the subject, you may be able to pass the exam successfully with fewer hours of study. It depends upon the learner as well as the subject, the number of credits (for example, a 6- or 8-credit exam will require more hours of study than a 3-credit exam), and the length of the exam. We strongly encourage you to create a long-term action or study plan, so that you have a systematic approach to prepare for the exam. We've included guidelines for creating such a plan.

### How Can I Create an Effective Long-Term Study Plan?

**1. Determine the time you will require to complete your preparation for this exam.** If you have not studied the subject before, you should plan to budget approximately 45 hours of study time for every credit: 135 hours for 3 credits, 180 hours for 4 credits, 270 hours for 6 credits, and 360 hours for 8 credits. These hours are rules of thumb based on expectations for a student taking a course in the subject; it may take you more or less time, depending on how familiar you are with the material and how easily you absorb the information studying on your own. Aside from the content review, you should then factor in time to search for and use other resources, and to complete any projects and assignments in the study materials that will clarify your understanding of the topics in the content outline (that part in the content guide where the specific areas of study are spelled out). Spend more time on concepts and areas in which you feel you are weak. Totaled, this is approximately the amount of time you should expect to devote to a three-credit, campus-based course. The actual amount of time you require depends on many factors, and will be approximate. If your background is weak, you may need to set aside substantially more than

135–150 hours. If your background is strong, you may budget less time.

Take a few minutes to review the content outline to assess your familiarity with the content. Then, in the space below, write the number of hours you will allocate to complete preparing for the exam.

Hours Required =

## 2. Determine the time you will have available for study.

In self-study, you need structure, as well as motivation and persistence, and a methodical approach to preparation. There is no set class to keep you on task. You have to do that yourself. Construct a time-use chart to record your daily activities over a one-week period. The most accurate way to do this is to complete the chart on a daily basis to record the actual amount of time you spend eating, sleeping, commuting, working, watching television, caring for others and yourself, reading, and everything else in an adult's life. However, if your schedule is regular, you might prefer to complete the chart in one sitting and, perhaps, by consulting your appointment book or planner.

After you have recorded your activities, you will be ready to schedule study periods around these activities or, perhaps, instead of some of them. In the space below, write the number of hours you will be able to set aside for study each week.

Hours Required =

## 3. Divide the first number by the second number.

This will give you the number of weeks you will need to set aside for independent study. For example, if you think you will require 170 hours of study and you have 10 hours available to study each week, divide 170 hours by 10 hours and you will get 17. This means that you will need about 17 weeks to complete this course of study. However, you will also need to allow about a week for review and self-testing. Moreover, to be on the safe side, you should also add two weeks to allow for unforeseen obstacles and times when you know you will not be able to study (e.g., during family illnesses or holidays). So, in this case, you should allot a total of 18 to 19 weeks to complete your study.

## 4. Schedule your examination to coincide with the end of your study period.

For example, if you plan to allow 18 weeks for study, identify a suitable examination date and begin study at least 18 weeks before that date. (The date you begin study assumes that you will have received all of your study materials, particularly textbooks, by that time.)

## 5. Format a long-term study plan.

You will need to use a calendar, planner, or some other tool to format and track your long-term study plan. Choose a method that is convenient and one that keeps you aware of your study habits on a daily basis. Identify the days and exact hours of each day that you will reserve for study throughout your whole independent study period. Check to see that the total number of hours you designate for study on your long-term study plan adds up to the number of hours you have determined you will need to complete this course of study (Step 1).

## 6. Record in your long-term study plan the content you plan to cover during each study period.

Enter the session numbers, review, and examination preparation activities you will complete during each study period. While it is suggested that approximately 160–170 hours of study is required for this exam, each and every student may require different timelines based on their comfort with, and comprehension of, the material.

You now have a tentative personal long-term study plan. Keep in mind that you will have to adjust your study plan, perhaps several times, as you study. It is only by actually beginning to work systematically through the material, using the content outline, that you will be able to determine accurately how long you should allow for each unit.

## What Learning Strategy Should I Use?

The following guidelines are intended to help you acquire the grounding in the knowledge and skills required for successful completion of this examination.

### 1. Approach learning with a positive attitude.

Most students are capable of learning subject content if they devote enough time and effort to the task. This devotion will give you a positive edge and a feeling of control.

### 2. Diligently complete the exact work you specified in your study plan.

Your study plan is being designed for the specific purpose of helping you achieve the learning outcomes for this exam.

### 3. Be an active learner.

You should actively engage in the learning process. Read critically, take notes, and continuously monitor your comprehension. Keep a written record of your progress, highlight content you find difficult to grasp, and seek assistance from someone in your learning community who can help you if you have difficulty understanding a concept.

### 4. Be patient: you may not understand everything immediately.

When encountering difficulty with new material, be patient with yourself and don't give up. Understanding will come with time and further study. Sometimes you may need to take a break and come back to difficult material. This is especially true for any primary source material (original letters, documents, and so forth) that you may be asked to read. The content outline will guide you through the material and help you focus on key points. You will find that many concepts introduced in earlier sessions will be explained in more detail in later sessions.

### 5. Apply your learning to your daily life.

Use insights you gain from your study to better understand the world in which you live. Apply the learning whenever you can. Look for instances that support or contradict your reading on the subject.

### 6. Accommodate your preferred way of learning.

How do you learn best? Common ways to learn are reading, taking notes and making diagrams, and by listening to someone (on video or live). Others learn by doing. Do any of these descriptions apply to you? Or does your learning style vary with the learning

situation? Decide what works for you and try to create a learning environment to accommodate your preferences.

## Study Tips

Become an active user of the resource materials. Aim for understanding rather than memorization. The more active you are when you study, the more likely you will be to retain, understand, and apply the information.

The following techniques are generally considered to be active learning:

- **preview or survey** each chapter
- **highlight or underline text** you believe is important
- **write questions or comments** in the margins
- **practice re-stating content** in your own words
- **relate what you are reading** to the chapter title, section headings, and other organizing elements of the textbook
- **find ways to engage** your eyes, your ears, and your muscles, as well as your brain, in your studies
- **study with a partner or a small group**
- **prepare your review notes** as flashcards or create recordings that you can use while commuting or exercising

When you feel confident that you understand a content area, review what you have learned. Take a second look at the material to evaluate your understanding. If you have a study partner, the two of you can review by explaining the content to each other or writing test questions for each other to answer. Review questions from textbook chapters may be helpful for partner or individual study, as well.

Study smart for your UExcel exam! Success starts with establishing a relationship with your advisor.

## About Test Preparation Services

Preparation for UExcel® exams and Excelsior College® Examinations, though based on independent study, is supported by Excelsior College with a comprehensive set of exam learning resources and services designed to help you succeed. These learning resources are prepared by Excelsior College so you can be assured that they are current and cover the content you are

expected to master for the exams. These resources, and your desire to learn, are usually all that you will need to succeed.

There are test-preparation companies that will offer to help you study for our examinations. Some may imply a relationship with Excelsior College and/or make claims that their products and services are all that you need to prepare for our examinations.

Excelsior College does not endorse the products and services of any tutorial or test preparation firm. We do not review the materials provided by these firms for the content or compatibility of their material and resources with UExcel® exams or Excelsior College Examinations®. No test preparation vendor is authorized to provide admissions counseling or academic advising services, or to collect any payments, on behalf of Excelsior College. Excelsior College does not send authorized representatives to a student's home nor does it review the materials provided by test preparation companies for content or compatibility with Excelsior College examinations.

To help you become a well-informed consumer, we suggest that before you make any purchase decision regarding study materials provided by organizations other than Excelsior College, you consider the points outlined on our website at [www.excelsior.edu/testprep](http://www.excelsior.edu/testprep).

## Exam Preparation Strategies

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Each learner is different. However, all learners should read the content outline in the exam's Content Guide and ensure that they have mastered the concepts. For someone with no prior knowledge of the subject, a rule of thumb is 135 hours of study for a 3-credit exam—this number is just to give you an idea of the level of effort you will need, more or less.

### Content Guides

This content guide is the most important resource. It lists the outcomes, a detailed content outline of what is covered, and textbooks and other study resources. It also has sample questions and suggestions for how to study. Content guides are updated periodically to correspond with changes in particular examinations and in textbook editions. Examinees can download any of the latest free UExcel content guides by visiting the individual exam page or from the list at [www.excelsior.edu/contentguides](http://www.excelsior.edu/contentguides).

### Using the Content Outline

Each content area in the content outline includes the most important sections of the recommended resources for that area. These annotations are not intended to be comprehensive. You may need to refer to other chapters in the recommended textbooks. Chapter numbers and titles may differ among textbook editions.

This content outline contains examples of the types of information you should study. Although these examples are many, do not assume that everything on the exam will come from these examples. Conversely, do not expect that every detail you study will appear on the exam. Any exam is only a broad sample of all the questions that could be asked about the subject matter.

### Using the Sample Questions and Rationales

Each content guide provides sample questions to illustrate those typically found on the exam. These questions are intended to give you an idea of the level of knowledge expected and the way questions are typically phrased. The sample questions do not sample the entire content of the exam and are not intended to serve as an entire practice test.

## Recommended Resources for the UExcel Exam in English Composition

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The resources listed below were selected by the faculty members on the examination committee for use in developing this exam.

Resources listed under “Strongly Recommended” were used by the committee to verify all the questions on the exam. Please refer to the Content Outline to see which parts of the exam are cross-referenced to these resources.

Resources listed under “Optional” provide additional material that may deepen or broaden your understanding of the subject, or that may provide an additional perspective on the exam content.

Textbook resources, both Strongly Recommended and Optional, may be purchased from the [Excelsior College Bookstore](#).

You should allow ample time to obtain the necessary resources and to study sufficiently before taking the exam, so plan appropriately, with an eye towards your own personal learning needs. See the sections in this guide on the Excelsior College Bookstore and the Excelsior College Library, and under Reducing Textbook Costs, to help you secure the Strongly Recommended resources successfully.

## Textbook Editions

Textbook editions listed in the UExcel content guides may not be the same as those listed in the bookstore. Textbook editions may not exactly match up in terms of table of contents and organization, depending upon the edition. However, our team of exam developers checks exam content against every new textbook edition to verify that all subject areas tested in the exam are still adequately available in the study materials. If needed, exam developers will list additional Strongly Recommended resources to ensure that all topics in the exam are still sufficiently covered. Public libraries may have the textbooks you need, or may be able to obtain them for you through interlibrary loan to reduce textbook costs. You may also consider financial aid, if you qualify, to further help defray the steep cost of textbooks. A section on open educational resources (OER) has been included in this guide to help you locate additional, possibly free resources to augment your study.

## Strongly Recommended

Axelrod, Rise B. and Charles R. Cooper.

*The St. Martin's Guide to Writing*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's

Axelrod, Rise B. and Charles R. Cooper. *Sticks and Stones and Other Student Essays*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Barnet, Sylvan, William Burto, and William E. Cain, eds. *Literature for Composition: Essays, Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Allyn & Bacon/Longman.

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

The study materials may be purchased from the [Excelsior College Bookstore](#).

## Optional Resources

The examination development committee did not identify any specific Optional resources for this exam. If you would like to explore topics in more depth, we encourage you to refer to available Open Educational Resources (OER) or look at the Library Resources for English Composition, listed below.

## Exam Resources for English Composition

This content guide is the first place to start to study. Excelsior's Library has also developed an Exam Resources page for the exam, based on this content guide. The [Exam Resources page](#) provides additional materials that complement the resources in this guide

## Practice Exam

There is no corresponding practice exam for English Composition.

## Using this Content Guide and Detailed Study Plan

Are you thinking about taking the English Composition exam? If you have already registered, begin with this Content Guide, which provides a high-level, ready reference of the Exam's main points. The Content Guide contains information ranging from how the exam is structured, to a suggestion of how much time you should spend writing for each question on the exam, to the Official Rating Scale.

To prepare for studying, see Section Five, where staff and faculty have developed a 16-Week Detailed Study Plan. This suggested plan shows how the different learning resources fit together to prepare you for the exam. Laid out with weekly assignments, it also shows how the learning presented in the Course Guide links with the expectations set out in the Official Rating Scale. In Section Three of this guide, there are Sample Questions.

To familiarize you with the various types of literature, and to give you a sampling of the various literary genres you should know, Section Four of this guide provides the Course Reading List, which contains literary selections gleaned from *Literature for Composition: Essays, Fiction, Poetry, and Drama* (Barnet, et al.), one of the Recommended Resources for the exam. (The same exact Reading list appears in the Course Guide, as well, under Appendix A.) The Barnet, et al. textbook, as well as the other two recommended



textbooks, *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing* (Axelrod & Cooper) and *A Writer's Reference* (Hacker), are essential to your study for this exam. Each of these textbooks provides tips and techniques on writing. If you are not experienced in formal argumentative and literary writing, in particular, you will need to consult these textbooks extensively. You are then encouraged to use the selections on the Course Reading List to practice writing all three types of prompts. Once you think you understand the various types of writing, try writing each one in a timed environment. Writing while being timed can sometimes feel awkward, at first, so it's important to practice.

Last, but not least, if you do not have the background, we highly recommend that you seek feedback on your writing, particularly in formal argumentation and literary analysis, from someone who is experienced in these types of writing. This will be essential to your success on the exam.

## Download the Course Guide

Once you have registered for the English Composition exam, download the Course Guide. This guide includes even more detailed information to help you plan your approach, and about writing and the writing process. The Course Guide is broken out into three parts: Part I, Preparing for Study; Part II, the Foundations of Writing: Developing Your Own Writing Process; and Part III, Preparing for and Taking the Examination. In Appendix A of the [Course Guide](#) you will find the same Course Reading List of literary selections for the exam that you saw in the Content Guide. Elsewhere in the Course Guide, you will find sample essay questions and, more importantly, student responses.

## Excelsior College's Online Writing Lab (OWL)

Excelsior College's OWL is designed to provide support for writers as they begin the process of writing for college and as they transition to writing outside of their introductory writing classes or programs. It offers a wide variety of interactive multimedia activities, quizzes, videos, interactive PDFs, and games—all designed to help writers understand important concepts about writing.

It is free, available 24/7, and can be used as either a supplement to or a replacement for traditional textbooks in the field. It supports students in online or traditional classrooms. Find out more about the OWL at [owl.excelsior.edu](http://owl.excelsior.edu)

Please be aware that the OWL does not contain specific instruction for writing about literature. For this task, you will need to read and closely study the sample literature essays in particular in the Barnett, et al., textbook, *Literature for Composition: Essays, Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*.

## Reducing Textbook Costs

Many students know it is less expensive to buy a used textbook, and buying a previous edition is also an option. The Excelsior College bookstore includes a buyback feature and a used book marketplace, as well as the ability to rent digital versions of textbooks for as long as students need them. Students are encouraged to explore these and the many other opportunities available online to help defray textbook costs.

## Open Educational Resources

There are many resources available online free of charge that may further enhance your study for the exam. Known as Open Educational Resources (OER), these may be textbooks, courses, tutorials, or encyclopedias. Any additional OER that you find independently should be used to augment study—not as replacements for the Strongly Recommended resources.

Most sites for university-based OER can be searched through [www.ocwconsortium.org](http://www.ocwconsortium.org) and/or [www.oercommons.org](http://www.oercommons.org).

Sites that specialize in web courses designed by college professors under contract with the website sponsor, rather than in web versions of existing college courses, include:

[www.education-portal.com](http://www.education-portal.com)

[www.opencourselibrary.org](http://www.opencourselibrary.org) (abbreviated as OCL)

We have included specific courses that cover material for one or more UExcel® exams from the sites in the listings above. It's worth checking these sites frequently to see if new courses have been added that may be more appropriate or may cover an exam topic not currently listed.

Sites like Khan Academy ([www.khanacademy.com](http://www.khanacademy.com)) and iTunes U feature relatively brief lessons on very specific topics rather than full courses. Full courses are also available on iTunes U (<http://www.apple.com/education/ipad/itunes-u/>). We have chosen a few courses and collections for this listing.

### Open Online Textbooks

BookBoon

<http://bookboon.com/en/textbooks-ebooks>

Flatworld Knowledge

<http://catalog.flatworldknowledge.com/#our-catalog>

### College Readiness

Khan Academy

<http://www.khanacademy.org/>

Hippocampus

<http://www.hippocampus.org/>

Open Course Library

<http://opencourselibrary.org/collg-110-college-success-course/>

### Study Aids

Education Portal

<http://education-portal.com/>

Khan Academy

<http://www.khanacademy.org/>

Annenberg Learner

<http://www.learner.org/>

OpenCourseWare

<http://ocwconsortium.org/en/courses/search>

OER Commons

<http://www.oercommons.org/>

Open Course Library

<http://www.opencourselibrary.org/>

To achieve academic success, rate yourself at Excelsior College's Self-Regulated Learning Lab. Visit the Diagnostic Assessment & Achievement of College Skills site at <https://srl.daacs.net>

It's free!

### Tips and Techniques for Success

- Read the textbooks, content guide, and the course guide
- Do the practice essays in this course guide (but not until you've done the reading!)
- Use a writing journal (print or electronic)
- Find a "study buddy" for writing practice
- Trade written essays with others
- Practice getting feedback on your writing
- Practice giving feedback on others' writing
- Sharpen your typing skills
- Practice typing responses to each essay in a timed environment
- Visit The Excelsior College Online Writing Lab (OWL) at: <https://owl.excelsior.edu/>  
It's free and interactive!

# Description of Exam

## General Description of the Examination

The UExcel English Composition examination is based on material typically taught in an introductory, six-credit, two-semester course in literature-based English Composition, such as English Literature and Composition, Writing Academic English, or Writing English for Academic Purposes.

The examination measures the ability to persuade a reader; to understand and compose an extended argument; to analyze and respond appropriately to written texts including literary texts; to use and document sources; and to recognize and write about revision and editing processes. The examination also measures the ability to organize knowledge, ideas, and information; to use rhetorical strategies such as narration, illustration, explanation, description, comparison and contrast, division, classification, and cause and effect in appropriate ways; to choose a tone and point of view appropriate for a specified rhetorical situation; to develop and maintain a controlling idea and a coherent organization; and to write within the rhetorical, syntactic, and mechanical conventions of Standard Written American English.

No previous knowledge of literature-based English composition is required before beginning study for this exam. However, you will be expected to have gained that knowledge before taking the exam, when you will need to demonstrate proficient skill writing in the form of traditional literary analysis. Even if you feel you are strong in this area of writing, we recommend that you study the materials (including the textbook) and practice writing the types of questions on the exam, especially the one on literary analysis. Most of all, you will need to get feedback on all your essay samples from a writing professional.

## Learning Outcomes

After you have successfully worked your way through this Content Guide, the accompanying Course Guide, the Course Reading List (found in both the content and course guides), the textbooks, and practiced writing for all three types of tasks—and received professional feedback on your writing—for when you take the exam in a timed environment, you should be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

1. Develop and maintain a clear controlling idea (thesis) and coherent organization. (Aligns to GECC 1.2)
2. Organize knowledge, ideas, and information in support of a thesis or proposition. (Aligns to GECC 1.2)
3. Recognize rhetorical strategies and writing modes (narration, description, persuasion, argumentation, and so forth) and use them in appropriate ways. (Aligns to GECC 1.2)

4. Establish and maintain a tone and a point of view appropriate for a specific audience and rhetorical situation. (Aligns to GECC 1.2)
5. Write within the rhetorical, syntactical, and mechanical conventions of standard written American English. (Aligns to GECC 1.2)
6. Write at an appropriate length and level of detail for the task requirements of a specific prompt (Aligns to GECC 1.2 and GECC 4.2):
  - a) Compose an argument using written sources and personal experience to persuade the reader.
  - b) Analyze a literary text (story, essay, poem, drama) in order to illuminate and appreciate the complexity of ideas and human experiences presented.
  - c) Critique an essay written by someone else by analyzing and evaluating a draft and writing an evaluation that would help the writer revise the draft.

### **General Education Career Competencies addressed in this exam:**

GECC-1.2: Oral and Written communication: Deliver written communication with appropriate content, organization, syntax, mechanics, and style for the audience and purpose.

GECC-4.1: Cultural Diversity and Expression: Analyze human thought, creative expression, or cultural representations within their contexts.

## **Description of Questions**

The English Composition exam includes three types of writing tasks. Each task is introduced by a prompt that describes the task. Each type of task requires you to demonstrate a number of interrelated writing abilities within that task.

### **Argumentation (suggested time: 1 hour 10 minutes)**

This type of task tests your ability to compose an argument using written sources and personal experience to persuade a reader. It tests your ability to assert a thesis (a position, proposal, evaluation, cause/effect, speculation, or interpretation); argue the assertion giving reasons and support; and develop counterarguments, acknowledging and accommodating the reader's concerns and refuting the reader's objections. It also tests your ability to integrate material into a text by quoting, paraphrasing, and crediting a source. You are directed to read a text presented in the prompt and to construct an argumentative essay that includes an introduction (with thesis statement), supporting arguments, counterarguments (refutation), and conclusion. You may either side with the argument in the presented text or take an opposing position. You are expected to include at least one quote and paraphrase from the text presented in the prompt and to use a standard system of citation (MLA, APA, or Chicago style).

### **Analysis and Response (suggested time: 1 hour 10 minutes)**

This type of task tests your ability to analyze a literary text in order to illuminate and appreciate the complexity of ideas and human experiences presented. You are directed to read an extract (up to 250 words for poetry and 800 words for prose texts) from the course's reading list or a short (250 words or less) poem not on the reading list. Then, you are asked to analyze the text using the concepts of literary analysis, including particular tools specified in the task. These may include, but are not limited to, irony, paradox, metaphor, characterization, point of view, setting, plot, story frame, sound patterns, and tone. Your response has two parts:

**Pre-writing:** Prepare for your formal essay using the tools of analysis and interpretation. Your pre-writing is required and will count toward your grade. This analytic pre-writing need not be written in complete sentences. It may be an outline, list notes, or exploratory (journal-type) writing, and should take no more than about 10 minutes to compose

**Formal essay:** You are then directed to write an essay in which you describe and comment upon the complexity of ideas and human experiences presented, using the results of your analyses as part of the evidence for your claims.

### **Revision Strategies (suggested time: 40 minutes)**

This type of task tests your ability to recognize and write about the effectiveness and correctness of a piece of writing that has a specific speaker, audience, and purpose. The task examines awareness of the writing process; understanding of strategies for revising; and knowledge of the effective use of rhetorical, syntactical, and mechanical conventions of Standard Written American English.

You are directed to read a sample of writing and to write an essay in which you critique the writing sample. In the essay, you are directed to offer an overall assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of a piece of writing from large-scale arrangement and selection of ideas to the fine points of editing and polishing; to assess the appropriateness of the form of writing chosen; to identify patterns of error in punctuation, spelling, usage, sentence structure, etc., and provide examples of each kind of error you identify; to comment on issues that the writer should consider as he or she revises the piece; and to offer specific advice for revision that would make it a more effective piece of writing. You should plan to spend 50% of your efforts on the content and structure of the writing, 30% on the style of writing, and 20% on the mechanics in the writing.

## SECTION THREE

# Sample Questions

The questions that follow will not be on the exam. The essay questions that follow illustrate those typically found on this examination. These sample questions are included to familiarize you with the types of questions you will find on the examination. Space has been left after each question for you to practice writing or organizing an answer if you wish to do so. The course guide in the guided learning package includes scoring guidelines and examples of student answers for each type of writing task, with ratings and commentary.

### **Argumentation**

Using the text that appears on the following page—by Walter S. Minot, an English professor, writing in the *Christian Science Monitor* (November 22, 1988)—construct an argumentative essay. In your essay, respond to the issue of the degree to which high school students work to earn money for what Minot considers luxuries, decreasing their time available for study.

You will need to:

- summarize the arguments so that an educated audience will understand them (you should assume your audience does not have access to the text);
- assert a thesis (a position, proposal, evaluation, speculation, or interpretation);
- argue the thesis by giving reasons;
- identify and respond to counterarguments;
- integrate material from the sample text into your own essay by quoting and paraphrasing;
- cite each quotation and paraphrase using a standard system of citation (MLA, APA, or Chicago style).

## “Students Who Push Burgers”

A college freshman squirms anxiously on a chair in my office, his eyes avoiding mine, those of his English professor, as he explains that he hasn't finished his paper, which was due two days ago. “I just haven't had the time,” he says.

“Are you carrying a heavy course load?”

“Fifteen hours,” he says—a normal load.

“Are you working a lot?”

“No, sir, not much. About 30 hours a week.”

“That's a lot. Do you have to work that much?”

“Yeah, I have to pay for my car.”

“Do you really need a car?”

“Yeah, I need it to get to work.”

This student isn't unusual. Indeed, he probably typifies today's college and high school students. Yet in all the lengthy analysis of what's wrong with American education, I have not heard employment by students being blamed.

But such employment is a major cause of educational decline. To argue my case, I will rely on memories of my own high school days and contrast them with what I see today. Though I do have some statistical evidence, my argument depends on what anyone over 40 can test through memory and direct observation.

When I was in high school in the 1950s, students seldom held jobs. Some of us babysat, shoveled snow, mowed lawns, and delivered papers, and some of us got jobs in department stores around Christmas. But most of us had no regular source of income other than the generosity of our parents.

I attended a public high school, while [my daughter] attended a Roman Catholic preparatory school whose students were mainly middle class. By the standards of my day, her classmates did not “have to” work. Yet many of them were working 20 to 30 hours a week. Why?

They worked so that they could spend \$60 to \$100 a week on designer jeans, rock concerts, stereo and video systems, and, of course, cars. They were living lives of luxury, buying items on which their parents refused to throw their hard-earned money away. Though the parents would not buy such tripe for their kids, the parents somehow convinced themselves that the kids were learning the value of money.

How students spend their money is their business, not mine. But as a teacher, I have witnessed the effects of employment. I know that students who work all evening aren't ready for studying when they get home from work. Moreover, because they work so hard and have ready cash, they feel that they deserve to have fun—instead of spending all their free time studying.

Clearly individual students will pay the price for lack of adequate time studying, but the problem goes beyond the individual. It extends to schools and colleges that are finding it difficult to demand quantity or quality of work from students.

Perhaps the reason American education has declined so markedly is because America has raised a generation of part-time students. And perhaps our economy will continue to decline as full-time students from Japan and Europe continue to out-perform our part-time students.

Reprinted with permission from Walter S. Minot, “Students Who Push Burgers,”  
*Christian Science Monitor* 22 Nov. 1988.

## Analysis/Response

Closely read the poem on the next page: “Musée des Beaux Arts,” written by W. H. Auden.

Your written response to this poem requires 1) pre-writing and 2) a formal essay.

Each is explained below.

### 1) Pre-writing

The pre-writing portion requires you to use the tools of close reading and explication in order to prepare for the formal essay. Your pre-writing need not be in complete sentences; you may compose an outline, notes, or exploratory (journal) writing. Please make sure your writing is legible.

In this portion of your response you must:

- identify the subject of the poem;
- note the poem’s relationship to the painting by Brueghel (Do the poem and the referenced painting treat the same subject?);
- consider the structure of this two-stanza poem (How does the first stanza prepare the reader for the second stanza?);
- comment on the relationship of stanza/line with sentence/punctuation;
- note the poem’s diction and imagery;
- identify the tone of the poem (What is the speaker’s attitude toward the subject?);
- consider the moral or philosophical stand the speaker takes;
- consider what type of religious or philosophical belief, if any, underlies the poem.

### 2) Formal Essay

Write an essay in which you describe and comment upon Auden’s depiction of the certainty the speaker finds in the art of the Old Masters regarding human suffering. Use your pre-writing response to support your ideas in the essay. Be careful that the essay is not simply a summary of the work or merely a personal narrative of your own experiences. Your essay may refer to your personal insights or to related issues in other literary works, but the focus should be on the ideas and experiences suggested by Auden’s poem. In your formal essay, be sure to do the following:

- refer to the author and title of the work early in your essay;
- assume that your audience are educated people who have not read this poem;
- present a clear thesis;
- choose an organizational plan appropriate to your ideas;
- include as support for your ideas aspects of the poem identified in your pre-writing;
- include concrete supporting details such as examples of the literary concepts you discuss and specific references to the text of the poem;
- cite each quotation and paraphrase using a standard system of citation (MLA, APA, or Chicago style).



## Musée des Beaux Arts

*Lines on Pieter Brueghel the Elder's painting, "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus"*

About suffering they were never wrong,  
The Old Masters: how well they understood  
Its human position; how it takes place  
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;  
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting  
For the miraculous birth, there always must be  
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating  
On a pond at the edge of the wood:  
They never forgot  
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course  
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse  
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.  
  
In Brueghel's *Icarus*, for instance: how everything turns away  
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may  
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,  
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone  
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green  
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen  
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,  
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

Auden, W.H., "Musée des Beaux Arts." 1938. *Literature for Composition: Essays, Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. Ed. Sylvan Barnet, William Burto, and William E. Cain, 7th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Allyn & Bacon/Longman, 2005.

## Revision Strategies

A college is considering a graduation requirement mandating a minimum number of unpaid community service hours for all undergraduates. The community service hours would be devoted to helping individuals, organizations, and agencies in the community. While the school has not determined details such as the number of required hours, the amount of school supervision, the necessary relevance to academic majors, etc., it looks as if the administration and most of the faculty are in favor of instituting some type of community service requirement.

Some students are against required service hours and have drafted a letter to the school's administration providing reasons why the requirement should not be adopted.

Write an essay in which you critique the letter that appears on the next page. In your essay, you must do the following:

- offer an overall assessment of the strengths, from large-scale arrangement and selection of ideas to the fine points of editing and polishing;
- offer an overall assessment of the weaknesses, from large-scale arrangement and selection of ideas to the fine points of editing and polishing;
- assess the appropriateness of the form of writing chosen for the audience and purpose;
- identify patterns of error in punctuation, spelling, word form, usage, sentence structure, etc., and provide examples of each kind of error you identify;
- comment on any other matters that you think the writer should consider as he or she revises the letter;
- offer specific advice for revising the letter that you think would make it a more effective piece of writing.

Dear Administrators:

We, a group of students here want to urge you not to add a community service requirement. There are many reasons why community service should not be mandatory: college students are already too busy, community service is a waste of time, your unfairly making us, community service is only valuable if it is provided voluntarily, and, because we're so busy, many of us will do a bad job.

We aren't obligated to help the community, and it really doesn't even need help from us. And requiring community service lessens the meaning and the benefit to the student. It's useful only if it's voluntary.

If you make college students volunteer in the community some of us will do a good job, but many of them will fail to show up. Or will do work poorly. This will reflect badly on the school. It will provide negative P.R.

Community service seems pointless for us. Our job is to get an education, and that's what we're paying for, not to help others, that's what we pay taxes for. And we're not yet ready to help others — we don't have the skills or knowledge. Once we graduate and get jobs, we'll be able to help if we want to.

Now students are too busy. They're in class at least fifteen hours a week, and many of them have long labs, too. They're involved in collegiate and intramural athletics and many of them work too. They need time to relax and unwind to watch TV and refresh themselves. We've also got to have time for social activities. Belonging to organizations, parties to go to, and having dates are among the most important parts of college life. This is their time to have fun — to relax and socialize. To still be kids before we go out into the real world. We need to develop our social skills. We should be allowed to take advantage of this time and enjoy ourselves and should not be made to work at community service.

Community service is slave labor. We can't be made to work without pay it's un-American. It's also unfair because those who run the school don't do community service. And the faculty doesn't do community service, so we shouldn't either.

In conclusion, we should be concentrating on our studies to prepare for life in today's society. A community service requirement would make it harder to do that. For that reason we urge you not to make community service a requirement.

Sincerely,

Outraged students

## SECTION FOUR

# Course Reading List

You are expected to be familiar with the specific readings listed below and with the types of literary analysis that might be applied to each. If one of these works is used in an Argumentation or Analysis/Response prompt on your exam, you will be accountable for drawing on your prior study in preparing your answer. For example, you may be provided with an excerpt in the exam, but be expected to remember elements of the entire piece in composing your response.

*from the Barnett et al. text:*

### Essays

- Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail
- Brent Staples, Black Men and Public Space

### Fiction

- Toni Cade Bambara, The Lesson
- Kate Chopin, The Story of an Hour
- William Faulkner, A Rose for Emily
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, Young Goodman Brown
- Ernest Hemingway, Cat in the Rain
- James Joyce, Araby
- Flannery O'Connor, A Good Man is Hard to Find
- John Updike, A&P
- Eudora Welty, A Worn Path

### Poetry

- Sherman Alexie, On the Amtrak
- Julia Alvarez, Woman's Work
- Gloria Anzaldúa, To Live in the Borderlands Means You
- Matthew Arnold, In Harmony with Nature
- William Blake, Infant Joy; Infant Sorrow; The Sick Rose; The Tyger
- Emily Bronte, Spellbound
- Gwendolyn Brooks, We Real Cool, Kitchenette Building

- Robert Browning, My Last Duchess
- e.e. cummings, in Just-
- Emily Dickinson, I'm Nobody! Who are you?; There's a certain Slant of Light
- John Donne, A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning
- T. S. Eliot, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock
- Robert Frost, Design; The Need of Being Versed in Country Things
- Louise Gluck, The School Children
- Robert Hayden, Those Winter Sundays
- Seamus Heaney, Digging
- Langston Hughes, I, Too [Sing America]
- Yusef Komunyakaa, Facing It
- Christopher Marlowe, The Passionate Shepherd to His Love
- Andrew Marvell, To His Coy Mistress
- Edna St. Vincent Millay, Love is not All: It is not Meat nor Drink
- Pat Mora, Immigrants
- Mary Oliver, The Black Walnut Tree
- Sylvia Plath, Daddy
- Sir Walter Raleigh, The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd
- William Shakespeare, Sonnet 73; Sonnet 116
- Walt Whitman, A Noiseless Patient Spider; I Hear America Singing
- William Wordsworth, The Solitary Reaper

### Drama

- Susan Glaspell, Trifles
- Lorraine Hansberry, A Raisin in the Sun

*from the St. Martin's Guide to Writing:*

### Chapter 4:

- Anastasia Toufexis, Love: The Right Chemistry

### Chapter 6:

- Jessica Statsky, Children Need to Play, Not Compete
- Amitai Etzioni, Working at McDonald's

**Chapter 7:**

- Patrick O'Malley, More Testing, More Learning

**Chapter 9:**

- Stephen King, Why We Crave Horror Movies

**Chapter 12:**

- Martin Luther King, Jr., An Annotated Sample from "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

Official Rating Scale for English Composition

Rating Dimensions		Scoring Key					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
Use of Written Language	<input type="checkbox"/> No response* <input type="checkbox"/> Response cannot be evaluated due to lack of content or off topic.*	<input type="checkbox"/> Organization is lacking or ineffective. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak or confusing style <input type="checkbox"/> Many major grammatical and syntactical errors that impede meaning <input type="checkbox"/> Many major mechanical errors that impede meaning	<input type="checkbox"/> Attempt at organization is evident. <input type="checkbox"/> Weak or confusing style <input type="checkbox"/> A few grammatical and syntactical errors that impede meaning <input type="checkbox"/> A few mechanical errors that impede meaning	<input type="checkbox"/> Competent organization <input type="checkbox"/> Competent style <input type="checkbox"/> Grammatical and syntactical errors that do not impede meaning <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical errors that do not impede meaning	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear organization <input type="checkbox"/> Skillful style <input type="checkbox"/> Few grammatical and syntactical errors, and they do not impede meaning <input type="checkbox"/> Few mechanical errors, and they do not impede meaning	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative, clear organization <input type="checkbox"/> Sophisticated style <input type="checkbox"/> Few grammatical and syntactical errors, and they do not impede meaning <input type="checkbox"/> Few, if any, mechanical errors, and they do not impede meaning	
	<input type="checkbox"/> No response* <input type="checkbox"/> Response cannot be evaluated due to logical contradiction, failure to make a coherent statement, or off topic.*	<input type="checkbox"/> Arguments and supporting evidence are attempted, but are neither convincing nor coherent. <input type="checkbox"/> Thesis (stated or implied) may be attempted but fails to do several of the following: make writer's opinion clear; focus on prompt's requirements; appear near beginning and/or end of essay; qualify its language.	<input type="checkbox"/> Arguments and supporting evidence are present, but either or both may be weak and poorly sequenced. <input type="checkbox"/> Some arguments may be fallacious or ill considered. <input type="checkbox"/> Thesis (stated or implied) appears near beginning and/or end of essay, makes writer's opinion fairly clear but fails to some extent to address prompt's requirements or fails to qualify, in several cases, its language.	<input type="checkbox"/> Arguments and supporting evidence are appropriately and adequately sequenced. <input type="checkbox"/> Thesis (stated or implied) appears near beginning and/or end of essay, makes writer's opinion adequately clear, addresses adequately the prompt's requirements, but may fail, in a few cases, to qualify its language	<input type="checkbox"/> Arguments and supporting evidence are well chosen and well sequenced. <input type="checkbox"/> Thesis (stated or implied) appears near beginning and/or end of essay, makes writer's opinion very clear and addresses thoroughly prompt's requirements, but may fail, in one or two cases, to qualify its language.	<input type="checkbox"/> Arguments and supporting evidence are well chosen, well sequenced, and sophisticated. <input type="checkbox"/> Thesis (stated or implied) appears near beginning and/or end of essay, makes writer's opinion completely clear, addresses thoroughly and inventively the prompt's requirements, qualifies language in all cases carefully and deftly.	
Use of Argument and Support	<input type="checkbox"/> No response* <input type="checkbox"/> No understanding of the key concepts	<input type="checkbox"/> Thesis (stated or implied) does not mention required key concepts. <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of key concepts is minimal. <input type="checkbox"/> Development does not consistently follow the required key concepts.	<input type="checkbox"/> Key concepts either do not appear in thesis (stated or implied) or are misunderstood. <input type="checkbox"/> Key concepts are partially developed, but unfocused.	<input type="checkbox"/> Key concepts are clearly and adequately understood and developed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding is clear and insightful; key concepts are developed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding is sophisticated and complex; key concepts are well developed.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> No response <input type="checkbox"/> No understanding of the key concepts	<input type="checkbox"/> Thesis (stated or implied) does not mention required key concepts. <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding of key concepts is minimal. <input type="checkbox"/> Development does not consistently follow the required key concepts.	<input type="checkbox"/> Key concepts either do not appear in thesis (stated or implied) or are misunderstood. <input type="checkbox"/> Key concepts are partially developed, but unfocused.	<input type="checkbox"/> Key concepts are clearly and adequately understood and developed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding is clear and insightful; key concepts are developed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding is sophisticated and complex; key concepts are well developed.	

\*If rating is one (1), please grid one of the following on the scoring sheet:

- No response (a blank or nearly blank paper)
- Did not address the question asked or off topic.

## SECTION FIVE

# 16-Week Detailed Study Plan

NOTE: This detailed study plan is based on the 2016 Course Guide and its associated textbook editions. If you are using different editions, you may need to adjust chapter and page references accordingly.

### Week 1: Getting the Most Out of Your Course Guide

1. To prepare for this course
  - a. Read *Course Guide* for English Composition, Part I: Preparing for Study.
  - b. Set up a notebook or computer folder for a Journal. Add a section called How to Study and a second section called Pre-Reading.
  - c. Be sure you have all the books and other materials you need to begin.
  - d. Choose a reader, a person or a group willing to read your writing and offer feedback. (See *Course Guide* for suggestions about choosing a reader.)
  - e. Preview the essays, fiction, poetry, and drama on the Course Reading List (*Course Guide*, Appendix A). Note in your journal Pre-Reading section comments or questions that you may want to address when you reach Units 7–10, which focus on these works of literature. Space these pre-readings over Weeks 1–7.
2. To begin to manage your time
  - a. Read the suggested allocations of study time in Appendix A of this detailed study plan. Compare these with the time you have available when you prepare your Long-Term Study Plan.

- b. Read the instructions and prepare your Plan. Once your Plan is complete, copy or paste it into the How to Study section of your Journal.
  - c. Post a copy of your Plan near your calendar.
3. To begin analyzing the test questions
  - a. Read the descriptions of the questions in this *UExcel Content Guide* for English Composition (not the *Course Guide*).
  - b. Read *St. Martin's Guide to Writing, Essay Examinations*.
  - c. Outline in your How to Study journal section what each question described in the *Content Guide* asks you to do. Leave generous space after each requirement: you will be adding information as you discover ways to respond to these requirements.
  - d. Read through the sample questions in this *Content Guide* and add any additional requirements that you notice to your outlines.
4. To begin to study

Preview the sections of the *Course Guide* that give you specific help with answering each of the exam questions.

  - a. Read through Unit 11: Writing Essay Examinations carefully in order to see what preparations you will need to make to take the English Composition exam. Make a note to yourself to refer back to the How to Study section of your journal when you reach Unit 11. You will find the outlines very useful.
  - b. Unit 12: Question One—Argumentation

- See *Course Guide*: the Sample Argumentation Prompt 1. As you work your way through Units 2–7, you will become familiar with the concepts of thesis, counterargument, and system of citation. You will apply them under examination conditions.
  - See *Course Guide*: this section of Unit 12 proposes that you follow three stages of writing when you are working under examination conditions. These condense the standard steps of the writing process that you will study in Unit 1. Units 2–3 and 5–10 give you essay assignments to practice on until the writing process becomes second nature. You will then be able to, under the pressure of an examination, follow the steps quickly and confidently.
  - Read the rest of Unit 12 to see how you will later prepare to answer Question One: Argumentation.
- c. Unit 13: Question Two–Analysis and Response
- See *Course Guide*: The chart focuses on the four types of literature that you will be asked to analyze. As you work your way through Units 7–10, you will become familiar with the concepts of tone, irony, and genre. You will be prepared to apply them under examination conditions.
  - Read through the rest of Unit 12 to see how you will later prepare to answer Question Two: Analysis and Response.
- d. Unit 14: Question Three–Revision Strategies
- See *Course Guide*. Read the instructions, noticing references to the notes you made in your journal and on your drafts and to helpful comments others made about your writing. Knowing that you will later write a response that offers another student a plan for revision will suggest the importance

of practicing with such plans (described under Revising in *St. Martin’s Guide to Writing*) as you revise your own essays in Units 2–3 and 5–10. In addition, you will find that the aids included under “edit and proofread” at the ends of Units 2–3 and 4–6 will help you spot errors of sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation in the writing sample to which you will respond under exam conditions.

- Read the rest of Unit 14 to see how you will later prepare to answer Question Three – Revision Strategies.

Complete this week’s study by carefully reading the introduction to Part II: *Course Guide*. Note, especially, that:

- An English Composition course does not require you to master a large body of knowledge.
- An English Composition course does require you to read with understanding.
- An English Composition course does require you to write in response to this reading with logic and clarity.

Congratulations! You’ve finished your first week of study. Now, you are ready to begin Unit 1, where you will focus on the skills you will need to answer the essay questions on the English Composition examination.



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## Week 2: Course Guide Unit 1

We offer the following suggestions for getting the most out of the Unit 1 assignments. Most of these suggestions will apply to later units as well.

1. **Unit Objectives/Self-Testing:** Each unit begins with a list of Unit Objectives. These are abilities you need to master before going on to the next unit. A valuable introduction to each unit is to enter the list of Unit Objectives in your journal, leaving space to fill in comments as you work through the unit. As you complete the unit, use the list on the unit's title page to see if you are ready to go on.
2. **Write the letter to your reader, assigned in the *Course Guide* early in the week and send it to your reader so you will get it back in plenty of time.**
3. **Compare the list** of stages of the learning process you followed in your letter to your reader with the list of stages described in the *Course Guide*. Are there any changes you might make in your personal writing process or are you fairly satisfied with your way of working?
4. **List** in your journal some invention strategies (ways of getting ideas for writing) that you think might help when you are planning an essay for an examination.
5. **Consider the responses** when your letter comes back from your reader. Do they suggest ways that you might have assessed your audience more thoughtfully or made your topic more interesting and detailed? Do the responses suggest ways in which your personal writing process needs revision? Answer the reader in your journal. Were the responses from your reader too vague to help? If so, ask your reader for more detail. (If you have not received your letter yet, remember to return to a thoughtful analysis of your letter while you are studying Unit 2).
6. **Administer a self-test** at the end of every unit, using the unit objectives on the title page. If you are not sure that you have mastered each unit objective, review the relevant pages in *St. Martin's Guide to Writing* and other texts used in the particular unit. It is important to recognize that each unit builds on the previous unit, so learning everything you need to learn in one unit before going on to the next will help you be successful. File your self-tests for future study.

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## Weeks 3 and 4: Course Guide Units 2–3

Units 2–3 focus on the basic writing you will need to master in order to answer all three questions on the *English Composition exam*. At the beginning of your study period on each of these units:

**Review your outlines** of requirements for answering the questions. As you work your way through the units, note in the space after each requirement skills that you have gained that will help you write well-informed, well-phrased answers.

Unit 2 guides you through the steps leading to an essay based on personal experience. Writing this essay will give you familiarity with a lively, detailed writing style that you can use in order to respond to the requirements of Question One. For Question One, you will need to offer evidence for your claims and personal experience often gives very persuasive evidence. (For an example of a essay that puts such experience to good use.)

**Units 2–3 require careful time management:**

1. **Let your reader know** before you begin your first study session that you will be sending a draft. Make sure the reader will be available.
2. **Allocate an hour or two** to each step in the first part of the writing process from **Search Your Memory** to **Prepare to Write**.
3. **Set aside a multi-hour block** of time to draft your essay when you reach the **Write** step.
4. **Let your draft rest** a day or two before beginning to revise.

**Units 2–3 require careful revision based on your reader’s comments:**

1. Outline your reader’s comments briefly in your journal. If your reader seems too critical, remember that the criticism is directed at your draft, not at you. Use suggestions that help and set aside the rest.
2. Revise your drafts, following the plans for revision on the assigned pages in *St. Martin’s Guide to Writing*. When you have finished, file the drafts in a separate section of your journal. They will be useful later when you practice essay answers, especially for Question Three–Revision Strategies.

**Units 2–3 offer good opportunities to review grammar and punctuation.** These exercises will improve your own writing and will help you offer suggestions for revision when you answer Question Three–Revision Strategies.

**Units 2–3 require careful self-evaluation of your essays and of your grasp of unit objectives:**

1. Fill out the chart on the final page of each unit. Consider what you have learned and make further revisions to your essays before filing them for future reference.
2. Administer a self-test at the end of each unit. File your self-test for future study.

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### **Week 5: Course Guide Unit 4**

Unit 4 focuses on the research and documentation skills you will need to answer Questions One and Two on the exam. At the beginning of your study session for this unit, review your outlines of the requirements for these essays:

1. Note that these two questions ask you to always “cite each quotation and paraphrase using a standard system of citation (APA, Chicago, or MLA style).” If you have not already done so, add this requirement to your outline.
2. Become familiar with the citation format of the style you choose.

3. Recognize that the *English Composition exam* requires only in-text citations (APA and MLA) or footnotes (Chicago). It does not ask you to furnish the bibliographical entries that come at the end of an essay or research paper.

**Unit 4 requires careful time management:**

1. Begin ahead of your first actual study session to choose a topic for research.
2. Plan a trip to a physical library. Call ahead for hours and check to see if a librarian might be available to help you navigate through both the physical books and periodicals and the library’s electronic resources. Also, if you are an enrolled student, orient yourself to the Excelsior College Library, especially if you are unable to visit a physical library.
3. Unit 4 gives you a good opportunity to become comfortable with your chosen citation style. After working through the unit, practice your citation style on quotations and paraphrases until the style becomes second nature.
4. Self-Test: As you have done in previous units, give yourself a test to make sure you have mastered the learning objectives on the title page of Unit 4. Review any information or skills about which you are uncertain.

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### **Weeks 6 to 8: Course Guide Units 5–7**

Units 5–7 focus on the skills you will need to master in order to answer, in particular, *English Composition exam* Question One - Argumentation. At the beginning of your study period on each of these units:

Review your outline of requirements for answering Question One. As you work your way through the units, note in the space after the requirement, skills you have gained that will help you write well-informed, well-phrased answers.

For example, Unit 5 guides you through the steps leading to an essay in which you explain a concept, while Unit 6 guides you through the steps leading to an essay in which you argue a position. Writing these two essays will give you familiarity with two types of argumentative writing often required for Question One on the examination. For Question One, you will need to master all the skills listed in Sample Argumentation Prompt 1 (*Course Guide*). For an example of an essay that puts such skills to good use, see Sample Student Response 1 in your *Course Guide*.

**Units 5–7 offer good opportunities to practice documenting sources and to master editing strategies, especially effective word choice and sentence style.** These exercises will improve your writing and will help you respond to all three types of questions on the examination. Both Question One–Argumentation and Question Two–Analysis and Response, for example, require documentation of sources, while Question Three–Revision Strategies, requires you to recommend editing strategies to another writer. As you notice skills you acquire related to the examination requirements, **add these to your outlines.**

**Unit 7 is a good transition to later units.** This unit asks you to analyze an argumentative essay, summarize the essay’s chief features, evaluate and critique the essay, and support your judgment about the essay. As you can see from reading Sample Argumentation Prompt 1 (*Course Guide*), this Unit will be of great assistance in answering Question One. In addition, it will help you with Questions Two and Three:

1. Question Two asks you to analyze and interpret a literary text. Because an essay is one type of literary text, Unit 8 gives you your first experience with the kind of analysis and response required for Question Two. Review your journal notes on essays that you encountered in your pre-reading and re-read the essays on the Course Reading List.
2. Question Two requires documentation of sources, a skill also required for the essay assignment in Unit 7.

3. Question Three requires you to analyze, evaluate, critique, and support your judgment about the work of another student. This work may not always be an essay. The sample question in Unit 14, for example, presents an argumentative letter (*Course Guide*). But you will need the same skills to criticize and evaluate this genre as you will be practicing on essays in Unit 7.

**Units 5–7 require careful self-evaluation of your essays and of your grasp of unit objectives:**

1. Fill out the chart on the final page of each unit.
2. Administer a self-test at the end of each unit.

**Note: You may now be eager to test your skills by writing a practice answer to *English Composition exam* Question One.**

**In order to test yourself:**

- **Turn to Unit 11** and work through the general instructions for writing the answer to an essay question.
- **Answer** the first sample question in Unit 12 (*Course Guide*). Save the second prompt for Question One until you have completed all the units through 11.
- **Study the rating scale** (*Course Guide*, Appendix G) and, with the help of your reader, rate your essay and compare your score with those assigned by a faculty rater to the sample responses (*Course Guide*).

**If you are not satisfied with your rating, and are not sure how to improve it, consult *Course Guide*, Appendix F.**

- **Diagnose** your areas of strength and weakness by using the Rating Scale.
- **Consider** how you might improve areas of weakness, perhaps by reviewing parts of Units 2–7.
- **Consider** working with a tutor.

**The advantage of giving yourself a pre-test at the end of Unit 7 is to boost your confidence and to give yourself several weeks to improve your basic writing skills—perhaps by finding a tutor—well before you take the *English Composition exam*.**

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## Weeks 9 to 11: Course Guide Units 8–10

Units 8–10 focus on your skills as a reader of short stories, poems, and plays, skills you will need to master in order to answer Question Two—Analysis and Response. At the beginning of your study period on each of these units:

Review your outline of requirements for answering Question Two and read Sample Analysis and Response Prompt 1 (*Course Guide*). Note that Question Two never asks you to know either authors or texts from memory. It does require you to be familiar with literary terms and to be able to discuss, for example, a poem’s diction and imagery. You will have a copy of the poem in front of you on the examination. As you work your way through the units, use your outline, noting in the space after the requirements, skills that you have gained that will help you write well-informed, well-phrased answers.

Unit 8 guides you through the steps leading to an essay in which you interpret a story; Unit 9 guides you through the steps leading to an essay in which you interpret a poem; and Unit 10 guides you through the steps leading to an essay in which you interpret a play. Writing these three essays will help you become familiar with three literary genres in addition to the essay you studied in Unit 7. It will also help you become familiar with the concepts of literary analysis required for Question Two. For Question Two, you will need to master all the concepts listed in Sample Analysis and Response Prompt 1 (*Course Guide*). For an example of an essay that puts such skills to good use, see Sample Student Response 3 (*Course Guide*).

As you begin studying each unit from 8 to 10, refer to your journal’s pre-reading notes on the literary genre the unit addresses. The reading assignments for each unit will walk you through the items on the Course Reading List, any of which may appear on the examination.

Some students find these literary units more difficult than the earlier units. You need to take advantage of the assignments in *St. Martin’s Guide to Writing* and *Barnet*, et al. to help you understand, interpret, and appreciate the readings you have been assigned.

Units 8–10 offer good opportunities to practice identifying and distinguishing key terms that express important literary concepts. You should list these in a separate part of your journal, **Glossary of Literary Terms**. These exercises will improve your own writing and will help you respond to Question Two—Analysis and Response. As you notice literary skills and concepts you are acquiring that relate to Question Two, **add these to your outline**.

Units 8–10 require careful self-evaluation of your essays and of your grasp of unit objectives:

1. Fill out the chart on the final page of each unit.
2. Administer a self-test at the end of each unit.

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## Weeks 12 to 15: Course Guide Units 11–14

Units 11–14 focus on test-taking skills you will need to master in order to do well on the *English Composition exam*. To get the most out of these units, follow the guidelines below.

Unit 11: Taking your academic audience (*Course Guide*) into account, review:

1. Use of supporting evidence (reasons) to make your claims convincing
  - a. Review your own essays, looking for examples of reasons and listing these examples.
  - b. Remember always to include reasons for every claim or opinion.

2. Use of correct grammar and mechanics
  - a. Review your error and spelling logs.
  - b. Look up in *St. Martin's Guide to Writing* and *A Writer's Reference* any errors that seem to occur frequently and learn how to correct or avoid them.
3. Use of correct citation style: see notes from Unit 4.
4. Take the examination time limits into account. Design a personalized Time Management Plan (*Course Guide*), being sure to leave time to edit and proofread.

Administer a self-test at the end of Unit 11.

### Unit 12: Argumentation

1. Work from your outline for Question One and follow Unit 12's instructions carefully.
2. If you have already done a pre-test for this question at the end of Unit 7, review and note points you need to focus on to do well on Question One.
3. On Question One: Argumentation, faculty raters will look especially for well-supported arguments. Do not forget that personal experience may form good support.

### Unit 13: Analysis and Response

1. Work from your outline for Question Two and follow Unit 13's instructions carefully.
2. When pre-planning your answer for Question Two, notice that this question always takes the form illustrated by Sample Analysis and Response Writing Prompt 1. This means that both pre-writing and a formal essay are essential and that you need to base the formal essay on the pre-writing. To do so may seem repetitious to some test takers, but faculty raters will be looking for a close connection between pre-writing and a formal essay.

### Unit 14: Revision Strategies

1. Work from your outline for Question Three and follow Unit 14's instructions carefully.
2. Organize your lists of the weaknesses and strengths that you find in the Writing Sample. Plan an essay that would be helpful for a student writer who wanted to revise her/his work.
3. Start with the questions that affect the whole writing sample (for example, confusing organization) and work your way down to local problems (for example, diction that is too informal for the writer's audience or frequent spelling errors).
4. Organize each topic of your critique, using paragraphs to develop your main points such as organization, audience, and grammar and spelling.
5. Edit and proofread your critique, making legible changes where needed.

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### Week 16: Wrap-Up and Review

**Congratulations!** You have finished your long course of study and are probably ready to take the Excelsior College Examination in English Composition. If you are still concerned about particular difficulties with your writing, consult Appendix F for suggestions to improve your writing before taking your exam. Spend your final week clearing up minor questions, reviewing the literature on the Course Reading List, writing practice essays of the type asked on the Excelsior College Examination in English Composition, and boosting your confidence.

## Appendix A

### Suggested Time Plans for Preparing to Take Excelsior College Examination in English Composition

Adjust these weekly plans to fit your own time frame.  
If you have 16 weeks (one semester):

Week(s)	Task	Week(s)	Task
1.....	Previewing the Exam and Course Guide	9-11 .....	Unit 9-11
2.....	Unit 1	12 .....	Unit 12
3-4 .....	Unit 2-4	13 .....	Unit 13
5.....	Unit 5	14 .....	Unit 14
6-8.....	Unit 6-8	15-16.....	Review and Self-Testing

As this exam is worth 6 credits (equivalent of two semesters or 32 weeks),  
we hope you will be able to devote additional preparation time to the materials.  
We recommend this optimal schedule, which allows two weeks for most of the units:

Week(s)	Task	Week(s)	Task
1.....	Previewing the Exam and Course Guide	15-16.....	Unit 8
2.....	Unit 1	17-18 .....	Unit 9
3-4 .....	Unit 2	19-20.....	Unit 10
5-6.....	Unit 3	21-22.....	Unit 11
7-8 .....	Unit 4	23-24.....	Unit 12
9-10 .....	Unit 5	25-26.....	Unit 13
11-12 .....	Unit 6	27-28.....	Unit 14
13-14 .....	Unit 7	29-32 .....	Review, Self-Testing, and “unforeseen circumstances”

## SECTION SIX

# Taking the Exam

## Registering for Your Exam

### Register Online

[www.excelsior.edu/examregistration](http://www.excelsior.edu/examregistration)

Follow the instructions and pay by Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover Card.

### Examination Administration

Pearson Testing Centers serve as the administrator for all Excelsior College computer-delivered exams.

### Accessibility Services

Excelsior College is committed to the principle that every individual should have an equal opportunity to enroll in an Excelsior College degree program, to register for courses or examinations in order to demonstrate their knowledge and skills under appropriate conditions, and to complete a degree.

The Accessibility Services Office at Excelsior College is responsible for considering requests for reasonable accommodations for individuals with verifiable, documented disabilities. If you are requesting an accommodation due to a disability/condition, complete a [Request for Accommodation form](#).

### Computer-Delivered Testing

The UExcel exams are delivered by computer. You can take this exam either in a [Pearson VUE testing center](#) or at your home or office with an online proctor. If you are interested in remote proctoring, visit [PearsonVUE OnVUE online proctoring](#).

The system is designed to be as user-friendly as possible, even for those with little or no computer

experience. On-screen instructions are similar to those you would see in a paper examination booklet. You will use either the keyboard or the mouse to submit your answers, depending upon the type of question.

Before taking your exam, we strongly encourage you to go on a virtual tour of the testing center. To access this tour, click the What to Expect in a Pearson VUE test center at the following link: [home.pearsonvue.com/test-taker/security.aspx](http://home.pearsonvue.com/test-taker/security.aspx)

You also will receive a small, erasable whiteboard if you need one.

### Breaks

Breaks are only permitted for exams taken at Pearson VUE Testing Centers, and are not permitted during exams delivered via online proctoring.

### Online Proctoring

As of spring 2021, Excelsior is offering an [online delivery option for UExcel exams](#), using OnVUE, Pearson VUE's online delivery and proctoring service.

You must use a personal (vs. an employer's) computer if you want to take the exam online and not in a testing center, so the exam can be effectively delivered to you.

Breaks are not allowed during an exam taken online from home. You may not leave your seat during an online-proctored exam, so be prepared to sit for two or three hours. If you need extra time, the exam will have to be taken at a PearsonVUE Testing Center, and an accommodation formally requested.

**NOTE:** English Composition, Spanish, Music, and College Writing will NOT be available for online proctoring.

# On the Day of Your Exam

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## Important Reminders

On the day of your exam, remember to:

- dress comfortably: the computer will not mind that you're wearing your favorite relaxation outfit
- arrive at the test site rested and prepared to concentrate for an extended period
- allow sufficient time to travel, park, and locate the test center
- be prepared for possible variations in temperature at the test center due to weather changes or energy conservation measures
- bring your ID, but otherwise, don't weigh yourself down with belongings that will have to be kept in a locker during the test.

## Academic Integrity Nondisclosure Statement

- All examinees must agree to the terms of the Excelsior College Academic Integrity Policy before taking an examination. The agreement will be presented on screen at the Pearson VUE Testing Center before the start of your exam.
- Once the examinee agrees to the terms of the Academic Integrity Nondisclosure Agreement (NDA), the exam will begin.

If you choose not to accept the terms of the agreement

- your exam will be terminated
- you will be required to leave the testing center
- you will not be eligible for a refund. For more information, review the Student Policy Handbook at [www.excelsior.edu/studentpolicyhandbook](http://www.excelsior.edu/studentpolicyhandbook).

Student behavior is monitored during and after the exam. Electronic measures are used to monitor the security of test items and scan for illegal use of intellectual property. This monitoring includes surveillance of Internet chat rooms, websites, and other public forums.

## UExcel Grade Report

After you complete the exam, you will be issued a UExcel Grade Report for Examinations. See the [sample UExcel Grade Report](#) in this content guide.

## Grade Appeals

If you believe that your score grade is incorrect, you may appeal your grade to [examcredit@excelsior.edu](mailto:examcredit@excelsior.edu). Details about the appeals process are in the [Student Handbook](#).

## What If I Miss My Appointment?

If you don't cancel or reschedule your testing appointment 24 hours before your test appointment, you will have to pay the full fee of the exam, even if you don't show up.

## Late Arrivals

You will also forfeit the exam fee if you arrive to the test center more than 15 minutes late.

## Information About UExcel Exams for Colleges and Universities

A committee of teaching faculty and practicing professionals determines the learning outcomes to be tested on each exam. Excelsior College Center for Educational Measurement staff oversee the technical aspects of test construction in accordance with current professional standards. To promote fairness in testing, we take special care to ensure that the language used in the exams and related materials is consistent, professional, and user friendly. Editorial staff perform systematic quantitative and qualitative reviews to ensure accuracy, clarity, and compliance with conventions of bias-free language usage.

Excelsior College, the test developer, recommends granting six (6) semester hours of lower-level undergraduate credit to students who receive a letter grade of C or higher on this examination. The examination can be used to fulfill the written English requirement (WER) of Excelsior College degree programs. Other colleges and universities also recognize this exam as a basis for granting credit or advanced standing. Individual institutions set their own policies for the amount of credit awarded and the minimum acceptable score.



# English Composition Exam Development Committee

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Mary O'Reilly, PhD (Princeton University, English, 1972)  
Professor, Colorado Mountain College

Beulah Spangler, PhD (University of North Carolina–  
Chapel Hill, English & American Literature, 1982)  
Professor, Peace College

Rosemary Winslow, PhD (The Catholic University of  
America, English Language and Literature, 1984)  
Associate Professor, The Catholic University of  
America

# Sample Grade Report

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## UExcel Grade Report for Extended Response Examinations

STUDENT NAME ID: 111222333  
Test Date: 07/17/2020

Examination Code and Title: Letter Grade: C  
434 ENGLISH COMPOSITION

Recommended Credit: 6 Lower Level

Your examination results are expressed as a Letter Grade of A, B, C, D, or F. Your results are automatically verified when they are received at Excelsior College. If an error is detected, you will be notified immediately.

**Recommended Credit** is the number of semester hours credit that Excelsior College awards and recommends for your grade. Excelsior College awards and recommends credit for letter grades of C or better.

**If you plan to retake this examination**, refer to the examination's content guide for recommendations on study resources.

**If you plan to take another examination**, you may download free content guides and the User's Guide.

**If you need an Excelsior College Official Examination Transcript** sent to another organization to document the credit you earned for this examination, use the online Exam Transcript Request.

### Question 1

#### Use of Written Language

Attempt at organization is evident. Weak or confusing style. A few grammatical and syntactical errors that impede meaning. A few mechanical errors that impede meaning.

#### Use of Argument and Support

Arguments and supporting evidence are appropriate and adequately sequenced. Thesis (stated or implied) appears near beginning and/or end of essay, makes writer's opinion adequately clear, addresses adequately the prompt's requirements, but may fail, in a few cases, to qualify its language.

#### Understanding Concepts

Key concepts are clearly and adequately understood and developed.

### Question 2

#### Use of Written Language

Competent organization. Competent style. Grammatical and syntactical errors that do not impede meaning. Mechanical errors that do not impede meaning.

#### Use of Argument and Support

Arguments and supporting evidence are appropriate and adequately sequenced. Thesis (stated or implied) appears near beginning and/or end of essay, makes writer's opinion adequately clear, addresses adequately the prompt's requirements, but may fail, in a few cases, to qualify its language.

#### Understanding Concepts

Key concepts are clearly and adequately understood and developed.

### Question 3

#### Use of Written Language

Competent organization. Competent style. Grammatical and syntactical errors that do not impede meaning. Mechanical errors that do not impede meaning.

#### Use of Argument and Support

Arguments and supporting evidence are appropriate and adequately sequenced. Thesis (stated or implied) appears near beginning and/or end of essay, makes writer's opinion adequately clear, addresses adequately the prompt's requirements, but may fail, in a few cases, to qualify its language.

#### Understanding Concepts

Key concepts are clearly and adequately understood and developed.





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