

Improving Graduate Student Writing Skills: Best Practices and Outcomes

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Abstract : A decline in writing skills and abilities of students entering graduate school has become a focus for university systems within the United States. This decline has become a national trend that requires reflection on the intervention strategies used to address the deficit and unintended consequences as outcomes in the profession. Social work faculty is challenged to increase written scholarship within the academic setting. However, when a large number of students in each course have writing deficits, there is a shift from focus on content, ability to demonstrate competency, and application of core social work concepts. This qualitative study focuses on the experiences of online faculty who support increasing scholarship through writing and are following best practices preparing students academically to see improvements in written presentation in classroom work. This study outlines best practices to improve written academic presentation, especially in an online setting. The research also highlights how a student's ability to show competency and application of concepts may be overlooked in the online setting. This can lead to new social workers who are prepared academically, but may be unable to effectively advocate and document thought presentation in their writing. The intended progression of writing across all levels of higher education moves from summary, to application, and into abstract problem solving. Initial findings indicate that it is important to reflect on practices used to address writing deficits in terms of academic writing, competency, and application. It is equally important to reflect on how these methods of intervention impact a student post-graduation. Specifically, for faculty, it is valuable to assess a social worker's ability to engage in continuity of documentation and advocacy at micro, mezzo, macro, and international levels of practice.

Keywords : intervention, professional impact, scholarship, writing

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