

(The questionnaire was administered to 115 students in seven English 1010/2010 courses.)

1. What should be included in a strong thesis statement?

Basically a clear overview.

Most mentioned supporting reasons or main points.

Some mentioned a significance, especially the 2010 classes.

A few mentioned having it catch the readers' attention, answering a question, and keeping it concise

"a claim with reasons"

"a road map"

"this _____ because _____"

"your claim, with a should...and because...."

"Clear direction as to where the paper is going"

"What you are talking about and why. Give facts and reasoning."

"the should/because thesis"

"claims – reasons – significance"

"because _____, _____, _____"

2. Do you feel your high school English teachers prepared you adequately to write at a college level? Why or why not? What, if anything, could they do differently?

YES 61%

NO 39%

Out of a group of 10 students: 3 love the class, 3 have a few suggestions but are content, and 4 don't care for it.

Advice for high school teachers: Introduce them to as much as you can. Challenge all your classes, especially the higher level ones. They will soak up whatever you present to them.

The most enthusiastic yeses were challenged with an eye towards college, AP courses/concurrent.

The higher the class level and teacher expectations, the more benefit and enjoyment.

Common comments were just writing a lot helped students figure out what works for them, also other teachers in other subjects.

Disapproval came from more creative/free writing, not research essays and citation.

"Yes, my high school English teachers were very strict about writing and ensuring that my classmates and I were writing the best papers we could. I had to write in different voices in various types of papers, most of which were 4-5 papers long. I thought they did very well."

"I took AP English, so yes I felt very prepared. If I would've stayed in regular English however I really don't think I would've been able to handle college. Not enough analysis of literature or research."

"Yes. I had to write papers frequently and they were very tough graders. They expected the papers to be concise, eloquent, and scholarly."

"No. They should introduce more academic writing rather than free writing all the time."

"No, my high school English teachers spent more time trying to control the rest of the class or trying to catch up the students who were not prepared for the class. The schools should be more strict about who can move on and who can't."

"No. I learned more English in junior high than high school. All I did for English in high school is read and write and a little poetry. Teach English!"

3. Do you feel that college English professors make their expectations clear for writing assignments? Why or why not? What, if anything, could they do differently?

YES 88%

NO 12%

Out of a group of 10 students: 5 love the class, 4 have a few suggestions but are content, and 1 is struggling.

Advice to students: Ask questions whenever you are unsure.

Advice to professors: Limit the number of handouts, keep them straightforward, and try not to change requirements too much.

Surprisingly, almost all of the students approve of their college professors.

Many of the compliments were regarding detailed handouts which outline the assignment and the professors' willingness to clarify questions.

Many of the complaints were regarding too many handouts or due date changes that varied from the syllabus.

"Yes and no. I feel like it's either way too specific and leaves no room for creativity...or there is no direction at all even if professor has a certain expectation."

"I think that some of the assignment descriptions have been fairly vague, but may have been given that way purposely to give the writer more freedom."

"Yes, they make their expectations clear, and if you have any questions they are more than available to answer our questions. I think if I saw more examples of previous writing assignments that would further help me to understand the assignment."

"Yes for the most part. Sometimes it is explained vaguely at first and then right before it's due all the expectations come out on what you need to do."

"I feel that they tell you what to do, but not what they want. Give a topic, but not the expectation."

"Let us see some bad examples as well so that we know what to avoid."

Try this simple formula for future thesis success:

Statement/Fact + Effect/Interpretation + Significance/Application = Thesis

Example: The implementation of school uniforms + would eliminate social ranking due to dress, + which would reduce discrimination and abuse.

4. Was this a new idea for you? Could this formula help you write a paper in the future? How?

YES, all positive: 53%

YES, either new idea or helpful: 35%

NO, don't need it: 12%

Out of a group of 10 students: 5 really liked the formula, 4 said it could be another way of looking at it, 1 is comfortable in their ways.

Common comments were that having a formula is clear because it breaks it down. Also, it will help them be more organized.

Yes, it is a simple way to look at it, but there are other ways of thinking about it.

I already know how to write a thesis like this.

“This would help because with this formula, the paper will be very interesting since it would talk about the effect and the significance.”

“Yes, helps me think in a broader perspective.”

“Yes. Definitely. It really helps to focus what your thesis should be. I feel that more pointed or specific teaching tools like this could be implemented more.”

“Yes, this is new for me, its like a math formula, kind of cool for me to remember.”

“It wasn’t new but it was different, harder but better!”

“Yes, my thesis was lacking “interpretation” for a long time.”

“I’ve heard it before, but forgot all about it. Yes, because it is obviously a good way to form your thesis – clear and precise.”

“Not really new, just a spin off of same old format. Yes, it is helpful.”

“I find it confusing. Get rid of the slashes, they threw me off when trying to interpret the formula.”