**Competency-Based iPLA Guide: College Writing Guide**

1. **Overview**

**How to Use this Guide**

This guide is meant to help you understand the knowledge and competencies typically expected of someone who has a college-level understanding of College Writing. This guide is also meant to help you go through the processes of thinking about your learning and competencies in preparation for writing your Prior Learning Request.  Respond to the activity prompts by drawing from your own experience and using the short scenarios provided to discuss how you would approach each situation.

The activity prompts in this guide act as a worksheet to help you identify and describe your learning. The rubric at the end can help you both formulate your responses and assess your learning. Once you have completed all of the competency activities and assessed that you have college-level knowledge in this area, you will compile a more formal iPLA request, incorporating your responses to the competency activities.

**PLA Process**

When you are ready, compile your responses into a learning description to create a more formal iPLA request. Once you complete your learning description, submit it to your mentor for review before you submit your iPLA request to PLA Planner, which initiates the evaluation process.

The college will assign an evaluator to your iPLA request. The evaluator uses two sources to assess your learning: 1) your learning description/iPLA request, which you develop from your answers to this worksheet, with any appropriate supporting evidence, and 2) an interview.

The evaluator asks questions to help clarify and verify your knowledge and to gain a better understanding of the depth and breadth of your learning. The evaluator may ask about possible redundancies between a particular credit request and other studies that are listed on your degree program. The evaluator also may suggest changes in the title of your learning components, the number of credits, the level of learning, or liberal arts and sciences credit designations. Once your interview is complete, the evaluator will write a recommendation which is posted in PLA Planner.

To learn more about the evaluation process, please talk to your mentor and read the college’s iPLA guide at <https://www.esc.edu/degree-planning-academic-review/prior-learning-assessment/individualized-prior-learning-assessment/>

**Overview of College Writing**

To gain credit in College Writing, you should demonstrate competence in different areas, including:

* focusing a communication around a main idea
* developing and supporting that main idea, maintaining a unified focus
* organizing information logically
* revising writing for focus, organization, and standard grammar, punctuation, and documentation

This guide is intended to help you both identify your knowledge and apply it. You will be asked to create and submit brief samples as you move through the prompts and self-assess your writing competencies through brief quizzes. You'll also be expected to describe and reflect on your writing process and provide longer writing samples at the evaluator's request. You will be evaluated on your responses for each competency as well as additional writing samples you will submit.

Review the [Rubric](http://cognify.sagencelearning.com/competencies/589/final/rubric)  at the end of this guide for more detail on how your learning will be evaluated.

# Competency Worksheet for your iPLA Request

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| Competency 1: Describe Writing & Apply a Writing Process |
| **Activity 1.1 Describe Writing Projects**  Describe the types and purposes of the writing you do, including:   * college essays and research papers in other courses/fields * work position papers, proposals, analyses * public writing such as opinion pieces, blogs, white papers, film or book reviews * personal writing such as social blogs or journals   Also discuss the types of writing that you've done the most and the types that you most enjoy. ​​As you consider this question, you may want to compile a list of writings that you could use as samples to reflect your writing range and college writing skills. |
| **Activity 1.2 Apply a Writing Process**  Choose a piece of writing that you did and explain the process you went through to create it.  Is this process different when you write for a different purpose?  Please explain. |

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| Competency 2: Identify & Create a Main Idea |
| Activity 2.1 Identify a Main Idea Which of the following sentences are main idea sentences that convey the writer's point of view on, argument about, or analysis of a topic? (choose all that apply)  Once you have chosen the main idea sentences, then evaluate them and choose the "best of the best" main idea sentence for a short college research paper. Please identify the sentence number and briefly explain the reasons for your choice.   1. I'm writing about the benefits of exercise, even modified exercise, for adults over 65. 2. Adults over 65 can benefit from regular exercise as long as they don't overdo it. 3. Adults over 65 can benefit from regular exercise in a number of ways, including strengthening muscles, maintaining or developing an ability to balance, and maintaining mental alertness, in addition to weight maintenance or weight loss. 4. Adults over 65 have been exercising in our community for a number of years. 5. Many doctors prescribe a regular exercise regimen, often including swimming, for adults over 65.   In the paragraph below, identify the one sentence that functions as a main idea sentence for the following short piece of writing, and briefly explain your choice. Note that each sentence has a number at the end.  Harriet was my cat, and one of the best cats ever.1 I often called her “hairy-ette,” because she did shed a lot, especially at certain times of the year.2 But whatever I called her, she would come running, especially if my call accompanied the sound of a can being opened.3 She surely did like her dinner, and she even could anticipate that can opening when she heard the sound of me opening the drawer that held the can opener.4 Cats’ hearing is almost double the range of humans’ hearing; cats are very sensitive to sound.5  As Harriet aged, she got even more sensitive to sounds, to the point at which I needed to be careful about wearing certain shoes on the wooden floors, or banging doors.6 According to Lotz (2015), certain cats are even susceptible to seizures that are triggered by certain sounds, including computer keyboard clicks, bags crinkling, or Velcro opening.7 ([*https://iheartcats.com/new-study-says-these-common-sounds-could-cause-your-cat-to-seize/*](https://iheartcats.com/new-study-says-these-common-sounds-could-cause-your-cat-to-seize/)) Because we know that cats are so susceptible to sound, and have such a sensitive and wide range of hearing, cat owners should act responsibly to ensure their pet’s quality of life.8 |
| Activity 2.2 Create a Main Idea Write **one** main idea sentence for a college essay that offers a point of view, insight, logical argument, or analysis in response to **one** of the following topics:   * adults returning to college * foreign language learning in elementary school * fad diets * business globalization   Choose a subject that interests you. Identify a main idea, point of view, logical argument, or analytical insight about this subject that you might want to focus on in a piece of writing.  Write a sentence that conveys your point of view on a particular aspect of this subject, a sentence that focuses and encapsulates your thoughts and offers that main idea, logical argument, or analytical insight. |

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| Competency 3: Develop Appropriate Support |
| Activity 3.1 Develop Support Write a main idea for a piece of writing.  You may use the main idea you created for the Main Idea competency, if you wish, or you may create another main idea.   * List four or five points that you might use to support your main idea.   Choose one of these points and list details you would include to explain this point more fully. |
| Activity 3.2 Analyze Support Read and listen to the following short article about storing tomatoes on National Public Radio’s site. Then answer the following questions.  <http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/10/17/498232752/forget-tomayto-tomahto-the-real-debate-is-should-it-be-refrigerated>   * What is the author’s main idea, in your own words? * Is the author persuasive in his argument? Why or why not? * Is the supporting information credible? Biased? Why or why not? * Is the supporting information appropriate for its intended audience? Why or why not?   What additional information, and from what type of source, do you think would make the article even stronger as a logical, researched argument? |
| Activity 3.3 Compare & Evaluate Support Read another short article about storing tomatoes, on National Public Radio’s site, and compare it with the article on tomatoes in the Analyze Support section.   * <http://www.seriouseats.com/2014/09/why-you-should-refrigerate-tomatoes.html> * <http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/10/17/498232752/forget-tomayto-tomahto-the-real-debate-is-should-it-be-refrigerated>   As background to comparing these articles, first apply the same set of analytical questions:   * What is the author’s main idea, in your own words? * Is the author persuasive in his argument? Why or why not? * Is the supporting information credible? Biased? Why or why not? * Is the supporting information appropriate for its intended audience? Why or why not? * What additional information, and from what type of source, do you think would make the article even stronger as a logical, researched argument?   Then write your answer to the following question (only this answer needs to be submitted):   * What are some of the differences between the articles? Which article do you think is more effective and why? Consider all of the elements of writing in your response. |

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| Competency 4: Organize Support |
| **Activity 4 Organize Support**  Copy the support you developed for the Develop Appropriate Support competency.    Explain how you would order these points in your writing - which would come first, second, third, and why? |

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| Competency 5: Edit/Revise |
| Activity 5 Edit the Essay Read the following short essay about the writer's neighborhood. List and describe the elements that need to be revised and explain and/or show how you would revise each element for improvement.  *My Old Neighborhood*  *I grew up on Long island on the South Shore in a town called Islip where there where shops, boats, and rows of houses off main streets near the water. I liked my next-door friends and the house we lived in. It was a one-story house that had a nice lawn and dark shudders on the windows. There were four of us in the house, which had three bedrooms one for my parents and two other bedrooms for my brother and myself. Why was the bathroom tile always black and pink. The house also had a nice backyard were we played in the warm weather and sometimes welcomed neihbors and guests to picnic. If no laundry was hung back there.*  *As I got older I spent more time at friend’s houses and traveled to other towns across the south shore. By the time I was in High School, I had learnt to drive and become very popular among the kids who didn’t have cars or didn’t yet learned to drive their parent’s cars. I drove an old blue two-door sedan that worked but made a creeking sound at lights. They could hear me coming and would appear at the window when they heard the noise as I came down the block to pick them up. I could carry up to six people on that old car and, we would drive down to the beach or movies or a park to hang out. Seatbelts optional. In the summer there would be tourists all around town and it was not that great to be on the crowded streets.*  *Islip developed over time and by the time I was applying for college there were many new neihborhoods of apartments, new stores, and new parking lots for the increase in patron’s cars. They added a section onto the elementary school for the new kids’ coming in, and built a playground at the center of town. Now that I have gotten a job at another town on the north shore, I come back to visit my family who still lives in the same small house I grew up in it looks a little different than when I remember, but still has dark shudders and a small yard which I realize now that I’m grown myself and have been away for a awhile.*    *Its always interesting to return to a place that seamed ideal and you’d never leave. I’d of believed once that Long island would be my home forever. Now that I have traveled to other places and got to see a bit of the world and the way other people live I have a better appreciation for my own beginnings and the people I grew up with lived with and loved.*  Provide samples of your own writing in earlier (draft) and more final form, and discuss what you changed during the editing and revising processes, and why. |

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| Competency 6: Find & Document Sources |
| Activity 6.1 Find Appropriate Sources Answer the 5 questions below.  1. You're writing a college essay on why people develop phobias. Which three sources would yield the most appropriate information, given the focus of the essay?  (choose three of the seven listed below, a-g).  Then, evaluate your three choices.  Which one is the "best of the best" for a college essay on reasons people develop phobias?  (a) a YouTube interview with a doctor on a popular television medical show  (b) New York Times science section article on fear of spiders  (c) information on Verywell.com  (d) a Wikipedia article on phobias  (e) articles in the Journal of the American Medical Association on the development of phobias  (f) articles in Psychology Today on the development of phobias  (g) your own interview with a person recovering from a fear of crowds  2. What search might most directly yield useful sources for a college research essay on recent community efforts to help the assimilation of immigrants to Amsterdam, NY?  Choose one and explain your choice.  (a) Immigrants Amsterdam  (b) Amsterdam statistics  (c) Community assimilation immigrants Amsterdam, NY  (d) ESL classes Amsterdam, NY  3. The difference between a primary and a secondary source is:  (a) A primary source is the one you use most often in a research essay; a secondary source is used less often.  (b) A primary source provides first-hand information, such as a historical record, an interview with a person who witnessed an event, a document or creative work composed by the writer or artist, or the results of an experiment.  A secondary source provides second-hand information, by someone who may be interpreting an event but did not experience or create it directly (e.g., contemporary writers analyzing the causes of the Civil War, literary criticism, a magazine article about nature photographers in the mid-20th century).  (c) No difference - either type of source is useful in a college essay  (d) The way in which the source needs to be documented  4. Once you find a source, your next step is to:  (a) evaluate the source for its date, author's authority, objectivity, accuracy, and appropriateness to your essay's main idea  (b) find a series of quotations from the source that you can use in your essay  (c) identify the date of the source and eliminate any source over 5 years old  (d) read the bibliography for other possible sources  5. Which of the following are reliable sources for a research paper on reasons for the surge in the homeless population in Saratoga Springs, New York? (Choose all that apply and explain your choices.)  (a) website of "build the shelter" coalition  (b) NYS statistics on homelessness in Saratoga Springs  (c) person-on-the-street interviews in the local newspaper on the homeless situation   * (d) interview with director of social services, Saratoga County, NYHow do you energize others to give of their best and collaborate toward the achievement of the shared vision? * Why is it important to appreciate and recognize each person’s contribution to the shared goals? |
| Activity 6.2 Document Sources Take the 13-question plagiarism quiz provided by Turnitin.com: <http://turnitin.com/assets/en_us/media/plagiarism-quiz/>  Please make sure to download the answer guide, which appears once you finish the quiz, to see an explanation of your results. Make sure to retain a copy of the answer guide and your own results to share with your mentor. |

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| Competency 7: Use Language Correctly & Effectively |
| Activity 7.1 Use Language Correctly Identify the sentences that are **incorrect** in grammar and punctuation (choose all that apply). Also, correct the incorrect sentences.   1. Robert Smith was an institution in Mayville, everyone knew him, from the police to the shop owners to the school children. 2. Germinating tomatoes from seed requires a lot of steps, including starting them in the winter under "grow lights," transplanting them once the weather warms, and constantly watering, fertilizing, and keeping bugs and birds away. 3. They were world travelers who had traveled to over 40 countries, including such an eclectic mix as Liechtenstein, Japan, Slovenia, Dubai, and Iceland. And also Poland and Chile. 4. "Its always something" said the sign that the Warner's kept on their porch door. 5. Jerry was what you'd call a truck connoisseur; over the years he owned a Ford; Nissan; Toyota; Honda; and Chevrolet. |
| Activity 7.2 Use Language Effectively Choose the samples below that are **not** written in the best style for a college essay, and explain your choice (choose all that apply).   1. Creating a new training program for employees always takes a lot of effort.  You need to identify the focus of the training.  You need to get permission from managers. You need to create the training.  You need to get reviewers.  You need to get buy-in among the workers to be trained.  You need to develop an evaluation. You need to develop a follow-up plan.  You need to report results. 2. The phenomenon of group think is an interesting one.  Group think happens when a certain dynamic takes over in a group and group members simply agree with one another.  This could happen because people are motivated to come to a conclusion and make a decision - they may not want to "waste time" on a discussion.   Or individuals might be personally motivated to be agreeable, which spills over into their behavior in work groups.  Whatever the motivation, the results of group think are not useful to either individuals or the organization.  Group think often results in cutting off analysis and creativity in business decisions. 3. Good nutrition comes from a balanced diet, but concepts of what constitutes a balanced diet have changed over the years.  For example, nutritionists have changed visual charts of what used to be referred to as the "food pyramid."  In the mid 20th century, the food pyramid consisted of four basic food groups, with more of an emphasis on bread and cereal as the pyramid's solid base: bread/cereal, vegetables/fruit, meat/protein/milk, and fats/oils.  This morphed into other images such as "my plate," which offers a round instead of pyramid image to emphasize balance.  Emphasis is now on vegetables/fruit, which makes up half of the plate. 4. The results of the aforementioned article identify two nefarious business practices related to advertising: targeting populations that are lacking in education, and assuming that consumers over age 35 are belong to some antediluvian group that doesn't have the perspicuity of thought to understand modern technological advances.   Choose one of the samples that you identified as poorly written and revise it here. |

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| Competency 8: Apply & Reflect on Skills |
| **Activity 8.1 Teach Others**  If you were teaching college writing, what would you teach others?  What are your top 5-6 criteria for effective college writing? |
| **Activity 8.2 Reflect on your Writing Competence**  Reflect on your experience completing these PLA competency activities. What competencies did you find more/less challenging to demonstrate your knowledge of? What have you learned about your own writing skills?    After completing this reflection and completing all of the competency self-assessment quizzes, gather additional samples of your writing. These samples should be developed enough for an evaluator to get a good sense of your writing |

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| Describe Additional Learning |
| This section is intended to provide you with an opportunity to discuss other learning you may have accomplished that is not already reflected in the Competency prompts.  Please make sure you discuss your learning with your mentor for guidance on how to articulate what you have learned. |

1. **Next Steps**

**Step 1: Compile and Write Your iPLA Request, Based on Responses to Worksheet Activities**

Review and compile all your responses to the activities from the various competency areas into a learning description. Review your learning description with your mentor. From the questions in the guide and the feedback you receive from your mentor, complete your iPLA request.

* Review what you have written and be sure that your learning description conveys your knowledge.
* Re-review the rubric, consider the evaluation criteria, and be sure that your learning description meets or exceeds expectations.
* Consider the feedback you have received from your mentor.
* The final iPLA request should reflect college writing; be sure to proofread what you write before submitting it to PLA Planner.

**Step 2: Prepare for your interview**

After the evaluator has reviewed your request, he or she will conduct an interview with you to gain a more in-depth understanding of your knowledge. You are expected to participate actively in the evaluation process. The evaluator may ask you to demonstrate or elaborate further on your learning. The evaluator needs to be confident that your learning is college level and not redundant with other learning in your degree plan.

Think about questions that the evaluator may want to ask you and think about possible responses that you can provide. The interview process can be interesting and informative. The interview is an opportunity for you to discuss ways in which you have used your knowledge and applied that knowledge in different situations. It can result in an increased understanding of your learning and provide you with new or differing perspectives.

**Rubric for College Writing Guide**

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| **Competency 1: Apply a Writing Process** | | |
| **Approaches Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| Little or no preliminary work to create a draft. Little or no editing of a draft. Writer creates one draft and considers it finished | Some preliminary work to create a draft (e.g., listing ideas; creating mind maps, outlines). Some editing work after creating a draft | A lot of preliminary work to create a draft (e.g., listing ideas; creating mind maps, outlines). Full editing work after creating the draft, possibly multiple times |

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| **Competency 2: Create a Main Idea** | | |
| **Approaches Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| No focus or unclear focus.  No personal insight offered into a topic | One obvious focus for the information, offering a personal insight into a topic | One obvious focus for the information, offering a relatively sophisticated insight into or analysis of a topic |

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| **Competency 3: Develop Support** | | |
| **Approaches Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| Sparse explanation of ideas | Explanation of main idea with details and examples | Full explanation of ideas with details and examples.  Awareness of reading audience and their needs for explanation |

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| **Competency 4: Organize Support** | | |
| **Approaches Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| Few or no conscious decisions made about the order of information | Main idea broken into supporting ideas. Supporting ideas ordered logically | Main ideas broken into supporting ideas. Supporting ideas ordered logically, with clear linkages among ideas.  Conscious consideration of organization in terms of audience needs and writing purpose |

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| **Competency 5: Edit/Revise** | | |
| **Approaches Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| Writer considers the first draft to be the final draft.  Little or no editing or revising | Writer reviews and revises draft for relevance and amount of information, clear organization, correct documentation, and language | Writer reviews and revises draft, sometimes multiple times, for relevance and amount of information, clear organization, correct documentation, and effective language.  Conscious consideration of audience needs and writing purpose |

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| **Competency 6: Find & Document Sources** | | |
| **Approaches Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| Writer researches sources on the **general topic** of the writing.  Search occurs mostly with Google or very basic search strategies. Writer uses sources written for general audiences (e.g. general interest magazines and websites). Little, no, or incorrect documentation of sources | Writer researches sources related to the **main idea** of the writing.  Search uses a variety of tools and databases. Writer evaluates and chooses sources written for a range from general to professional audiences (e.g., professional journals and websites).  Sources documented correctly, both within and at the end of the writing | Writer researches sources related to the **main idea** of the writing.  Search uses a variety of tools and databases. Writer evaluates and chooses sources written for a range from general to professional audiences. As appropriate, writer uses a variety of sources (e.g., print, online, interviews) and understands the use of primary and secondary sources.  Sources documented correctly, both within and at the end of the writing |

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| **Competency 7: Use Language Correctly & Effectively** | | |
| **Approaches Expectations** | **Meets Expectations** | **Exceeds Expectations** |
| Writing contains multiple technical errors.  Little or no consideration of writing tone or style | Writing contains no or minimal technical errors. Writing style is straightforward and clear | Writing contains no technical errors.  Writing style is clear and elegant, showing the writer’s effective, conscious language choice appropriate to the writing’s purpose and audience.  Writing may be appropriate for a professional audience |