

# Implementation of Major-Specific Interviews in Composition Classrooms

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## Introduction

In the traditional composition classroom, writing is typically only addressed through English department expectations. However, students encounter many forms of writing over their academic careers that extend past these humanities expectations (Conzelmann; Dave and Russell).

## Key Findings

Composition students who understand how writing fits into their major are more invested in the course material and create actionable materials they can refer to and use for future courses.

## Assignment Description

Over the course of the semester, you will conduct two (2) interviews:

- One (1) with an IU faculty member from your major
- One (1) with an upper class (junior or senior) IU student from your major

Create at least 20 questions for each interview. These questions can be about anything you would like to ask, but here are a couple of topics to get you started:

- Research opportunities, conferences, course information, books to read, careers, complimentary minors for your major, internships, thesis writing, personal experiences

## Interview Questions

In addition to your 20 questions, pick a few of these writing-based questions to ask your interviewees:

- What is the most essential aspect of writing in your major? What citation style will you be using? Are you familiar with that citation style?
- What are some of the major differences of writing within your discipline versus within other disciplines?
- How does the writing process differ in your discipline from other disciplines?
- What can you do to better prepare yourself for your major-specific future writing assignments?

### Major-Specific Interviews

(500-750 words per interview)

#### What is a Major-Specific Interview?

A major-specific interview is a method of gathering information about your major that you might like to pursue after taking this course. These interviews are specifically designed for you to have the chance to explore multiple perspectives to understand what writing looks like in your specific discipline.

#### Important Dates:

- Friday, December 8: Major-Specific Interviews due
- **You are free to do these interviews at any point throughout the semester but be mindful of others' schedules and of your own.**

#### Your Assignment:

**Step 1:** Pick your interviewees.

Over the course of the semester, you will conduct two (2) interviews:

- One (1) with an IU faculty member from your major
- One (1) with an upper class (junior or senior) IU student from your major

Note: If you are currently undecided, pick a major that currently most interests you to pursue for this project.

**Step 2:** Create at least 20 questions for each interview. These questions can be about anything you would like to ask, but here are a couple of topics to get you started:

- Research opportunities, conferences, course information, books to read, careers, complimentary minors for your major, internships, thesis writing, personal experiences

In addition to your 20 questions, pick a few of these writing-based questions to ask your interviewees:

- What is the most essential aspect of writing in your major? (i.e., If you are an English major, your entire college career will center around academic essays...)
- What citation style will you be using? Are you familiar with that citation style?
- What are some of the major differences of writing within your discipline versus within other disciplines?
- How does the writing process differ in your discipline from other disciplines?
- How does writing fit into the major you are pursuing overall?
- What can you do to better prepare yourself for your major-specific future writing assignments?

**Step 3:** Email your interviewees to ask if they would be willing to interview with you.

- CC me on the emails to your interviewees
- Explain the context for why these interviews are taking place

## Conclusions

The Major-Specific Interview accomplishes multiple SLOs: students 1) form connections and network with faculty members and advanced students from their major, 2) interact with foundational communication skills, 3) synthesize qualitative data into meaningful reflective work, and, most importantly, 4) learn about forms of writing not traditionally covered in the composition classroom, which helps to better prepare them for future coursework.

This assignment can be altered for career-specific interviews to explore career options within a major. (Example: English career-specific interviews depending on type of writing— legal, political, graduate work, etc.)

## References

- Conzelmann, Johnathan G., et al. *Skills, Majors, and Jobs: Does Higher Education Respond?* IZA - Institute of Labor Economics, 2023. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep57448>. Accessed 25 Sept. 2024.
- Dave, Anish M., and David R. Russell. "Drafting and Revision Using Word Processing by Undergraduate Student Writers: Changing Conceptions and Practices." *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2010, pp. 406–34. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25704888>. Accessed 25 Sept. 2024.

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