

Effectiveness of MLA Citations Writing Workshops

Are students who participate in an MLA In-Text Citations in-class workshop able to employ the presented resources and information on how to use and format MLA in-text citations to create correct MLA in-text citations in future writing contexts?

Learning Outcome

- Students who participate in in-class workshops will be able to employ the presented resources in future writing contexts.

Methodology

- Data were collected from students enrolled in 3 First-Year Writing courses who also participated in an MLA citations workshop during Winter 2019.
- An internally-created Qualtrics survey was completed by students directly before and after participating in the MLA In-Text Citations workshop.
- Answers to the pre-test and post-test were independently scored by three trained scorers and then normed to determine one set of pre-test and post-test scores for each student.
- Scores were determined by counting the number of errors within each incorrect citation yielding a possible error score ranging between 0 to 8 errors.

Demographics

- Of the 69 students enrolled in these three course sections, 55 students (78%) completed the pre-test and post-test.
- Additional demographic information about the students was not collected.

Key Findings

- Of the 55 students assessed, 27 students (49%) met the “acceptable performance” benchmark, having either improved on their pre-test error score or earned a perfect “zero” score on both tests.
- 19 students (35%) displayed no change in the error score between their pre-test and post-test and 9 students (16%) earned a worse score on their post-test.
- Out of the 78 total errors in the pre-test responses, the most common errors involved incorrect punctuation (35 errors) or including unnecessary information (31 errors); however, both of these categories saw significant decreases in the post-test responses by 38% and 13% respectively.
- The only error category to increase between pre-test and post-test was missing the author, which had 3 occurrences in the pre-test and 11 occurrences in the post-test.

Plan of Action

- Maintain the overall approach to teaching MLA citations in writing workshops.
- Review the workshop’s agenda and materials for accuracy and clarity, especially regarding information about how to correctly include an author’s name in an in-text citation.
- Explain these findings and recommendations to the graduate assistants who are responsible for developing workshop agendas and materials.