

The Institute for Learning and Teaching

L2 Learners Task Force



2. What learning challenges face these students?

Writing: Writing is one of the top concerns at both levels. Undergrads have trouble with essay tests and papers while grad students also have trouble with thesis and dissertation writing. Current resources, such as the Writing Center, do not always have sufficient resources to meet student needs or to satisfy student expectations fully. In particular, Writing Center tutors are trained to avoid a strong focus on sentence-level mechanics and other editing issues. The need for help in this area, however, exists. Faculty at the graduate level feel frustrated with the need to do extensive editing of student work.

Reading: This is another top concern at both levels.

Study and Classroom Expectations: We need to add something here about study skills, class participation, flexibility, understanding the "culture" of the US classroom, understanding the role of office hours, working in groups inside and outside of class, academic integrity, attendance.

Examinations and Quizzes: Multiple choice tests are challenging to international students. Wording of these tests is often tricky, even for native speakers. L2 learners often need additional time to perform at a level comparable to how they would perform if they were being tested in their first language.

Listening and Comprehension Skills: The speed of native speakers' speech, combined with regional accents, can often bewilder even advanced L2 speakers.

Keyboarding: Keyboards differ across national boundaries. Depending on the language and country of origin of L2 learners, simply adapting to US keyboards can be a challenge.

Group Work: Differing expectations about group work can be a challenge. For example, computer programming must be done independently but some engineering courses encourage group work. The different expectations can be confusing. (MH)

Academic Integrity: L2 learners, particularly those from other countries and cultures, often bring different expectations about appropriate levels of assistance to their course work, writing, and examinations.

Social and Cultural Issues: L2 learners, particular those from other countries and cultures, often have different expectations about interactions among students and with faculty. Gender issues have been identified as a problem with some groups of students. Stress can also emerge from simply being in another country.