

How To Write Self-Evaluations

by Richard Alexander (abridged)

You are literally writing your transcript! So your self evaluation must be clean, neat, well-typed, and free from spelling, punctuation, and syntax blunders. Really bad copies probably won't be accepted by the Registrar's Office, but some persistent students have managed to get sloppy evaluations accepted. They pay for that later when they discover to their horror that the transcript cannot be changed! Take no chances. The evaluations must be typed directly on to the STUDENT SELF-EVALUATION form. Program secretaries will not type them for you.

The self-evaluations taken as a whole should provide a running account of your ACADEMIC PROGRESS through Evergreen. Readers who start with the first evaluation and read through to the final one, should be given the autobiographical story of your work here.

Why did you choose to come to Evergreen?

What were you prepared to do?

What did you want to do?

Why did you want to do it?

Why did you choose this program at this time?

What did you learn?

How have you changed? grown? developed?

Are your goals still the same?

What do you plan to do next? and why?

Things you should definitely put IN to the evaluations:

A) Explain what you hoped to **accomplish**, why you wanted to accomplish it, and to what degree you met or surpassed your expectations.

B) Describe **accomplishments you did not expect** but nevertheless turned out to be very important to you.

Why were they important?

C) Concentrate at least 1/3 of the evaluation on anything in the program that would be **important to your future plans, a future employer, or future graduate school.**

D) *You should concentrate on things that*

a) pertain to your future goals

b) connect to past work, or point to future work

c) were vital to the work of the program, and your relative accomplishment in it;

d) explain why you deserve the amount of credit you are earning in your "credit equivalencies"

e) personally affected YOU whether or not they were important to the program or your future work.

Here's what you *SHOULD* put in:

*Choose the two or three (no more than three!) specific items which were most important during the quarter, for whatever reasons, and discuss these items in detail.

*If you make convincing statements about these things, showing that you really do understand them fully and well, then lists of other items, and general claims of accomplishment will be convincing.

*It is important to be **CONVINCING**, to make the reader see that you really do know what you are talking about. Raise substantive issues and make substantive statements. This will **NOT** be boring. The usual bland list of things done is intensely boring.

*While it is important to be positive, to blow your own horn, you want to avoid arrogance and boasting. Admitting deficiencies and/or failures can actually strengthen a positive evaluation. Don't go on and on about these deficiencies at length - just admit them, explain why they were important, explain what you hope to do about them in the future.

*Make the self-evaluation as stylish and as uniquely yours as you can. You want to write an evaluation that no other student in the program could possibly write. You want to present a recognizable portrait of yourself. You want to write something no one could mistake for the evaluation of any other student.

Thing to leave OUT of evaluations, unless they are absolutely necessary:

A) Negative comments about yourself, your own work, your own abilities. You can acknowledge poor work, but should let the faculty evaluation describe it. YOU should concentrate on what is positive.

B) Negative comments about the program, its format, its faculty, your fellow students... Save this stuff for the evaluation you write of the faculty! Your future employer or graduate school doesn't need to hear this, and it can do you great damage in their eyes. It makes you sound like a sore-head.

C) Emotional statements, "feeling comments," and excessive information about your personal life, unless such information is absolutely needed to explain why something went wrong, or why you did something different from the other students. You can, of course, say that you were pleased with something or not pleased... but be brief, and rather vague.

Here 's what you can leave out

*Anything the program description says, you don't need to repeat; simply assume it is already described.

*Anything the faculty can and does say adequately, you don't need to repeat. You can acknowledge what the faculty says, but you don't need to go over the same ground again.

*Mere lists of your activities and accomplishments are never convincing: ANYONE can write a list, even someone who never read the books and who slept through every seminar can make a list of books he supposedly read.

Sample Self-Evaluation

Before I came to Evergreen I attended Linn-Benton Community College, studying a wide range of subjects including---among many others---writing, anthropology, geography, photography, and Eastern religions. I came to Evergreen to study environmental sciences but chose Myth and Sensibility for my first program. The art history and cross culture studies attracted me to the program. I felt that it would be helpful to have a background in those areas because of the prospect of travel in my future. I felt, however, that it was important to get started on my environment studies, which is why I have chosen to leave the program after only one quarter.

Before participating in this program I already had a background in the study of eastern religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. I had not, however, studied much of the Eastern cultures as a whole and I wanted to learn more about the way their societies functioned. The first book that we read proved most influential to me. By reading *Woman Warrior* I got a very in-depth look at the Chinese culture and its effects on women in society. I learned that the demands that were placed on women were and continue to be detrimental to their physical and mental health. The Chinese culture is an extreme example, in comparison to American culture, of a patriarchal society in which women historically have either been under valued or had little influence. From our study of the ancient Greek culture as well, I learned to draw concise comparisons between two contrasting cultures.

Coming into the program I realized that there was going to be a lot of writing expected and I knew that it was going to challenge me to improve my writing skills. The writing process has never been easy for me, but having to write weekly papers helped me develop better writing strategies. Open-ended papers were something that I was not accustomed to and it pushed me to form an opinion of my own and develop a strong thesis that I could back up with information from the books that I read. As well as writing, there was also extensive reading, which challenged my time management. Without daily tests or reading assignments I had to push myself to get the reading done throughout the week before seminar. From this, the pace at which I read has increased, improving my ability to read long books in a timely manner. From the seminars, I gained a wide range of perspectives on the books that we read, challenging the opinions that I had formed prior to seminar. During the program I also participated in workshops involving Chinese calligraphy, Sumi ink painting, and ceramics. By participating in the Chinese calligraphy workshops I learned how to manipulate the ink and brush in the traditional Chinese manner. The calligraphy is written by not only controlling the hand but the body as well. By controlling the body's movement and energy flow with the direction of the brush, one can attain the correct shape and stability of the lines to form strong characters. I also learned that most of the Chinese characters came from a simplification of their original forms. In addition, I worked with ceramics, learning to manipulate the clay to resemble an ancient art form from either Greece or China. Working with such media as clay and ink gave me a different perspective on the ancient Chinese and Greek cultures.

While working through the program I challenged my ability to complete all of the work required. I feel that although I did not fulfill every single requirement, I did work to the best of my abilities and pushed myself to accomplish as much as I could. My writing skills improved, my reading pace has increased and my knowledge of two different cultures has expanded. I have learned to comprehend complex theories and, by placing myself outside of my own cultural context, I have come to a better understanding of some other cultures as well. The