



YOUR EDUCATION ON PAPER: THE SUMMATIVE SELF-EVALUATION

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As I completed my time at Evergreen during the spring of 2010, I kept hearing whispers about the summative self-evaluation. Even in the Writing Center, not many tutors had written one, and no one knew all of the specifications. While I didn't fully understand what the summative self-eval was, I had a sense that I needed one to complete my transcript. I understood a variety of interdisciplinary approaches to my education, years spent in the print studio, quarters worth of collaborative projects, bits and pieces of time in intensive philosophy and writing programs, that one quarter I studied performance art, and the one in Prague. When I looked at it all together, it made perfect sense to me that I now wanted to do to graduate school for mental health counseling. And I understood that this might not seem like the most obvious step to anyone else, most worryingly, to graduate school admissions.

When I began to write my summative, I found that even though I had lived through all of my education, I wasn't yet familiar with my education on paper—as it appears in my transcript. Reading through one's own transcript isn't necessarily pleasant; sometimes evals contains comments or typos that are regrettable now. Yet taking time to read the whole thing enables critical reflection. Through reflection, it is possible to add another page to the pile.

What I added to my transcript provides a more overarching insight into my education than my evaluations could. It frames my education from the end point of my undergrad career and shows how I developed into the learner I am now. All the smatterings of information in other evals serve as evidence of this learner. I know that when a reader begins the daunting task of reading my transcript the first piece of my voice they encounter reflect the learner that I am now. it is this voice that guides them through the rest of the pages.

This article is an attempt to compile some of the tools that guided me through writing my summative in hopes that it will illuminate the process. These tools are meant for the early stages of the writing process, generating ideas, and beginning to write; however they can be useful whenever you get stuck or need new perspective on your writing. Often the biggest challenge with summatives is figuring out how to start. It seems like a baffling task, so it is best to start with a clear understanding of requirements and recommendations:

Your summative self-evaluation is due at the end of the quarter after you graduate. If you graduate in spring, that means it is due at the end of summer quarter: Communicate with Registration & Records about this deadline if you have unusual circumstances and are trying to complete your summative on time.

The summative will be the first evaluation in your transcript, followed by all the others in order of the most recent courses to the first program.

The summative adds a new perspective to your transcript—**it is not a chronological retelling** of your education.

If your summative is concise, your readers are more likely to read it in full, so a length of approximately **two single-spaced pages** is a good guideline. No smaller than 10-point type please.

It takes time and space to craft a summative self-eval, so give yourself plenty of both.

The following chart can help you map out how your transcript portrays your education and spark thinking about what else you want it to communicate. It works best if you fill the chart out while referencing your transcript. This way you can know how your education is portrayed already and see how you might clarify it for a reader. Fill the chart out from left to right, listing first all the credit bearing things you did, and then continue to the next column to draw out what you learned. You may find that as your progress to common threads and themes that you combine courses and you end up focusing less on certain courses and more on tone of a quarter or year. And perhaps in the importance column, you'll write even less.

PROGRAMS I'VE TAKEN AT EVERGREEN	SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES & LEARNING	COMMON THREADS & THEMES	HOW THIS IS IMPORTANT NOW

The summative is a document that asks you to be intentional about why you are writing it. It is common in the early stages to feel like you are writing because it *seems* like a good idea. After getting acquainted with your transcript, you might have a more personalized sense of why *you* are writing *your* summative.

At this stage it may be helpful for you to frame that purpose for both yourself and your audience. The following prompt can start that framing. You may want to use this prompt (or a variation on it) to begin your summative, or you may just use it to brainstorm:

The summative self-evaluation is an optional document the student creates for the Evergreen transcript. I am choosing to write a summative because...

go ahead, write some ideas...

There are no set structures for summatives; they don't require a chronological approach or a mention of each class you took. It may be helpful to consider the approach that Evergreen takes to teaching and learning, particularly if you find yourself focusing more on what you did than on how you learned and why it is important. The five foci of teaching and learning at Evergreen will be listed in your transcript on a page that describes the institution. They are beneficial to consider, not so that you can merely pay lip service to these institutional values, but because they are the themes that your courses and programs were designed around. They are likely to be reflected in how you learned. They are:

Interdisciplinary learning

Learning across significant differences

Personal engagement with learning

Linking theory and practice

Collaborative learning

It is likely that you can point to evidence of each of these in your transcript. If they resonate with how you conceptualized your education, take some time to freewrite about them. How have they

impacted the way you learned at Evergreen? Where have you seen yourself excel at them? Are there any that you want to carry into your future work? As you think thematically about your education, you may want to refer back to the chart you filled out with your transcript. How do the themes you noted there compare with the themes of the five foci?

Writing a summative self-eval is no easy task. It takes dedication and time. It takes multiple drafts. It takes revision. And it takes getting help from others. It is, however, a task that your education at Evergreen has prepared you for. No matter what you studied during your time here, reflection on those studies is likely a central part of how you learned. The summative provides the opportunity for your most practiced reflective voice to guide a reader through years of reflection. Having a summative as part of your transcript completes the work that you have done, and it makes it possible for your transcript to be read in a way that best represents your education.