**Basic SNL Terms**

**Competencies:**

Competencies, or Competence Statements, are requirements written as statements describing basic competence. These competences are flexible, depending on an SNL student’s experience and preferences. “Certain competences are met by specific courses or projects; others can be satisfied by relevant transfer courses or experience” (SNL online).

**Academic Committee:**

The Academic Committee usually consists of three members: the SNL student, an SNL Faculty Mentor, and a Professional Advisor. Occasionally, a peer may act as a fourth member. All SNL students have their own academic committee. The main purpose of this committee is to guide and assist the SNL student as they work to complete their individualized program.

**Independent Learning Pursuits (ILP):**

An ILP is not a course, it is written proof of projects completed or knowledge obtained outside of traditional college courses that complete competencies. Part of an ILP involves writing a paper that explains and demonstrates what and how the writer gained knowledge or accomplished something.

**Externship writing:**

The Externship is experience-based learning. Much, if not all, Externship learning occurs outside of the traditional classroom. The Externship fulfills two competencies. One competency is already written, and the student develops the second one with the assistance of the instructor or the Academic Committee. The nature of writing required for the Externship is dependent upon the conditions set by the instructor or Academic Committee.

**The Advanced Project:**

The Advanced Project required for students to graduate. Students must design a document or program, create a business plan, or come up with another major endeavor that he or she intends to use in real life. Part of this project is to write about how this endeavor was, is, or will be accomplished. In many cases, the written portion of the advanced project is research-based. There is no class for the Advanced Project, and it must be completed by the student without an instructor, on her own time. This, combined with a large page requirement (usually ten to thirty pages) for the written portion, can cause anxiety for some students.

**Focus Area:**

A focus area is **similar** to the traditional university major. It consists of competencies satisfied by SNL courses, relevant transfer courses, and documented college-level learning from experience.  The Advanced Project addresses learning in the SNL student’s individualized Focus Area.

Common elements of SNL writing

Inclusion of personal experience:

Some SNL writing assignments (including research papers) may include more personal, introspective writing than traditional writing projects. In many instances for reflective papers, the writer is considered a reliable source because of his personal experiences. It is important to not restrict an SNL student’s personal input in a paper but help them equally incorporate their experiences with other forms of research and objectivity.

Creative interpretation/Open-endedness:

In many cases, SNL assignments are open to creative interpretation. For example, pretend there is a competency centered on understanding "health." The writer could have choices to make, such as discussing mental or physical health. This open-endedness allows writers to personalize their work and challenge themselves to create a unique end product. However, some SNL learners feel uncomfortable because of loose assignment boundaries of “correct” and “wrong.” When faced with these challenges, going through pre-writing strategies will most likely help writers manage their creative freedom while maintaining the unique aspects of a writing assignment.

Definitions taken from:

Kwiatkowski, et al. *Handbook for Suburban Campus Group Leaders.* University Center for Writing-based Learning, 2010.

*DePaul SNL Online.* DePaul University, 2001. Web. 06 July 2010.