

## Writing–Enhanced Courses

### Rationale

Faculty members realize that too many students enter their sophomore, junior, and senior years with inadequate writing skills. In fact, many come to the college as freshmen lacking these skills. While College Writing I and II help, they are not the panacea. David Russell from Ohio State University points out that “writing is clearly not a single, autonomous skill, learned once and for all, but a varied and developing accomplishment.” In short, helping students develop better writing skills is the business of the entire faculty.

Skill in self-expression has been limited far too long to the standard essay, research paper, and laboratory report, according to experts in the Writing in the Disciplines’ initiative. Every profession has its own writing requirements or genre. Russell says that for students to write successfully in new genres they must have these four things:

1. **Motivation:** Instructors who use writing as an essential part of teaching and evaluation motivate students to invest more time and energy in the assignment. Students should also come to realize the correlation between writing activities and the requirements of their chosen professions.
2. **Identity:** Gender, age, social class, and ethnicity are significant components of identity. From these, students will be encouraged to develop their personal voices.
3. **Tools:** Each profession has a variety of genres, and students must learn strategies and requirements for successfully writing across the entire spectrum, from simple pieces (memos, journals, letters) to the more complex (formal reports, research documents).
4. **Processes:** Writing is a process, not a one-time event. Students need guidance in learning the processes necessary in successfully completing the writing demanded in each profession.

The writing-enhanced committee recommends writing should be a central part of the instruction and evaluation of a course. This will include clearly-stated expectations of the assignment; revision; instruction in the process of good composition, grammar, mechanics, and documentation as needed; individual conferences as needed; and rigor in the evaluation of the assignment. We do our students an injustice if we assign high grades to work that is poorly written, is replete with grammatical and mechanical errors, and has sloppy documentation.

### Sources:

Russell, David R. “Where Do the Naturalistic Studies of WAC/WID Point? A Research Review.” *WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Programs*. Ed. Susan H. McLeod, et al. Urbana: NCTE, 2001. 259-298.

Townsend, Martha. “Writing Intensive Courses and WAC.” *WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Programs*. Ed. Susan H. McLeod, et al. Urbana: NCTE, 2001. 233-258.

## Suggested Guidelines for Writing-Enhanced Courses

1. **Instructors:** WE courses should be taught by instructors who are committed to writing and who have demonstrated skill in the writing and revision processes.
2. **Class Size:** A 15:1 student-teacher ratio is preferred. The maximum should be 25.
3. **Writing Assignments:** Assignments will vary among classes and thus will center on writing that is appropriate for each discipline. These include formal and informal writing. Instructors are encouraged to create a variety of writing projects in addition to staples such as essays, research papers, and lab reports.
4. **Revision:** The course should include assignments that are sufficiently complex to accommodate significant revision, which at times may require students to rethink their writing.
5. **Required Number of Pages:** Typically, students will be required to write a minimum of 20 pages, at least eight of which should be formal, that is, graded for content, grammar, and mechanics. Informal writing can include many assignments such as responses to assigned reading, journal entries, lab reports, letters, in-class work, etc. Writing is more effective if it is distributed throughout the course instead of coming at the end.
6. **Impact on Final Grade:** Writing should be a minimum of 30 percent of the final grade.
7. **Required Courses:** Three writing-enhanced courses will be required in the 200-400 level in all baccalaureate programs. At least one will be in the major. Program directors will help transfer students demonstrate writing proficiency if problematic situations arise. Writing-enhanced courses should be designated WE in the University catalog and on students' transcripts.
8. **Feedback:** Students should receive feedback from their instructors within a reasonable period. Instructors are not expected to accept the full burden of correcting errors in student writing but are encouraged to give holistic evaluation of the content.
9. **Support Services:** The director of writing programs will serve as a resource for instructors of WE courses. Students will be directed to the tutoring services offered by the University.
10. **New Instructors:** A new application is required when a different instructor teaches the class.
11. **Syllabi:** A current syllabus should be submitted every four years.