

Writing Across the Curriculum Guidelines

Section 1: Introduction: Writing is a process essential to learning. This process is basic to the development of self-knowledge and is a central medium for the clear and efficient exchange of information in all disciplines. To achieve these ends, writing, like any other skill, needs to be continuously practiced. Ideally then, a college curriculum embeds the writing process in all modes of instruction, from the chemistry laboratory report to the sonnet sequence produced in a writing arts course. The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) component of General Education will provide the primary framework for the above-mentioned objectives. A variety of models can be used to deliver this instruction, including seminars, internships and the traditional classroom settings. In support of this endeavor, we would recommend that the college enhance writing support services, which includes instructional technology and faculty development. Taken together, these efforts will foster an environment in which the learning experience at Oswego will be broadened and deepened by the continuous commitment to the writing process.

Section 2: Departmental Plans The General Education curriculum requires a basic composition course (ENG102 or waiver based on placement) of all students. Additionally five writing courses/seminars are required for all students who enter as Freshmen. Each department will develop its own plan for meeting this five- course requirement. This plan could include any combination of Major, Cognate, Elective or General Education courses. In developing their plans, departments should keep in mind that not all writing courses have to be provided by the major department. Departments may be providers and/or consumers of writing courses. We anticipate that these writing courses will be mainly "double-dip" courses and are likely to apply to other Major, Cognate, or General Education requirements. The Plan: Each department should submit a plan for meeting the policy above, based on the general form below. The plan should contain goals and objectives for fulfilling the policy for each major and should designate five writing courses that students in each major must complete. The plan should also account for different kinds of matriculating students. The WAC Steering committee will make all department plans available for review and will evaluate plans according to the policy above. The WAC Steering Committee will then pass along its recommendation on each departmental plan to the General Education Board for its action.

I. Goals: the department should provide a narrative statement (200-500 words) of basic goals for its graduating students' writing proficiency. The statement should be outcome-oriented: it should reflect those kinds of writing skills that are expected of graduates in each major and how students may use writing to learn the discipline.

II. Objectives: the department should provide clear objectives for meeting the goals it states. The department should consider as guidelines the features of writing experiences given below. The objectives should describe and justify each of the below:

A. Behavior: specific kinds of writing experiences that will provide students with target skills and knowledge. This should include forms and activities in which students write to learn.

B. Conditions: specific contexts and resources, such as reading examples, stylebooks, etc. that will contribute to successful writing experiences.

C. Criteria: specific standards that will assure student progress in developing writing skills for the discipline. These will be the major's criteria for writing

experiences, and the department should show that each designated writing course fulfills the criteria (although the department may show that courses in other departments meet the criteria) for providing the writing experiences. This section is most important.

III. Courses: the department should include a list of specific writing courses that meet the criteria for providing writing experiences in each major. The courses may be in cognates or electives in other departments. A. List of courses: for each major, the department should provide a list of at least five courses that meet its criteria for providing writing experiences, along with a narrative justification for each course. Each justification should explain how it meets the criteria, and should also include (a) how writing is evaluated, including percentages of the final grade, (b) the maximum enrollment, and (c) how many non-majors might be allowed to enroll. A justification may apply to more than one major, as long as the list for the major refers to the justification. B. Anticipated categories: where the department intends for students in a major to complete one or more of the writing courses outside the department, it should provide descriptions of acceptable courses for each major, with specific examples of course outlines. C. Course outlines: the department should submit a course outline for each writing course that it will offer along with its overall plan. Departments seeking guidance as they develop these writing courses may submit to the WAC Steering Committee draft outlines of courses that are being developed; final outlines of these courses will be evaluated with regard to the justification for them.

IV. Special Circumstances: the department should describe how, or by what special means, the plan may be accessible to (a) transfer students, (b) students double majoring in another department, and (c) undeclared students.

Section 3: Implementation: The goal for a writing course is to incorporate as many writing experiences as possible in order for the student to attain the necessary skills required by their discipline. These experiences will undoubtedly differ according to discipline and could encompass such things as essays, laboratory reports, term papers, book reviews, critiques, practicum reports, case studies, internship reports, student teaching reports, computer programming assignments and journal writing.

The WAC Steering Committee encourages departments to develop as part of their plan lower-division and advanced Writing Seminars as well as other courses in the discipline with substantial writing. In other words, as part of the WAC component of General Education, we recommend that in addition to Freshman composition, students complete a lower division Writing Seminar that emphasizes writing skills (possibly along with other basic academic skills, such as critical thinking) within or as a cognate to their discipline, and another lower-division writing course before they complete 60 credit hours.

The WAC Steering Committee envisions the seminar experience to be "writing intensive" with some or all of the following features:

- a small group instruction (25 or fewer students) - a configuration that promotes frequent student/ teacher interaction and peer discussion;
- development of student skills at verbalization and organization of the course's knowledge content;
- a series of several writing assignments spaced periodically throughout the semester which require students to undertake a variety of writing tasks;
- at least one assignment, but preferably more that involves revision of the written assignment as a means of refining the student's understanding of the content;
- evaluation of writing assignments as a major component of grading;
- student/teacher conferences.

Writing courses other than seminars, submitted as part of a department's plan, could be offered in large or small classroom settings and would probably be less intensive than a Writing Seminar but need not necessarily be so. These writing courses would emphasize writing as a means to understanding the course content and should incorporate as many of the elements of the seminar experience as possible. The main goal of these courses would be to encourage students to write throughout the semester in order to enhance the learning process.

To reiterate, the committee strongly recommends that a first Writing Seminar and at least one other writing course be taken at the lower division level in order to reinforce the skills emphasized in Freshman composition. The recommended second Writing Seminar and at least one other writing course should be taken at the upper division to encourage writing within the student's particular discipline.

Section 4: Assessment of Department's Writing-across-the-Curriculum Programs:

In order for the writing component of General Education to be effective, periodic and regular assessment will be necessary. This assessment should be a longitudinal, college-wide assessment.

In order to facilitate implementations of the plan, representatives of the WAC committee will be available to meet with departments at any point during this process.

Section 5: Support Services: Development of a Coding System to identify approved Writing Courses and other General Education approved courses should be undertaken. Such a system would provide easy identification of approved courses that departments could include in their plans.

Writing Workshops for the professional development of faculty and graduate students who will be teaching Writing Courses should be created and scheduled on a regular basis, perhaps during Winter Breakout, in late May and in late August.

The WAC and General Education Board should develop and make available a resource guide for faculty who teach Writing Courses. This guide could include such things as articles on writing pedagogy, sample assignments and model syllabi. In addition to the faculty resource guide, a "Writing Requirement Handbook" should be developed and distributed to ALL students and faculty. This handbook would articulate the philosophy, which justifies the writing requirement, an explanation of the requirement, and the resources available to students and faculty.

The O.L.S. Writing Center and the English Department composition faculty should develop a plan, with administration support, to provide more comprehensive writing support and/or referral services campus wide. Additionally, modularized instruction (perhaps computer-supported) in such areas as grammar, spelling and punctuation should be made available to students.

ADDENDUM From the General Education Policy: Advanced Expository Writing: recognizing that a single required course cannot, in and of itself, produce graduates who communicate confidently and effectively in writing, the required basic competence in writing will be followed by a program of writing throughout the curriculum. The curriculum should ensure that students write frequently. The faculty of each major will submit to the Writing Across the Curriculum Steering committee a plan, specifying at least five courses, which will demonstrate how the students in their major will meet the goal of enhancing their writing and research skills. Such courses should help students attain proficiency in advanced college-level writing, including the reading and writing of articles, essays, proposals, and reports dealing with issues and concepts broadly conceived and narrowly focused.

Advanced Writing Requirements: students are required to take at least five courses that include a writing experience beyond the Basic Skills course. This requirement may be met with courses that meet other General Education or major requirements. The faculty of each major will determine which courses satisfy this requirement. Students who transfer to SUNY Oswego with sixty or more credits are exempt from any lower-division writing courses required for their major, but are required to take any upper-division writing courses required for their major.