Proposed W-Course Requirements

Created by Writing Advisory Committee (WAC)
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All this can be found at: http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/uwp

The purpose of the W course requirement at UW Tacoma is to provide students with critical writing experiences in their major that help them practice writing the genres of those fields, professions, and disciplines, and that meet to some degree the UWP's eight philosophical statements. For this reason, students are required to take at least one of the 2 required "W" courses approved by their major. All W courses ask students to:

- practice the writing of their chosen fields
- think critically about the expectations of language and communication
- understand and practice writing as processes of research, drafting, and revision
- engage in and use feedback and response practices among peers and the teacher as an integral part of the writing and revising process

W courses work from the philosophy that written communication, which includes multimodal and multimedia compositions, has different expectations in every field, discipline, and profession; however, there may be larger dimensions that cross multiple fields and audiences, although they too will be practiced in different ways (e.g. the treatment and documentation of research and sources; the use of evidence and what counts as such, reflection, and concision).

Common Curricular Elements

These guidelines are currently under review and are contingent upon faculty and administrative approval.

There are several **guidelines** that all W courses must follow in order to be considered a W course and be recorded as such:

- The course can enroll no more than 24 students since writing is labor intensive
- Every student needs at least 10 units of W courses.
- 50% of the total course work must be discipline-specific writing(referred to as DSW), which does not include daily quick writes, freewrites, journaling, or written exams
- Opportunities to receive formal feedback on most of the DSW should be designed into the course

- Students should be required to revise a significant number of the DSW (preferably the writing that has been given feedback) and these revision drafts should be designed into the course
- Some class time should be spent building writing practices that are discipline specific and critical, and that help them do the DSW of the course
- Occasional, low-stakes, writing-to-learn activities should be incorporated into the course, for instance, freewriting, journaling, and reflection activities
- The course should expect and help students use the library as a resource for their writing

Required Kinds Of Writing for "W" Courses

For clarification, the requirements above for any W course delineates two kinds of writing that any W course must ask students to practice.

Discipline-Specific Writing (DSW). This consists of any of the native genres of the discipline, field, or professions that the course covers. These genres of writing might be the typical research paper, reports, business memos, proposals, poems, essays, briefs, web-based documents, lab reports, or other kinds of documents with very particular expectations and structures that are generally determined by the discipline and its readers. Several disciplines may have the same genre of writing, say the research paper, but each discipline likely has vary particular ideas about what goes in it, how to structure it, documenting sources, and the kinds of discussions that are expected.

Keep in mind that in one W course a particular genre of writing might be DSW but when used in another, it's likely a writing-to-learn activity. For example, in a creative writing course, writing poetry is the genre of one of the fields it covers, so poetry is DSW, but in a business or math course that asks students to write poetry the activity is not DWS. Likely, students are learning something else about the course topic, and not learning a native genre practiced in the field (they are writing poetry to learn about business or math). Both of these kinds of writing are important to the W course. Together, they make a course writing intensive and in the disciplines, both of which provide multiple ways to engage in critical language activities that are important to the philosophy of the UWP.

Writing-to-Learn Activities. These writing activities can be used in any discipline or course. Their purposes are mainly to engage students in particular kinds of learning, questioning, and thinking. Through the writing, the student learns something, but the writing itself is usually not graded on errors, grammar, and the like because those formal issues of writing are not the purpose of the writing activity. For instance, these activities might be journaling, guided note-taking, freewriting, reflection activities, peer feedback activities, etc.

Current IAS Policy for W-Course Designation

The IAS program is committed to encouraging the development of writing skills, including formal W courses, as well as other types and levels of writing across the curriculum. To ensure that students include classes that have more intensive levels of writing, they must complete one designated as C (composition) and two courses designated as W (writing) to complete their bachelor's degree.

IAS will ensure that a significant number of W courses are available for students.

W courses must include the following:

1. Out-of-class writing assignments in an appropriate discipline-specific genre that account for 30% or more of the final grade and that include either

   a. Two short (3-5 pages each) papers, OR
   b. One longer paper with appropriate scaffolding, such as peer review.

2. A revision process is encouraged for one of the out-of-class writing assignments.

3. Feedback on writing for out-of-class papers (no more than 2-3 areas for improvement has been shown to be most effective for improving student skills).

4. Some class time spent on building writing skills needed for success in projects.

5. Occasional, brief, in-class, ungraded writing as part of routine teaching to encourage critical thinking, fluency, and increased retention of subject matter.