Guidelines for Writing Intensive Courses

Teaching students to write well is one of the primary missions of the College of Arts and Sciences. Writing Intensive courses are intended to help students learn to express themselves formally and coherently in discursive prose. Writing is to be regarded not simply as information to which students should be exposed, but as a skill which requires practice. Writing Intensive courses equate extended, intensive writing with contemplative concentration on the subject matter: in any field, a student can learn by writing. Writing Intensive courses are therefore offered across the curriculum.

A Writing Intensive course should include several writing assignments that form an integral part of the students' progression in the course. Throughout the semester, review and revision of writing should occur systematically and include feedback from the instructor and peers. The students' writing might address philosophical concerns, methods, or specific topics; but the work should be based on exposure to published expository writing.

While Writing Intensive assignments may take different forms, they should include

- Prewriting -- e.g., outlines, in-class writing, freewriting, lab notebooks, journals.
- Submission of preliminary drafts for the instructor's oral and written response. Peer review and response may also be incorporated.
- Revision of content, organization, mechanics, and style.
- Formal presentation of a final draft.

The instructor should take into account student performance at all these stages when evaluating writing. It is recommended that students prepare a number of different assignments of varying lengths and intent. An extended essay or term paper is strongly recommended. Examinations should incorporate essay questions, and writing assignments should be given significant weight in the overall course grade. While the weight of writing in WI course grades will vary, it is typical for writing assignments to count for at least 30% of the course grade, and in most WI courses, writing assignments count for no less than two thirds of the total grade. Similarly, the amount of writing assigned in WI courses may vary. As a general guideline, writing assignments should total at least 5000 words (20 pages). However, in recognition of the significance of shorter writing assignments in particular fields, such as the development of abstracts in the sciences, the page limit is flexible.

Guidelines for Submitting Writing Intensive Course Proposals

Proposals for Writing Intensive courses should be submitted by following the same procedure Arts and Sciences departments follow when requesting a course modification or course description change. Complete the appropriate form, adding the letters WI at the end of the course number. Submit the form and related materials to Anna Larkin of the Curriculum Committee, 308 Scofield. Subsequently, proposals will be reviewed and approved by the Campus Writing
Board, a committee of nine faculty members from departments across the curriculum. Related materials submitted should include

- Description of writing exercises (e.g., journals, reports, research proposals, annotated bibliographies, critiques, essay examinations, term papers, drafts, etc.). Include an estimate of the length of each assignment.
- Provisions for submission of drafts, substantive and organizational revision in response to the instructor's criticism, and rewriting.
- A course syllabus that describes how writing assignments figure in the overall course grade.

Once approved, Writing Intensive courses may be subject to periodic review. If you have any questions or need help preparing a proposal or designing WI assignments, contact:

   Alice Reckley, Associate Professor of Foreign Languages & Literature
   Scofield Hall 214, x 2821
   reckleya@umkc.edu