WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Criteria for Writing-Intensive Courses

IUP is committed to the improvement of student writing skills; therefore, the responsibility for writing must be university wide. This means that writing must be practiced and reinforced throughout the curriculum. Students need to be educated to recognize that writing is a necessary and frequently used skill. Writing assignments must be designed to increase learning by encouraging students to integrate new knowledge with previous knowledge and to teach discipline specific uses of writing.

Courses which develop writing skills are of two types: (1) Writing courses--those that provide direct instruction in writing skills and the process of writing (the two required English composition courses) and (2) Writing-intensive courses--those that have content as their primary focus but also reinforce writing skills by using writing as an integral part of the learning experience. Writing-intensive courses are addressed in criteria which follow.

GOALS FOR WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

(1) Encourage and reinforce student learning by using writing as a learning tool;

(2) Help students write more effectively;

(3) Prepare students for writing in their careers and in their personal and community lives;

(4) Encourage literacy across the university;

(5) Demonstrate IUP's commitment to effective writing skills.

CRITERIA FOR WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSES

[revised, University Senate, December 1992]

In designing writing-intensive courses, departments are urged to be creative and to modify/design courses which are both faithful to the university-wide criteria and reflective of the differences among fields of study. Faculty are urged to determine the number of papers or words (specific number and kinds of writing assignments), grading scales, and teaching strategies appropriate for individual writing-intensive courses.

All writing-intensive courses must:

(1) Integrate carefully planned writing assignments into the course so that they increase student learning and enhance student ability to write.

(2) List the improvement of student writing among the course objectives in the syllabus.

(3) Distribute specific written instructions, including criteria for evaluation, for major assignments.

(4) Guide students in conceiving, organizing, and presenting written material in ways appropriate to the subject being studied.

(5) Provide ample opportunities for students to improve their writing skills and to have at least 5000 words (approximately 15-20 typed pages) comprising two or more separate assignments evaluated by an instructor. Depending on the nature of the course, appropriate writing assignments may include such formats as case studies, laboratory reports, journals, letters, memos, formal essays, research articles, project or grant proposals, and so forth.

(6) Provide an opportunity for students to revise at least one of their writing assignments after receiving response from the professor.

(7) Include, with whatever informal or draft writing is appropriate, at least one assignment that requires students to produce finished, edited prose.

(8) Consider written assignments as a major part of the final grade; in most cases, this should be 50% or more.

In addition, all writing-intensive courses should:

(1) Give attention to both the process and the product of writing. Intervention in the writing process, particularly in its early stages, is a highly effective way of helping students produce better written work. For example, students can be assisted with task definition, topic selection, information gathering, organization and formatting, and revision strategies. Major assignments should have clearly defined stages of preparation and regular progress reviews.

(2) Provide opportunities for students to consult with instructors and perhaps tutors or one another as they prepare drafts of assignments or revisions.

(3) Provide an appropriate variety of writing experiences by including writing with different audiences, purposes, or formats. There should also be an appropriate mixture of in-class and out-of-class writing and of graded and ungraded writing.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

**Barbara Walvoord, Helping Students Write Well: A Guide for Teachers in All Disciplines. (Second Edition. N.Y.: Modern Language Association, 1986)

Excellent handbook for faculty. Advice on designing courses, coaching the writing process, and responding/evaluating student writing. Also case studies of courses in history, literature, psychology, biology, sociology, marketing research.

**Barbara Walvoord, Three Steps to Revising Your Writing for Style, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling. (Glenville, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1988)

Advice for students. Includes general approaches to editing prose as well as specific "lessons" on topics like subject-verb agreement, pronouns, punctuation, capitalization, etc.

*C. Williams Griffin, ed. Teaching Writing in All Disciplines. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982)

Collection of articles. Covers coaching students, connection of writing to learning, responding to writing, and examples from mathematics and finance courses.

*Robert Weiss, ed. Faculty Handbook for the West Chester University Writing Program. (1987)

Includes general advice plus brief descriptions of writing activities in nineteen of West Chester's "writing-emphasis" courses.

*The Forum for Liberal Education, 7 (October 1984). [Periodical published by Association of American Colleges]

Special issue devoted to Writing Programs, including descriptions of what is happening on fourteen campuses.

*The Busy Professor's Travel Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum.

Faculty handbook from Eastern Oregon State College. Emphasizes strategies for improving work in progress rather than dealing with writing disasters after they have occurred.

**Available in Reference Section, Stapleton Library.
*Available in Liberal Studies Office.