

PROCEDURES FOR USING THE W-DESIGNATION

The W-designation may be applied to a course or section only when authorized by the Liberal Studies Committee (LSC); attaching a W indicates that the course or section is "writing-intensive" and meets the criteria established by the University Senate. All LSC actions either authorizing or denying authorization for a W-designation will be reported to the UWUCC for information.

How Do We Get the Process Started?

STEP #1. Read the Senate-approved criteria for writing-intensive courses. Consider attending a writing workshop designed to help faculty prepare proposals, or talk with a colleague who has attended. Read the introduction and look at the sample summaries of writing assignments in the LSC's packet.

STEP #2. Complete the application form, get the necessary signatures, and send twelve (12) copies of the form and its attachments to the LSC.

How Much Flexibility Will We Have Within the Department?

You have a great deal of flexibility. Because the LSC knows that departments face different situations, it will authorize the use of a W-designation in any of three ways:

I. PROFESSOR MAKES A COMMITMENT TO WRITING

A professor may make a commitment to IUP's Writing Across the Curriculum program. The W may then be attached to any course that she or he elects to teach in a writing-intensive way. (The professor need not emphasize writing in every course, every time; this method permits the use of the W, but does not demand it universally.) To make a commitment, a professor must: (1) indicate his or her intention on the application cover sheet, (2) have completed an approved writing workshop, (3) submit an acceptable syllabus and summary of writing assignments for one typical course, and (4) agree to forward to the LSC, for its information, syllabi for subsequently offered W courses or sections.

Professors will be asked to indicate, every five years, if they want to continue the commitment.

II. DEPARTMENT IDENTIFIES A WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSE

A department may indicate that one of its courses will be a writing-intensive course regardless of who teaches it. To receive authorization to use the W for a departmental course, a department must: (1) submit an acceptable syllabus and summary of writing assignments, and (2) attach a supplementary statement explaining how the department will insure that whoever teaches the course will abide by the syllabus, use the same or equivalent writing assignments, and be familiar with current theory and practice in writing-across-the-curriculum.

III. PROFESSOR MAKES INDIVIDUAL COURSE APPLICATION

A professor may apply to use a W-designation on a course-by-course basis. A small team of professors who regularly teach a course together may submit a jointly prepared proposal in this same manner. To receive authorization for a course, a professor or team must: submit an acceptable syllabus and summary of writing assignments. [Note: this form of authorization is both course-specific and professor(s)-specific. It cannot be carried by the professor(s) to other courses, nor can it be used for this course when other professors are teaching it, unless they submit their own applications.]

How Long Will It Take to Get Approval?

The LSC will make every effort to act promptly on applications. Assuming that the application contains no insufficiencies, a submission by November 1 will receive action in time for inclusion on the next summer or fall schedules; a submission by April 1 will receive action in time for inclusion on the next spring schedule.

How Does the W-Designation Get on the Class Schedule?

The department chairperson does this when preparing the "Final Class Schedule." The Director of Liberal Studies will provide in a timely fashion a list of writing-intensive authorizations so that chairpersons can do this with assurance. As in the case of all scheduling decisions, it is assumed that the chairperson will have consulted appropriately with faculty and deans, and considered the programmatic needs of students served by the department.

In the case of a professor commitment, the chairperson may apply a W to any course or section of a course, any time this professor is the instructor (assuming, of course, that the professor agrees to teach this course in a writing-intensive manner). In the case of a departmental course, the W may be applied any time that the department can fulfill its promise to insure the course is writing-intensive. In the case of a professor/individual course authorization, the chairperson may apply a W only when the specific professor(s) and specific course are paired on the class schedule.

The chairperson has a good deal of flexibility: The W may be applied to some sections of a course without applying it to all. The W may be applied to a course or section for some semesters without incurring an obligation to apply it every time the course is taught.

Because there is flexibility, however, chairpersons have a responsibility, when scheduling a W course or section, to communicate with involved faculty to be sure that they are willing and intending to teach in a writing-intensive manner on this occasion.

PERIODIC EVALUATION AND REVIEW OF THESE PROCEDURES:
(Agreement between UWUCC and LSC)

1. The LSC will report annually to the UWUCC on how these procedures are working.
2. These procedures will be reviewed jointly by the UWUCC and LSC at the end of three years.

WP: W-RULES

LSC # _____
Action _____

COVER SHEET: Request for Approval to Use W-Designation

TYPE I. PROFESSOR COMMITMENT

- () Professor _____ Phone _____
() Writing Workshop? (If not at IUP, where? when? _____)
() Proposal for one W-course (see instructions below)
() Agree to forward syllabi for subsequently offered W-courses?

TYPE II. DEPARTMENTAL COURSE

- () Department Contact Person _____ Phone _____
() Course Number/Title _____
() Statement concerning departmental responsibility
() Proposal for this W-course (see instructions below)

TYPE III. SPECIFIC COURSE AND SPECIFIC PROFESSOR(S)

- () Professor(s) _____ Phone _____
() Course Number/Title _____
() Proposal for this W-course (see instructions below)

SIGNATURES:

Professor(s) _____

Department Chairperson _____

College Dean _____

Director of Liberal Studies _____

COMPONENTS OF A PROPOSAL FOR A WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSE:

I. "Writing Summary"--one or two pages explaining how writing is used in the course. First, explain any distinctive characteristics of the content or students which would help the Liberal Studies Committee understand your summary. Second, list and explain the types of writing activities; be especially careful to explain (1) what each writing activity is intended to accomplish as well as the (2) amount of writing, (3) frequency and number of assignments, and (4) whether there are opportunities for revision. If the activity is to be graded, indicate (5) evaluation standards and (6) percentage contribution to the student's final grade.

II. Copy of the course syllabus.

III. Samples of assignment sheets, instructions, or criteria concerning writing that are given to students.

Provide 12 copies to the Liberal Studies Committee.

WRITING SUMMARY -- HI 300 "Social History of Colonial America"

HI 300 Social History of Colonial America is proposed for identification as a "W" course. The course is taught every Spring and is listed as a Liberal Studies Elective. Most students in the class are juniors and seniors; a few may be sophomores. Students are drawn from a variety of majors; class size is limited to 25. The course will count toward a history major or minor.

There are five basic types of writing which occur in this class:

1. **WRITING TO STIMULATE THOUGHT OR TO SUMMARIZE A POINT.** After listening to a lecture or participating in a discussion, students may be asked to summarize the main point(s) of the class; this helps to reinforce the idea that history is argument rather than a mere collection of unrelated facts. On other occasions, students may be asked to write down a few ideas about a question in preparation for an ensuing discussion; this helps to focus thought and improve the quality and liveliness of the discussion. These are not collected and not graded. They do not contribute to the students' grades, except indirectly in the sense that they help students learn.

2. **WRITING FOR EVALUATION.** There are two major examinations, a mid-term and a final. Each has two types of questions: (a) paragraph-style identification-relationship questions, which ask students to identify two people or terms and explain the connection between them; (b) larger, interpretive questions asking students to apply what they have learned to novel situations. [See attached examples of questions.] Students write their answers during the 1-1/2 hour class period, but have copies of the major essay questions ahead of time. In evaluating the answers, the construction of the essay counts a great deal, but students are not expected to produce fully edited prose. 55% of grade.

3. **WRITING TO ENHANCE READING.** Students read five paperbacks for this class; each is the basis for a class discussion. In preparation for these discussions, students must prepare two things: (a) "What's in the Book Card" and (b) a short 1-2 page paper as directed by an assignment sheet. Instructions for the cards are attached, as is a sample of an assignment sheet. The objective of the card is to encourage students to focus on the thesis of the book; the objective of the brief paper is to encourage them to think about the implications of the book and to see history's connections to present issues. Both assignments are graded on a simply scale of 0, 1, 2 as indicated on the attached sheets. 20% of grade.

4. WRITING TO INTEGRATE LEARNING AND THINK CREATIVELY ABOUT A TOPIC. Students are asked to do additional reading on a topic of their choice and write an interpretive essay. Length is 10-15 pages. This assignment allows students to demonstrate their ability to frame a historical argument. The assignment is monitored at various stages throughout the semester and graded according to distributed criteria. [See attachment.] The paper is expected to be presented in fully edited English. After it has received an initial evaluation, students have an opportunity to revise and resubmit. 25% of grade.

5. NOTE-TAKING. Because there is no standard textbook for this course, much of the material is presented in lectures. Students are encouraged to take their notes in a double-entry format--that is, one side of a page for recording the lecture and the opposite for making later notations about implications, questions, and insights which the student sees. This encourages students to see history as interpretation and to engage in interpretation themselves. Although notebooks are occasionally examined if a student is having difficulty, they are not collected or graded.

WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSES AT IUP

This packet of materials is for use by individuals and departments who wish to designate courses as "Writing-intensive." It contains:

1. Procedures for Using the W-designation, as agreed upon by the UWUCC and the LSC.
2. Cover Sheet for Request for Approval to Use W-designation
3. Criteria for Writing-intensive courses, as approved by the University Senate
4. Bibliography of materials on teaching writing-intensive courses
5. Two Sample Proposals

What is a Writing-intensive course? The University Senate defines this as a course that has content as its primary focus but that also reinforces writing skills by using writing in a substantial way to enhance learning.

As those of you who attended an IUP Writing Workshop know, these courses are not created by merely tacking on more writing assignments. Writing is not an "extra"; rather, it becomes an integral part of the learning process. Writing is not added to content; it is a way of improving students' understanding of content. The motto of the writing-across-the-curriculum movement is "Writing to Learn."

The best way to begin revising a course to make it writing-intensive is to think clearly about your objectives. What do you want the students to learn, or to be able to do? With your objectives clearly in mind, you can then choose writing assignments--from the dozens of possibilities available--that will most increase learning.

This means that there is no "perfect" formula that will work for every instructor in every course. You have a great deal of flexibility in designing your course and in selecting your writing activities. There are, however, minimums set out in the Criteria for Writing-intensive Courses, and you must, of course, observe those.

A note about the two sample proposals. These are not intended to suggest a "best" or "right" or "only" way to design a course. They are intended to define the form that the LSC asks you to follow when submitting a proposal. Committee members will have many proposals to read, and you can help them (and yourself) by arranging material in a standard way.

Any LSC member will be happy to read your proposal informally prior to submission, or to refer you to someone with more expertise.