

## Writing Emphasis Guidelines

Any course submitted for a writing emphasis designation should **emphasize writing**. Research indicates that students develop writing skill primarily through repeated practice with a variety of kinds of writing over time. Although the core learning outcomes for writing emphasis courses are intended to be broad enough to allow specific disciplines to teach writing in ways that best meet the needs of their students, **strong writing emphasis courses share these features:**

**Writing is a substantial component in the course.** Students learn most from writing that demands their time and attention and that is clearly valued by faculty. A course in which students' writing constitutes only a small portion of the total grade or in which students complete only one short writing assignment is not emphasizing writing. Not all courses are good choices for a writing emphasis designation. A course should be designated "writing emphasis" because writing is the best way for students to express what they learn in that particular course.

**Students engage in multiple writing assignments.** Although students can learn something about their subject matter from writing a single paper, they are unlikely to increase writing skill without engaging in multiple writing assignments throughout a course. These may be multiple drafts of a single assignment, multiple assignments in the same genre, or different kinds of writing in a single course.

**Students receive some direct instruction in writing.** For writing skill to develop, students need instruction in various kinds of writing over time. As students move beyond introductory and intermediate composition courses into courses in the major, they need explicit instruction in the rhetorical strategies and writing conventions common in their field. This instruction can be delivered through lecture, handouts, analysis of models, written feedback from the instructor, directed peer response, and teacher-student conferences. Supplemental instruction may be provided by the Center for Writing and Writing Associates program.

**Classes are small enough to allow multiple drafts and direct feedback on writing.** A strong writing emphasis class that includes substantive attention to writing in addition to course content will require extra time and energy from instructors. That is why the Conference on College Composition and Communication recommends limiting writing-intensive classes to 20. Courses in the major that must have large enrollments in order to meet demand are not good choices for writing emphasis credit.

### Suggestions for Choosing Learning Outcomes for Writing Emphasis Courses

Courses submitted for a Writing Emphasis designation need to focus on at least one of the following outcomes. These learning outcomes will determine how the course is assessed. Although a Writing Emphasis course may fulfill more than one learning outcome, trying to fulfill all of the learning outcomes below may make assessment difficult. Select those learning outcomes that fit best with other intended outcomes for the specific course.

***Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of the rhetorical conventions of the target discipline.*** This learning outcome is appropriate for courses that focus on preparing students to write as disciplinary specialists or professionals. Students will be expected to learn to conduct and present research as disciplinary specialists do or to use the forms appropriate to specific professions or to gain expertise in producing a particular genre of text.

***Students will exhibit the ability to use writing as a means of gaining and expressing an understanding of discipline-specific content.*** This learning outcome is appropriate for courses in which writing is used primarily to help students to learn the course material. Courses in which students use writing to respond to reading, complete reflective journals on their learning, or write researched essays in academic forms would meet this learning outcome.

***Students will show the ability to employ writing strategies and rhetorical practices learned in lower division writing courses (i.e. Written Communication 1 and 2).*** This learning outcomes is appropriate for courses which focus on developing writing skill more generally, especially revision skills, general research skills, and rhetorical analysis of writing. A course that includes multiple writing assignments and opportunities for revision would meet this learning outcome

***Students will produce writing that demonstrates clarity and precision of thought.*** This learning outcome is appropriate for courses that will give focused attention to language and logic. Although all instructors consider clarity and precision important qualities in student writing, not all courses provide students with instruction on how to achieve these qualities. A course that meets this outcome would be expected to provide opportunities for students to learn to write more clearly and think more precisely.