

# **THE BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY WRITING REQUIREMENT AND PROGRAM**

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## **BACKGROUND**

In May 1981, the Bucknell University faculty provisionally approved a new graduation requirement for writing, to be fulfilled by writing courses in the disciplines. Following two years of experimentally developing and offering such courses, the faculty in May 1983 adopted the requirement and program described below, to go into effect with the first-year class entering in August, 1983. Some modifications were made to the legislation in response to an internal review conducted in the 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 academic years; these changes were approved by the faculty in April 2006. Additional changes and updates were made during 2020/21 to bring the legislation in line with current practices. These changes were approved by the faculty in May 2022 and are reflected in this document.

## **THE REQUIREMENT**

Every candidate for any undergraduate degree must successfully complete at least three writing courses to be selected from courses designated W1 (one course) and W2 (two courses).

## **THE PROGRAM**

### **I. Aims and Outcomes**

Designated writing courses in the University Writing Program have two purposes: to develop expository skills and to teach the use of writing as a means for creating and processing knowledge. Such courses aim to develop students' mastery of written language, so that they may discover, organize, and communicate their knowledge, while recognizing and supporting students' individual differences (e.g., linguistic background, disability).

To this end, a set of student-centered learning outcomes, referred to as Writing Program Outcomes (WPOs) were developed by the Composition Council [now called Writing Across the Curriculum Council] in 2012/13 to be used as the foundational criteria for Writing Program assessment. The WPOs are as follows:

**WPO 1:** *students produce effective written communication in terms of expository skills (i.e., organization, clarity of expression, achieving purposes, and addressing intended audiences) and use of conventions relevant to particular disciplines or genres.*

**WPO 2:** *students practice writing as a process that includes revision based on feedback.*

**WPO 3:** *students use writing as an instrument for learning.*

## **II. Two Types of Courses**

Courses intended to fulfill the University writing requirement are of two types: foundation (W1) and practice (W2).

W1 courses have as one of their primary objectives the teaching of fundamental techniques in writing expository prose. These courses are not remedial.

W2 courses offer students guided practice in writing in differing fields across the curriculum. They teach the skills necessary to write for the course/discipline.

W1 and W2 courses may be offered in any department.

## **III. Summary of Criteria for W1 and W2**

<b>Purposes</b>	<b>Common Traits</b>	<b>Differentiating Traits</b>	
		<b>W1</b>	<b>W2</b>
To teach the use of language as an instrument for thinking	1. Writing to learn, as well as to communicate	Introduce writing as thinking	Use writing to teach concepts in the course or discipline
To develop expository skills	2. Writing instruction	Recurring, frequent instruction	Instruction as needed
	3. Writing process	Introduce process writing	Support process writing
	4. Expository skills	Teach skills	Support skills; teach techniques needed for the course/discipline
	5. Frequent and substantial writing	No difference	

#### **IV. Specific Criteria for W1**

W1 courses will:

1. Teach the use of writing as thinking and as a means of creating and processing knowledge.

W1 courses include writing assignments that prompt students to engage in intellectual work. Types of assignments may include essays, abstracts, journals, emails, question formulation, field notes, lab notebooks, or short answers to prepared questions, all designed to use language as a resource for inquiry.

2. Include recurring instruction in writing.

Methods of instruction will vary. There is no single model for teaching a W1 course. The important aim is to reinforce the development of skills by frequent instruction (weekly, if possible) and the provision of feedback from various sources.

3. Teach the writing process: planning, composing, revising, editing.

By teaching writing as stages in a process, by presenting strategies for each stage, and by allowing time for reworking, instructors enable students to improve thought and to improve communication. Students will be expected to treat each stage of the process with an appropriate amount of care.

The writing process often varies by discipline and by instructor. Consequently, it is essential that faculty be clear about what is expected of students in the drafting/revising process as well as about the criteria by which writing assignments will be evaluated.

Instructors should provide feedback to aid revision on a substantial amount of student writing. When responding to drafts, instructors should prioritize global concerns earlier in the process, with local concerns addressed in later drafts. The response need not be time-consuming, but it should be provided in a timely fashion. Response to work-in-progress should occur in addition to evaluation of finished writing for grading. At least one writing assignment must require revision of drafts in response to instructor and/or peer feedback.

4. Teach, emphasize the importance of, and require students to demonstrate proficiency in the following expository skills:

- understanding genre and using appropriate conventions
- addressing intended audiences

- achieving purposes
- organizing the whole paper, paragraphs and sentences
- editing and proofreading

5. Require frequent writing from each student.

Frequent and substantial writing must be incorporated into the course, including writing-to-learn opportunities in which students use writing to explore, internalize, and synthesize the subject matter, enabling the acquisition and retention of information and ideas.

## **V. Specific Criteria for W2**

W2 courses will:

1. Use writing to teach subject matter.

W2 courses emphasize that writing enables acquisition and retention of information and ideas. Whenever appropriate, students will be required to explore, internalize and synthesize subject matter through writing. This kind of writing should occur in addition to finished, graded work.

2. Provide writing instruction.

Instructors will determine which writing skills or techniques are appropriate to the discipline and course and will provide instruction in them. Methods of instruction will vary, but appropriate assistance must be provided by instructors who will hold students to a high standard in regard to expository skills (see Criterion #4 for W1 courses). Instructors will identify areas for improvement and will work with students as appropriate. The Writing Center is also available to support both students and instructors (see Section VIII).

3. Support the writing process.

W2 courses emphasize the benefits of writing in stages to clarify meaning and improve communication. Whenever possible, the schedule of writing assignments will allow time for drafting and re-drafting, feedback, and revision. At least one writing assignment must require revision of drafts in response to instructor and/or peer feedback.

Instructors should be clear about what is expected of students in the drafting/revising process as well as about the criteria by which drafts will be evaluated. Instructors should hold students accountable for meeting these expectations and for fully engaging with each stage of the process.

4. Teach the techniques of writing needed by students or expected in the discipline.

W2 courses recognize that students enter a course with writing skills on which to build but which may need reinforcement, development or adaptation in a new context. Instructors will teach writing techniques expected in the discipline and will provide review of strategies and methods of research as needed.

5. Require frequent and substantial writing.

W2 courses recognize the need for practice in writing. Students will write often, in multiple assignments or in preparation for one large assignment. Many types of writing (reports, abstracts, summaries, interpretive or argumentative essays, notes, documentation, manuals, fiction, poetry) are appropriate to W2 courses.

## **VI. Order of Courses**

Students will take one W1 course, for instruction, in the first year. They will take at least two W2 courses, for sustained development, throughout their remaining undergraduate years and for guided practice in one or more disciplines, including the major.

W1 courses must be taken in the first year and W2 courses should normally follow W1 courses. At least one W2 course must be taken after the W1 and one W2 course after the first year. Some majors may require a W2 in the last two years.

## **VII. Substitutions**

Bucknell graduates will have completed at least three W courses, and students may request substitutions for the W1 and W2 requirements based on work done prior to enrolling at Bucknell or/and at other institutions. The credits must first be accepted via Bucknell's transfer process. Students can subsequently contact their College's associate dean, who may consult with the Writing Program or Writing Center staff in assessing course materials and who will then communicate the decision to the Registrar. For W credit, these substitutions usually fall in one of two categories:

1. Students who believe they have completed coursework that satisfies W criteria *before enrolling* at Bucknell (e.g., Advanced Placement English, college-level writing course, etc.) can begin the process by contacting the associate dean as outlined above. Depending on the W1-equivalent work completed, students may only be required to take the remaining two W2 courses, while in some cases, (e.g. Advanced Placement English), a student might need to substitute a third W2 course in lieu of the W1. All students have to take at least one W2 course at Bucknell, regardless of the number of W courses taken elsewhere.

2. Students *currently enrolled* at Bucknell requesting W credit for a course at another institution are strongly encouraged to begin the process by also consulting with the Writing Program or Writing Center Directors to assess the feasibility of that course being approved for Bucknell W credit upon return. If course documents are not available prior to taking the course, students will have to wait and provide course materials after course completion, following the course approval steps outlined above.

## VIII. Writing Referral System

A referral system is available through the Writing Center. Instructors should seek to identify ***as early as possible in the semester*** any student who needs additional one-on-one writing support. The instructor should meet with the student to explain the referral and to identify the areas of writing with which the student needs the most assistance. For a referral to be successful, the student must understand the need for the additional support and must be motivated to follow through with the writing consultant.

The instructor and student will jointly complete a referral form, and copies of the form will be available for the faculty instructor, the student, and the Writing Center. The referral form will include check boxes that identify the student's writing concerns, space in which the faculty instructor can provide more detailed information, and a description of upcoming writing assignments in the course for which the student will need help.

The Writing Center will arrange consultations for the student, either with Writing Center staff or with trained peer writing consultants. In some circumstances, it may be beneficial for the student to work with the same one or two consultants throughout the semester. The instructor should monitor the student's progress during the remainder of the semester, consulting with the student and providing feedback to the Writing Center.

## IX. Writing Course Distribution

It is expected that courses designated W1 and W2 will be widely distributed across the curriculum. Faculty advisers will therefore encourage their advisees to take W courses in a variety of disciplines.

All departments will share in offering W courses. The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Council will seek to assure sufficient numbers and types of courses by monitoring and reporting annually on the availability of W courses.

## **X. Administration of the Writing Program**

The WAC Council will determine policy for the Writing Program and will coordinate its activities. The Council will have seven members who will be appointed by the Committee on Instruction. One of these members will come from the Department of English, one from the College of Engineering, one from the Freeman College of Management, and one from the Library. The other three will be chosen from the three different divisions in the College of Arts and Sciences in order to gain the widest University participation. In addition to these seven members, the Council will have as permanent voting members the Director of the Writing Program and the Director of the Writing Center. The Deans from the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Engineering and the Freeman College of Management will appoint non-voting (*ex officio*) members to the WAC Council. The WAC Council will be a sub-committee of the Committee on Instruction. Terms of the seven non-permanent members will be for three years. By default, the chair of the WAC Council will be the Writing Program Director; if the Writing Program Director is unable to serve as chair, then the Council will elect a chair.

The Writing Program Director and Writing Center Director will both be appointed by the Provost in consultation with the Academic Deans, the Department of English, and the WAC Council. The Writing Program Director will be a member of the faculty, and the Writing Center Director will be a member of the Writing Center staff. Both the Writing Program Director and the Writing Center Director will report directly to the Provost or to an associate Provost.

The functions and duties of the WAC Council will include:

- 1.inviting, reviewing, and providing feedback to departments and programs on writing assessment plans
2. reviewing writing assessment data to assist in evaluation of the effectiveness of the Writing Program;
3. maintaining criteria for designating courses as W1 or W2;
4. assisting the various departments and faculty members with the design of their writing courses; and
5. reporting annually to the Committee on Instruction on the operation of the Writing Program and proposing, for faculty action, any changes in the Writing Program that it wishes to recommend.

The Director of the Writing Program, as a member of the WAC Council, will share in the duties enumerated above, and in addition will:

1. implement the policies determined by the WAC Council;
2. serve as a liaison between the faculty and the Writing Center;
3. consult with and advise faculty members on the design of writing courses;
4. report regularly to the Provost (and annually to COI and to the faculty) about the status of the Writing Program; and
5. work with the Writing Center Director to provide support to faculty teaching writing courses.

The Director of the Writing Center, in addition to their normal Writing Center duties, will:

1. administer the day-to-day operations of the Writing Center and supervise Writing Center staff;
2. administer the Writing Center budget;
3. report regularly to the Provost about activities of the Writing Center;
4. work with the Writing Program Director to provide support to faculty teaching writing courses.

The WAC Council charges the Writing Center with the following:

1. to provide individual consultations and workshops for students;
2. to conduct faculty development workshops to assist faculty in the teaching of writing courses; and
3. to consult with and advise faculty members on the design of writing courses.

## **XI. Identification of W Courses**

The WAC Council will approve courses to be designated 'W' according to the criteria developed by the Council based on the Writing Program legislation. Faculty members, academic departments, and academic programs may propose individual courses for approval. The intention of the Council is to help all courses meet the criteria. The Council will consult with instructors, departments, and programs as needed to interpret the criteria and to assure that W designations have essentially common meaning across the University. No course may be designated 'W' without WAC Council approval.

The WAC Council will approve new W courses. Regularly offered W courses will be re-announced each year, and reviewed by the Council every three years--upon the submission of a renewal proposal--to ensure the integrity of the Writing Program.

## **XII. Review of the Program**



The Committee on Instruction fully reviewed the Writing Program and reported to the University faculty in 1987. Another review was conducted in the 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 academic years and reported to the faculty in April 2006.

Approved by Faculty Vote: May 2022