

Policy Statement: Curricular Initiative to Enhance Writing in the Liberal Arts Disciplines (WLAD)

Effective: Fall 2014

Approved: Dean's Office, College of Liberal Arts

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A. Tenets

The Curricular Initiative to Enhance Writing in the Liberal Arts Disciplines (WLAD) is informed by these basic tenets:

1. Writing practice and instruction fosters higher order thinking and cultivates critical intellectual processes such as analyzing ideas, solving problems, and evaluating claims.
2. Writing is a complex activity that must be continually adapted to the particular needs of disciplinary and multi-disciplinary contexts.
3. Writing competencies are essential for graduates to secure jobs, advance in their given professions, and participate in all forms of civic life.
4. Students should have primary responsibility for the quality of their writing.
5. If students are to improve their writing, they must be given opportunities to write in a variety of forms and to revise their writing in response to peer and faculty feedback.
6. Faculty in the students' program is best situated to help their students adapt writing competency to professional contexts. However, faculty must participate in structure professional development opportunities that focus on writing pedagogy, learning outcomes, and evaluation rubrics in order to provide continuity across disciplines and uniformity in assessment.

B. Writing in the Disciplines (WID) Program Requirements

The WID Program requirements entail two writing intensive (WI) credit-bearing courses in each academic department offering a Liberal Arts degree.

1. One designated WI course in the **second year** (200-level course major requirement) course with approval of the College Curriculum Committee.
2. One required WI course in the **third year** (300-level course major requirement) course with approval of the College Curriculum Committee.
3. Students should complete the **100-level English sequence** (104 and 105 or 111) before enrolling in the WID program requirements.
4. The WI courses in the program must be passed with a **grade of C or higher** before students receive the degree.
5. Students should be able to complete WI requirements within the existing graduation requirements.

C. Criteria for Writing Intensive Courses

The following criteria will be met in the designation of “WI” courses:

1. Students must complete **informal and formal writing assignments sequenced** during the course intended as “writing to learn” and “learning to write” assignments. Examples of informal and formal writing assignments include brainstorming, free writing, journals, and reaction-response essays. Examples of formal writing include critiques, reviews, laboratory reports, case studies, observations, essays, proposals, and research papers.
2. Students must **receive feedback** from instructors. The feedback should facilitate the composing process but give the primary responsibility for **revision** to the student. This feedback might be supplemented by peer mentors in the major or writing tutors in the Richard Wright Center.
3. Students must have an opportunity to **incorporate feedback** from instructors (as well as from peer mentors and writing tutors) and complete **substantive revision** of written work.
4. The course must include classroom discussion of particular writing conventions—vocabulary, organization, evidence, citation—specific to the discipline or profession.
5. A **minimum of 20% of the grade for the course** must be based on the extent to which students display program writing criteria (i.e., as evaluated by rubrics) in the **revision and editing processes of formal writing**.

D. Approval Process for Writing Intensive Course Designations in the Liberal Arts

Courses proposed to meet the WI criteria (as defined in this policy) must first be submitted for review to the appropriate curriculum review bodies using the required forms for the College Curriculum Committee (and Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, when required). Department curriculum committees should review course proposals to determine if they meet WI criteria (as stated above) before sending it forward to the College Curriculum Committee (CCC). Review of courses to determine if they meet the WI criteria will be conducted CCC. Recommendations for approval will then be submitted to the Dean for final review and approval before being sent forward to Undergraduate Curriculum Committee.

All of the WI courses will be identified among existing courses in academic programs, and will be submitted to the department and CCC, using normal course review procedures. The CCC will refer each course proposed for WI designation to the Dean. When the WI designation is not recommended, the CCC will provide suggested modifications to the department chair and return the proposals to the respective departments. Departments will make suggested revisions and must resubmit the course with modifications to the CCC for reconsideration.

E. College-wide Responsibilities for Implementation and Assessment

1. College Curriculum Committee

The CCC is a standing committee in the College of Liberal Arts and will serve to implement this policy and evaluate courses for the determination of meeting the WI.

To facilitate the implementation of this policy and the Writing in the Disciplines program, CCC will:

- a. consult with the curriculum committees of the various departments to review writing program objectives and the criteria for WI courses;
- b. review courses proposed to carry a WI designation and recommend courses for approval for this designation to the Dean;
- c. act as a liaison between all academic units to determine student and faculty need regarding implementation of the writing policy;
- d. define priorities for adequate, professional and curricular support for both students and faculty;
- e. stay current with research for changing best practices in writing program administration, assess the feasibility and desirability for instituting these practices in the College of Liberal Arts (and Jackson State University, where appropriate) and make recommendations accordingly; and,
- f. serve in an advisory role to program faculty in the development of assessment methods for the writing outcomes; and

F. Writing in the Disciplines Program Implementation

The College of Liberal Arts believes that for WID to be successful it is necessary that students and faculty will have the benefit of meaningful and appropriate support. Support may include the provision of faculty offering professional consultations on syllabus design and development for WI courses, as well as offering ongoing education opportunities or offering students a place to go for continued assistance on the writing they are preparing for the writing intensive classes. All faculty and students are encouraged to consider their own role in cultivating and practicing writing, and to develop their understanding of and practice in writing.

G. Writing in the Disciplines Program Assessment

To determine the extent to which the WID program supports appropriate student learning outcomes (SLOs), a comprehensive, coordinated, and data-driven system of assessment will be implemented. In order to sustain the assessment system and complete the related assessment work (e.g., course and syllabi development, rubric development, faculty development), the WID Program will be assessed over a three-year period.

Central to the assessment process is the belief that writing assessment must be embedded in the environments in which writing is produced. The CCC will advise the assessment of the program, and will be available to assist in the assessment of the WI courses and SLOs, and in the assessment of this policy.