

THE BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY WRITING REQUIREMENT AND PROGRAM

**Bucknell University
Lewisburg, PA 17837**

**570-577-3141
Writing Center and Writing Program
Roberts Hall 100 A**

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 freshman class entering in August, 1983.

THE REQUIREMENT

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

THE PROGRAM

I. Two Aims

Designated writing courses in the University Writing Program have two purposes: to develop expository skills and to teach the use of language as an instrument for thinking. Such courses aim to develop student writers' mastery of language so that they may discover, organize, and communicate their knowledge.

II. Two Types of Courses

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

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

W2 courses are distributive. They 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

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

IV. Specific Criteria for W1

W1 courses will:

1. Include recurring instruction in writing.

Methods of instruction will vary. There is no single model for teaching a W1 course. But whether the instructor is assisted in teaching by student peer editors or by tutors, whether to the whole class, to small groups, to individuals, or in combinations of these methods, the important aim is to reinforce the development of skills by frequent instruction (weekly, if possible).

2. 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.

3. Teach the following expository skills:

- addressing intended audiences
- achieving purposes
- organizing the whole paper, paragraphs and sentences
- choosing appropriate words
- punctuating and spelling correctly

Since the W1 course is the foundation course in composition, it should teach those expository skills that are a) generally recognized elements in higher-level discourse, and b) needed by the majority of students entering Bucknell. Analysis of a writing sample collected from the class of '86, in August 1982, indicated that students entering Bucknell need instruction and practice especially in the first four items on the above list.*

*Results of the writing sample are reported in The 1982 Writing Skills Assessment of Bucknell Freshmen and Its Implication for Writing Across the Curriculum.

4. Require frequent writing from each student. The instructor, who may be assisted by student peer editors or by tutors, should see a substantial amount of this writing.

For mastery, students need to write more than instructors alone can read. However, a substantial amount of writing should receive response to aid revision. The response need not be time-consuming, but it should be prompt and request (weekly, if possible). Response to work-in-progress should occur in addition to evaluation of finished writing for grading.

5. Teach writing to think.

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

V. Specific Criteria for W2

W2 courses will:

1. Provide writing instruction as needed.

Instructors will determine which writing skills or techniques are demanded by writing for the course and will provide instruction in them. Methods of instruction will vary, but appropriate assistance must be provided by instructors, who may be assisted by student peer editors or by tutors.

2. Support the writing process.

W2 courses recognize the benefits of writing in stages to clarify meaning and improve communication. Whenever possible, the schedule of writing assignments will require drafting and re-drafting, will provide response, and will allow time for revision.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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 put course materials in their own words to explore, internalize and synthesize subject matter in writing. This kind of writing should occur in addition to finished, graded work.

VI. Order of Courses

Students will take one W1 course, for instruction in the first year. They will take two W2 courses, for sustained development throughout the four undergraduate years and for guided practice in differing disciplines, including the major.

W1 courses must be taken in the first year. W2 courses should normally follow W1 courses. A W2 course will count toward the University writing requirement if it follows a W1 (or, in exceptional cases, is concurrent with a W1). At least one W2 course must be taken after the first year. Some majors may require a W2 in the last two years.

VII. Substitutions

Entering students, including those with Advanced Placement English, who wish to substitute a W2 for the W1, must petition the dean of their college to be assessed individually for permission. Such students will take three W2 courses.

VIII. Writing Referral System

A. Entering Student Referral

Entering freshmen who, in the opinion of the deans and faculty, have not clearly demonstrated competence in writing will be directed by the deans to enroll during the first year in tutorials offered by the Writing Center.

B. Mid-term Referral

In order to build on the working relationship between faculty and student as a course progresses, a formal mid-term writing referral system is available for faculty:

By means of a mid-term writing referral, which is submitted simultaneously with mid-term grades, the instructor identifies students who would benefit from consulting writing tutors. Instructors are encouraged to alert students (preferably before mid-term) that they have writing problems. Ideally the instructor provides students with as much diagnostic information about their writing problems as possible, perhaps by means of remarks on their most recent writing assignment.

Instructors may require students who receive mid-term writing referrals to visit the Writing Center regularly to work on writing assignments for the course in which the mid-term writing referral was received. The instructor will receive the customary note from the Writing Center after each consultation.

Students who receive a writing referral will also receive a letter from the Writing Center encouraging them to consult with their instructors concerning their writing and inviting them to the Writing Center.

C. End-of-Semester Referral

End-of-semester grade reports in all courses will include a box entitled "Writing Deficiency." A check in that box will generate a letter from the deans directing the student to the Writing Center, where staff members will assess the deficiency and help the student choose an option for correcting it. In order for the Writing Center to help students improve their writing, faculty should explain why the writing referral was given and, where possible, submit a sample of the student's written work that illustrates the deficiency. A form for this explanation will be distributed to the faculty with the final grade reports and should be returned to the deans when grade reports are submitted. The deans will forward a copy of this explanation to the student and to the Writing Center.

Students receiving an end-of-semester writing referral must confer with the Writing Center before the end of the first month of the succeeding semester and select an option for correcting the deficiency at that time. The Writing Center will inform the appropriate faculty member of the action taken to address the reported deficiency. Second semester seniors are not affected by the receipt of writing referrals.

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 Academic Council will assure sufficient numbers and types of courses.

X. Administration of the Writing Program

The Composition 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. Two of these members will come from the Department of English*, one from the College of Engineering, and one from the Library. The other three will be chosen from three different divisions in order to gain the widest University participation. In addition to these seven members, the Council will have as a permanent voting member the Director of the Writing Program, who will be appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs in consultation with the Academic Deans, the Department of English, and the Composition Council. The Director will be attached to the Vice President's office. The Council of Deans will appoint a non-voting consultant to the Composition Council. The Composition Council will be a sub-committee of the Committee on Instruction. Terms of the seven non-permanent members will be for three years. The Council will elect its own chairperson.

(* The number of representatives from English was changed from two to one by former VPAA Dan Little.)

The functions and duties of the Composition Council will include:

1. approving plans for assessing the writing of entering students;
2. approving plans for evaluating the writing of graduating students;
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;
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 Composition Council, will share in the duties enumerated above, and in addition will:

1. implement the policies determined by the Composition Council;
2. administer the Writing Center;
3. consult with and advise faculty members on the design of writing courses;
4. administer the Writing Program budget.

The Composition Council charges the Writing Center with the following:

1. from time to time, to assess the writing abilities of entering classes;
2. to provide individual assistance, remedial tutorials, and workshops for students;
3. on request, to hold seminars and workshops for faculty and teaching assistants in the teaching of expository prose;
4. from time to time, to evaluate the writing of graduating students as a check on the effectiveness of the entire program;
5. to consult with and advise faculty members on the design of writing courses.

XI. Identification of W Courses

The Composition Council will approve courses to be designated 'W' according to the criteria developed by the Council. Faculty members, departments, or programs may propose individual courses for approval. The intention of the Council will be 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 approval.

The Council will approve new 'W' courses. Regularly offered 'W' courses will be re-announced each year, and reviewed by the Council every three years to assure 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.