

Western Michigan University
Baccalaureate-level Writing Requirement
Effective Fall 1988

On January 13, 1988, President Haenicke approved a baccalaureate-level writing requirement, as recommended by the Undergraduate Studies Council and the provost. According to this policy, undergraduate students will maintain and enhance their writing proficiency by meeting an upper-level writing requirement. The means of meeting the requirement will be designated by the major department or program from among these alternatives: (1) a writing-intensive course or courses at the 300 or 400 level in the major discipline or in a related discipline (the preferred alternative); (2) a writing course at the 300 or 400 level (preferably taken during the junior or senior year); or (3) in exceptional circumstances (determined by the major department) a proficiency rating on a University test of writing proficiency.

A passing grade in the alternative designated by the department or program will be required. Credit for course work from two-year institutions will not fulfill the requirement. Existing guidelines regarding repeating a course apply. (The requirement will not apply for students gaining a second baccalaureate degree.)

Criteria for Courses Satisfying the Requirement

Writing-intensive Courses

1. One of the stated goals of the course will be to develop the student's writing abilities to meet the baccalaureate-level writing criteria below.
2. The baccalaureate-level writing criteria and further criteria specified by the department and the instructor will be communicated in the course syllabus.
3. The course will integrate *several* writing tasks into the term's work.
4. Writing will comprise a significant portion of the course, and evaluation of the writing will comprise a significant portion of the student's grade.

Writing Courses

1. One of the stated goals of the course will be to develop the student's writing abilities to meet the baccalaureate-level writing criteria below.
2. The baccalaureate-level writing criteria and further criteria specified by the department and the instructor will be communicated in the course syllabus.
3. Writing non-fiction prose will be the principal focus of the course. Emphasis will be on developing, organizing, and interpreting information and opinion.
4. The course will be at the 300 or 400 level and will either specify a college-level writing course as prerequisite or assume a comparable level of competence in students enrolling.

Considerable flexibility is intended by these guidelines. For example, departments may specify the nature of some or all of the writing tasks to be incorporated into their courses (e.g., essays, reports, research papers), or they may leave these decisions partly or wholly to individual instructors while encouraging communication about successful course strategies.

Criteria for the Evaluation of Student Writing

Instructors and departments are responsible for establishing criteria with regard to format, organization, technical vocabulary or diction, clarity, style, and tone which are appropriate to their respective disciplines and fields. As a guide to evaluating the more generic writing skills called upon by all writing-intensive courses, we propose the following easily assessable, if minimal, criteria:

1. An ability to demonstrate maturity of thought, usually reflected in the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. (Specific applications of these higher cognitive skills to a particular discipline will be determined by the department or instructor.)
2. An ability to sustain the development of a point or idea over the span of at least 500 words.
3. An ability to signal the unfolding plan of a written passage by the use of organized paragraphs and transitional devices.
4. An ability to make conventional use of capitalization and punctuation.
5. An ability to use regularly, if not faultlessly, the grammar, syntax, and spelling of standard written English, with particular attention to sentence structure and to agreement between subjects and verbs, pronouns and antecedents.