

Appendix K: Enhancing the Writing Abilities of Students Majoring in the College
Plan Approved by the Faculty of the College of Arts and Science, 17 November 2010

The College of Arts and Science has decided to supplement the Miami Plan composition requirement with its own writing requirement. Its decision is based on the following assumptions.

- The ability to communicate ideas in writing is essential to success for all students in their academic, professional, civic, and personal lives.
- Effective writing is learned gradually and through ongoing attention and sustained feedback.
- Frequent writing featuring revision is necessary for student development.
- Writing is a way of thinking and a means for discovering knowledge, not just a mechanism for organizing or presenting it.
- Scholarly writing practices and conventions structure and reflect the thinking and values of the discipline or interdisciplinary area.
- Effective writing requires the ability to understand and adapt strategies for different audiences and contexts.
- Writing instruction cannot end with first-year composition courses or with the proposed CAS writing requirement.
- Writing instruction is not the responsibility of a particular department; faculty outside of English can and do teach writing.
- Miami University students in the College of Arts & Sciences need additional writing instruction beyond the minimal instruction required by the Miami Plan. This instruction would be beneficial in and of itself, but it is especially important given that an increasing number of students at Miami University—approximately 1/3 of the incoming first-year class—take only one of the two required composition courses in the Miami Plan because they are receiving AP credit for at least one of the courses.

Major Features the Proposed Writing Requirement

To achieve its goal of assuring that all of its graduates are accomplished writers, the College has developed a writing requirement that has the following features.

- 1. Focus on the writing abilities students will possess by the time they graduate. Student writing will be assessed as part of Outcomes in the Major.**
- 2. Flexibility for departments.** The proposal enables departments and programs to define the abilities their students should possess by graduation. The proposal offers two models for enhancing student writing, enabling each department and program to pick the alternative that is best suited to its pedagogy, curriculum, and resources.
 - The **bridge-course alternative** features a writing course typically offered in the sophomore year and building on the writing abilities students gain through the Miami Plan composition requirement. The bridge course provides a foundation for more advanced writing in upper-level courses in the major.

- The **scaffolded-courses alternative** features a structured sequence of three courses in the major, typically one each at the sophomore, junior, and senior levels.
3. **Ample time for implementation.** The proposal includes a two-year schedule for departments and programs to prepare a plan for writing outcomes in their major(s) and to designate one or the other alternative for meeting the College writing requirement, with the first offering of courses in Fall 2012.
 4. **Coordination with other requirements.** Courses that satisfy the College's writing requirement may also satisfy other College or Miami Plan requirements, including the CAS quantitative literacy requirement.
 5. **Assistance in planning and preparing for implementation.** The Howe Center will provide many kinds of assistance throughout the two-year period.

Expected Outcomes

The proposed writing requirement is expected to achieve the following learning outcomes for students.

- Students will demonstrate their ability to locate, analyze, evaluate, summarize, integrate, synthesize, and cite information and ideas from sources typically used in the discipline, interdisciplinary area, or profession of their major.
- Students will write effectively in two or more key genres of the discipline, interdisciplinary area, or profession of their major.
- Students will be able to present specialized content in a clear, concise, and coherent manner appropriate to practitioners in the discipline, interdisciplinary area, or profession and to convey complex content to a more general audience.

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Features of Proposed Writing Requirement

CONSIDERATION	REQUIREMENT
Goal	Prepare every graduate of the College with the advanced writing abilities used by graduates of his or her major
Structure	<p>Each department defines the writing outcomes for its major(s), develops assessment plans, and identifies a course or courses that enable students to achieve the outcomes</p> <p>The requirement is met after students have completed the Miami Plan composition requirement.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WRITING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT PLANS</p>
Identification of outcomes	<p>Departments define the outcomes for their majors</p> <p>Departments that offer more than one major identify appropriate outcomes for each of them</p> <p>Appendix J.1 includes a sample set of program-level outcomes based on a set of learning outcomes at another university</p>
Assessment of outcomes	Departments identify the ways they will assess their outcomes, designating the courses in which student writing in the major will be assessed; for departments and programs choosing the bridge-course model, these cannot be the bridge-course itself
Approvals	Approvals of outcomes, designated courses, and assessment plans are granted by a College Writing Enhancement Committee
Support for departments from Howe Center	<p><u>Summer 2010</u>: The Howe Center will offer two-day workshops and conduct follow-up consultations for departments that would like a head start on their outcomes and assessment plans; the results might serve as models for other departments</p> <p><u>Ongoing during 2010-2011</u>: The Howe Center will continue to offer workshops on outcomes and assessment plans; it will work individually with departments requesting assistance</p>
Deadline for Approval	April 2011

CONSIDERATION	REQUIREMENT
COURSES ADVANCING STUDENT WRITING ABILITIES	
Overview	<p>Departments designate the courses for their majors, selecting either the bridge-course alternative or the scaffolded-courses alternative</p> <p>Departments that offer more than one major designate a course or courses separately for each of them; they may choose the bridge-course alternative for one major and the scaffolded-courses alternative for another</p>
Content of courses	<p><u>Bridge-Course Alternative</u>: Requirements for bridge courses are detailed in Appendix J.2</p> <p><u>Scaffolded-Courses Alternative</u>: Taken together, the sequence of scaffolded courses must include at a minimum the amount and range of writing instruction (and guided student revision) as is provided in a bridge course.</p>
Ways a department may establish courses that fulfill the requirement	<p>Create a new course or courses</p> <p>Modify an existing course or courses</p> <p>Partner with others in the cognate area to create a new course (e.g., Writing in the Social Sciences)</p> <p>Arrange for another department to create a course for its majors</p>
Credit hours	All courses must be 3 or more credit hours or the equivalent
Enrollment limits	<p><u>Bridge-Course Alternative</u>: Enrollment in a bridge course is typically limited to 24 students, but exceptions may be made as long as students receive individual feedback and guidance from the instructor on multiple writing assignments.</p> <p><u>Scaffolded-Courses Alternative</u>: Departments determine the enrollment limits, provided that each student receives instructor feedback and guidance on the writing assignments.</p>
Instructors	Courses may be taught by tenure-line faculty, adjunct faculty, or graduate teaching assistants under the supervision of a faculty member. All instructors should have or receive experience, training, and/or preparation in teaching writing at the college level. The Howe Writing Center can assist in this regard
Coordination with other college or Miami Plan requirements	Courses that satisfy the College's writing requirement may also satisfy other College or Miami Plan requirements, including the quantitative literacy requirement.
Approval of course plans	<p>Approval is granted by the College's Enhancement of Writing Committee</p> <p><u>Bridge-Course Alternative</u>: Departments submit a list of the bridge course's learning outcomes together with a list of writing outcomes for the major, the type of instruction and assignments the bridge course will include, the</p>

CONSIDERATION	REQUIREMENT
	<p>approximate portion of the final grade that will be determined by the writing assignments and a syllabus that illustrates the way the instruction, assignments, and instructor feedback will be included in the course schedule</p> <p><u>Scaffolded-Courses Alternative</u>: Departments submit the same information for each of the three courses as is required for bridge courses; they must also describe the way the courses work together to achieve the program-level outcomes of the major</p>
Deadline for Approval	April 2012
Support for departments from Howe Center	<p><u>Summer 2011</u>: The Howe Center will offer four-day workshops for departments wishing to design bridge courses as well as four-day workshops for departments wishing to modify existing courses; workshops will include suggestions for providing writing instruction, designing assignments, supporting students' work on assignments, and evaluating the work students turn in for grade</p> <p><u>Summer 2012</u>: The Howe Center will offer two-day workshops for departments that will be preparing graduate assistants or others to assist with the writing instruction and assignments</p> <p><u>Ongoing during 2011-2012</u>: The Howe Center will continue to offer workshops; it will work individually with departments requesting assistance in establishing their courses</p>
Deadline for Approval	April 2012
SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE	
Summer 2010	
Academic year 2010-2011	Departments define program-level outcomes and gain approval from a committee established by the College; assistance available from the Howe Center; deadline is April 2011
Summer 2011	Departments wishing to gain a head start on preparing courses may work with the Howe Center
Academic year	Departments plan their course(s) and gain approval from a committee established by the College; assistance available from the Howe Center; deadline

CONSIDERATION	REQUIREMENT
2011-2012	is April 2011
Fall semester 2012	Departments offer their course(s) for the first time; continued support available from the Howe Center

Appendix K.1: Sample Program-Level Writing Outcomes

Upon graduation, psychology majors should be able to do the following:

1. Write clear, persuasive, and accurate **proposals, research reports, or other communications addressed to other psychologists** that demonstrate their ability to **follow genre conventions** and their **understanding of basic theory and concepts of psychology** as well as their ability to **engage in the systematic inquiry into human behavior and experience**. Specifically, the students' writing should show that they can:
 - a. explain key psychological theories and concepts
 - b. ask pertinent and productive questions that lead to an analysis of a problem: the source of the problem, the kinds of data needed to solve the problem, and the criteria that must be met for a solution to the problem.
 - c. collect data for solving problems and evaluate those data for their relevance and credibility.
 - d. make sound judgments about solutions to problems based on the data they or others have collected.
 - e. present data in a way that is accurate and appropriate to the audience.
 - f. make a strong case for their judgments based on data, presenting their point logically and clearly.
2. Write clear, persuasive, and accurate **literature reviews, critical analyses, or other communications addressed to other psychologists** that demonstrate their ability to **follow genre conventions** and **discover, understand, manage, and communicate source materials** in psychology. Specifically, the students' writing should show that they can:
 - a. find, evaluate, and arrange potential source materials related to a subject.
 - b. effectively summarize source materials.
 - c. synthesize, analyze, and come to conclusions from multiple source materials.
 - d. make an argument for a claim or a proposed action based on source materials.
 - e. evaluate articles about psychology in the popular and scholarly press by analyzing claims, arbitrating among conflicting claims, and recognizing when data confirm or disconfirm hypotheses.
3. Write clear, persuasive, and accurate **critical analyses of scholarly articles, or other communications addressed to other psychologists** that demonstrate their ability to **follow genre conventions** and work effectively within the **complexity and ambiguity that characterize investigation in the human sciences**. Specifically, the students' writing should show that they can:
 - a. handle a broad range of data, including quantitative and qualitative empirical data as well as data from theoretical and philosophical sources.
 - b. generate a variety of alternative hypotheses for explaining psychological phenomena.
 - c. recognize some of the ways in which researchers, participants, and consumers construct meaning through research paradigms and in psychological settings.

4. Write clear, persuasive, and accurate **case reports, internship project reports, or similar communications addressed to other psychologists AND magazine articles or other communications addressed to non-psychologists** that demonstrate their ability to **follow genre conventions** and to **generalize theoretical knowledge of psychology to real-world applications**. Specifically, the students' writing should show that they can:
 - a. apply core concepts and principles to different life situations.
 - b. apply theories of developmental processes and theories of behavior change to situations that require evaluation, maintenance, and/or change.
 - c. explain the role of subjectivity in psychological research and applications and the potential for imposing their own cultural values on subjects and data.
 - d. explain how researchers, agents of change, and participants in research and intervention construct meaning in their world, and that the ways individuals construct meaning may affect the course of research and intervention.

*Based on North Carolina State University

Appendix K.2:

Requirements for Bridge Courses, With Notes about Sequences of Scaffolded Courses

1. **The course must focus on developing at a novice level the writing principles and practices employed by specialists in the discipline, interdisciplinary area, or profession.** Usually, students will write based on research or inquiry and using genres and conventions characteristic of the discipline, interdisciplinary area, or profession. Of course, their ability to write about their research or inquiry will require them to learn the appropriate methods and study the relevant content. Thus, the course need not be devoted exclusively to writing. However, other topics studied in the course must be directly related to the course's writing assignments. For example, focal activities might include locating or generating, analyzing, and synthesizing information or data as well as communicating the results clearly and persuasively.

Note: Sequences of scaffolded courses should advance students' abilities beyond the novice level.

2. **Most of the course grade shall be determined by the students' major written assignments.** While it is expected that the students will read and analyze published research, learn about disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary research and methods, and write about disciplinary or interdisciplinary content, the student learning outcomes and grading criteria must be based primarily on the students' novice-level mastery of basic genres and practices. The instruction in the course should reflect this emphasis in the grading.

Note: In each course in a sequence of scaffolded courses, the writing assignments should constitute a significant portion of the course grade, but they need not be the major determinant of the course grade.

3. **The course must include instruction and graded assignments in which students write to audiences and for purposes common among specialists in the discipline, interdisciplinary area, or profession.** For example, in the sciences, the audiences may include other specialists in the same field, managers in an industrial or corporate organization that has a research lab, and the general public. For journalists, audiences may include the general public, citizens in a certain community, or readers of certain publications, such as the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, or the *Wall Street Journal*.
4. **The course must include instruction and graded assignments in two or more genres commonly used by the discipline, interdisciplinary area, or profession.** The assignments using distinct genres may be

independent of one another, or they may all be part of one large project, such as a proposal or prospectus, progress report, and final research report.

5. **The course must include significant and frequent feedback from the instructor.** Some of the feedback should guide the students' work early in the process (e.g., when planning their research, or planning the focus of their communication), and some should guide students' revision of drafts later in the process. At least one major assignment must require substantive revision following instructor feedback.
6. **The course must include at least one substantial assignment involving use of published sources that are considered credible by the discipline, interdisciplinary area, or profession.** For the sciences and humanities, the sources might include peer-reviewed articles. For professional programs, such as journalism or technical and scientific communication, they might include documents published by a government agency, corporation, or nonprofit group. This assignment may be a standalone project or a component of a larger project, such as the literature review for a research proposal or research report.
7. **The course must include instruction in the conventions used in the discipline, interdisciplinary area, or profession for acknowledging and citing sources.** Students should learn how to distinguish between common knowledge and information where a source should be credited, and they should learn the conventions for citation (e.g., APA guidelines, Chicago manual of style, journalistic attribution). Graded assignments must evaluate students' skill at observing these conventions.
8. **The course may supplement instruction and assignments in printed texts with work in other media.** For instance, if appropriate to the discipline, interdisciplinary area, profession, the course may include web-based, multimedia, and interactive media communication.
9. **The course may be on any topic that allows the other requirements are satisfied.** For example, the course may focus on research or inquiry methodology *per se* or it may focus on an area for which students will employ the research and writing conventions characteristic of the discipline or disciplinary area.

