

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
GENERAL EDUCATION GUIDELINES
As approved by the University Senate on May 12, 2003

Writing (W) Competency

Definition of Writing Competency for General Education:

The writing across the curriculum W course requirements are designed to ensure that writing instruction continues after the Freshman English writing courses (English 110 or English 111). As one of the fundamental ways through which academic disciplines explore, construct, and communicate their various forms of knowledge, writing is an essential component of a university education. The goals of the Freshman English seminars emphasize the need to “engage students in the work of academic inquiry through the interpretation of difficult texts, [to help them participate in] the issues and arguments that animate the texts, and [to reflect] on the significance for academic and general culture and for themselves of the critical work of reading and writing” (Freshman English Seminar Description 1). The W requirement extends that work to other courses with an emphasis on the significance of writing in individual major fields of study.

W courses should demonstrate for students the relationship between the writing in the course and the content learning goals of the course. Students should not write simply to be evaluated; they should learn how writing can ground, extend, deepen, and even enable their learning of the course material. In addition then to the general formal questions concerning strategies for developing ideas, clarity of organization, and effectiveness of expression, and the discipline specific format, evidentiary, and stylistic norms, the W requirement should lead students to understand the relationship between their own thinking and writing in a way that will help them continue to develop both throughout their lives and careers after graduation.

The W requirement can be met in formats other than the standard three-credit course. For example, a department might add a fourth credit to a three-credit course to convert the course to a W; another department might adopt a portfolio assessment mechanism that requires substantial writing over a number of semesters’ work in the major; and another department might organize a series of partial W courses in sequence that when completed would fulfill the W requirement.

The W requirement does not limit writing only to courses with a W designation; the requirement is designed to support and encourage writing instruction throughout the curriculum. Courses without a W designation, for example, still would commonly require that students write papers and essay examinations.

The University Writing Center:

Much of the outside-of-class work involved in writing instruction will be supported by qualified tutors in the University Writing Center at Storrs and the regional campuses. The center, directed by a senior, tenured faculty member with another faculty member as an assistant and a group of graduate student (and in some cases undergraduate) tutors from across the disciplines, will be a clearing house for writing issues throughout the University. The Director of the Writing Center will organize on all campuses faculty development workshops for W course instructors and will be responsible for organizing and supervising the W course instructor orientations/workshops.

The Writing Center will train tutors, and the Writing Center office will house copies of all W course syllabi that have been approved by GEOC.

Staffing:

W courses normally will be taught by University of Connecticut faculty. When that is not possible, then qualified graduate students may be used to assist faculty in 200-level W courses or, with faculty supervision, to teach a 100-level W course.

All new instructors of W courses will be provided with a W course orientation. This orientation will be required of all teaching assistants assigned to assist in a 200-level or to instruct a 100-level W course. The orientation will present the W course guidelines and the pedagogical strategies and learning outcomes of the Freshman English courses in order to provide the institutional context and rationale for the requirement. Detailed descriptions of the Freshman English courses and a copy of the writing handbook required of all students in Freshman English will be distributed at the workshop. All orientation materials will be made available to experienced W course faculty. Supplemental workshops will be offered throughout the academic year. All W course instructors will be invited to those voluntary workshops, which will be designed to support the teaching of writing.

Departmental Responsibility:

1. Each department must submit to GEOC a pedagogically sound plan for all W courses approved for the major. That plan must include specific courses and a brief rationale for how those courses are central to the major.
2. All plans that involve fulfilling the W requirement within each department (the preferred plan) or that link to courses in other departments must be submitted to the GEOC W course subcommittee for review and the GEOC for final approval.
3. Any changes in previously approved W courses that substantially alter the mode of writing instruction must be submitted to GEOC for review.
1. If a department desires to approve one or more W courses taught in other departments as a part of its own major requirements, the outside departments must agree to such arrangements.
5. Courses at the 100-level taught by TAs or 200-level courses with TA help must have a mechanism for TA supervision approved by GEOC.

Criteria:

Courses (and their equivalents) appropriate for a W designation should:

1. Require that students write a minimum of fifteen pages that have been revised for conceptual clarity and development of ideas, edited for expression, and proofread for grammatical and mechanical correctness;
2. Address writing in process, require revision, and provide substantial supervision of

student writing. (The structure of revision and supervision may vary, including in-class writing workshops, individual consultation, substantial formative commentary on drafts, and so on.);

3. Have an enrollment cap of nineteen students per section;
4. Make explicit the relation between writing and learning in the course;
5. Articulate the structure of supervision of student writing;
6. Explain the place and function of revision in the course;
7. Detail how the page requirement will be met;
8. Require that students must pass the writing component in order to pass the course.

Entry Expectations:

1. Freshman English placement options for first year students at the University of Connecticut will vary depending upon their incoming qualifications.

AP Scores: Students who receive a 4 or 5 on the English Composition Advanced Placement Exam or the Literature Advanced Placement Exam receive 4 credits for Freshman English, thereby fulfilling the requirement.

Honors: Honors Students may choose English 250, a three-credit seminar taught by full-time faculty, to fulfill the Freshman English requirement.

SAT Placement Scores: Students with Verbal SAT (VSAT) scores of 430 and below are automatically placed in English 104. There is no pre-class appeal. Student writing is evaluated after the first week of the term. In rare cases it is possible, based on that writing and with the approval of the Director of Freshman English, for a student to be moved into an English 110 or 111 section.

Students with VSAT scores of 440-540 have the option to enroll in either English 104 or English 110 or 111. Student writing is evaluated after the first week of the semester and all inconsistencies brought to the attention of the Director of Freshman English. At this point a student may be placed in a course more appropriate to his or her writing. All students who remain in English 104 must pass that course in order to move on to English 110 or 111.

Students with VSAT Scores above 540 have the option to enroll in either English 110 or 111.

2. Connecticut Community College Transfer Students:
There is an articulation agreement with each community college that prescribes which two, three-credit community college courses fulfill UConn's Freshman English requirement. Four of these six credits count toward the four-credit Freshman English requirement; the other two credits come in as elective.
3. Transfer students from other Connecticut colleges and from out-of-state:
These students are assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Director of Freshman English.

Exit Expectations:

1. All students must take either English 110 or 111. Students with Advanced Placement English scores of 4 or 5 and students passing ENGL 250 are exempted from the ENGL 110 or 111 requirement.
2. Additionally, all students must take two writing-intensive courses, one of which must be approved for the student's major (see Departmental Responsibility above). These courses may also satisfy other Content Area requirements. (Note: English 110 or 111 is a prerequisite to all writing-intensive courses.)
3. A writing-intensive course approved for the student's major does not have any credit-hour restriction, but it is to be at the 200-level.