

UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA  
PEMBROKE

### Guidelines for Writing in the Discipline (WD) Courses

The purpose of the Guidelines for Writing in the Discipline (WD) Courses is to assist faculty as they develop proposals for these courses. Faculty should also use these Guidelines as they develop Writing in the Discipline courses, and the WI Advisory Committee should use them as they review course proposals and design faculty development activities.

Writing in the Discipline courses are typically 3000- and 4000-level courses that introduce students to the thinking and writing of the discipline. Courses and assignments that emphasize Writing in the Discipline introduce or give students practice with the language conventions and formats typical to a given discipline. In this respect, Writing in the Discipline courses provide students with *advanced instruction and practice in writing and reading within an academic discipline and make students aware of how disciplinary conventions and rhetorical situation call for different choices in language, structure, format, tone, citation, and documentation.*

Writing in the Discipline (WD) is based on the idea that each discipline has its own conventions of language use and style and the conviction that these conventions must be taught if students are going to participate in successful academic discourse. Courses and assignments that emphasize Writing in the Discipline give students practice with the language conventions and formats typical to a given discipline. The purpose of assigning writing tasks in WD courses is to introduce students to expectations for thinking and writing in that discipline. Such disciplinary expectations include knowledge about subject matter, writing processes, rhetoric (conventions for making arguments in a discipline: what makes sound evidence and credible writers), genre (common forms and associated ways of using them in disciplinary situations), and discourse community (typical ways of demonstrating disciplinary membership, such as shared goals, language, and communication structures).

#### Elements of Writing in the Discipline Courses:

1. **Syllabus.** Faculty teaching Writing in the Discipline courses should include writing assignments in course requirements and syllabi and clearly define expectations for performance. WD courses involve more than just having students "write"; they must include explicit instruction, guidance, and feedback concerning the disciplinary specific writing and research expectations, practices, and strategies.
2. **Student Learning Outcomes.** The syllabus should include student learning outcomes that are reflective of and consistent with those of the Writing Intensive Program, but it need not address all of these outcomes. The student learning outcomes of the WI Program focus on improving general writing skills encompass knowledge and skills in four areas: rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading and writing; processes; and knowledge of conventions.

3. **Instruction and Evaluation of Papers.** Students enrolled in WD courses will receive **explicit** instruction in a variety of skills, including how to write for a variety of audiences and communicate through several forms of writing relevant to a particular discipline (e.g., reports, outlines, proposals, research papers, course journals, essays, lab reports, letters, and reviews, among others); how to use writing as a means for engaging in research and developing analytical skills; how to revise and edit drafts, individually and in collaboration with peers and faculty; and how to structure and organize writing, use documentation and styles of argumentation within specific disciplines as appropriate. WD courses may include some form of instructional support for writing, including, but is not limited to, a writing textbook, in-class instructional activities, group work on writing, conferences with course instructor, and tutorial support.
4. **Assignments.** Writing assignments should be used throughout the semester, rather than concentrated at the end, to help students view writing as integral to learning within and across disciplines. There should be opportunities for writing for varied audiences as appropriate, including formal and informal papers, journals, learning logs, in-class responses, writing based on research, writing for professional or general audiences, and other writing appropriate to the discipline. WD assignments are typically, but not exclusively, formal papers prepared over a few weeks or even months. The final papers adhere to format and style guidelines typical of the professional papers they are helping students learn about.
5. **Required Number of Papers or Words.** The amount of writing required will vary by department, depending on disciplinary expectations. A possible standard for writing in the designated course might be twenty pages (5000 words), which could include revisions of previously submitted work.
6. **Revision.** There should be opportunities for revision of written work after a reader has responded to a draft. Opportunity for peer response is highly encouraged.
7. **Use of Rubrics.** Faculty may provide students with adequate feedback on their written work by using rubrics in evaluating papers and providing extended commentary on drafts. Writing samples may be assessed using rubrics, and students may be taught how to assess their own and their peers' writing using rubrics. Rubrics may be used to clarify expectations for students and make the grading process transparent.
8. **How Writing Will Affect Final the Grade.** Assessment of writing should be a significant component of students' final grades for WD courses (more than 50%).
9. **Class Size or Instructor/Student Ratio.** WD courses should have a student-to-teacher ratio that does not exceed 20:1.
10. **Support Services.** Students should be encouraged to use the resources provided by the University, such as the University Writing Center and the Mary Livermore Library.

**APPENDIX A**  
**Writing Intensive Program**  
**Student Learning Outcomes for Writing in the Discipline Courses**

A. Rhetorical Knowledge---Disciplinary/Professional Competency

Students who complete Writing in the Discipline courses will be able to:

- Understand and employ the main features and purposes of writing in the relevant discipline.

B. Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing---Disciplinary/Professional Competency

Students who complete Writing in the Discipline courses will be able to:

- Learn the interrelationships among critical thinking, critical reading, and writing in the relevant discipline.
- Exhibit ability to synthesize research in writing appropriate to the discipline.

C2. Processes--- Disciplinary/Professional Competency

Students who complete Writing in the Discipline courses will be able to:

- Write multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text in the relevant discipline.
- Write in stages, review work-in-progress in collaborative peer groups, save editing for the latter stage of the writing process, and apply technologies commonly used to research and communicate in their fields.
- Reformulate and revise first drafts, attending first to concerns about argument and accuracy and later to more local, paragraph, and sentence issues.
- Learn to critique their own and others' works according to the standards of the relevant discipline.

D. Knowledge of Conventions--- Disciplinary/Professional Competency

Students who complete Writing in the Discipline courses will be able to:

- Appropriately use specialized vocabulary, format, and documentation in the relevant discipline. Use syntax, terminology, and technical language appropriate to the selected discipline's overall style.
- Write in the forms and genres of writing required by each discipline (i.e., conference papers and research articles).

## E. Other—Disciplinary/Professional Competency

Students who complete Writing in the Discipline courses will be able to

- Exhibit confidence in the emerging writing skills and cognitive abilities needed to communicate in the disciplines.
- Exhibit less apprehension about scholarly writing
- Demonstrate writing skills sufficient to fulfill the writing requirements of each academic program (i.e., a graduate level thesis).