Writing in the Disciplines Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this requirement students will be able to:

1. Develop and articulate knowledge through modes of writing appropriate to the discipline.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the disciplinary forms, vocabulary, and modes of analysis used within the field.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the needs and expectations of the audience specific to the discipline.

Summary

In Writing in the Disciplines (WID) courses, faculty use informal writing strategies and formal writing assignments to stimulate students' learning of course concepts and disciplinary conventions. WID courses promote cognitive and rhetorical processes for writing.

WID courses introduce disciplinary writing conventions to students and provide writing practice before students proceed into mastery level courses. In WID courses, student writing is developed according to disciplinary and professional goals and outcomes. Discipline-specific writing tasks can reflect a variety of genres and purposes:

- Academic writing, including research methods, application, and conventions
- Technical writing, including problem-solving processes
- Collaborative writing, including group-based learning
- Public writing, including expectations of workplace or community interactions

Writing development occurs with extended, consistent practice rather than concentrated practice. Because of this, WID courses should occur shortly after students' enrollment in Writing & Research and before students' enrollment in their mastery-level writing courses. Writing skills also develop nonlinearly; writing development ebbs and flows, especially when students encounter new or more challenging tasks. For example, audience awareness in one writing context does not immediately transfer to another writing context without sustained instruction and practice. WID faculty should continually scaffold course learning outcomes and writing skills to help students develop connections among courses.

Pedagogical Practices

Writing development successfully occurs when students receive frequent writing instruction, receive assignments that allow them to write about what they know, and receive individualized feedback as they practice. To facilitate content knowledge and writing skills, WID courses should offer structured, consistent activities and assignments to promote the thinking, writing, and communication process. The following components represent WID best practices and promote a rhetorical, recursive process of thinking and communicating.

1. Writing to learn
   Writing to learn is a cognitive practice. Activities are often informal or low-stakes and help students learn about course concepts. Writing to learn is integrated to promote discovery, critical thinking, and reflection.

2. Writing to communicate
   Writing to communicate is a rhetorical process (students write with an awareness of concepts such as audience, context, and purpose). Assignments are often formal or high-stakes and require students to compose discipline-based writing for specific contexts and audiences. Writing to communicate assignments present writing and research as both a process and as a social activity.

3. Writing instruction
   Explicit instruction about conventions, vocabulary, and rhetorical contexts specific to the discipline is necessary for students to develop writing skills. Each class introduces new content for students, so faculty should continually foreground writing instruction to help students make connections from previous courses and assignments.

4. Instructor feedback
   Feedback provides students with individualized writing instruction from a disciplinary expert. Instructor feedback is most useful when students have the opportunity to incorporate comments in subsequent revisions.

5. Revision
   Revision opportunities promote writing as a process: the ability to clarify and strengthen ideas, gather evidence, and improve organization. Revision allows students to integrate feedback from the instructor and feedback from peer review.

6. Peer review
   Peer review provides with opportunities to have their work read by multiple audiences, including disciplinary experts and their peers. Peer review promotes a dialogue of ideas among public audiences.

Course Designation Requirements
1. The course assignments fulfill WID learning outcomes.
2. The course integrates the pedagogical practices outlined above. Pedagogical practices are integrated according to disciplinary standards. The course syllabus demonstrates clear integration of the practices above, whether in a schedule or in assignment descriptions.
3. At least 25% of the course grade is devoted to writing activities. Model WID courses devote more than 40% of the course grade to writing.
4. The course is at least two credits.
5. The course enrollment does not exceed 25. Model WID courses do not exceed course enrollment of 20.