

Teaching with Writing (TWW) Tip Applying for the Writing Intensive Designation

The Writing Intensive course designation is one of the ways the University of Minnesota ensures that students receive meaningful writing instruction in their undergraduate careers. Occasionally, students misunderstand this designation (W) as simply a course that assigns a lot of writing. This tip will both explain the features that are required for writing intensive courses and assist faculty and instructors in preparing their courses to receive the W designation. Writing intensive courses have six crucial features:

Writing is integrated comprehensively into the course.

For a course to receive the W designation, it is not sufficient to simply add writing assignments to an existing course. Writing intensive courses integrate learning to write into course goals and learning objectives. Writing intensive courses are explicit about the critical role of writing as both a practice of student learning and a measure of it. For advice on [course design for writing](#), consult our Teaching with Writing page.

Writing is a significant component of course work.

The minimum requirement for WI designation is 2500 words of finished writing (writing intended for instructor assessment in its final version). Multiple drafts of single assignments, essay exams, and informal writing assignments (discussion posts, informal journals, in-class writing activities) do not count toward this total, although both drafting and informal writing are recommended as effective pedagogical practices.

At the same time, the 2500 words need not be presented in a single finished document. Research papers, professional documents, lab reports, ethnographic observations, and criticism are all potential genres of finished writing. The Campus Writing Board will allow group papers to be considered for that total, but each student's individual contribution should be 2500 words or more.

Writing is a significant component of the course grade.

Students' performance in written assignments should constitute no less than one-third of the course grade. For many courses, this fraction is significantly higher. Please note that essay exams and timed writing do not typically count as significant writing and thus would not count as writing that contributes to the course grade.

While drafts of assignments do not count toward the final length requirements, graded drafts or credit for writing in preparation for a final document can be included in grading. The course syllabus should clearly outline the weight for writing assignments, and faculty are encouraged to provide grading guidelines and rubrics for major writing assignments. Please consult the [approaches to grading](#) section of the TWW website for advice on how to make evaluative criteria for writing explicit.

Writing is learned through revision.

At least once in each course, students should revise a significant piece of their writing based on instructor feedback. While there is no required quantity of graded writing that must be revised, students should have the opportunity to receive instructor feedback on their writing with an opportunity to make changes before final assessment. While [peer response activities](#) are encouraged, they do not count as a revision.

Importantly, revision means that the student will submit the same assignment for assessment after an initial round of feedback. In courses with serial writing assignments (i.e., lab reports, sequenced reading responses), feedback on the first document that offers advice on a subsequent document *will not* count as a revision.

Writing is explained and practiced in the course.

Class time should be devoted to explicit writing instruction and activities. Encouraging students to seek help with writing through Student Writing Support is encouraged, but will not satisfy this requirement. Similarly, a single day dedicated to writing will not evidence the deliberate and sustained attention to writing that is typical of writing intensive courses.

Informal writing, drafting, workshops, peer response activities and other classroom writing activities are encouraged and should be detailed explicitly in course materials.

Instructors should understand the practice of writing instruction.

If courses involve multiple instructional faculty (or include teaching assistants as instructors or evaluators of student writing) all instructional faculty should be aware of the emphasis on writing as a critical component of

the course goals. Instructors submitting a WI course will need to explain how instructors will be trained in the assessment of course writing activities.

Professional development opportunities for instruction are regularly offered through the Teaching With Writing program; moreover, departmental opportunities, professional development conducted by course supervisors, and [grade norming sessions](#) are encouraged.

For more information

University of Minnesota [Definition of a Writing Intensive Course](#)

University of Minnesota [Writing Intensive Course Application](#)

Writing Intensive Courses [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Further support: Visit us online at <http://writing.umn.edu/tww>. To schedule a phone, email, or face-to-face teaching consultation, [click here](#).

Our purpose is to provide practical strategies for teaching with writing. Our goal is to offer timely and pragmatic support to faculty members and instructors who teach with writing in undergraduate and graduate courses in all disciplinary areas.