Writing-Intensive Courses in the Hub

Courses designated as "Writing-Intensive" (WIN) provide students with explicit opportunities to improve their writing through targeted assignments and regular feedback. It is critical that students in all disciplines learn how to write well in their field of study, and we therefore encourage faculty in all degree programs to develop WIN courses for their students. WIN courses use writing as a means to engage with course materials (so that students are not only using writing to learn about the discipline, but also learning to write in the discipline). This document aims to clarify the baseline criteria for approval of a WIN course for the BU Hub and articulate the aspirational goals for the teaching of writing in undergraduate courses at Boston University. The GEC encourages you to keep these guidelines in mind as you design or revise your WIN course.

Successful WRITING-INTENSIVE proposals make writing VISIBLE & PRESENT

Page Count: While flexible based on discipline and genre, 12-15 pages (circa 3600-4500 words) of finished writing in total is sufficient for WIN courses.

Prerequisite: A proposal and syllabus for a WIN course should list a pre-requisite as: "First-Year Writing Seminar."

Learning Outcomes: WIN courses have two required learning outcomes; the 3rd learning outcome (which involves writing in multiple genres) is OPTIONAL. See WIN Learning Outcomes.

Purposeful Sequencing of Regular and Targeted Writing
The syllabus/calendar explicitly notes several specific writing assignments distributed throughout the semester that engage with course materials. The required assignments include both finished products (e.g., major graded papers) and purposeful writing tasks (aka the "scaffolding" of assignments) that contribute to those final products. Such tasks might include, for example, reading responses, summaries, outlines, drafts, annotated bibliographies, literature reviews, blog or social media posts, transcripts for podcasts or video narratives, etc. Varied, regular acts of writing are integral to helping students to produce complex final writing projects, and to reflect on their writing throughout the semester.

Feedback on Student Writing
The syllabus/calendar describes when and how students will receive feedback on their written work. Instructors can supplement written comments with discussion with students in class or during office hours. "Formative" feedback identifies the strengths of student writing and gives students clear guidance on what areas to work on and how to improve. Peers can also provide "formative" feedback, but instructors must provide guidance for peer reviews. On finished products, "summative" feedback should explain the basis of a grade and, ideally, suggest how students can apply the lessons of the assignment to future writing.

Reading
The syllabus/calendar explicitly refers to the teaching of reading that is particular to the discipline. Doing so involves noting, e.g., features of a text's genre, structure, style, intended audience, and/or purpose(s). For example, a WIN science course could teach students how to navigate scientific reports and how to interpret charts and graphs. Instructors might consider a variation of the following language with regard to reading: "Students receive instruction in reading, so that they can learn to recognize and to analyze –and in some instances, even, to apply – the important features of texts that are commonly used in this discipline." The explicit and regular instruction in reading strategies gives students models and deepens their understanding of the expectations that their own writing should meet. Close and/or critical reading develops an awareness of the genres appropriate to the discipline, enabling students to draw on these in their own written work.

Finished Written Products and Grades
All WIN courses have written products as the basis for major grades, and writing counts as a substantial portion of the final grade for students in the course.