

“Through writing, we figure out what things mean.”

- Rosenwasser & Stephen, *Writing Analytically*

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Low stakes writing is "for learning, figuring out, and exploring new and complicated ideas."

- Peter Elbow, *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*

### **The Role of the WI Guidelines**

These Writing-intensive (WI) guidelines are designed to help align WI sections across Lehman College, to support faculty across the curriculum to adopt similar learning outcomes, and to create a more accessible learning environment for the retention and timely graduation of Lehman students.

### **Writing in the Discipline and Writing Across the Curriculum**

Writing helps students uncover what they are unsure about, and to ask questions. Writing helps students to learn what is being presented: concepts, genres of the discipline, etc. Writing paired with reading allows students to observe texts and components of a discipline more closely. Through low stakes and exploratory writing (where the assessment of writing is different than in a writing-heavy discipline) students learn about and practice key strategies and analytical moves related to a discipline or to a topic within a discipline.

### **Writing Intensive Courses and WI Intensive Class Sections**

At Lehman College, the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee does not oversee the WI-course-designation *at the section level*. Departments and Programs may submit course proposals for courses to be considered as WI courses, wherein each section offered would be a WI-designated-class. For such course proposals, the UCC may refer to the WI guidelines to assess the writing intensive components of the course.

Outside of this process, any section of any course can be designated as writing intensive, as decided by the department chair, or curriculum committee, or P&B committee, or instructor with chair approval. The guidelines will be used as a reference to design the WI class section. Each instructor who teaches a WI class will be asked to fill out a self-assessment form prior to scheduling the class. The forms will be collected by the Associate Provost office for data and assessment, and to instruct professional development training.

### **Writing Intensive Classes**

As part of a greater curriculum at Lehman College, WI classes can function as spaces wherein writing is a tool to understand and to process the *content of the course*, regardless of the discipline (STEM, Social Sciences, Health Sciences, Nursing, Business, Arts, Humanities).

Depending on the discipline, the instructor's training and preferences, and the students' learning modalities and needs, WI classes can turn to different modes of expression: multimodal writing, podcasts, presentations, discussion, lab reports, audiovisual recordings, etc.

#### *A WI syllabus*

- will include some, not necessarily all learning outcomes from the WI guidelines;
- will include some, not necessarily all, not necessarily only, writing assignments from the modes of writing listed in the guidelines;
- may also include learning outcomes related to the discipline, program, major or minor (not listed in the guidelines)
- may also include learning outcomes related to discipline-specific writing (not listed in the guidelines)

#### *A WI instructor*

- will have access to support to develop assignments and assessments in their class(es).
- Similar to instructors who are new to teaching online, instructors who are new to teaching writing in their discipline will be incentivized to join a seminar to develop their class(es), and
- will have access to designated Lehman faculty to make adjustments to their courses as they see fit.

#### **Assessment in WI classes**

At the beginning and the end of each semester, WI instructors and students may be asked to fill out a short survey about the writing components of the class. The goal of the assessment would be to support college-wide assessment and WI course design professional development programming. Assessment may include questions related to:

- Whether writing was used to process/reflect on content and concepts
- Variety and frequency of writing assignments
- Assignments that prepared students for final projects or papers
- Types of and amount of low stakes (ungraded and/or anonymous) writing
- Opportunities for feedback on writing (from instructor and/or from peers) and revision
- Whether writing was used to reflect on features of writing in the discipline (conventions, genre, research methods, etc.)

### Syllabus Checklist for a Writing Intensive Class.

- ☐ 2-3 guiding principles selected from the guidelines
- ☐ 3-7 learning outcomes related to writing-to-learn
- ☐ A description of ungraded (low stakes) writing that will be used in the course
- ☐ A description of how smaller writing assignments will prepare students to complete a larger writing assignment or exam
- ☐ A description of a larger graded (high stakes) writing assignment (when applicable)

To meet the learning outcomes of a writing intensive class, a syllabus ought to *reflect* the following:

1. **Writing is comprehensively integrated into the course.** Writing assignments in a WI class serve as a means to achieving mastery of class content. They can also serve to develop professional output, though that is not required – it may be required to meet program or department learning outcomes.
2. **Writing is a significant part of the coursework.** Though it is not required to assign a single major assignment, students will write at least 2000 words or the equivalent of finished writing. The genres and mode of production ought to be appropriate for the course and discipline. It is encouraged to distribute the writing over a variety of assignments. *Note: The finished writing will vary depending on the discipline.*
3. **Writing is a significant part of the course grade.** Though it is not required to put the majority of the weighted grade on a single major assignment, a WI class will include writing as 30% or more of the class grade, for example, discussion board posts, “think pieces” or reflection papers, in-class writing assignments, etc. The grading can also be based on completion, and/or collective rubrics, for example, completing lecture notes, or completing a peer-reflection exercise.
4. **Writing is learned through revision.** Feedback, peer-reflection, and/or revision will be part of the regular coursework/curriculum. *Note: Feedback and revision does not need to take place via drafts; it can be resubmission of a report, or a reflection.*
5. **Writing is explained and practiced in the course.** In the WI class, the instructor and the students will engage in reflection, conversation, and writing about the function of writing in the discipline, and the structures of writing in the discipline. The syllabus or course materials can explain the forms and types of writing instruction that the class will use, such as five-minute papers, concept maps, discussion board posts, annotated design notebooks, case study or case notes, reflection for a photo essay, etc. Alongside a writing activity, there could be a workshop to engage students to interactively learn the conventions of the writing style.

### Guiding Principles for Writing Intensive Classes

*Choose 2-3 from the list to include in your syllabus.*

1. **Focus on process, content and genre:** Writing, reading, and discussion activities and assignments allow students to process the *content of the course* and identify, explore, and practice *genres of writing specific to the discipline*.
2. **Writing as a tool for learning and questioning:** Ungraded and/or anonymous writing assignments/activities invite students to ask questions, identify what they know and don't know. By expressing themselves, they make sense of, synthesize, and analyze course material (in writing, discussion, and/or presentations).
3. **Writing as a mode of evaluation (of texts, of ideas, of the world)** Writing functions as a discovery tool to explore and familiarize oneself with the genres and formats of a discipline, with a particular audience and/or workplace discourse in mind (lab reports in science, charts, music sheets, research-focused writing).
4. **Frequent and varied opportunities to write and revise:** Students ought to experience frequent and varied writing assignments and activities, in different modalities, formats, and genres, with different types of assessment for the writing, and opportunities for self-assessment or peer-review when applicable. This helps to become aware of the choices one can make as a writer depending on the needs of a situation.
5. **Writing as multimodal:** Alphabetic, text-based writing is one possible mode of expression/communication that can be used in WI courses. Opportunities for students to engage and/or compose in multimodal writing fosters student confidence and versatility.
6. **Opportunities for multilingual expression:** WI classes can make room for students to write in their first language, particularly when writing is being used as a tool for learning and reflection.
7. **Scaffolding:** WI classes can help students build writing skills and work towards completing larger assignments by breaking them into smaller, discrete components. Smaller assignments support the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge.

## **Examples of Learning Outcomes for a Writing Intensive Class**

*WI instructors may draft their own (department/program-specific WI learning outcomes are also welcome), or select 3-7 from the list below. This will depend on whether a WI class also includes discipline-specific / program-specific learning outcomes, and assessment practices related to programs (Middle States, etc). For further guidance on learning outcomes, see this list of [measurable learning outcomes](#).*

Here are examples of measurable learning outcomes, organized into categories.

### **By the end of the WI course, students will be able to...**

#### **Writing style / voice**

- Compare and contrast their own writing voice/style with others
- Practice and integrate different strategies of analytical expression, including in traditional essay forms and/or other media forms (digital or analog)
- Use writing to critically reflect on and evaluate their own learning processes and course performance
- Reflect on the differences between writing and learning in a WI-course vs. non-WI courses

#### **Writing Process and Discipline-specific conventions**

- Identify which characteristics of a text are an argument, evidence, and/or a thesis statement
- Reflect on various steps of the writing process and their outcomes, such as free-/prewriting, drafting, research, revision
- Identify which steps of a writing process work or do not work for them
- Demonstrate the steps involved in developing high-stakes writing-based projects
- Select a genre and/or mode of writing for their final project
- Identify the components of a disciplinary genre of writing (lab report; surrealist poetry; cultural anthropology reflection, concert review, etc)
- Identify discipline-specific writing conventions
- Apply discipline-specific writing conventions in their written assignments
- Describe quantitative research study findings
- Formulate a \_\_\_\_\_ [type of writing] for \_\_\_\_\_ [audience]. (Example: formulate a treatment plan for a patient)
- Produce a \_\_\_\_\_ [piece of writing] which integrates knowledge on \_\_\_\_\_ [concepts from the course]. For example: Produce an individual treatment plan for the management of IDA which integrates knowledge on nutrition and individual and cultural food preferences.

### **Reading Comprehension**

- Identify components of a disciplinary genre of writing (lab report; surrealist poetry; cultural anthropology reflection, concert review, etc)
- Practice asking questions about the reading
- Use freewriting, note-taking, annotating, and/or journaling to make sense of course readings and concepts (low-stakes ungraded or anonymous writing)
- Use freewriting, note-taking, annotating, and journaling, to synthesize course readings and concepts (low-stakes ungraded or anonymous writing)
- Use freewriting, note-taking, annotating, and journaling, to analyze course readings and concepts (low-stakes ungraded or anonymous writing)
- Differentiate between \_\_\_\_\_ (concept 1) and \_\_\_\_\_ (concept 2) by analyzing \_\_\_\_\_ (disciplinary text) For example: Differentiate between IDA and Sickle cell anemia by analyzing the CBC results.

### **Peer-review**

- Identify genre components or course concepts in peers' writing (peer-reflection or peer-review)
- Differentiate among published observational research studies in students' literature reviews.

### **Research & Resources**

- Evaluate sources from a variety of genres and perspectives
- Use credible sources to define terms
- Refer to multiple pieces of evidence to illustrate an argument / support an idea.
- Evaluate multiple pieces of evidence to identify which best illustrate an argument / support an idea
- Design research questions that help develop to a topic in the discipline
- Explain how the components of a detailed outline relate to each other

### **AI and Writing**

- Describe how AI is used in writing in the discipline
- Review the uses of AI in writing in the discipline
- Review the ethical uses of AI in writing in the discipline
- **for syllabus policies and resources on Generative AI**  
<https://www.lehman.edu/ctl/For-Faculty/generative-ai/>

## Examples of writing assignments

### Low Stakes (ungraded, and/or anonymous)

### High Stakes

#### Committee members:

Karin Beck	Interim Associate Provost
Sarah Ohmer	Latin American & Latino Studies & Africana Studies
Sherry Deckman	Middle School & High School Education
Jane Kehoe-Higgins	Director of Institute of Literacy
Maeve Adams	Director of First Year Writing Program
Sophia Hsu	WAC Coordinator, English
Scott Calvin	Pre-Health Program Director
Yvette Rosario	Senior Registrar
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Nari Kim	Management and Business Innovation
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