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GUIDELINES FOR WRITING INTENSIVE COURSES AT HARVARD

Writing intensive courses incorporate writing into the broader pedagogical goals of the course, such that students both improve their compositional skills and deepen their learning through frequent writing assignments and timely faculty responses. The learning objectives pursued in the course should shape the writing intensive structure.

The Standing Committee on Writing and Speaking presents these guidelines for writing intensive courses to all faculty members for use in developing new classes or strengthening the writing pedagogy in existing courses. They may be used in General Education, in other programs, or in any department, particularly in tutorial and “capstone” research experiences.

Concentrations and programs are encouraged to offer writing intensive courses, but not all may have the resources to do so. However, faculty and TF’s teaching writing intensive courses may avail themselves of pedagogical support services provided by the Bok Center, the Harvard Writing Project, and the Harvard College Writing Center.

1. In writing intensive courses, timely feedback on student writing from teaching staff figures centrally. This feedback should be both written and spoken and should include one or more conferences between student and instructor. In short, significant teacher student interaction and close attention to student writing will be one of the draws of the course.
2. Revision of written work, through a sequence of draft, feedback, rethinking, and rewriting, will be part of the course. Peer evaluation and feedback are encouraged.
3. A writing intensive course has multiple (perhaps sequenced) writing assignments distributed throughout the semester. In these assignments, some attention—which may include feedback on drafts of sections of longer papers—should be given to the “trajectory” of a student’s writing.
4. Writing intensive courses should be small or have small sections. Within the limit of resources available, smaller section size will be supported by the College Instructional Fund.
5. A significant portion of the student’s final grade in the course should be determined by the quality of the student’s thought expressed in good writing.