

**Western Michigan University**  
**Baccalaureate-Level Writing Requirement – An Addendum**  
(Approved by the College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee, 21 February 1997)

<b>PART ONE</b>
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While the college curriculum committee [CCC] endorses the University's statement on baccalaureate-level writing and its general education position on writing proficiency, it wishes to emphasize and clarify several points of policy in the two documents. It also wishes to urge general reading and discussion of the 1993 McCauley report entitled "Writing at Western Michigan University: A Study of Faculty and Student Perceptions."

1. According to the McCauley report, students made it clear that they wanted a greater opportunity to improve their writing skills. Among student suggestions, was a call for greater opportunity to **revise** writing assignments. Since student critiques of each other's work are no substitute for the expert critiquing that the instructor can provide, we suggest frequent and significant interchanges between the instructor and the student about the quality of the student's writing.
2. Because the CCC realizes that the process of conferences and revisions represents only one of several pedagogical approaches, we simply ask that course descriptions identify a procedure for encouraging and demonstrating improvement in writing. This procedure may include opportunity for revisions or for demonstrated improvement in successive papers.
3. The CCC wishes to emphasize the baccalaureate-level writing requirement which states that "the course will integrate **several** writing tasks into the term's work."
4. The general education policy's statement of criteria for writing proficiency indicates that papers for the course "must be substantial in nature and length." While realizing that different departments and instructors will interpret "substantial in nature and length" according to their own teaching methods and respective disciplines, the CCC wishes to call special attention to the need for **several** papers which indeed **substantial** in terms of their content and length.
5. Because the University's baccalaureate-level writing policy states that "evaluation of the writing will comprise a **significant** portion of the student's grade," the CCC asks that course descriptions indicate the number, expected length, and general nature of the writing assignments. Descriptions should also indicate the portion of the student's grade that will be based on the quality of his or her writing. [For example: "Thirty percent of the final grade will be based on an evaluation of the student's writing."]

The CCC realizes that baccalaureate-writing courses are advanced classes in a wide variety of disciplines and that they are not necessarily similar to writing classes offered by, say, the Department of English. Trying to distinguish between "writing style" and "content" in courses as diverse as physics, mathematics, chemistry, and political science, for example, will offer many challenges to everyone involved. We hope and expect, though, that students in various departments will succeed in learning, developing, and displaying a greater sense of **professional** style in their respective disciplines.

## **PART TWO: Checklist for Approving Baccalaureate-Level Writing Courses**

### Preface

The following questions, in no way binding, simply offer one of many possible ways for the CCC to evaluate proposals for writing-intensive courses. The CCC urges departments and instructional units to present their own checklists or criteria explaining why a proposed course should be designated as a baccalaureate-level writing course.

Does the proposal, and the syllabus included therewith, address the following?

1. Do the proposal and the course syllabus **clearly state that one of the course goals** will be to develop the student's writing abilities in accordance with the baccalaureate-level policy?
2. Is there a **procedure for demonstrating growth and improvement** in writing? This may include opportunity to rewrite papers and/or to demonstrate improvement in successive papers.
3. Are **several writing tasks** involved?
4. How, according to the criteria of individual departments, are the several writing tasks **substantial in nature and length**?
5. a. Does the proposal include **examples of the writing assignments** that instructors will distribute to students?  
b. Do the assignments specify "the **format**, modes of presentation, technical vocabulary, and research of bibliographic conventions appropriate for writing in...respective disciplines"?
6. What **portion of the student's grade** is based on an evaluation of writing?
7. Is the course at the **300 or 400 level**?
8. Is this class capped at a **maximum of thirty students**?
9. If the writing tasks include preparation of a final project or term paper, is there provision for **return of the paper, with instructor's critique**, to the student? [This is a recommendation only.]
10. Does the current **catalog description** identify writing as a significant component of the course? [This is a recommendation only.]