The Writing Intensive Course

All students work to develop the critical reading and writing skills introduced in the First-year Seminar by completing at least one Writing Intensive (WR) Course. A WR course is a regular academic course designed to integrate the teaching of writing with the teaching of subject matter. Students usually take the WR course after completing the First-year Seminar, but WR courses cannot be senior seminars. WR courses are offered across the curriculum and are normally taken within the major. Because teaching a WR course requires much time and energy, the class size is generally, although not necessarily, limited to sixteen students.

The central goal of a WR course is to teach students that writing is a process of planning, drafting, revising, and editing. A WR course may also introduce students to the specific forms of writing common to a discipline, teach students strategies for identifying and correcting error and polishing prose style, and encourage students to read attentively for content and an author’s purpose, audience, and context.

Because revision is key to improving writing, students in a WR course should submit drafts of papers written for the course and then revise them in accordance with instructor comments (written and/or oral). Additional feedback may come from peer critiques and Writing Center conferences. In a WR course, students are generally required to submit approximately 4,000 words (15 pages) of polished, graded prose. Kinds of assignments may vary greatly, depending on the discipline, and may include expository essays, lab reports, case studies, and term papers that are divided into stages that receive feedback. The grade for a WR course should reflect the central role of writing. Faculty may supplement formal writing assignments with writing exercises to help students learn course content.

We believe that writing is most effectively taught and learned in the major, at a point when students have committed to a course of study. All departments are thus expected by the Academic Program Committee to offer at least one course that meets the general guidelines for a WR course. The Subcommittee on Writing and the Writing Director will assist each department in formulating specific goals, standards and formats for its WR course(s).

The Norman M. Eberly Writing Center

Every writer benefits from the response of a reader who will point out a confusing sentence, a weak argument, or insufficient evidence to support a claim; every writer also benefits from a reader who will point out an effective sentence, a strong thesis, or an interesting point of view. The Norman M. Eberly Writing Center at Dickinson College is a place where all students can find such sympathetic but critical readers.
From first-year seminar through senior seminar, Dickinson students are asked to write in a variety of contexts and a variety of modes, from response journals to lab reports to position papers to literary essays. Our goal is to help students develop and mature as writers by providing assistance with all aspects of writing and by encouraging students to see writing as a way of learning, discovering, and communicating.

Central to our approach to tutoring is flexibility and collaboration. We see each student as an individual with particular concerns, situations, and goals, and we respond to these diverse factors.

- We acknowledge that the writing "belongs" to the student and that our purpose is to help the student achieve his or her goals.
- We respect the student's authority and autonomy.
- We assist students in understanding and interpreting the requirements of an assignment.
- We help students with their writing at any stage in the writing process.
- We assist students in understanding and interpreting the requirements of a specific assignment.
- We assist students in clarifying and developing ideas.
- We help students in organizing and supporting points.
- We help students to write clearly and precisely and to recognize and correct grammatical and mechanical errors.

Writing Center tutors do not write students' papers for them. We do not supply content, fix mistakes, or proofread papers.

Writing Center tutors are students selected on the basis of their strong writing and interpersonal skills. They take a semester-long course in composition theory and tutoring practice before becoming tutors. In addition to tutoring, they visit classes to talk about the services provided by the Writing Center, and they assist faculty in classroom writing workshops and peer-editing sessions.

The Director of the Writing Center trains, coordinates, and supervises tutors. Together with the College Writing Director, she also conducts workshops on writing for faculty and consults with faculty individually on writing in their courses. 
Responsible Office/Division:

Effective Date:

Last Amended Date:

Next Review Date:

Also Found In: Writing Program Web Site (http://alpha.dickinson.edu/departments/writing/)