

Guidance on Writing Intensive (W) Courses

This document provides guidance for departments offering writing intensive (W-designated) courses. This guidance is based on national practice for writing intensive courses and is intended to serve as a reference.

Writing, including drafts and informal writing, should make up a significant portion of the student grade. While 20% is the minimum to qualify as a W-designated course at Ball State, national norms suggest around 70% of the course grade be based on writing.

Writing-intensive courses should engage students in the writing process and should include formative writing feedback. Students should be encouraged to submit drafts of their writing and should receive peer and/or instructor feedback before that writing is submitted for a final grade.

W-designated courses may be included in a Tier or may be listed only as a **W** course. **All writing intensive courses should include at least one student learning outcome (SLO) related to writing that will be regularly assessed.**

The Indiana College Core (formerly STGEC) outcomes for *Written Communication* are listed below and may serve as a guide when creating student learning outcomes (SLOs) for writing-intensive (**W**) courses.

- 1.1. Produce texts that use appropriate formats, genre conventions, and documentation styles while controlling tone, syntax, grammar, and spelling.
- 1.2. Demonstrate an understanding of writing as a social process that includes multiple drafts, collaboration, and reflection.
- 1.3. Read critically, summarize, apply, analyze, and synthesize information and concepts in written and visual texts as the basis for developing original ideas and claims.
- 1.4. Demonstrate an understanding of writing assignments as a series of tasks including identifying and evaluating useful and reliable outside sources.
- 1.5. Develop, assert, and support a focused thesis with appropriate reasoning and adequate evidence.
- 1.6. Compose texts that exhibit appropriate rhetorical choices, which include attention to audience, purpose, context, genre, and convention.
- 1.7. Demonstrate proficiency in reading, evaluating, analyzing, and using material collected from electronic sources (such as visual, electronic, library databases, Internet sources, other official databases, federal government databases, reputable blogs, wikis, etc.).

The assessment report for a **W** course should include **assessment of at least one student learning outcome (SLO) specific to writing**. Any assessment of writing should take into consideration the disciplinary norms of the field of study.

Components of the assessment report should include (but are not limited to):

Part 1 - Course SLOs aligned with UCC Cognitive Skills, if the W-designated course is included in a Tier or Writing-intensive SLO(s) if the W-designated course is not included in a Tier

Part 2 - Assessment Methods: Describe activities used to assess the UCC cognitive skills outlined in Part 1 or describe activities used to assess the Writing-intensive SLO(s) if the course is not included in a Tier. Describe the sample. What is the expected performance outcome? Describe any other details related to the assessment methods/activities.

Part 3 - Results: Indicate the number and percentage of students in your sample in each of the following levels 4 = Accomplished; 3 = Competent; 2 = Developing; 1 = Beginning. Describe the results. Was the expected performance outcome met? Include comparisons with previous assessment cycles, if possible, and note trends within this cycle and/or over time. What did you learn?

Example of assessment results for at least one SLO related to writing:

N=30	4 Accomplished - student exceeds expectations	3 Competent - student meets expectations	2 Developing - student does not fully meet the expectations	1 Beginning - student does not meet expectations at all
Develop, assert, and support a focused thesis with appropriate reasoning and adequate evidence.	N=14 47%	N=13 43%	N=2 7%	N=1 3%

Part 4 - Use of Results to Improve: Describe how the results were shared with other faculty. Describe any plans for improvements to future instructional methods, course content, syllabus or assessment activities/processes in this course as a result of assessment data.

For more information on writing intensive courses, here are a few resources:

- [Conference on College Composition and Communication Position Statement on Principles or the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing](#)
- [The National Writing Census](#)
- [NSSE Report on Experiences with Writing](#)
- [Farris, C. & Smith, R. "Writing-Intensive Courses: Tools for Curricular Change"](#)
- [Townsend, M. "Writing Intensive Courses & WAC"](#)