

# ADVANCED WRITTEN & ORAL COMMUNICATION

## Foundation Document

Approved by the FGEC April 19, 2007

### Requirement Purpose

The BYU Mission Statement and the *Aims of a BYU Education* identify the ability to communicate effectively among the primary skills that students should acquire as part of a broad university education. This requirement is founded on the belief that effective writing is essential to any area of inquiry. It is both a method of learning as well as a means of expressing that learning. Effective writing helps students develop skills in verbal expression and sound thinking, “the ability to engage successfully in logical reasoning, critical analysis, moral discrimination, creative imagination, and independent thought” (*Aims*). In particular, the requirement in advanced written and oral communication expands upon the skills students develop in their first-year writing class by introducing students to the disciplinary nature of academic writing. This requirement is founded on the belief that writing is tied closely to the depth and rigor of an academic concentration that prepares students for the workplace or graduate education. In courses that fulfill this requirement, students learn to write and present for multiple audiences, including specific disciplinary and professional audiences. They learn the rigor of disciplinary writing, reading, and research and refine their skills of verbal expression, both written and oral.

### Learning Outcomes

1. **Rhetorical Knowledge.** Students will demonstrate that they can write clearly, focus on a well-defined purpose in writing, use conventions of format and structure appropriate to their discipline, and adopt a voice, tone, and level of formality suited to multiple purposes and audiences, including audiences both within and outside the discipline in which the course is offered.
2. **Disciplinary Writing.** Students will demonstrate an understanding of the roles that writing plays in their particular discipline, major, or career as a way of learning, as a way of demonstrating and evaluating what one has learned, and as a way of communicating with others.
3. **Writing Processes.** Students will develop productive and flexible individual and collaborative writing processes, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading. These processes could include the following: collecting data, finding supporting evidence, and creating good arguments; organizing the material for a paper; writing successive drafts of the same paper; group writing; seeking and using peer

responses; revising; editing grammar, usage, and punctuation; and using conventional formats. These processes will reflect processes of inquiry within the student's discipline.

**4. Processes of Disciplinary Research.** Students will demonstrate the ability to use appropriate research tools and processes of research within their particular discipline, including library research. Students will demonstrate their ability to identify and evaluate sources, retrieve and evaluate data, take notes, and follow conventions of quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing. They will cite sources properly and demonstrate an understanding of ethical issues related to research, including how to avoid plagiarism.

**5. Oral Communication.** Students will demonstrate their ability with presentation media and with public speaking skills, including focusing a topic, adapting it to the understanding of a particular audience, organizing main points coherently and supporting them with adequate detail, and delivering a message effectively using appropriate audio and visual aids. Students will demonstrate that they can give effective formal presentations (which may include poster presentations), either as part of their course or as part of an undergraduate research conference or professional conference.

**5. Knowledge of Conventions.** Students will understand the genres, forms, styles, and documentation conventions of writing for their discipline. They will also demonstrate knowledge of edited syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

### **Course Characteristics**

**1. Writing as a Primary Emphasis.** This primary emphasis manifests itself in several ways:

- direct instruction in writing concepts and processes
- substantial polished writing (typically several assignments with 25 or more total pages)
- feedback from the instructor using clearly articulated criteria on work in progress and on final drafts
- a substantial portion of the grade based on final drafts (usually 70% or more).

A writing course is different from a writing-intensive course, which may require substantial writing but doesn't have writing as a primary emphasis.

**2. Course Sequencing.** The AWOC requirement may be distributed over more than one course. For example, a department may combine a research course with a seminar course. If a department distributes the requirements over three or more courses, students will be required to assemble a portfolio of work demonstrating that they have met the AWOC requirements. This portfolio will be evaluated within the department, independently of any of the courses and according to effective practices of portfolio evaluation.

**3. Course Size.** The writing requirement will be implemented in such a way that students can receive adequate feedback from their instructors and that instructors are not burdened with excessive grading. According to the National Council for Teachers of English, the optimal size for a writing class is 20 students per section. Courses receiving AWOC credit should be no larger than 30 students. Departments who distribute this requirement over a sequence can mitigate relatively large class in one part of the sequence by ensuring that students have smaller classes in another part. For example, a relatively large research

class can be balanced with a small seminar class (fewer than 30 students). TAs in large classes will be adequately trained and closely supervised by faculty.

4. **Frequency.** To enhance pedagogy, departments should schedule writing classes to meet at least twice a week.

5. **Teacher Qualifications.** Teachers of AWOC should themselves be effective writers. In addition, because writing pedagogy is not typically part of the academic training of most college faculty, AWOC teachers must be qualified to teach writing through one of the following:

- recent experience teaching advanced written and oral communication
- an approved internship with an experienced teacher
- an approved seminar on methods of teaching writing

Courses receiving AWOC credit should be taught by faculty with appropriate graduate degrees, i.e., these courses should not be taught by graduate instructors.