

FIRST-YEAR WRITING

Foundation Document Criteria for General Education Certification

Approved by FGEC November 14, 2024

Requirement Purpose

First-year writing supports the mission and aims of a BYU education by helping students gain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to get along with and learn from others. Fulfilling the first-year writing requirement prepares students to communicate effectively, ethically, and charitably in other university courses and in professional, civic, and personal contexts. This course supports students as they become communicators who contribute to flourishing families, organizations, and communities.

Learning Outcomes

1. **Rhetorical and Genre Knowledge.** Students will be able to analyze rhetorical situations, use and adapt genres, write for a specified audience and purpose, and adopt a style, tone, and level of formality suited to the purpose and audience.
2. **Processes of Writing.** Students will be able to use productive and flexible individual and collaborative writing processes, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading, reflecting, and employing writing technologies like generative artificial intelligence effectively and ethically.
3. **Inquiry and Reading.** Students will be able to engage in inquiry as an iterative process as they understand and participate in ongoing scholarly conversations, suspending judgment until larger contexts are understood. They will be able to read and use written materials in a variety of genres and from a variety of sources, including information gathered from digital sources like databases, search engines, social media, and generative artificial intelligence.
4. **Processes of Library Research and Information Literacy.** In collaboration with the library, students will begin to develop the ability to critically evaluate sources; construct effective search strategies; and investigate, analyze, interpret, and synthesize information from diverse perspectives to ask questions, learn, generate new knowledge, and solve problems.
5. **Style and Knowledge of Conventions.** Students will be able to use appropriate language, genre conventions, and citation practices to write effectively in different contexts.
6. **Reflection.** Students will be able to practice a systematic reflective process that includes describing prior or current writing experiences; evaluating the meaning and relevance of those experiences, including the consequences of their writing choices; and thinking ahead to future writing contexts.

Course Characteristics

1. **Writing as a Primary Emphasis.** This primary emphasis manifests itself in several ways:
 - a. Students receive direct instruction in writing concepts and processes
 - b. Students spend significant time revising their work
 - c. Students receive frequent and substantial feedback from the instructor using clearly articulated criteria on work in progress and on final drafts
 - d. Students produce a substantial body of writing as they conceptualize, develop, and finalize projects. This includes in-process and polished writing and presentations (typically multiple assignments that total approximately 6,500 words). Courses may also include oral and multimodal composition assignments.

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 Size.** According to the National Council for Teachers of English, the optimal size for a first-year writing class is 20 students per section. Second-language writing courses are typically smaller, optimally 15 students per section.
3. **Frequency.** To enhance pedagogy, departments should schedule writing classes to meet at least twice a week.
4. **Teacher Qualifications.** Teachers of first-year writing should themselves be effective writers. In addition, because writing pedagogy is not typically part of the academic training of most college faculty, first-year writing teachers must be qualified to teach writing through one of the following:
 - a. recent experience teaching first-year writing
 - b. an approved internship with an experienced teacher
 - c. an approved seminar on methods of teaching writing

Graduate instructors teaching first-year writing should be part of a closely supervised development program that includes pre-service and in-service training and course work in writing pedagogy.

5. **Writing Assessment.** Student writing should be assessed using standards that reflect the outcomes outlined above. Students should receive clear formative and summative feedback about their developing proficiency in rhetorical and genre knowledge, inquiry, reading, research and information literacy, and style.