



UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mike Mullen, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education

**FROM:** Mark Lawrence Kornbluh, Dean  
Anna Bosch, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs

**DATE:** February 15, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Revision to Graduation Writing Requirement Criteria

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The following memorandum serves as a proposal to make revisions to the second-tier graduation writing requirement.

The Graduation Writing Initiative was instituted as a writing-across-the-curriculum program to satisfy the second-tier writing requirement. Unfortunately this goal has not been realized: five years out nearly 80% of the GWR is currently taught by the Department of English, with more than half of that in literature classes.

Most of the College's departments offer courses that meet many if not all of the GWR requirements, yet departments chose not to participate in the program. When asked why, the primary reason cited was a cumbersome approval process.

Departments cited the extra layer of administration – approval by the Writing Initiative Office – as a deterrent, particularly the requirement of submitting syllabi every semester. Faculty also spoke about the awkwardness of having graduate students (employed by the Writing Initiative) being responsible for course approval.

There were also comments regarding the criteria for “W” courses. Respondents argued that the requirement of having one of the assignments be written for a general university audience was a deterrent to offering a course. Given the goal to have the “W” courses embedded in the disciplines, faculty responded that the audience – if specified - should be an “intelligent audience.” The current phrasing “written for a general university audience” could be interpreted as too lenient for upper-level major courses. In addition, science departments remarked that the four-page per assignment requirement was too stringent since most laboratory assignments are three pages in length.

With the expressed interest in helping to realize the writing-across-the curriculum goal, the College proposes the following in hopes of expanding the number of “W” courses offered:

- (1) Change the approval process to facilitate faculty participation. Streamline it so that there is only one process, and attempt to have it mirror that of any other undergraduate course approval process. If need be attach a “W” course checklist, but do not require approval from the Writing Initiative Office.
- (2) Do not require submission of course syllabi every semester. Have a one-time approval for courses.
- (3) Keep the 15-page requirement, but allow five assignments of three-pages as an option.
- (4) Remove the criterion “written for a general university audience” as it causes confusion and acts as a deterrent to faculty considering offering a “W” course.