

## **GE Writing Experience Courses - Course Approval Description**

### **I. Regulations**

The UC Davis Requirements for Higher Degrees, Section 522, sets forth the Baccalaureate Degree Requirements in General Education. Literacy with Words and Images is a component of Core Literacies (522-C-1) and requires 20 units of work in specified categories. A minimum of 6 units of courses that provide writing experience is required; in lieu of an oral skills course, a student may elect to take 3 or more additional units with writing experience

Regulation 523-C-1 states: A course providing writing experience promotes the student's ability to think clearly and communicate effectively about the course material through guided writing assignments completed in stages. Guidance may take the form of class discussions, peer feedback, individual or small group conferences, or written (including online) feedback. Students must be given feedback designed to promote improvement in writing in the course. Feedback may occur in the context of one or more successive, refined submissions of a single assignment, or over a series of multiple assignments. Students receive the current version of the handout on plagiarism from Student Judicial Affairs. Grading criteria are articulated in advance of the due date. The writing is evaluated for content, clarity, organization, and logic. A 1 unit course requires a minimum of 5 pages of writing; a course of 2 or more units requires a minimum of 10 pages, possibly in a series of staged tasks or shorter assignments. Approval may be sought for shorter assignments that total fewer than 5 or 10 pages when they are appropriate and clearly justified.

### **II. Interpretation**

The objective of the writing experience requirement is to promote the students' ability to think clearly and communicate effectively about course material as well as to advance students' writing skills. Requiring a certain quantity of writing is less important to these objectives than integrating writing assignments that progressively develop critical thinking and that model effective writing strategies: transferring feedback on one piece of writing to the next, developing a longer work through a series of shorter pieces, or drafting, getting feedback, and revising.

Writing experience may be part of courses taken for G.E. topical breadth credit or for the major; the writing may take the form of essays, reports, proposals or other genres. Writing in courses both inside and outside of the major will encourage students to become proficient writers in a range of situations. Departments and programs are encouraged to include writing experience within upper-division courses whenever possible to assist students in the development of skills that will be used for decades after graduation.

Students must receive clear, written guidelines for completing each assignment. Assignments should provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate critical thinking and the ability to communicate an understanding of issues pertinent to

the course. Students must be given feedback designed to promote improvement in writing in the course. Feedback may occur in the context of one or more successive, refined submissions of a single assignment, or over a series of multiple assignments. Clear criteria for evaluation (rubric, scoring guide, etc.) must be articulated in advance of each assignment and include evaluation of content, clarity, organization, and logic. The proposal for a writing experience course should describe how guidance will be provided during the development of the writings. Guidance may include staged tasks, class discussion of topic selection, narrowing of focus, analysis of effective and ineffective models, or explanation of evaluation criteria. In addition to written comments, feedback may be provided as oral comments, individual or small group conferences with instructor or teaching assistant, or peer feedback. The Student Judicial Affairs handout on plagiarism must be given to the students and techniques of avoiding plagiarism discussed in class (<http://sja.ucdavis.edu/avoid.htm>).

In general, a 1 unit course requires a minimum of 5 pages of writing; a course of 2 or more units requires a minimum of 10 pages, possibly in a series of staged tasks or shorter assignments. Approval may be sought for shorter assignments that total fewer than 5 or 10 pages when they are appropriate and clearly justified.

Education Abroad Program courses may be used to satisfy the GE writing requirements if, and only if, they meet the specific requirements for a GE writing experience course.

### **III. Guiding questions for developing a course proposal**

1. What types of writings are required in your course? Briefly explain how the assignments provide an opportunity for students to develop critical thinking and the ability to communicate an understanding of issues pertinent to course objectives.
2. Briefly describe a typical writing topic in this course and list the criteria you would apply to assess the students' performance.
3. Briefly describe the guidance that will be given to students before a draft is written (e.g. through staged tasks; class or on-line discussion of topic selection and narrowing of focus; through discussion of effective and less effective models; and so forth).
4. Briefly describe how feedback will be given on one or more successive, refined submissions of a single assignment, or over a series of multiple assignments.
5. Identify the projected number, types, and approximate lengths of writing assignments. If the writing is expected to total less than 5 pages for a 1 unit course or less than 10 pages for a course of 2 or more units, provide a clear justification.

#### IV. Sample Course Information and Possible Justification in Fulfillment of the Writing Literacy Requirement

1. **Sample Course:** In a course in the research methods of the discipline, taught partially with small sections, students do a series of laboratory reports or research reviews or another appropriate type of writing.

**Justification:** Each writing assignment receives comments from a teacher or teaching assistant and a grade. Progressive improvement is expected, based on previous feedback.
2. **Sample Course:** In a large lecture course with enough small discussion sections to ensure an appropriate student/teacher ratio, students do regular informal writing exercises (e.g. in journals, logs, field notes, or a class blog) and write 1 to 2 papers.

**Justification:** At least one assignment is a substantial project that receives feedback at some stage, and then may be revised.
3. **Sample Course:** In a fieldwork-based course, students, sometimes in teams, create written projects (appropriate to the discipline) that consist of several smaller stages or parts.

**Justification:** Students must do enough individual writing to generate an appropriate amount of writing per student and for the teacher to assess individual growth.
4. **Sample Course:** In a readings-based course, students write several critical analyses totaling at least 10 pages.

**Justification:** At least one substantial paper receives careful feedback and students are given the opportunity to revise it.
5. **Sample Course:** In a lecture course, students write at least two papers that together total 10 pages or more.

**Justification:** These papers are sufficiently similar in structure and purpose (though not in content) that careful feedback on one can be used to guide the writing of the next. In such a case, the WE criteria can be met without formal revision of any of the papers.
6. **Sample Course:** A capstone course requires lengthy individual research projects appropriate to the field and written in stages, each of which receives feedback from a teacher or teaching assistant.
7. **Sample Course:** In a senior design project course, students work individually or in teams on parts of the project and write frequently to record and measure progress.

**Justification:** Students produce in stages a formal written report and perhaps other documents (e.g., posters, brochures, oral presentations) for different audiences.

8. **Sample Course:** In a senior capstone course in the arts, students create portfolios of their work with a substantial amount of writing supplementing the visual or aural content.

**Justification:** These portfolios would be suitable for job interviews or graduate school applications.

9. **Sample Course:** In an internship course, students write regular brief reports or other documents and build a portfolio of work created for the internship site.

**Justification:** A substantial writing is given careful instructor feedback and students are given the opportunity to revise or are expected to incorporate the feedback into a later writing.