Learning Goals and Outcome Criteria for Primary Writing Requirement Courses
WRT 103 & 104, WRT 105, WRT 105E, WRT 105A/B
Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program

Across all academic communities writing, speaking, and argument enable us to discover, develop, test, and communicate our ideas. The Primary Writing Requirement courses familiarize students with key principles and strategies for developing as successful communicators across different modes and academic contexts. The criteria below hold up the foundational knowledge and processes that support ongoing growth as academic communicators. They articulate key aspects of composing processes and of academic compositions. This is because process is part of product. At the same time, in many contexts, our product alone represents not only our message, but also us.

To distinguish process-oriented objectives from product-oriented criteria, the sub-heading "the composition" separates out grading criteria for the formal compositions. All other learning objectives correspond to the writer's awareness of composition knowledge and composing processes. Work related to these objectives is integrated throughout the course; it is not assessed with letter grades so that students have the freedom to try out and reflect on different approaches.

Critical Awareness of One's Writing Situation

Through reflections, the writer
- Considers the audience's knowledge, needs, and expectations
- Makes appropriate choices about the composition's content, form, mode, and language features based on the rhetorical situation (which includes purpose, audience, and genre conventions)
- Develops awareness of multimodality (e.g., incorporating visual, textual or spatial elements) and code-meshing (i.e., incorporating global and local language varieties) in academic and non-academic texts
- Evaluates, as both reader and writer, the advantages, risks, and challenges of making particular writing choices, such as employing multimodality and code-meshing
- Reflects on how writing choices may or may not transfer to different writing situations
- Demonstrates awareness of their strengths and weaknesses as a writer

The composition
- Is accompanied by a self-reflection that conveys a critical awareness of the writing situation

Effective Writing Processes

Through a variety of assignments, the writer
- Recognizes that all writers—even the most experienced writers—begin with a "working" draft and rely heavily on revision
- Develops a toolkit of strategies for different aspects of the composing process (e.g., brainstorming, informal writing, outlining, getting feedback from readers, etc.)
- Drafts, reviews, and revises to discover, develop, and refine ideas
- Draws on reflection and feedback to consider how well the text communicates the writer's intended meaning
- Revises and edits to refine the writer's meaning and to meet the expectations of the audience and the rhetorical situation

Effective Process for Engaging Sources

The writer
- Becomes aware of resources that support the research process, such as outreach librarians, as well as databases and source management systems
- Develops methods for identifying, evaluating, and selecting possible sources
- Keeps track of sources and source ideas so that they can be fairly represented and properly cited

The composition
- Draws on sources to develop and motivate a question or problem

- Contributes to an academic conversation through synthesizing, evaluating, and building on others' ideas, while ensuring that the writer's perspective guides the text
- Appropriately balances—based on the rhetorical situation—summary and critical analysis of source material
- Differentiates between the writer's ideas and source material; attributes and cites *all* source material. This includes not only scholarly sources, but also any source used in the composition, such as background sources (e.g., Wikipedia, etc.), sources from different modes (e.g., TEDtalks, blogs, a sculpture, performance, etc.), as well as sources not immediately recognized as sources (e.g., a peer, a faculty lecture, etc.)

Strength of Argument

The writer
- Uses argument to understand other perspectives
- Uses argument to develop their own perspective on the issue in the context of the larger academic conversation

The composition
- Poses an authentic question or problem
- Develops a debatable thesis that responds to the question or problem
- Uses argument and counterargument to test and develop the thesis
- Supports argument and counterargument with credible and relevant evidence and sources

Structure

The writer
- Recognizes that structure is meaningful: form affects function, and function affects form
- Learns and selects among a range of possibilities for organizing an argumentative essay
- As appropriate, uses multimodal elements (e.g., tables/graphs, images, video clips, etc.), multimodal platforms (e.g., video essay, presentation platforms, websites, etc.), or non-standard linguistic choices (e.g., varieties of English, dialects, other languages) when they support effective communication of intended meaning

The composition
- Utilizes organizational choices to help the reader easily identify key elements of the text (e.g., motivating question, thesis, supporting arguments, conclusion)
- Is organized and uses transitions at the paragraph and sentence levels to help the reader understand connections across ideas (e.g., logical flow, topic development, how new information is related to old information, etc.)
- Is comprised of sentences and paragraphs that build on one another to advance the argument (as opposed to reiterating ideas)
- Has a design and layout which enhances meaning through visual, textual, and aural modes

Language Use

The writer
- Recognizes that sentence-level choices vary with purpose, audience, media/mode, and genre; has some practice crafting text for different writing situations

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The composition
- Demonstrates effective sentence-level choices to convey the intended meaning in the context of shared disciplinary and genre writing conventions

- When appropriate, draws on personal language in accordance with the text's purpose, audience, media/mode, and genre