

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

September 25, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Douglas Estry, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education
and Dean of Undergraduate Studies

FROM: Dr. John Gaboury, Associate Provost for Academic Services

RE: Request to Change the University's Graduation Requirements – Writing
Requirement

For Transmittal to the University Committee on Undergraduate
Education (UCUE)

The request referenced above is being sent to you for action by the University
Committee on Undergraduate Education (UCUE).

UCUE Response Requested:

Please ask the UCUE to consider the request referenced above. Please mail the
related materials referenced under the heading Attachments at the end of this
memorandum to the members of the UCUE.

The UCUE alone will consider this request.

If you have any questions about this memorandum or the attached materials, please call
me at 5-8420.

Thank you for your help.

Attachments:

1. Request from the College of Arts and Letters dated September 14,
2015 and attachments.



University Curriculum and Catalog

Hannah Admin. Building
426 Auditorium Road
Room 151
East Lansing, MI 48824

517-355-8420
Fax: 517-353-1935

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Writing Requirement

Each student must complete the university's writing program requirements as follows:

1. The Tier I writing requirement that consists of *either* a. or b. below.
 - a. one of the following 4-credit Tier I writing courses during the first year: Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures ~~110, 115, 125, 130, 135, 140, 145, 150, 195H; Arts and Letters 192 and 192H;~~ 101 or 195H
or
 - b. the developmental writing courses: Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures 0102 and 1004 and one 4-credit Tier I writing course during the first year.
2. Based on the English placement mechanism, a student may be required to complete the developmental writing courses prior to enrolling in a Tier I writing course. The developmental writing courses are administered by the Department of Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures. For additional information, refer to the statement on *Academic Placement Tests*.
3. New freshmen who have taken the College Board Advanced Placement Examination in English should consult the statement on *Academic Placement Tests*. Transfer students should consult the statement on *Transfer Student Admission*.
4. For students who are enrolled in James Madison College, the completion of James Madison College 111 or 112 satisfies the university Tier I writing requirement.
For students who are enrolled in Lyman Briggs College, the completion of Lyman Briggs 133 satisfies the university Tier I writing requirement.
For students who are enrolled in the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities, the completion of Residential College in the Arts and Humanities 111 and 112 satisfies the university Tier I writing requirement.
5. The Tier II writing requirement for the student's academic major and degree program. This requirement involves writing in the student's discipline and is met by completing *either*:
 - a. one or more 300–400 level Tier II writing courses as specified for the student's academic major and degree program, *or*
 - b. a cluster of 300–400 level courses that involve writing experiences and that are approved as the Tier II writing requirement for the student's academic major and degree program.

Speas, Joy

From: Fred Rauscher <rauscher@msu.edu>
Sent: Monday, September 14, 2015 2:50 PM
To: Speas, Joy
Cc: Grabill, Jeffrey; 'Estry, Doug'; 'Christopher Long'; Halbritter, Scott; 'Laura Julier'; Lindquist,
Subject: Tier One Writing Requirement Change Request
Attachments: Letter to Joy Speas Sept 2015.docx; MSU BA Writing Req text change.docx; Tier One Writing Requirement Change Request.docx

September 14, 2015

Ms. Joy Speas
Curriculum Administrator
Office of the Registrar
Hannah Administration Building
426 Auditorium Road
East Lansing, MI 48824

Dear Joy,

This letter constitutes an official request from the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures and the College of Arts and Letters to revise the university Tier I writing requirement. We do not have access to initiate such a change in the system.

As part of its continual efforts to improve the curriculum and pedagogical methods, the Department has recently transformed the way it teaches the Tier I writing course required of nearly all MSU undergraduates. Now all Tier I writing courses offered by WRAC focus more on studying writing directly and less on studying writing using content related to American cultures. This change means that instead of many separate Tier I writing courses with different content, WRAC wants to offer only one course with a corresponding honors course, each called "Writing as Inquiry". More information about the change is in the accompanying material prepared by the Department and already shared widely with stakeholders across campus.

The specific changes to courses are:

new: WRA 101, "Writing as Inquiry"

changed: WRA 195H "Writing as Inquiry: Honors"

deleted: WRA 110, WRA 115, WRA 125, WRA 130, WRA 135, WRA 140, WRA 145, WRA 150, and AL 192 and AL 192H. (the latter two courses had also satisfied the Tier I requirement)

New course, course change, and course delete requests for these courses have been approved by the Department and the College.

To change the university Tier I writing requirement, we request that the specific language for the Writing Requirement portion of the Graduation Requirements for a Bachelor's Degree under Undergraduate Education in the Academic Programs catalog (<https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=110#s285>) be altered. The change affects (1.a.) only:

old: one of the following 4-credit Tier I writing courses during the first year: Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures 110, 115, 125, 130, 135, 140, 145, 150, 195H; Arts and Letters 192 and 192H

new: one of the following 4-credit Tier I writing courses during the first year: Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures 101 and 195H

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I am attaching a copy of the Writing Requirement with this change made in context.

Please let us know what other steps you need us to take in order to further this process.

Yours,

Fred Rauscher
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education
College of Arts and Letters

Jeffrey Grabill
Chair
Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures

Proposal for Revision of Tier One Writing Courses

Approved by the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Studies and the College of Arts and Letters.

Background:

The current option for meeting the first-year writing requirement (for students outside the residential colleges and who have either completed PCW, or have placed into Tier One writing directly) is one of the following courses. These courses were originally created to enable the delivery of American Studies content in Tier One courses, as consistent with the mission of the Department of American Thought and Language. In addition, two Arts and Letters courses for first-year students, which have not been offered for many years, satisfied the Tier One requirement.

WRA 110: Writing: Science and Technology
WRA 115: Writing: Law and Justice in the United States
WRA 125: Writing: The American Racial and Ethnic Experience
WRA 130: Writing: American Radical Thought
WRA 135: Writing: Public Life in America
WRA 140: Writing: Women in America
WRA 145: Writing: Men in America
WRA 150: Writing: The Evolution of American Thought
WRA 195H: Writing: Major Topics in American Thought
AL 192: Arts and Humanities First-Year Seminar
AL 192H: Arts and Humanities First-Year Seminar

Proposed change: We propose that these courses be deleted and replaced by one regular course or, in the case of WRA 195H, changed to reflect pedagogical improvement:

WRA 101: Writing as Inquiry
WRA 195H: Writing as Inquiry: Honors

Appropriate new course, course change, and course deletion requests have been approved by the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Culture and the College of Arts and Letters.

University Requirement Language Change:

We request that the University Requirements for all undergraduate degrees (BA, BS, BFA, etc) be changed as follows:

Each student must complete the university's writing program requirements as follows:

1. The Tier I writing requirement that consists of either a. or b. below.
 - a. one of the following 4-credit Tier I writing courses during the first year: Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures ~~110, 115, 125, 130, 135, 140, 145, 150~~, 101 or 195H; Arts and Letters ~~192 and 192H~~; or

- b. the developmental writing courses: Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures 0102 and 1004 and one 4-credit Tier I writing course during the first year.

Rationale: We propose this change for several (pedagogical, institutional, and administrative) reasons, informed by survey data we have collected from teachers and advisors:

- ***The first-year writing program now has a shared curricular sequence and set of learning outcomes relevant to all courses.*** These outcomes specify that the primary content of writing courses at MSU is rhetorical knowledge, students' experiences as learners, and the writing generated by students themselves. The current menu of courses distinguished by themes suggest content topics for these courses, and are, consequently, misaligned with the express learning outcomes for all first-year writing classes. "Writing as Inquiry" clearly places two of the three primary categories of learning (inquiry, discovery, and communication) in the title of the course and expresses more accurately the content of the instruction.
- ***There is persistent confusion among advisors about what WRA courses are and do.*** In last year's survey, one respondent wondered how best to respond to student questions about "what they will be learning about in their first year writing course based on title and course number," and another wished for "concrete examples of how the theme is incorporated," or "how the themed courses differ/are similar in comparison to one another." As constituted, the themes encourage students (and others) to view the first-year writing course as a course about a specific subject, rather than as a course on the multifaceted and interwoven processes of writing (i.e., inventing, reflecting, revising, peer reviewing, inquiring, etc.).
- ***At least half, or more, of the students who enroll in themed courses do not select these courses to pursue an interest in the theme, but rather, are motivated by other concerns*** (scheduling, location, availability). According to last year's survey of first year writing students in themed course, as few of 15% chose their section based on strong interest in the course (while another 14% cited only mild interest as their reason). Currently, a majority of first year writing students are pre-enrolled in their required courses even before they arrive here, and only during orientation, with the assistance of their adviser, may they change their enrollment as they see fit. As a result, fewer numbers than ever may be consciously selecting their WRA classes before the semester begins. Enrollment pressures also militate against adjustments in their course schedules, once students arrive at MSU.
- ***The current array of course numbers significantly complicates the scheduling process.*** Extensive staff time is spent imagining possible instructors, or scenarios for instructors whose teaching or graduate school contract has yet to be officially renewed and their ensuing course schedules for the themed courses. It entails anticipating almost a year in advance who might or can teach what. This is especially true of courses like WRA 115, WRA 130, or WRA 145, which attract smaller numbers of students and seem to require more specialization and willingness on the part of the instructors who teach them.

We wish to emphasize that **eliminating course themes and numbers as they currently exist will not divest instructors of their agency or limit their choices** (a concern that surfaced in the survey we circulated to teachers)—in fact, we believe the change will have the opposite effect. Instructors may choose to frame the curriculum, and direct the moves of its inquiry, in relation to any topical focus or thematic discussion (not just the ones currently represented in the list of existing themes).

This is the graduation requirement for BA, section on Writing Requirement. From this web url: <https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=110#s285>

Each student must complete the university's writing program requirements as follows:

1. The Tier I writing requirement that consists of either a. or b. below.
 - a. one of the following 4-credit Tier I writing courses during the first year: Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures 101 and 110, 115, 125, 130, 135, 140, 145, 150, 195H; Arts and Letters 192 and 192H; or
 - b. the developmental writing courses: Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures 0102 and 1004 and one 4-credit Tier I writing course during the first year.
2. Based on the English placement mechanism, a student may be required to complete the developmental writing courses prior to enrolling in a Tier I writing course. The developmental writing courses are administered by the Department of Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures. For additional information, refer to the statement on Academic Placement Tests.
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