WRITING INTENSIVE REQUIREMENT, ORAL PRESENTATION and CAPSTONE COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Prepared by Academic Council and Committee on Outcomes Assessment
Adopted by Faculty May 18, 2012

The guidelines below are provided to assist departments and faculty in conceptualizing and designing courses that fulfill these three requirements. Departments will differ in the ways that they implement the guidelines because of disciplinary differences and practical issues such as the number of students in capstone courses. Faculty within each department should design departmental criteria for uniform implementation of the capstone, writing requirement, and oral presentation requirements in departmental courses that address these requirements. In addition, faculty within each department should design uniform departmental criteria for assessing how successfully students have met the goals of the college and department with regards to the three requirements.

I. The Ursinus Writing-Intensive (W) Course

Writing must be conceptualized as a mode of thinking and learning as well as proof of a student's acquisition of knowledge. Thus, writing is not just an end-product but is integrated into the course as the process of learning. In W courses students should practice skills common to good writing in any context but also learn the conventions of discourse and research in a chosen discipline.

Goals for Writing Intensive (W) Courses:

- Students should be instructed in the type of writing required in the course.
- Students should be made aware of the criteria on which they will be assessed.
  - Each W course should help each student create an adequate subject position as a scholar in a particular field of study by giving each student the proper conventions of discipline-specific discourse, e.g., proper use of vocabulary, ways of expressing an argument, and ways of critiquing an argument. To develop an adequate subject position, one must know how to adequately perform and display research.
  - Each W course should include discipline-specific writing assignments: lab or research reports, summaries of scholarly articles, critiques of /or responses to the research of other authors, interpretations, proposals, and other thesis-driven arguments.
  - Each W course should require assignments that emphasize information literacy (research, knowledge of research tools, citation format, and assessment of sources).
  - Each W course should require revision for most, if not all, formal writing assignments.
  - Each W course should require informal writing assignments as well as formal writing assignments.

Suggestions for Departmental Implementation:

- Ideally a W course should be taken in the major in the sophomore year.
- Instructors are strongly encouraged to maintain a consistent partnership with Myrin Library and the Center for Writing for W courses.

Assessment of Student Work in the Writing Intensive (W) Course:

The CLA and AACU have general criteria that can serve as guidelines for writing assessment. However, those criteria should be seen as models that can be modified based on departmental values. Therefore, we strongly suggest that each department create its own criteria for writing effectiveness.

II. Oral Presentation Requirement

The oral presentation requirement is intended to foster students' ability to speak to audiences in a range of situations, including presentation of scholarly work within their discipline.   The requirement helps prepare students for the world after Ursinus.

Goals for the Oral Presentation Requirement:
- Students should be instructed in speaking and accessory skills such as research.
- Students should be made aware of the criteria on which they will be assessed.
- Students should learn the conventions of speech in their discipline and utilize them in their presentations before faculty and other students.

Considerations for departmental implementation:
- Ideally students will complete the oral presentation requirement within the major in the capstone course.
- The oral presentation should be delivered to an audience of students and faculty.
- The capstone oral presentation should account for no less than 10% of the students' final grade.
- Students should have an opportunity for multiple oral presentations with instructor feedback in their major prior to the capstone oral presentation.

Assessment of Student Achievement of Oral Presentation Requirement Goals:
Every department should foster uniformity among courses that fulfill the oral presentation goal within the department by developing a set of uniform criteria to help guide and assess students work.

III. The Ursinus Capstone Course / Experience

All students are required to complete a capstone course in their major(s). The Capstone should provide challenging opportunities to put the skills of the major to use in situations similar to those students may encounter after graduation. The Capstone is the culminating educational experience in the major.

Goals for Capstone Courses:
- This course/experience should offer an opportunity to apply, refine, synthesize, and consolidate the core competencies, information, and principles of the discipline.
- The capstone should permit students to develop and showcase their talents through participation in discussion, analysis, writing, problem-solving, presentations, and/or other experiential tasks that embody the discipline's approach to scholarship or performance
- The capstone experience should enhance the student's confidence in their ability to do the work of their discipline by putting its methods and language into actual practice.

Considerations for Departmental Implementation:
- Ideally students will have been introduced to the conventions of both written and oral discourse in the major prior to taking the Capstone.
- The Capstone is ideally taken at or near the conclusion of work in the major and only when all prerequisites for the Capstone are met but no earlier than the junior year.
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Assessment of Student Achievement of Capstone Goals:

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Every department should foster uniformity among Capstone courses within the department by developing a set of criteria to help guide and assess students' Capstone project work.

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Assessment of courses in meeting these three requirements:
The effectiveness of courses in helping students to meet these goals will continue to be part of departmental assessment and departmental external reviews and Middle States Accreditation studies. The data collected from these assessments will continue to be analyzed by the Ursinus College Outcomes Assessment Committee and presented to the appropriate departments and committees.