

QUICK GUIDE

to Teaching Writing Intensive Classes

Writing Intensive (W) courses are part of the overall goals for student writing at Queens College. An important component of students' curriculum during their undergraduate careers, W classes provide the opportunity to teach writing practices specific to a discipline or field. In these classes, students will:

- Gain experience writing in a variety of rhetorical situations within a given discipline
- Become fluent in the conventions and linguistic expectations governing different discipline-specific genres
- Build confidence as writers responding to or intervening in the conversations and/or debates within a discipline or field of inquiry
- Engage disciplinarily-appropriate rhetorical and investigative processes and methods
- Take ownership of the language and rhetorical strategies they use in their writing

W Course Characteristics and Requirements

Writing Intensive classes at Queens College are designated with a W after the course number. If, for example, you are teaching an ENGL 170W, SOC 210W, or a PSYCH 211W, that means you are teaching a writing intensive course. Queens College students must complete two W courses in order to graduate.

The Academic Senate has determined that W classes must meet the following criteria:

- Syllabi must include this statement: “This course is a Writing Intensive (W) course and fulfills one Writing Intensive requirement. W classes include a significant portion of time devoted to writing instruction. This may include things such as revision workshops, discussions of rhetorical strategies, or reflective writing about writing assignments.”
- At least 5000 words (15 pages) of evaluated writing in three or more assignments (either separate papers or one term paper done in stages) so that the students have the opportunity to develop and improve. At least one assignment (graded or ungraded) must require student revision in response to instructor feedback.
- At least three separate class hours (either one hour in three class sessions or shorter time periods over multiple sessions) devoted to explicit writing instruction, including such things as peer review, revision strategies, disciplinary concerns, proper attribution, the writing process, research, rhetorical strategies, or writing in online environments.
- If exams are given, they must include essay questions.
- Maximum class-size of 25 students (as of Spring 2010).

Prerequisites for W Courses

W courses have a prerequisite of 110, which means all students in your class have passed English 110 at Queens or completed an equivalent course at another school. English 110 is the College Writing 1 (CW1) requirement at CUNY. The college encourages students to take their College Writing 2 (CW2) course in the following semester but it is not a prerequisite for W courses. Also, many of the students at Queens are transfer students so instructors cannot assume they have taken their first composition course here.

To foster the kind of *ownership and confidence* exhibited in most academic-related projects, English 110 offers activities and assignments that build on one another to reflect the rhetorical and emergent processes of writing. The learning goals for English 110 can also give you some idea about how students' prior experience with academic writing. Instructors may choose to represent a smaller number of these goals on a syllabus, or adapt them to suit their courses, but all English 110 instructors understand these goals as a fundamental component of the first-year writing program at Queens College.

By the end of English 110, students will have been introduced to:

1. Producing writing that responds appropriately to a variety of rhetorical situations with a particular focus on academic argumentation.
2. Reading strategies to summarize, synthesize, analyze, and critique other people's arguments and ideas fairly.
3. Research practices that will help strengthen their writing and thinking.
4. Producing writing that shows how writers may navigate the diverse processes of composing including revision and collaboration.
5. Producing writing that strategically employs appropriate language conventions in different writing situations.
6. Taking ownership of their work and gaining an understanding of their own voice, style, and strengths.

English 110 and College Writing 2 (CW2) courses are intended to provide a foundation for students' writing practices—a foundation that Writing Intensive classes then build upon. Because writing practices can take time to develop, the sequence of writing classes—English 110, College Writing 2 (CW2) and Writing Intensive—provide multiple opportunities for writing instruction throughout a student's college career.

Steps to the “W” Designation

“W” designations for new courses need to be approved by both the UCC and the Writing Sub-Committee (WSC). “W” designations for courses already on the books require WSC approval only.

Departments interested in developing new W courses or converting existing courses to Writing-Intensive classes can seek guidance from Nora Carr, Interim Director of Writing at Queens, at nora.carr@qc.cuny.edu and Amy Wan, Special Assistant to the Provost on Writing, at amy.wan@qc.cuny.edu. More information is available [here](#).