W Courses at the University of Connecticut
Guidelines for Faculty in All Departments

Writing should be integral to the learning goals and subject matter of every W (writing-intensive) course. In the language of UConn’s General Education Guidelines, "Students should not write simply to be evaluated; they should learn how writing can ground, extend, deepen, and even enable their learning of course material. In addition then to general formal questions concerning strategies for developing ideas, clarity of organization, and effectiveness of expression—and discipline specific format, evidentiary, and stylistic norms—the W requirement should lead students to understand the relationship between their own thinking and writing in a way that will help them continue to develop throughout their lives and careers after graduation."

The Four Criteria
Every W course should reflect the following standards:

☑ A minimum of 15 revised and edited pages must be assigned. Writing that does not move through a revision process (many kinds of journals, informal writing, field notes, etc.) should not be included in the minimum page tally, but can certainly be included in the course.

☑ A deliberate process for revision must be built into the course. This usually involves structuring assignments in drafts and delivering feedback to those drafts in writing or at individual conferences; it can also involve peer review of drafts.

☑ Instructors must not only assign writing but also teach it. Writing instruction here means more than imparting rules for grammar, usage, and documentation; it also involves teaching students to explore and shape their ideas, analyze their audiences, frame compelling arguments, gather evidence effectively and ethically, understand genre conventions, and attend to style.

☑ To pass the course, students must pass its writing component. Writing assignments can be worth whatever proportion of the final grade an instructor deems appropriate, but a student cannot pass the course without earning a passing grade on the writing part. This should be stated on the syllabus.

The Enrollment Cap
To encourage active learning and consistent feedback on writing, W sections are capped at 19. Please do not over-enroll W courses.

From GEOC
The following excerpt from an April 14, 2005 memo by the General Education Oversight Committee expands on the nature of W courses:

The key distinction between a W and non-W course is pedagogical, not whether writing is assigned or not. Writing, of course, may be, and in fact, should be assigned in many courses, with or without the W designation. What distinguishes a W course from any other course is that students must be provided explicit writing instruction and consistent faculty feedback to foster revision, and W courses require a minimum of fifteen, revised and edited pages of writing. It is likely that some courses may require fifteen or more pages of writing in a semester without offering instruction and structured opportunities for revision, but a course that did so would not qualify as a W course.

For More Information, Teaching Resources
The University Writing Center is a faculty and student center for writing in the disciplines. For instructors we offer information, workshops, online resources, and individual consultations. Please see our website for details. For students we offer one-on-one tutorials with graduate and undergraduate writing advisors from a range of disciplines.