

Guidelines for Proposals to Revise Hamline Plan Requirements: Writing-intensive / T

At this time, no changes are being proposed for writing-intensive requirements (“T”) in the Hamline Plan. While some faculty members have expressed concern about student writing, particularly that Hamline students are graduating with inadequate writing skills, conversations have not confirmed that the problem is with the current requirement but rather may be traced to a number of related structural problems in the program itself. Some of the areas of discussion have concerned an absence of comprehensive training for new faculty in writing-intensive principles and strategies; a lack of consistency within majors and programs about the writing skills majors and minors should develop and the acceptable features of that writing; and a lack of a developmental arc for students through their gateway, intermediate, and capstone writing experiences within and across programs.

The information-gathering sessions sponsored by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) in spring and fall 2012 did not surface concerns about the requirements that a student take a writing-intensive course in each year after the first and that one of those writing-intensive courses must be in the student’s major.

This is not to say that the “T” should not be scrutinized for opportunities to refresh or that it does not have elements that indeed do need refreshing. Rather, it would benefit students and the curriculum to use this next year to gather data about the current program’s strengths and weaknesses and to bring research about current writing-across-the-curriculum practices into our conversations.

Part One – Hamline Plan Designation

- 1) Does the current HP designation have clearly articulated learning outcomes (LO)? That is, the LO for that designation, not unit, etc. If so, include those LO. If not, develop and clarify the proposed LO for this HP designation and include them in your report.

The writing-intensive learning outcomes are described in the “Hamline Writing Rubric,” a rubric which provides learning outcomes for both first-year expository writing (E) and writing-intensive courses. (See Capstone Writing Rubric.)

The Writing Rubric was developed by the English Department faculty in January 2009 as the “First-year Writing Rubric.” (See First-year Writing Rubric.) For consistency in measuring student learning, the Writing Rubric defines the learning outcomes in the far right column as “Meets Capstone Expectations,” which is the same set of criteria as “Exceeds Baseline Expectations” on the First-year Writing Rubric. Thus, the developmental pattern is seen as an arc from first-year writing to a student’s capstone writing experience.

Based on the Writing Program Administrators’ guidelines, research into other universities’ language, and practices at Hamline, the key elements in the learning outcomes are those categories listed on the rubric: “analytical insight/depth,” “central idea/purpose,”

“organization/structure,” “evidence/support,” “style,” and “mechanics.” In addition, since the faculty have agreed upon a process model of teaching writing, students are taught to develop writing process strategies appropriate to the writing task and audience.

Thus, the learning outcomes for the “T” are that students should be able to produce writing that

1. employs writing process strategies appropriate to the writing task and audience,
2. demonstrates analytical insight and depth,
3. articulates a compelling central idea or purpose,
4. establishes a clear and logical organizational structure,
5. provides appropriate evidence and support for ideas,
6. uses stylistic strategies appropriate to audience, genre, and purpose, and
7. controls the mechanics of readable sentences.

Learning outcomes 2 through 7 are further described by the following components as given in the “Exceeds Expectation” column of the First-Year Writing Rubric and the “Meets Expectations” column of the Capstone Writing Rubric:

Analytical insight/depth

- demonstrates strong understanding and control of key concepts and terms
- provides analysis and interpretation
- anticipates and addresses other positions or interpretations
- engages the complexities of the issue

Central idea/purpose

- articulates a compelling central idea or thesis
- establishes a focused purpose that matches the demands of the assigned writing task

Organization/structure

- establishes a clear and logical organizational structure determined by the writer’s purpose and intended audience
- makes effective and engaging moves in the introduction and conclusion
- develops paragraphs that are consistently focused, orderly, and connected by substantive transitions

Evidence/support

- supports ideas and purpose with compelling evidence that is fluently integrated
- engages the complexities of source materials
- always attributes sources with effectively incorporated, varied signals

Style

- consistently uses voice, tone, and diction that enhance the writer’s purpose and appeal to the audience
- consists of clear, concise sentences of varied structure and length

Mechanics

- uses correct grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling; rare errors do not impair the reader’s comprehension
- cites sources using the appropriate citation style
- uses formatting appropriate to the assigned writing task, genre, and discipline

Since writing skills are taught in conjunction with disciplinary content and context, it is expected that instructors will adapt the rubric for their specific purposes, particularly in translating what the outcomes mean in their disciplinary expectations.

For example, in an English Department gateway course, a goal is to use theoretical perspectives and approaches for analysis of texts. Thus, “analytical insight/depth” requires both knowledge and application of theoretical strategies in written production. This is made explicit in this category. Instead of a general expectation that a student “cites sources using the appropriate citation style,” MLA documentation is taught and practiced.

Further, given that students self-select writing-intensive courses, disciplines are encouraged to make available or require writing-intensive courses at certain points in the arc of the major/minor to ensure that students are learning to write in the context of and to the expectations for that discipline. Considering the arc of a student’s development in these learning outcomes across three years and three writing-intensive experiences is one of the considerations now under discussion.

2) Align the HP LO with the appropriate institutional LO.

While to “communicate effectively in writing and in speaking” is the University Learning outcome to which the Hamline Plan “T” is most clearly aligned, writing skills inform all of the University Learning Outcomes as a communicative technology and could be embedded in any of the balance of the following University Learning Outcomes:

- to serve, collaborate, and lead in a community;
- to solve problems in an innovative, integrative, analytical, and ethical ways;
- to work and create understanding across cultural differences locally, nationally, and internationally;
- to use of information and technology competently and responsibly;
- to apply theories and methods of a field of expertise; and
- to engage independently and reflectively in lifelong learning.

Most departments and programs have aligned their learning outcomes with the University-wide learning outcome of “communicate effectively in writing and speaking.”

3) Does a bulletin description of the HP designation currently exist? If so, please include the current designation.

From the Bulletin

Expository Writing (E)

This requirement is generally fulfilled by ENG 1110: Writing and Reading Texts, which must be completed during the first year at Hamline. Students who receive Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) English composition credit must still register for English 1110

or a writing-intensive FYSem. The AP or IB English credits count for credit toward the degree, but Hamline faculty members believe writing is an essential skill and thus require a first-year college-writing experience. Please note that Hamline University’s ENG 1110 also counts as a disciplinary breadth course in the Humanities (H).

If you are granted credit for a PSEO or College in the Schools (CIS) English composition course, this will generally satisfy your first-year writing requirement. However, you are encouraged to enroll in a writing-intensive FYSem to continue developing your college writing skills. If you have taken college courses through a PSEO program, you must have your transcript sent to Hamline to be evaluated for transferability. Do not register for Hamline courses that you will be transferring as a result of PSEO coursework. You will not receive credit for courses that are repeated.

Writing Intensive (T)

Writing-intensive courses must be taken at Hamline, and a minimum of one writing-intensive course is required each year a student is in attendance. For students who begin as first-year students at Hamline, ENG 1110 (E) is considered the writing-intensive course for the first year and one writing-intensive (T) course is required each subsequent year. (For students who begin at Hamline during the fall term, fall/spring is considered a year of attendance. For students who begin at Hamline during the spring term, spring/fall is considered a year of attendance.) Students who do not complete a writing-intensive course during a year may complete an extra writing-intensive course the following year (no petition approval is necessary); however, the reverse does not apply, i.e., students who take two writing-intensive courses in one year may not apply one to a subsequent year.

One writing-intensive course is required within the major department; if double majors are declared, one in each major department must be completed.

Exception: Students enrolled in a Hamline-approved off-campus program for a full year do not have to complete a writing-intensive course for that year.

Transfer students do not transfer writing-intensive courses to Hamline; however, one per year in attendance at Hamline is required. Transfer students needing six full-time (minimum of 12 credits) semesters to complete the Hamline degree must complete three writing-intensive courses in addition to satisfying the Expository Writing (E) requirement. Transfer students needing four or five full-time (minimum of 12 credits) semesters to complete the Hamline degree must complete two writing-intensive (T) courses in addition to satisfying the Expository Writing (E) requirement. Transfer students needing fewer than four full-time (minimum of 12 credits) semesters to complete the Hamline degree must complete one writing-intensive (T) course (and are encouraged to complete two) in addition to satisfying the Expository Writing (E) requirement. Transfer students who complete summer classes to accelerate graduation are not exempt from the above requirements.

<http://bulletin.hamline.edu/content.php?catoid=7&navoid=148#E>

From the Writing across the Curriculum Website: First-Year Writing (Bulletin copy)

The first-year writing requirement is generally fulfilled through enrollment in English 1110: Writing and Reading Texts.

Students who receive Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) English composition credit or otherwise have significant critical writing experience have the option of registering for a writing-intensive First-Year Seminar (FYSEM) to fulfill the first-year writing requirement.

All English 1110 classes and all writing-intensive FYSEMs give students a foundation in **critical reading, thinking, and writing skills**, and provide the guided experience to help students meet **high writing standards**.

Additionally, English 1100 offers writing skills development focused on the particular needs of English Language Learners or International Students.

If you are granted credit for a PSEO or College in the Schools (CIS) English composition course, this will generally satisfy your first-year writing requirement. However, you are encouraged to enroll in a writing-intensive FYSem to continue developing your college writing skills. If you have taken college courses through a PSEO program, you must have your transcript sent to Hamline to be evaluated for transferability.

<http://www.hamline.edu/offices/writing-across-curriculum/first-year.html>

From the Writing across the Curriculum Website

Communicating effectively in writing is a central goal of the Hamline Plan for integrated, liberal education.

The first-year college writing course is the beginning of writing at Hamline. The student then completes at least one writing-intensive course each year, with at least one of those courses in the student’s chosen major.

A Hamline writing course has three objectives:

- to designate specific written communication objectives appropriate to the course and the discipline
- to enable the student to practice writing with guidance from the instructor, allowing feedback before the final product and building upon the student’s writing strengths
- to focus on the written communication process as well as the final product. The student gains experience writing and receiving feedback from the instructor and/or peers to build strengths in writing

See the Hamline University Undergraduate Bulletin for more information about the writing requirements that prepare students to communicate effectively in writing.

<http://www.hamline.edu/offices/writing-across-curriculum/hamline-plan.html>

4) If there is no current description of the HP designation, or if the description needs to be revised to be consistent with the proposed LO, please draft a proposed description for the revised HP designation.

N/A

Part Two – Supporting the Revision Proposal

- 1) General rationale for the proposal: What are the arguments for and benefits of revising? Address reasons anchored in global and national contexts, higher education and workplace-related shifts, as well as reasons that are Hamline-specific.

While the Hamline Plan “T” is not undergoing a “refresh” at this moment, a pilot study of writing in capstone courses across University undergraduate programs will be undertaken in the fall of 2012, both to gather data about writing across the curriculum and to provide a trial site for implementing Blackboard Outcomes.

Building on the capstone pilot developed and administered in 2010-11 by then Writing Program Director, Professor Deffenbacher, this assessment will provide the program with an opportunity to apply the capstone rubric across undergraduate writing to gather data about student writing, to train faculty from across the university in assessing writing, and to test the capstone rubric itself.

Plans for the assessment are just beginning at the submission of this report. We fully expect the data gathered in this assessment process will inform conversations about the refresh of the “T.”

- 2) Specific grounding for the proposal: Identify underlying principles that anchor the proposal (whether different from or similar to current grounding). How does the proposed revision distinguish Hamline or move Hamline into line with other colleges and universities (broader pool as well as comparator schools)?

As noted above, this is exactly the research that needs to take place during this academic year. That work is underway.

Part Three – Implementing the Revision Proposal and Assessing Learning Outcomes

As research develops, these four important questions will be addressed.

- 1) Barriers: Identify potential barriers to implementation and strategies for dealing with those barriers. Identify any existing campus programs where exemplary practice similar to proposed revision is already happening (how might implementation build upon these?).
- 2) Transition: What is the plan for making the transition from current practice to proposed revision? Include timeframe and scope (pilot effort in a few units vs. all units simultaneously?) as well as who is responsible for implementing revision.
- 3) Assurance of Learning: How will “quality control” be assured?
 - a. Address necessary faculty development, course redesign and review.
 - b. Address assessment and approaches to measuring student LO. **Attach, as Appendix A, sample proposed rubrics to use in assessing the LO of the designation.**
- 4) Resource implications: What resources does the proposed revision require in terms

of staffing, faculty development, library acquisitions, studio or lab space, equipment, new funding, or other costs?

Respectfully submitted by Mark Olson, Writing Program Director, 5 November 2012

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