

**Report to the Faculty  
Knox College**

**Assessment of the Writing Competency Requirement**

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**Ad Hoc Working Group on Writing Competency Assessment**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ad Hoc Working Group on Writing Competency Assessment was charged by the Curriculum Committee to develop proposed learning goals for the Writing requirement, to review the numbers and pattern of student enrollment in writing-intensive courses, to review syllabi of existing W courses to provide a basis for subsequent department and Curriculum Committee action, to assess student learning with respect to competency in writing, and to provide a summary report to faculty, including recommendations. The working group met during Winter and Spring Terms 2013, reviewing information from a wide variety of sources, including a focus group with faculty and a direct assessment of writing by graduating seniors.

### Learning Goals

The working group proposes that the faculty adopt the following four learning goals regarding competence in writing: that graduates of Knox College

- will be able to write clearly and accurately for a general audience;
- will be able to write effectively in relation to their disciplinary major field, including the use of appropriate disciplinary conventions;
- will be able to recognize different modes and purposes of writing and adapt their writing appropriately;
- will be able to engage in writing as a process, including use of multiple drafts, revisions, editing, and review.

### Enrollment in W Courses

The 2012-13 *Catalog* lists 131 courses designated as writing-intensive, in addition to First-Year Preceptorial. Of these, approximately 73% are 300-level or above, 23% are 200-level, and 5% are 100-level. Departments and programs offer between 0 and 25 such courses, with the modal number of offerings being 2. The paucity of 100- and 200-level offerings seems problematic, particularly where majors have a choice of only one or two courses often not taken until the senior year. On average, Knox students take between five and six writing-intensive courses, substantially more than the requirement of three. Excluding FP, these are divided fairly evenly between courses in the student's major and those in other programs. A majority of students (66%) takes at least two courses in the major, and a sizeable minority (26%) takes four or more. Half of all enrollments in W courses in the major are at the 300-level. Fully 72% of graduates take a course outside their major in addition to FP, and more than a third (36%) take two or more. Most of these enrollments (83%) are in 100- or 200-level courses. English 120 Introduction to Literature and English 207 Beginning Fiction Writing are the most popular W courses taken by non-majors.

### Review of W Course Syllabi

A review of 16 submitted W course syllabi showed that most did not highlight the writing-intensive character of the course in their discussion of course goals, and none discussed the college's broader expectations for a writing-intensive course. In addition, there was considerable variation in terms of the ways that writing as a process (draft, feedback, revision) was incorporated in the syllabus or the course outline. The working group is recommending the inclusion in future syllabi of the college's learning goals for writing competency, along with greater explicitness about the writing-related expectations of the course.

### Assessment of Student Learning

Data from an assessment of writing in First-Year Preceptorial conducted by the FP Steering Committee in 2012 suggest that a majority of students emerge from FP without a solid command

of college-level writing, particularly with respect to the ability to formulate and develop a thesis. In addition, a significant proportion of FP students show weaknesses in their ability to support ideas with evidence, use appropriate citation and show appropriate use of grammar and syntax.

A similar direct assessment of senior-level writing in Spring 2013, by contrast, suggests that around 80% of graduating seniors demonstrate adequate and consistent competence in all examined aspects of writing, with 14%-25% assessed in the highest category. However, a significant minority (16%-21%) were assessed as possessing only minimal or inconsistent competence.

### **Recommendations**

The Working Group makes the following recommendations to the faculty with respect to writing competency. Rationales for these recommendations can be found in the full report.

- Adoption of the proposed learning goals for the Writing Competency Requirement.
- Incorporation of the Learning Goals into W course syllabi, along with greater explicitness about how these goals are addressed in the course.
- Strengthened resources for faculty development in the area of teaching writing, particularly for the FP faculty and program.
- Increased resources for all students needing writing support, building on the quality of existing programs such as TRIO and the CTL. Development of more 100- and 200-level writing-intensive courses, to provide more opportunities for student writing prior to the senior year, especially within the student's major.
- Greater consistency in identifying capstone courses as writing-intensive.

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## INTRODUCTION

In Winter Term 2013, a working group of four Knox faculty members, assisted by the director of assessment, was formed to assess the writing competency graduation requirement, as part of implementing the Assessment Plan for Knox Graduation Requirements developed by the Curriculum Committee and adopted in February 2013 (see *Appendix A. Assessment Plan for Knox Graduation Requirements*).

The Assessment Plan directed that this group's charge include the following:

- The **development of proposed learning goals** for this requirement to submit to the Curriculum Committee for adoption, in the absence of approved formal learning goals for this requirement;
- An **extensive review of student enrollment** in courses approved to meet the requirement to determine numbers and significant patterns of enrollment;
- A **review of the courses approved to meet the requirement**, including a mapping of the course objectives with the requirement's learning goals, to provide a basis for subsequent departmental/program revisiting of their course offerings and Curriculum Committee review of which courses should continue to be approved for the requirement;
- An **assessment of student learning** with respect to the requirement, including:
  - **direct assessment** of artifacts of student learning (in this case, a representative sampling of student papers and essays in "W" courses); and
  - **indirect assessment** based on student and faculty experiences gathered through a variety of methods;
- A **summary report** to all faculty of the review, including recommendations for changes.

The members of the working group are:

Cyn Kitchen, assistant professor of English

Fernando Gomez, associate professor of modern languages

Matthew Jones-Rhoades, assistant professor of biology

David Amor, instructor of journalism and anthropology-sociology (now emeritus)

Leah Adams-Curtis, director of academic assessment

The working group met weekly through most of Winter and Spring Terms, reviewing information gathered from a wide variety of sources, including the college catalog, department chairs, individual instructors of "W" courses, enrollment data from the registrar's database, and examples of writing requirement learning goals from other institutions. We held a focus group of faculty to get their input regarding both the current writing requirement and student writing in general, and we conducted a direct assessment of student writing, asking faculty in "W" courses to rate the papers of randomly selected senior students following an assessment rubric developed by the working group. While the Writing Competency requirement includes writing in the First-Year Preceptorial, FP writing had previously been assessed independently by the FP Staff working with the director of assessment. We took account of the results of that assessment in the course of our deliberations.

## I. DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING GOALS

There currently are no explicit learning goals formulated for the Writing Competency requirement, although certain expectations are implicit in the Curriculum Committee's Guidelines for W courses (see *Appendix B: Guidelines for W Courses*). Starting from these guidelines, the working group reviewed learning goal statements from a variety of institutions, gathered the reflections and opinions of faculty at a focus group, and reviewed the learning goal statements of

syllabi of existing “W” courses. As a result of this review, the working group proposes the following learning goals for the Writing Competency requirement.

**Graduates of Knox College:**

- 1. Will be able to write clearly and accurately for a general audience;**
- 2. Will be able to write effectively in relation to their disciplinary major field, including the use of appropriate disciplinary conventions;**
- 3. Will be able to recognize different modes and purposes of writing and adapt their writing appropriately;**
- 4. Will be able to engage in writing as a process, including use of multiple drafts, revisions, editing, and review.**

Clarity, accuracy and effectiveness in writing are singled out for emphasis in the Guidelines for W Courses; they were cited by Knox faculty in our focus group discussion, and are also found in the Writing learning goals of the other institution we examined. The importance of these criteria seems self-evident. While mastering the conventions of a specific major discipline is not explicitly noted in the Guidelines, the Writing Competency does require one “W” course in the student’s major and most departments’ “W” courses are at the 300-level, if not the department’s capstone course. It seems clear that writing in the major is a significant implicit expectation of writing competency at Knox, and this should be made explicit in the learning goals. However, writing in the major is not the only criterion of what Knox expects in terms of writing competence. The ability to write clearly for a general audience, as well as the ability to adapt one’s mode of writing to different audiences and purposes, are also important competencies that our graduates should possess. While these goals are not mentioned explicitly in the Guidelines, they were brought up forcefully by faculty in our focus group and were included in most other institutions’ Writing goals. Finally, both the Guidelines and much faculty comment underscore the importance of students experiencing and internalizing the value of engaging in writing as an ongoing process and realizing the close connection between writing and thinking.

## **II. REVIEW OF STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN W COURSES**

### ***1. Distribution of W Courses across the Curriculum***

The 2012-13 Knox College *Catalog* lists 131 different courses (net of cross-listings) designated as “W” (writing-intensive), in addition to First-Year Preceptorial. This does not count Independent Study courses (250, 350) or Honors courses (400), which may be considered writing-intensive if the supervising instructor so certifies. Of these, the vast majority was at the 300-level:

**Table 1. Distribution of W Courses by Course Level**

<b>Course Level</b>	<b>Number of Courses</b>	<b>Percent</b>
100-	6	4.6%
200-	30	22.9%
300-	95	72.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100%</b>

Overall, the median number of W courses (at all levels) offered per department/program is two, with a range from 0 to 25. However, some departments with a large number of W courses on the books only offer a fraction of them in any given year. Only five departments/programs offer 100-level W courses: Biochemistry, Classics, Computer Science, English-Literature), and Theatre. The 200-level courses are spread among 15 departments/programs, though just four – Art

History, English-Creative Writing, Environmental Studies, and Political Science – account for more than half of the 30 courses offered.

Most departments and programs offer 300-level W courses. While the number of these courses offered in each department/program varies substantially – from 0 in seven departments/ programs to a high of 24 in History – the most common number offered is only two. Many of these 300-level courses are capstone or other required senior courses in the major and, in some cases, are the only W course the department offers. (For a full tabulation of W courses by department/ program and course level, see *Appendix C: Distribution of W Courses across Departments and Programs*.)

**Table 2. Number of W Courses, by Department/Program**

<b>Department/Program</b>	<b>No. of W Courses</b>
Business & Management	0
Dance	0
Film Studies	0
Integrated International Studies	0
Economics	1
German	1
Neuroscience	1
Physics	1
American Studies	2
Anthropology-Sociology	2
Asian Studies	2
Biochemistry	2
Chemistry	2
French	2
Music	2
Philosophy	2
Spanish	2
Computer Science	3
Journalism	3
Africana Studies	4
Environmental Studies	4
Latin American Studies	4
Mathematics	4
Psychology	4
Biology	6
Theatre	6
Educational Studies	7
Gender & Women's Studies	7
Art & Art History	8
Religious Studies	9
English-Creative Writing	12
Political Science & International Relations	12
English-Literature	17
Classics/Greek/Latin	21
History	25



## 2. Student Enrollment in W Courses

In order to determine how many W courses Knox students currently take, course enrollments for all students graduating between 2006 and 2012 were tabulated. In all, the records of 2,109 Knox graduates were examined.

### a. Number of W Courses Taken

On average, Knox students take between five and six W courses (avg. 5.58), including FP – almost double the number required for graduation. Students take 1-2 courses (avg. 1.65) at the 100-level (most commonly FP), around two courses at the 200-level (avg. 1.95), and between two and three courses at the 300-level<sup>1</sup> (avg. 2.69).

Students majoring in the arts take on average the most writing courses (7.99), followed by students in the humanities (6.34), interdisciplinary majors<sup>2</sup> (5.15), social sciences (5.12), mathematics/natural sciences (5.02), and self-designed majors (4.49). The high numbers for the Arts area are in part a reflection of the large proportion of these majors (55%) who are English-Creative Writing majors, who take on average nearly 10 designated Writing courses (avg. 9.91).

**Table 3. Number of W Courses Taken by Knox Graduates, by Area of Major**

*Note: includes FP*

Area of Major	No. of Majors	Avg. No. of W Courses
Arts	393	7.99
Humanities	391	6.34
Social Sciences	761	5.12
Sciences	692	5.02
Interdisciplinary Majors	179	5.15
Self-Designed Majors	53	4.49
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,469<sup>3</sup></b>	

While, on average, Knox graduates take significantly more W courses than the three required for graduation, the variation across individual departments is significant. This does not fall into any simple pattern, however, as a listing of the five departments whose majors had the fewest Writing courses attests: Integrated International Studies (3.67); Economics (3.82); Physics (4.02); Computer Science (4.44); Anthropology-Sociology (4.46). (For a more detailed breakdown by major, see *Appendix D: Average Number of W Course Enrollments, by Student's Major Field.*)

### b. How the Competency is Met:

- i. First-Year Preceptorial: All Knox students except transfers are required to take FP 100 during their first term in residence. International students may defer FP 100 until Fall Term of the sophomore year. Transfer students not required to take FP must transfer in the equivalent of ENGL 101 or 102, or pass an additional W course. Students who do not receive a grade of C or better in FP 100 are required to pass with a grade of C or better an additional W course.

<sup>1</sup> This includes 400-level (Honors) courses designated as "W" by the Honors advisor.

<sup>2</sup> The following were classified as interdisciplinary majors: American Studies, Asian Studies, Black/Africana Studies, Gender & Women's Studies, Integrated International Studies.

<sup>3</sup> This number is greater than the total number of graduates (2,109), as the 360 students with double majors that span more than one area are counted once in the area of each major.

ii. W Courses in the Major<sup>4</sup>:

All students must complete one W course in the major. In fact, a majority (66%) take two or more W courses in the major, 41% take three or more, and a quarter (26%) take at least four.<sup>5</sup> About half our graduates (57%) take a 200-level W course in the major, while 79% take at least one 300-level course and 45% take two or more. Only 15% of students take a 100-level W course in the major.

**Table 4. Number of Students Taking W Courses in the Major,  
by Number of Courses and Course Level**

No. of W Courses Taken in the Major	Total All Levels		100- level		200- level		300- level	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>None</b>	140*	7%	1798	85%	889	42%	447	21%
<b>1</b>	583	28%	297	14%	788	37%	709	34%
<b>2</b>	528	25%	14	1%	279	13%	372	18%
<b>3+</b>	858	41%	0	0%	153	7%	581	28%
<b>Total**</b>	2109	100%	2109	100%	2109	99%	2109	100%

\*This number is a measurement artifact. See footnote 4, below.

\*\*Percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

This general pattern of the greatest number of W courses in the major being at the 300-level, followed by the 200-level, is the same across all the curricular Areas. Nonetheless, there is significant variation in the total number of major W courses taken, from a high of 5.81 in the Arts, to 3.75 in the Humanities to 2.55 in HSS and 2.40 in MNS.<sup>6</sup> A large proportion of the 100-level and 200-level major enrollments are by students majoring in Arts and Humanities disciplines, which makes sense, as these are the areas (English and Art History) where most 100- and 200-level W courses are offered.

iii. W Courses Outside the Major

Taking W courses outside the major is optional, but a large majority of Knox graduates do so. Fully 72% take at least one course in an area that is neither their major nor their minor, and 36% take two or more. While one might expect that a significant number of students would take a writing course in their minor field, in fact this is not common, with only 27% of graduates taking a W course in their minor. Most of the courses taken outside the major are at the 100- and 200-level (41% and 42% of graduates, respectively, taking at least one W course at each level), while only 20% take such a course at the 300-level. Students in the Arts take the least number of

<sup>4</sup> There is some degree of measurement error in the following discussion. Courses are counted as being in the major if the course prefix matches one of the student's designated majors. So, for instance, this does not catch courses designated within a student's self-designed major (53 students) or courses in an interdisciplinary major that are designated in another department (which could miss up to 179 students). However, we can be confident that it accurately captures the enrollment patterns of 90%+ of all 2109 students.

<sup>5</sup> The prize goes to two enterprising students who took 14 W courses in their major.

<sup>6</sup> The numbers for interdisciplinary and self-designed majors are not reliable because of the measurement issue described in footnote 4, above.

courses outside the major, averaging about 0.8 such courses, compared to about 1.3 such courses for students in other areas.<sup>7</sup>

Information on the most popular “outside” courses helps to elucidate this pattern. By far most common non-major W course is English 120 Introduction to Literature. A total of 671 students who were neither English-Literature nor English-Creative Writing majors took this course – fully 32% of all Knox graduates during the period sampled. Of these, 255 (40%) took the course during their first year and another 189 (28%) as sophomores. The second most common non-major course is English 207 Beginning Fiction Writing, taken by 267 students. The most popular 300 level non-major course is English 307 Fiction Workshop (103 students).<sup>8</sup>

For more details about the distribution of W courses in and outside the major, see *Appendix E. W Course Enrollments by Level and Major/Minor/Neither Field*; *Appendix F. 300-Level W Courses, by Department, with Enrollments by Majors*; and *Appendix G. Non-Major Enrollments in W Courses, by Course*.

### III. REVIEW OF W COURSES SYLLABI

The Curriculum Committee’s charge specified a review of the syllabi of current W courses, including a mapping of the course’s objectives in relation to the Committee’s guidelines for W courses (in the absence of explicit learning goals for the W requirement). In response to an email query to faculty, the Working Group received 16 syllabi and related handouts from instructors of current W courses (in addition to six sets of materials from courses not formally designated as writing-intensive). These materials came from 11 different departments and programs drawn from all four areas of the curriculum.

Of the 16 W course syllabi, only two explicitly noted the W status of the course and then only to state that, as a consequence, the course would address and evaluate the quality of student writing. None discussed the broader college-level expectations for a writing-intensive course or included them in a formal statement of learning goals for the course. Several, however, included a discussion by the instructor of the importance of good writing in general or in relation to the specific disciplinary purpose of the course.

A review of course syllabi suggests a breadth of writing requirements in W courses. Much of this breadth is a consequence of disciplinary differences (e.g. laboratory notebooks vs. works of short fiction). While writing counted as a significant portion of grades in each of the classes, the extent to which the process of writing (drafts, preliminary steps such as outlines or bibliographies), was part of the course varied considerably. Around two-thirds of the syllabi explicitly included mention of such a process, but for others it was not clear that the course actually included such a formal process of draft-feedback-revision. In most courses the process appeared to consist of submission of a draft, instructor feedback and submission of a revised final paper. Others incorporated additional elements, including some or all of: advance submission of a paper topic proposal/initial bibliography; submission of an outline; peer review; and oral presentations. In most syllabi, the process was presented without any explanation or discussion of its pedagogical purposes, but simply in terms of what students would be expected to do. In several cases there

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<sup>7</sup> The number of “outside” courses taken by students in interdisciplinary majors is higher (2.72 on average), but it is likely that many of these courses, while located in other departments, actually count toward their major. See footnote 4, above.

<sup>8</sup> This number (of individual enrollments) is likely higher than the actual number of students taking the course, since 300-level creative writing courses may be taken multiple times for credit.

was no explicit discussion at all, and the assignments were simply listed in the course schedule and the grading criteria.

#### **IV. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

The charge to the Ad Hoc Working Group was to assess student learning relative to the expectations of the Writing Competency graduation requirement, that is, to assess the competency that students have attained by end of their Knox education. However, to understand the learning process involved, it is important have an earlier benchmark as a point of comparison. The assessment of writing in First-Year Preceptorial, conducted in 2012 by the FP Steering Committee and the Director of Assessment, provides such a point of reference.

##### ***1. First-Year Preceptorial***

In 2012, the quality of student writing in FP was assessed in two ways. First, there was a direct assessment of final FP papers selected at random across all sections. Second, all FP students and faculty were asked to complete a survey, which asked a battery of questions about the course, including its status and effectiveness as a writing-intensive course.

##### ***a. Direct Assessment***

Seventy-four students from 19 FP sections (approximately 20% of the FP class) selected at random to have their final FP papers read and scored according to a common rubric by a team of 14 faculty members, with each paper read by a minimum of two faculty members.

Seventeen different scale items were employed to assess five different aspects of the writing:

- Context & Purpose: the degree to which the paper demonstrates attention to (1) the intended audience and (2) the purpose of the assignment.
- Content Development: the degree to which the paper has (3) a clearly articulated thesis, (4) accurate, relevant and appropriate information, (5) development of evidence and information, and (6) credible and relevant ideas.
- Expectations of the Task: the degree to which the paper meets the expectations of the assignment for (7) basic organization, (8) content, (9) presentation, and (10) development of the thesis.
- Sources & Evidence: the degree to which the paper demonstrates use of (11) credible, (12) relevant and (13) appropriate sources, the degree to which (14) ideas are supported by evidence and (15) cited appropriately.
- Syntax & Grammar: the degree to which the paper demonstrates (16) appropriate word choice and (17) follows appropriate grammatical conventions.

Faculty were asked to employ the following 4-point scale:

- 0 - Does not demonstrate and awareness of or attention to [the scale item]
- Milestone 1 - Shows minimal awareness of and attention to [the scale item]
- Milestone 2 - Shows awareness of and attention to [the scale item]
- Milestone 3 – Clearly and effectively shows awareness of and attention to [the scale item]

Papers for which the faculty ratings differed by more than one point were re-read by another faculty member to resolve the differences.

**Table 5. Results of Direct Assessment of FP Writing, Fall Term 2012**

		0	0.5	1 Minimal	1.5	2 Awareness & Attention	2.5	3 Clear & Effective	Mean
<b>Context &amp; Purpose</b>	<i>Intended Audience</i>	0%	4%	8%	19%	<b>38%</b>	23%	7%	<b>1.95</b>
	<i>Purpose of Assignment</i>	1%	4%	12%	25%	<b>34%</b>	16%	7%	<b>1.82</b>
<b>Content Development</b>	<i>Clearly Articulated Thesis</i>	3%	12%	21%	<b>26%</b>	16%	18%	4%	<b>1.55</b>
	<i>Accurate, Relevant &amp; Appropriate Information</i>	1%	4%	11%	21%	<b>36%</b>	22%	5%	<b>1.86</b>
	<i>Information &amp; Evidence Development</i>	1%	3%	23%	<b>29%</b>	27%	16%	0%	<b>1.64</b>
	<i>Credible &amp; Appropriate Ideas</i>	1%	3%	11%	23%	<b>45%</b>	12%	4%	<b>1.81</b>
<b>Expectations of the Task</b>	<i>Basic Organization</i>	3%	1%	16%	30%	<b>36%</b>	12%	1%	<b>1.68</b>
	<i>Content</i>	0%	1%	18%	<b>33%</b>	32%	14%	3%	<b>1.73</b>
	<i>Presentation</i>	0%	5%	12%	25%	<b>34%</b>	19%	4%	<b>1.81</b>
	<i>Development of the Thesis</i>	1%	14%	<b>29%</b>	27%	18%	10%	1%	<b>1.40</b>
<b>Sources &amp; Evidence</b>	<i>Credible</i>	3%	4%	5%	5%	11%	33%	<b>38%</b>	<b>2.35</b>
	<i>Relevant</i>	3%	4%	3%	3%	15%	<b>37%</b>	36%	<b>2.38</b>
	<i>Appropriate</i>	3%	4%	3%	8%	11%	<b>36%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>2.35</b>
	<i>Ideas Supported</i>	3%	4%	19%	<b>34%</b>	22%	12%	5%	<b>1.64</b>
	<i>Appropriate Citation</i>	4%	11%	12%	<b>32%</b>	25%	15%	1%	<b>1.56</b>
<b>Syntax &amp; Grammar</b>	<i>Appropriate Word Choice</i>	1%	4%	15%	<b>33%</b>	30%	11%	5%	<b>1.71</b>
	<i>Appropriate Grammatical Conventions</i>	3%	4%	16%	<b>32%</b>	26%	14%	5%	<b>1.68</b>

*NOTE: Boldfaced percentages indicate the modal (most common) score for each scale item.*

**Table 6. Results of Direct Assessment of FP Writing, Grouped by Milestone Level**

		<b>Less than Milestone 1</b>	<b>Less than Milestone 2</b>	<b>Milestone 2 or Higher</b>	<b>Milestone 3</b>
<b>Context &amp; Purpose</b>	<i>Intended Audience</i>	4%	32%	<b>68%</b>	7%
	<i>Purpose of Assignment</i>	5%	42%	<b>58%</b>	7%
<b>Content Development</b>	<i>Clearly Articulated Thesis</i>	15%	<b>62%</b>	38%	4%
	<i>Accurate, Relevant &amp; Appropriate Information</i>	5%	37%	<b>63%</b>	5%
	<i>Information &amp; Evidence Development</i>	4%	<b>56%</b>	44%	0%
	<i>Credible &amp; Appropriate Ideas</i>	4%	38%	<b>62%</b>	4%
<b>Expectations of the Task</b>	<i>Basic Organization</i>	4%	<b>50%</b>	<b>50%</b>	1%
	<i>Content</i>	1%	<b>52%</b>	48%	3%
	<i>Presentation</i>	5%	42%	<b>58%</b>	4%
	<i>Development of the Thesis</i>	15%	<b>71%</b>	29%	1%
<b>Sources &amp; Evidence</b>	<i>Credible</i>	7%	17%	<b>83%</b>	38%
	<i>Relevant</i>	7%	13%	<b>87%</b>	36%
	<i>Appropriate</i>	7%	18%	<b>82%</b>	36%
	<i>Ideas Supported</i>	7%	<b>60%</b>	40%	5%
	<i>Appropriate Citation</i>	15%	<b>59%</b>	41%	1%
<b>Syntax &amp; Grammar</b>	<i>Appropriate Word Choice</i>	5%	<b>53%</b>	47%	5%
	<i>Appropriate Grammatical Conventions</i>	7%	<b>55%</b>	45%	5%

*b. Indirect Assessment*

A total of 334 FP students completed an online survey at the end of Fall Term 2012 (87% response rate), along with 16 Preceptorial instructors (80% response rate). Among many other topics, two questions directly addressed student learning in the area of writing. Students were asked to rate their agreement, on a 5-point scale from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree, with the following questions:

- FP helped me to improve my ability to write clearly (Mean Response: 3.91)
- FP helped me to improve my ability to formulate and effectively support a thesis in writing (Mean Response: 3.87)

In addition, both students and faculty were asked to indicate what aspects of writing were focused upon in the course:

**Table 7. Relative Emphasis of Aspects of Writing Addressed in FP,  
Ranked by Students and Faculty**

Aspect of Writing	% of Students indicating area of focus	Rank (Students)	% of Faculty indicating area of focus	Rank (Faculty)
Composing Thesis Statements	65%	1	97%	1
Constructing Arguments	64%	2	85%	2
Developing Papers	63%	3	61%	6
Evaluating Arguments	46%	4	48%	7
Documenting Sources	45%	5	85%	2
Organizing/Outlining Papers	44%	6	64%	5
Grammar & Mechanics	43%	7	45%	8
Writing Introductions	42%	8	65%	4
Evaluating Sources	40%	9	43%	9
Brainstorming	22%	10	38%	10
Conducting Research	17%	11	20%	11

### *c. Discussion*

The results of the direct assessment of FP papers give a useful and nuanced picture of the state of student writing by the end of the first term. The FP Steering Committee's expectations were that writing at the level of Milestone 1 (*Minimal Awareness of and Attention to the scale item*) is a minimally acceptable expectation for writing at this point in a student's college career, that writing at the level of Milestone 2 (*[More than minimal] Awareness of and Attention to the scale item*) shows that students are on the right track, and that writing at the level of Milestone 3 (*Clear and effective demonstration of Awareness of and Attention to the scale item*) gives good assurance that students will end up fully meeting our competency expectations.

The areas of greatest weakness were the articulation and development of a thesis and appropriate citation, with 15% of papers not even meeting Milestone 1 in each category and substantially more than 50% scoring below Milestone 2. Other areas where papers did not meet Milestone 2 include the use of evidence to support ideas and issues of grammar and syntax. Students were most successful in the presentation of credible, relevant and appropriate ideas, sources and evidence; in addressing the context and purpose of the assignment; and in the basic organization and presentation of the paper.

Based on the evidence of their FP papers, it seems that a majority of our students do not emerge from FP in solid command of two of the core elements of college-level writing: the ability to formulate a clear thesis and to develop it effectively over the course of a coherent argument. This seems to be the case, despite the facts that students generally believe they have improved in this regard and that they overwhelmingly recognize these as aspects of writing that were essential objects of attention in the course. In addition, a majority of students also showed weaknesses in the areas of: supporting ideas with evidence, using appropriate citation, and appropriate use of syntax and grammar.

Given the core role of First-Year Preceptorial as one of the three pillars of the Writing Requirement and the only course common to (virtually) all Knox students, the working group believes that these results show an urgent need to find ways to improve student learning in FP

with respect to writing. We are recommending that high priority be given to ensuring strong support both for faculty development to strengthen the effectiveness of writing instruction in FP and for greater resources for support services for students, through the Center for Teaching and Learning and TRIO. We would also encourage the FP Steering Committee and the Curriculum Committee to re-examine the ways in which student writing is addressed in the course, to see whether changes at the level of the course as a whole might usefully address these problems.

## **2. Senior-Level Writing**

### ***a. Direct Assessment***

In order to obtain a direct assessment of the degree to which Knox students are competent in writing by the time of their graduation, we asked selected instructors of upper-level W courses taught in Spring Term 2013 to assess the quality of writing of a sample of randomly identified senior students in their courses, following a rubric developed by the working group.

A population was identified of 181 students with a planned graduation year of 2013 who were enrolled in a 300-level “W” course in their major, a major capstone course, or College Honors.<sup>9</sup> By random assignment, a sample of 42 students (24% of the population) was selected.<sup>10</sup> These students were enrolled in courses with 28 different faculty members. Three faculty members did not complete all the rubrics for their students, so the number of completed assessments was 37 (20% of the population).

Using the major assignment for the course, instructors were asked to assess five different aspects of the writing:

- Context & Purpose: the degree to which the student demonstrates attention to context, audience, purpose, and the assigned task.
- Content Development: the degree to which the student uses appropriate and relevant and compelling content to develop ideas and convey the writer’s understanding.
- Genre & Disciplinary Conventions: the degree to which the student demonstrates appropriate use of important conventions particular to the discipline or writing task, including organization, content, presentation and stylist choices.
- Sources & Evidence: the degree to which the student demonstrates use of credible, relevant sources appropriate to the discipline and genre to support their ideas and argument.
- Control of Syntax & Mechanics: the degree to which the student uses language that clearly and gracefully conveys meaning to readers and is free of grammatical errors.

Faculty were asked to employ an 8-point scale, from 0 to 7:

- 0: Does not meet benchmark
- 1: Benchmark Level 1: Minimal competence
- 3: Benchmark Level 2: Awareness of what is required, but incomplete or inconsistent application
- 5: Milestone: Demonstrates adequate and consistent competence
- 7: Capstone: Demonstrates mastery

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<sup>9</sup> For Chemistry, a 200-level course was counted, as that department does not have a 300-level W course; capstone courses were determined by title, catalog description and/or being a senior-level course required for graduation.

<sup>10</sup> One student was excluded because the enrolled course turned out to be not related to their major; two students did not complete the coursework, and another student enrolled in the course was substituted in each case.



In addition, instructors were asked to estimate the student's likely ability to write a brief summary for a general audience of the submitted work, in terms of their ability to communicate the substance of the work to an audience with no specialized knowledge of the subject, and to do so clearly. (For details, see *Appendix E: Writing Assessment Rubric*)

On all assessed dimensions of writing, around 80% of our sample of graduating seniors was assessed as showing adequate and consistent competence and from 14%-25% were assessed at the highest category. From 16%-21% were assessed as possessing minimal to inconsistent competency, and no student was assessed as completely incompetent on any of the assessed dimensions.

**Table 8. Results of Direct Assessment of Senior-Level Writing, Spring Term 2013**

Category	0	1 Minimal	2	3 Incon- sistent Awareness	4	5 Adequate & Consistent	6	7 Mastery	TOTAL & MEAN SCORES
Context & Purpose	0	0	0	4 (11%)	3 (8%)	12 ( <b>32%</b> )	11 (30%)	7 (19%)	37 (100%) <b>5.38</b>
Content Development	0	0	0	3 (8%)	3 (8%)	14 ( <b>38%</b> )	11 (30%)	6 (16%)	37 (100%) <b>5.38</b>
Genre & Disciplinary Conventions	0	0	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	4 (11%)	12 ( <b>34%</b> )	11 (31%)	5 (14%)	35 (99%) <b>5.26</b>
Sources & Evidence	0	0	1 (3%)	3 (8%)	2 (5%)	14 ( <b>38%</b> )	8 (22%)	9 (24%)	37 (100%) <b>5.41</b>
Syntax & Mechanics	0	1 (3%)	2 (5%)	2 (5%)	3 (8%)	17 ( <b>46%</b> )	7 (19%)	5 (14%)	37 (100%) <b>5.00</b>

*NOTE: Boldfaced percentages indicate the modal (most common) score for each scale item.*

**Table 9. Results of Direct Assessment of Senior-Level Writing, Grouped by Milestone Level**

Category	Less than Milestone 5	Milestone 5 or Higher	Capstone 7
Context & Purpose	7 (19%)	30 (81%)	7 (19%)
Content Development	6 (16%)	31 (84%)	6 (16%)
Genre & Disciplinary Conventions	7 (20%)	28 (80%)	5 (14%)
Sources & Evidence	6 (16%)	31 (84%)	9 (24%)
Syntax & Mechanics	8 (21%)	29 (79%)	5 (14%)

The above results were based on direct assessment of writing for an advanced or capstone course within the student's major. The assessment of students' writing for a general audience was more indirect, in that instructors were asked for a judgment based on the writing they were familiar with. Here, too, the results were positive: more than half of students (54%) were judged as likely to be successful in writing for a general audience, and another 35% were assessed as adequate but likely to include some language or concepts requiring specialized knowledge. Only 5% were assessed as unlikely to be able to do this successfully. As to the clarity of writing in such an assignment, nearly half (46%) were judged to be able to produce a clear, well-organized summary, and another half (51%) would be "okay, but with some organizational or clarity issues."

**Table 10. Results of Faculty Assessment of Students' Ability to Write for a General Audience**

<i><b>Question:</b> Please choose the statement that best describes your assessment of the student's ability to write a brief summary of this work for a general audience.</i>		
<b>Ability to communicate the substance of the work to an audience with no specialized knowledge of the subject.</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Would not be able to do this successfully	2	5%
Would include language or concepts requiring specialized knowledge	2	5%
Would be okay overall, but would include some language or concepts requiring specialized knowledge.	13	35%
Would be appropriate for a general audience.	20	54%
<b>Clarity of Writing</b>		
Would not be able to do this successfully.	0	0%
Would not be well organized or clear	1	3%
Would be okay, but some organizational or clarity issues.	19	51%
Overall, it would be clear and well organized.	17	46%

*b. Indirect Assessment*

Evidence for an indirect assessment of student writing was obtained through an informal faculty discussion held in Ferris Lounge during Spring Term, attended by about 25 faculty members. The discussion was facilitated by the director of assessment. In general, faculty perceptions of first-year writing were in line with the results of the direct assessment: that there was a small but significant proportion of beginning students who had major problems of grammar and syntax (anecdotally identified as primarily international students whose principal language of instruction was not English and students from very weak high schools), and that there was a much larger group for whom formulating a thesis and developing an argument were significant weaknesses. Other points emerging from that discussion were that:

- Students tend to see writing as a task to be completed, turned in and be done with. They resist the idea that it is a process demanding time, planning, editing and revision.
- Writing weaknesses may not be true reflections of students' abilities. Issues of time management, motivation, effort, and competing demands are important considerations affecting the quality of student writing.
- Good writing is importantly connected to regular, careful reading; students who don't read may have difficulty recognizing the problems in their writing.
- Writing is also closely bound up with thinking. Problems with thesis formulation and development may reflect reading and comprehension issues as much as limitations of writing ability.

Faculty members also noted the shortage of intermediate-level W courses and were concerned that, if students are taking only senior-level W courses, there may be little time to assist them to significantly develop their writing. Faculty had several suggestions for improving writing instruction and support for student writing, which are discussed below, under Recommendations.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FACULTY

### *1. Learning Goals for Writing Competence*

As a result of our review, the working group proposes the following as appropriate learning goals for all Knox graduates with respect to competence in writing:

#### **Graduates of Knox College:**

- 1. Will be able to write clearly and accurately for a general audience;**
- 2. Will be able to write effectively in relation to their disciplinary major field, including the use of appropriate disciplinary conventions;**
- 3. Will be able to recognize different modes and purposes of writing and adapt their writing appropriately;**
- 4. Will be able to engage in writing as a process, including use of multiple drafts, revisions, editing, and review.**

*Discussion:* Clarity, accuracy and effectiveness in writing are referenced in the Guidelines for W Courses, were cited by Knox faculty in our focus group discussion, and are also found in the Writing learning goals of many other institutions. The importance of these criteria seems self-evident. While the ability to write in terms of the expectations and conventions of a major discipline is not explicitly specified in the Guidelines, the Writing Competency requirement does require one “W” course in the student’s major and most departments’ “W” courses are at the 300-level if not the department’s capstone course. It seems clear that competent discipline-specific writing in the major is a significant expectation at Knox, and this should be made explicit in the learning goals. This is important, too, in order to underline explicitly that writing in the major is not the only criterion of what Knox expects in terms of writing competence. The ability to write clearly for a general audience, as well as the ability to adapt one’s mode of writing to one’s audience and purpose, are also important competencies that our graduates should possess. Finally, both the Guidelines and much faculty comment underscore the importance of students experiencing and internalizing the value of engaging in writing as an ongoing process and appreciating the close connection between writing and thinking.

It is important to point out that the Writing Competency requirement, as currently structured, only directly addresses two of these four goals: #2, through the requirement that at least one “W” course be in the student’s major field, and #4, through the guideline that all “W” courses include a process of draft, feedback and revision. There is nothing in the structure of the Writing requirement that ensures students will acquire competence in writing for a general audience, nor that they will engage in different modes of writing. Nonetheless, two findings from our assessment suggest that, without any explicit requirements, the other two goals may also be being met by most Knox graduates. First, the faculty members who directly assessed course-related writing for a sample of graduating seniors in Spring 2013 overwhelmingly expressed confidence that their students, in whole or in large part, would be capable of writing clearly for a general audience (see Table 7, p. 10, above). And, second, fully 72% of Knox graduates took at least one “W” course in a field outside their major, with the majority of these courses at the 100- or 200-level (see discussion above, p. 5).

We recognize, however, that our current direct assessment of senior-level writing does not definitively answer the question of the degree to which current Knox graduates are fulfilling the goals of writing for a general audience and achieving competence in different modes of writing. Rather than recommend a change in the Writing Requirement to address this (which would mean more hoops for students to jump through), we believe that careful periodic assessment of student writing going forward is a satisfactory way of checking that these goals are in fact being met.

One suggestion that would address this and greatly facilitate future assessments – and would potentially be useful for students, as well – would be to have students maintain and/or assemble retrospectively a writing portfolio. These could then be systematically sampled in the future as the basis for a direct assessment of student writing. (Since there are many more aspects of this idea that go well beyond the issue of assessment, we make this as a suggestion, not a definite recommendation.)

## ***2. Incorporating “W” Learning Goals into Course Syllabi***

Once the Curriculum Committee and/or the Faculty approves formal learning goals for the Writing Competency, the Working Group recommends that the Committee require the incorporation of these learning goals into the syllabi of all W courses, and that existing and future W courses submit for approval syllabi that reflect these. Syllabi should be explicit about the Writing learning goals and how they are addressed in the course. Not all courses need to give the same weight to all the learning goals, but we believe it is important that students be given a clear indication of how the College-wide expectations for writing will be addressed in the course. In particular, for courses where discipline- or area-specific writing is the most central concern, we recommend this be discussed explicitly in the syllabus and in the course, so students understand clearly and unambiguously what the writing-related goals are in the course. Based on the admittedly non-random sample of W course syllabi submitted to us, we found that only a minority really did a good job on this score. Learning goals for writing intensive courses for example, could include: “The student will be able to use discipline specific writing and citation styles correctly”, “the student will demonstrate effective revision of their written work”, and “the student will be able to modify their writing to meet the needs of their audience”.

## ***3. Strengthen Writing-Related Faculty Development Resources for FP Faculty***

This process of assessment has reinforced for the members of the Working Group our appreciation of the central role that First-Year Preceptorial plays with respect to the achievement of writing competence for our students.<sup>11</sup> It is a major institutional investment of time and energy by a dedicated faculty. It is clear that it is an important, sometimes formative, experience for our students with respect to their writing. But the evidence of the direct assessment of FP writing suggests that serious core weaknesses remain for a majority of students at the end of the course. Unless the faculty want to turn to some other model to address student writing in the first year, we believe it is imperative to find ways to make the teaching of writing in FP more effective. At a minimum, we recommend that the College dedicate regular and substantial resources toward faculty development activities to help FP instructors become more effective as teachers of writing. Possible faculty development activities include intensive workshops on incorporating writing instruction into coursework, developing writing assignments, and ongoing support for their efforts, developing and incorporating peer review. The adoption of student support software for writing could potentially assist FP faculty in developing student writing skills (see below).

## ***4. More Resources for Support of Student Writing***

Our assessment indicates that a majority of Knox students have significant weaknesses in writing early in their Knox careers and, while most have overcome these by graduation, there remains a significant minority (16-20%) that has not. These results underscore the importance of adequate academic support resources for students in the area of writing, especially early in their Knox career. There are models for writing support early in students’ academic career- TRIO, the CTL, and the ESL courses being offered for non-native English speakers through the Educational

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<sup>11</sup> Full disclosure: All the faculty members on the Task Force are current or former FP instructors.

Studies Department, but the instructors in these offices are overwhelmed. We strongly recommend that strengthening the staff resources to support student writing be an institutional priority. The particular pattern of student weaknesses in writing, with the most widespread problems being in the area of thesis and argument, suggests that the current focus of CTL writing tutors on these kinds of higher-order problems is appropriate. But it is important, too, to address the fundamental problems of mechanics, etc., that characterize a persistent minority of students (which anecdotal evidence suggests is principally comprised of students from very weak school systems and those whose first language is not English). Possible options would include developing a half credit co-enrolled course, modeled on the current TRIO writing course, available to (and limited to) students in need of support. Another possible option is to institute summer writing intensive workshops for incoming students who are identified as being in need of skill development. In addition, we recommend the College explore online resources (e.g., Kahn Academy-type self-paced learning modules) that students can be assigned remedially to complete as needed. Another recommendation is that the college explore writing support programs such as My Writing Lab (Pearson) or My Access (McCann and Associates).

### ***5. More 100- and 200-level Writing-intensive Courses***

The Working Group recommends that the Curriculum Committee encourage departments to develop more 100- and 200-level W courses, or at least ensure that students have adequate opportunities to take W courses in their major department prior to taking a capstone writing-intensive course. This would also provide additional, broader opportunities for students to take writing-intensive courses outside their major field, and could facilitate meeting the goals of achieving competence in different modes of writing and of writing for a general audience. While the direct assessment of senior writing shows that most graduates do reach the “Adequate and Consistent” milestone for the different aspects of writing, including Content Development (thesis development & argument), by the end of their Knox studies, there is a persistent minority of students who do not, ranging from 16-20% of graduates. It is worth noting that many Knox courses are in substance writing-intensive but are not formally designated as such. Many could meet the guidelines for W courses with minimal adjustment. Departments could be prodded to submit these courses for designation as writing-intensive.

### ***6. More Consistency in Identifying Capstone Courses as Writing-Intensive***

The Working Group recommends that departments be more consistent in flagging capstone courses as W, if in fact they are intended to be opportunities for demonstration of competency in writing within the major. Currently 12 majors designate their capstone as a W course. Eight designate the capstone as an O course; of these, three courses are designated as both an O and a W. One major (Computer Science) designates its research seminar as a QL course, and seven majors do not designate their senior capstone as meeting any general education requirement. Five majors do not offer any coursework that could be confidently identified as a capstone course.

### ***7. Suggestions from the Faculty Focus Group***

Several related suggestions were made in the faculty focus group that are also worth considering. One recommendation was for more diagnostic work with respect to writing abilities early in a student’s career, to flag problem areas, along with more forceful encouragement by instructors and advisors to get students to address problem areas. Other recommendations were to make FP an ungraded course with a grade only for writing, and to institute a separate writing grade in W courses, to ensure that students are meeting expectations for writing. The writing grade, and not the course grade, would determine whether the student had satisfied the W component with a grade of C or better. In addition, several pedagogical approaches were recommended for instructors in W courses:

- peer review, as a way to motivate students to increase their attention to writing;

- group writing assignments, where a team of students has to work collaboratively through the process of draft, editing and revision;
- explicit attention to the craft of writing as exemplified in reading assignments – discussing how authors achieved specific results;
- dedication of class time to explicit instruction on writing as a process, what is entailed, and what are its benefits.

## **Appendix A: Assessment Plan for the Knox Graduation Requirements**

Knox College has developed and, for several years now, has implemented formal program review for all academic departments and programs. We have also implemented a process by which departments and programs engage in assessment of at least one of their learning goals annually. Assessment of all Knox graduation requirements in the remaining piece, and we have now developed a complete program for this undertaking, as outlined below. The intention of this document is to provide a guide or blueprint to begin the assessment of graduation requirements. Inevitably, as we begin these assessments, we will find that the proposed processes here are in need of revision.

### **1. Foundations: Arts, History and Social Sciences, Humanities, and Mathematics and Natural Sciences**

Faculty who teach in each of the foundation areas have met to develop learning goals for the foundations. The learning goals will be presented to the entire faculty during the current academic year.

A. The faculty is currently in the process of implementing and assessing a new form of First-year Preceptorial. They will likely make a formal decision about the ongoing form of this course by spring of 2013. Whatever decision is reached, the writing required of its students will be assessed annually, and the course itself will be evaluated in a focused way each time it is offered. At a minimum, the evaluation will be an indirect assessment of at least one of the learning goals for the course.

B. The Director of Academic Assessment will annually review all departmental/program assessments and determine which of the Knox Goals for Learning, including those linked to foundations and key competencies, were assessed through the departmental/program assessments during that period. The results of this evaluation will be reported to the faculty and to the Dean of the College.

C. The college will develop a regular cycle of review for the key competencies and foundations. Each requirement area will be reviewed at least once during each 10-year accreditation period (see proposed calendar).

D. The review of each of the key competencies and foundations will have the following components:

1. A working group of interested faculty to undertake, with the guidance and support from the Director of Academic Assessment, the assessment for each requirement area.
2. A critical examination of learning goals for the targeted foundation/key competency to determine the need for any revisions.<sup>12</sup> (N.B. If learning goals are not in place, the task will be to develop appropriate learning goals for the requirement.)
3. Extensive review of student enrollment in classes that meet each requirement in order to ascertain the following:
  - a. Number of aggregate and average number of courses students take that meet that particular requirement;
  - b. Number of aggregate and average number of courses students take within and outside of major areas;

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<sup>12</sup> Revisions will be approved according to current governance structure.

- c. Student classifications when meeting the targeted requirement (e.g. first year, senior);
  - d. Most popular ways to meet the requirements in the period since the last review of the targeted requirement.
- 4. Review of coursework meeting each requirement, using the following methods:
  - a. Mapping of course objectives to learning goals for targeted area;
  - b. Review by departments/programs to determine which of their offered courses can or should be offered in the targeted area and whether these courses appropriately address the learning goals of the targeted area;
  - c. Review by Curriculum Committee to determine continued inclusion of courses in meeting the foundation/competency.
- 5. Assessment of student learning, using the following methods:
  - a. Direct assessments of artifacts (essays, projects, or other outcomes) generated by students. (To be completed by the faculty working group.);
  - b. Indirect assessments through surveys, focus groups or other methods of student and faculty experiences in the targeted area.
- 6. Summary report to all faculty of the review, including recommendations for changes.

## **2. Specialization**

Assessment of specialization is thoroughly addressed by the departmental/program assessment and will not be overviewed here.

## **3. Key Competencies**

The key competencies of diversity, second language, and mathematics proficiency and quantitative literacy will be assessed in the process described for foundations and key competencies above.

### *Oral Proficiency*

- i. Oral Proficiency will be assessed at the department/program level.
- ii. At a minimum, oral proficiency will be addressed during each seven-year program review.
- iii. The Director of Academic Assessment will annually identify department/program reviews' assessments of oral proficiency.

### *Writing Key Competency*

- i. At a minimum, the writing key competency will be addressed during each seven-year program review.
- ii. Since the writing key competency is addressed both at the program level and at the broader curricular level, it will be addressed both through the First-Year Preceptorial assessment process and through the foundations and key competencies assessment process, as outlined above under 1.D.
- iii. The Director of Academic Assessment will annually identify department/program reviews' assessments of the writing key competency.

### *Information Literacy and Informed Use of Technology*

- i. At a minimum, information literacy and informed use technology outcomes will be addressed during each seven-year program review.



- ii. Continued assessment by Library with regard to their programs and instruction, the appropriate use of technology, and learning outcomes.
  - iii. The Director of Academic Assessment will annually identify department/program reviews' assessments of information literacy and informed use of technology.
- 4. Experiential Learning:**
- i. At a minimum, experiential learning will be addressed during each seven-year program review, i.e., each department/program reviews the ways in which students in their programs meet the Experiential Learning requirement.
  - ii. Indirect assessment of Experiential Learning is part of the "Six Month Out Survey" conducted by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and reported to the Center for Career and Pre-Professional Development.
  - iii. Senior and alumni surveys conducted by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment since April of 2012 have included questions regarding the students' experiential learning. These data will serve as a basis for the development of a more in-depth assessment of this requirement and will also aid the appropriate programs and offices as they develop the best processes for ensuring that students complete the Experiential Learning requirement in accordance with the college's intentions in setting the requirement.
  - iv. Specific opportunities for Experiential Learning (e.g. off-campus study, internships, independent research) will be assessed as part of the regular seven-year assessment process for Knox graduation requirements as outlined above in 1.D.
- 5. Educational Plan**
- i. The newly appointed Associate Dean for Faculty Development has been charged with undertaking a review of the college's academic advising system and will do so in collaboration with the Registrar and with assistance from the Director of Academic Assessment. This full-scale review will include a focused assessment of the current implementation of the Educational Plan. The goal is to aid faculty as they develop the best processes for ensuring that students complete the Educational Plan requirement in accordance with the college's intentions in setting the requirement.
  - ii. Indirect assessment of the perceived value of the Educational Plan has been included in all senior survey and alumni surveys conducted by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment since April of 2012. These data will serve as a basis for the development of more in-depth assessment of this requirement.
  - iii. Assessment of the Educational Plan is part of the regular seven-year assessment process for Knox graduation requirements as outlined above in 1.D.
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## Appendix B: Guidelines for W Courses

### Graduation Requirement:

- a. **Writing.** Each student must develop writing proficiency.

Every student is required to complete with a grade of C or better three writing-enhanced (W) courses, as approved by the Curriculum Committee (ENGL 101 does not count as a W course), including the following:

- o First-Year Preceptorial. Students who do not receive a grade of C or better are required to pass with a grade of C or better an additional W course. (Transfer students not required to take FP must transfer in the equivalent of ENGL 101 or 102, or pass an additional W course beyond the following requirements.)
- o One course in a student's major. A student with two majors need satisfy this goal for only one major.
- o One additional course.

Independent Studies and College Honors courses may count as W courses if the faculty sponsor certifies it will meet the appropriate criteria.

### Guidelines for W (Writing Enhanced) Courses

([www.knox.edu/registrar/forms/faculty-forms](http://www.knox.edu/registrar/forms/faculty-forms))

A course eligible to fulfill the competency requirement in writing is one in which the following characteristics apply:

1. A “W” course emphasizes student writing as central to the process of learning. W courses incorporate written assignments that are sufficiently frequent to constitute a key component of the continuity and sense of progress of the course. Writing assignments may include essays on exams, take-home essays, journals or research papers. The quality of written expression should clearly contribute to the assessment of the grades for those assignments.
2. The instructor should pay explicit attention to accuracy, clarity and effectiveness in the development of student writing skills. Various pedagogies may be employed to achieve these goals, including, for example, required re-drafting of assignments, required re-writing of assignments, close editing, additional optional assignments, 5-minute in-class essays, or group critiques. Writing instruction itself may be integrated with faculty-student conferences; it may also be the subject of group critiques, class lectures and/or demonstrations.
3. Institutional support through the Center for Teaching and Learning may provide extra assistance for students. But the CTL programs should not substitute for focused attention to writing on the part of the instructor in the designated course.
4. Normally, enrolment should not exceed 20 students.
5. Faculty teaching “W” courses are encouraged to participate in faculty development activities that will enhance their familiarity with current pedagogical practices in the instruction of writing. Such activities could include: workshops offered through the Knox Faculty Development Program and/or the Center for Teaching and Learning, workshops off campus, and extended reading of literature in the field.

### Appendix C: Distribution of W Courses across Departments & Programs

*NOTE: These counts INCLUDE cross-listed courses in each program where they appear.*

<b>Department/Program</b>	<b>100-level</b>	<b>200-level</b>	<b>300-level</b>	<b>Total</b>
American Studies	0	1	1	2
Anthropology-Sociology	0	1	1	2
Art History & Studio Art	0	7	1	8
Asian Studies	0	0	2	2
Biochemistry	1	0	1	2
Biology	0	1	5	6
Black Studies	0	0	4	4
Business & Management	0	0	0	0
Chemistry	0	2	0	2
Classics/Greek/Latin	1	1	19	21
Computer Science	1	1	1	3
Center for Teaching & Learning	0	1	0	1
Dance	0	0	0	0
Economics	0	0	1	1
Educational Studies	0	2	5	7
English – Literature	2	0	15	17
English – Creative Writing	0	6	6	12
Environmental Studies	0	3	1	4
Film Studies	0	0	0	0
French	0	1	1	2
German	0	0	1	1
Gender & Women's Studies	0	1	6	7
History	0	1	24	25
Integrated International Studies	0	0	0	0
Interdisciplinary Studies	0	0	2	2
Journalism	0	1	2	3
Latin American Studies	0	2	2	4
Mathematics	0	0	4	4
Music	0	0	2	2
Neuroscience	0	0	1	1
Philosophy	0	1	1	2
Physics	0	1	0	1
Political Science & International Relations	0	3	9	12
Psychology	0	1	3	4
Religious Studies	0	1	8	9
Spanish	0	0	2	2
Theatre	2	0	4	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>182</b>

**Appendix D: Average Number of W Course Enrollments, by Student's Major Field  
(including and excluding Creative Writing courses)**

<b>Student Major</b>	<b>total # of majors</b>	<b>Avg. # of W Courses</b>	<b>Avg. excluding Creative Writing courses</b>	<b>Difference in # of courses</b>	<b>Rank - All Writing courses</b>	<b>Rank - excluding CW courses</b>
English- Creative Writing	221	<b>9.91</b>	<b>4.23</b>	5.71	1	23
Educational Studies	213	<b>5.54</b>	<b>4.92</b>	0.62	13	9
Economics	196	<b>3.82</b>	<b>3.57</b>	0.25	28	28
Psychology	177	<b>5.10</b>	<b>4.56</b>	0.56	18	18
Biology	166	<b>5.42</b>	<b>5.16</b>	0.26	14	8
Political Science	141	<b>5.96</b>	<b>5.35</b>	0.61	8	7
Anthropology-Sociology	136	<b>4.46</b>	<b>3.82</b>	0.64	25	26
Spanish	126	<b>5.60</b>	<b>4.81</b>	0.79	11	13
English - Literature	118	<b>7.88</b>	<b>6.13</b>	1.75	2	2
Environmental Studies	107	<b>5.07</b>	<b>4.73</b>	0.34	19	15
History	106	<b>6.79</b>	<b>5.82</b>	0.97	5	5
Studio Art	75	<b>5.59</b>	<b>4.85</b>	0.74	12	11
Biochemistry	70	<b>4.70</b>	<b>4.56</b>	0.14	23	19
International Relations	69	<b>6.43</b>	<b>5.84</b>	0.59	7	4
Theatre	69	<b>5.74</b>	<b>4.58</b>	1.16	9	17
Physics	56	<b>4.02</b>	<b>3.70</b>	0.32	27	27
Chemistry	54	<b>5.19</b>	<b>4.80</b>	0.39	17	14
Mathematics	53	<b>5.19</b>	<b>4.83</b>	0.36	16	12
Self-Designed Major	53	<b>4.49</b>	<b>3.94</b>	0.55	24	24
Integrated International Studies	52	<b>3.67</b>	<b>3.48</b>	0.19	29	29
French	50	<b>5.64</b>	<b>4.70</b>	0.94	10	16
Philosophy	47	<b>5.28</b>	<b>4.40</b>	0.88	15	21
Computer Science	39	<b>4.44</b>	<b>3.82</b>	0.62	26	25
Neuroscience	38	<b>5.03</b>	<b>4.89</b>	0.14	20	10
Music	37	<b>6.54</b>	<b>5.81</b>	0.73	6	6
Art History	26	<b>7.50</b>	<b>6.62</b>	0.88	3	1
Gender & Women's Studies	25	<b>4.76</b>	<b>4.48</b>	0.28	22	20
Asian Studies	23	<b>5.00</b>	<b>4.39</b>	0.61	21	22
Classics	20	<b>6.80</b>	<b>5.90</b>	0.90	4	3

## Appendix E: W Course Enrollments by Level and Major/Minor/Neither Field

*Note: Double majors are counted twice, once for each major. Also, students with self designed majors or interdisciplinary majors will have courses counted as not being in the major as a function of the course area not matching the major area (for example, cross listed courses are only counted if the course prefix matches the designated major).*

### A. Number of Knox Graduates taking W courses, by number of courses taken, course level, and major/minor field

Number of Courses taken	100 Level						200 Level						300 Level					
	Major		Minor		Neither (excludes FP)		Major		Minor		Neither		Major		Minor		Neither	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>0</b>	1798	85%	2000	95%	1246	59%	889	42%	1769	84%	1204	57%	447	21%	1790	85%	1686	80%
<b>1</b>	297	14%	104	5%	776	37%	788	37%	255	12%	661	31%	709	34%	242	11%	253	12%
<b>2</b>	14	1%	5	0%	85	4%	279	13%	67	3%	192	9%	372	18%	54	3%	86	4%
<b>3</b>					2	0%	116	6%	17	1%	41	2%	261	12%	17	1%	48	2%
<b>4</b>							30	1%	1	0%	10	0%	147	7%	5	0%	23	1%
<b>5</b>							5	0%			1	0%	84	4%	1	0%	12	1%
<b>6</b>							2	0%					49	2%			1	0%
<b>7</b>													27	1%				
<b>8</b>													5	0%				
<b>9</b>													6	0%				
<b>10</b>													2	0%				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>1+</b>	311	15%	109	5%	863	41%	1220	57%	340	16%	905	42%	1662	79%	319	15%	423	20%
<b>2+</b>	14	1%	5	0%	87	4%	432	20%	85	4%	244	12%	953	45%	77	4%	170	8%
<b>3+</b>	0	0%	0	0%	2	0%	153	7%	18	1%	52	2%	581	28%	23	1%	84	4%

Number of Courses taken	Total Major		Total Minor		Total Neither	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>0</b>	140	7%	1549	73%	592	28%
<b>1</b>	583	28%	345	16%	762	36%
<b>2</b>	528	25%	110	5%	425	20%
<b>3</b>	318	15%	53	3%	172	8%
<b>4</b>	161	8%	20	1%	85	4%
<b>5</b>	81	4%	20	1%	35	2%
<b>6</b>	67	3%	7	0%	21	1%
<b>7</b>	62	3%	2	0%	14	1%
<b>8</b>	74	4%	3	0%	2	0%
<b>9</b>	43	2%			1	0%
<b>10</b>	29	1%				
<b>11</b>	11	1%				
<b>12</b>	9	0%				
<b>13</b>	1	0%				
<b>14</b>	2	0%				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>2109</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>1+</b>	1969	93%	560	27%	1517	72%
<b>2+</b>	1386	66%	215	10%	755	36%
<b>3+</b>	858	41%	105	5%	330	16%

#### B. Number of W Courses Taken by Knox Graduates, by Area, Level and Field

	100 Level			200 Level			300 level			Total		
Area	Major	Minor	Neither (excludes FP)	Major	Minor	Neither	Major	Minor	Neither	Major	Minor	Neither
ARTS	0.60	0.07	0.23	1.84	0.20	0.41	3.37	0.21	0.19	5.81	0.48	0.83
HUM	0.28	0.04	0.34	1.10	0.16	0.54	2.36	0.14	0.47	3.75	0.35	1.34
INTER	0.02	0.03	0.46	0.24	0.13	0.69	0.90	0.18	1.56	1.16	0.34	2.72
SCI	0.03	0.04	0.48	0.66	0.21	0.66	1.70	0.16	0.18	2.40	0.41	1.31
SOCSC	0.05	0.05	0.55	0.84	0.16	0.52	1.65	0.18	0.25	2.55	0.38	1.32

## Appendix F: 300-Level W Courses in the Major

<i>Dept/Program</i>	<i>Course</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Cross-Listing</i>	<i>Enrollment*</i>
American Studies	367	The American West: Cultures, Regions, Frontiers	History	18
Anthropology-Sociology	399	Research Seminar		124
Art & Art History	342	Interpreting Works of Art		25
	395	Warhol & the Visual Culture of the 60s		7
Asian Studies	399	Senior Project		28
Biochemistry	310	Biochemical Methods		70
Biology	380	Senior Research Seminar		101
	381	Research: Populations		53
	382	Research: Organisms		46
	383	Research: Cells & Molecules		35
	384	Research: Education		6
Africana/Black Studies	366	American Civil Rights Movement	History	23
Chemistry				
Classics/Latin/Greek	395	Roman Imperialism	History	16
	313	Roman Comedy		8
	318	Roman Lyric Poetry		6
	316	Roman Rhetoric & Oratory		6
Computer Science	322	Software Engineering		8
Economics	303	Statistical Research Methods		61
Educational Studies	310	Perspectives on Curriculum		213
English	307	Fiction Workshop		429
	308	Poetry Workshop		229
	398	Senior Seminar for Literature Majors		117
	306	Creative Nonfiction Workshop		110
	311	Advanced Writing		70
	336	Studies in the Literature of America		61
	335	Studies in American Romanticism		56
	345	Victorian Literature		52
	344	Romantic Literature		51
	343	Enlightenment Literature		51
	347	Modern & Contemporary Fiction		46

<i>Dept/Program</i>	<i>Course</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Cross-Listing</i>	<i>Enrollment*</i>
	376	Modern Drama: 1945 to the Present	Theatre	45
	320/395	Fairy Tale: History & Culture		37
	375	European Drama & Theatre: Realism - 1945	Theatre	30
	342	Renaissance Literature & Culture		25
	330	Chaucer		15
	395	Native American Literature		10
Environmental Studies	399	Senior Project		144
	390	Senior Research Preparation		38
French	399	Senior Seminar		42
German	320	Advanced Conversation and Composition		12
Gender & Women's Studies	373	Women, Gender & the American Revolution	History	19
	312	Gay & Lesbian Identities		16
	333	Global Feminism & Antifeminism	Political Science	5
History	366	American Civil Rights Movement	Black Studies	23
	338	Nazi Germany		21
	347	Museums, Monuments & Memory		20
	373	Women, Gender & the American Revolution	GWST	19
	367	The American West: Cultures, Regions, Frontiers	AMST	18
	380	British Imperialism		26
	395	Roman Imperialism	Classics	16
	340	Culture & Diplomacy: Modern East Asia		14
	380	Ireland and England		13
	363	The Great Society		12
	361	American Civil War		12
	314	US-Latin American Relations/Modern Latin America	Political Science	11
	381	Time & Place in American Indian Cultures		10
	339	Weimar Republic		10
	395	Comparative Roman Imperialism		9
	371/395	History of Religion in Europe & America		13
	380	Topics in British History		5
Mathematics	321	Mathematical Statistics I		46
	300	Mathematical Structures		44
	331	Analysis I		24



<i>Dept/Program</i>	<i>Course</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Cross-Listing</i>	<i>Enrollment*</i>
Music	341	Abstract Algebra I		14
	361	Music History I: Renaissance & Baroque		25
	362	Music History II: Classical		22
	364	Music History IV: 20th Century		24
	322	Seminar in 18th Century Music		10
	324	Seminar in 20th Century Music		5
Neuroscience	399	Research in Neuroscience		50
Philosophy	399	Senior Seminar: Contemporary Philosophy		47
Physics				
Political Science	362	American Constitutional Law I		80
	342	The Modern Theorists		65
	363	American Constitutional Law II		58
	326	Comparative Revolution		16
	314	US-Latin American Relations/Modern Latin America	History	11
	333	Global Feminism & Antifeminism	GWST	5
Psychology	361	Research Experience in Psychology II		168
	369	Evolution and Human Behavior		122
	365	The Study of the Person		57
	368	Visual Cognition		24
	395	Emotion		12
	399	Advanced Seminar		124
Spanish	302	19th and 20th Century Spanish Fiction and Poetry		10
Theatre	376	Modern Drama: 1945 to the Present	English	45
	375	European Drama & Theatre: Realism - 1945	English	30

\* **Enrollments:** Enrollments for cross-listed courses include majors from both disciplines. Also, some courses can be taken multiple times for credit (e.g. English 306, 307, 308, 311).

## Appendix G: Enrollments in All Non-Major Writing Courses

Course	Title	Enrollment
<b>100-level Courses</b>		
ENG 120	INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE	671
ENG/THEA 123	INTRODUCTION TO DRAMA & THEATRE	148
CS 127	COMPUTERS, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY/C. S. FOR ARTS AND SCIENCES	73
BCHM 140	BIOTERRORISM: UNDERSTANDING THREATS	16
<b>200-level Courses</b>		
ENG 207	BEGINNING FICTION WRITING	267
ENG/JOUR 206	BEGINNING NONFICTION WRITING	151
ENG 208	BEGINNING POETRY WRITING	139
EDUC 203/PHIL 215	PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION	111
FREN 211	INTERMEDIATE FRENCH GRAMMAR	84
BIOL 210	INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH	81
JOUR/ENG 270	NEWSWRITING AND REPORTING	78
EDUC/HIST 202	HISTORY OF EDUCATION	49
ART HISTORY 226/246	CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN & AMERICAN ART	46
PS 245	AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT	43
LAST/GWST/PS 227	WOMEN AND LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS/WOMEN AND WORLD POLITICS	36
MUS 295	MUSIC & LIT IN 19 <sup>TH</sup> CENT EUROPE/MUSIC AND DEATH/MUSICAL EMOTION	30
CHEM 212	ORGANIC CHEMISTRY II	28
CLAS 201	ANCIENT ROME/ROMAN CIVILIZATION	24
ART/LAST 221	NATIVE ARTS OF THE AMERICAS	22
ART/AMST 261	AMERICAN ART, ARCHITECTURE, & CULTURE	21
CTL/ENG 275	ADVANCED COMPOSITION	19
ANSO 295	MEDIA IMAGES OF CRIME	18
CHEM 215	INORGANIC CHEMISTRY	13
ART/CLAS 295	ETRUSCAN AND ROMAN ART/ISLAMIC ART AND ARCHITECTURE	13
<b>300-level Courses</b>		
ENG 307	FICTION WORKSHOP	103
PSYC 369	EVOLUTION AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR	55
PS 362	AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL LAW I	46
GWST/PREC/IDIS 312	GAY AND LESBIAN IDENTITIES	42
PS 363	AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL LAW II	30
ENG 308	POETRY WORKSHOP	30
LAST/PS 326	COMPARATIVE REVOLUTION	24
HIST/LAST/PS 314	HISTORY OF 20 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY LATIN AMERICA/MODERN LATIN AMERICA	24
ENG/JOUR 371	IN-DEPTH REPORTING	21
JOUR 370	EDITORIAL VISION: FEATURE WRITING/FEATURE & INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING	21
HIST 380	BRITISH IMPERIALISM /IRELAND & ENGLAND/TOPICS IN BRITISH HISTORY	20
BKST/PREC 336	SCIENCE & THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE & GENDER	17
EDUC 310	PERSPECTIVES ON CURRICULUM	16
BKST/HIST 366	AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT	16
PS 362	AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL LAW I	14
PS 342	THE MODERN THEORISTS	14
MATH 321	MATHEMATICAL STATISTICS I	13
PS 315	CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY	13
ENG 306	CREATIVE NONFICTION WORKSHOP	12

HIST 363	THE GREAT SOCIETY	12
ENG 343	ENLIGHTENMENT LITERATURE	12
ENG 306	CREATIVE NONFICTION WORKSHOP	12
<b>Course</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>
ART 225	19th C EUROP&AM ART & ARCHITECT	12
MATH 300	MATHEMATICAL STRUCTURES	12
ART 222	MEDIEVAL ART AND ARCHITECTURE	11
ART 224	BAROQUE ART AND ARCHITECTURE	11
HIST 373	WOMEN, GENDER & AMERICAN REVOLUT	11