

Objectives for Writing Intensive Courses at Elon

A writing intensive course is a special opportunity for faculty and students to use plentiful writing as a means for communication and discovery. Such courses encourage both writing to learn and learning to write. The emphasis is on using writing as a means to achieve the aims and objectives of the particular course. In so doing, writing intensive courses promote the following goals:

1. Writing as Discovery: Most public writing derives from private reflection and personal engagement with ideas. Students in writing intensive courses spend significant time completing ungraded writing assignments that encourage them to develop the habit of using writing as a means to explore new ideas, reflect on these ideas in relation to themselves, and construct knowledge for themselves.
2. Writing/Thinking as Process: The writing process of matures writers is reinforced in writing intensive classes. Graded assignments are “unpacked,” which means that students are given instruction in pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. Student revision on preliminary drafts is based on response from peers and/or the instructor. Students are held to clear standards of readable, well-edited papers.
3. Writing in Context: Purpose and audience are the primary factors shaping discourse. When graded writing is assigned, students are given clear instructions with regard to purpose and format, and are given help in considering the impact of their words on the designated audience.
4. Writing to Achieve Course Aims: The assignments in a writing intensive course are used to provoke higher levels of thinking, as opposed to merely checking that information has been memorized. Ideally, assignments are sequenced so that each prepares students for the next, more challenging, task.
5. Amount of Writing: Students will be willing to write only if their writing is an integral part of the course; therefore, a significant portion (possibly 50% or more) of a student’s course grade should be based on written work, in contrast to other types of evaluation such as objective tests.