To: All Faculty

From: Writing Committee Chair Nancy Hinman

Date: December 5, 2008

Re: Deadline for writing course review

Writing course forms (electronic copy and signed original) for courses to be considered for general education writing courses and upper-division writing requirement must be submitted to the Faculty Senate Office, UH 221, camie.foos@mso.umt.edu by Friday February 6, 2009. Current writing courses that do not apply for writing status under the new guidelines will lose their designation. Proposals for new courses or changes to existing courses must be accompanied by the Course Form.

The revised criteria and learning goals for writing courses are appended and available at: http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/writing/WritingGuidelines11-13-08.htm

The writing forms have been revised to match the new criteria and learning goals so please do not use old forms. Old forms will be returned without review. The forms are available at: www.umt.edu/facultysenate/main/forms_instructions.htm.

The forms must be complete and have the department chair’s signature.

Answers to frequently asked questions are available at: http://www.umt.edu/facultysenate/writing/FAQs_10-8-08.pdf

Information regarding information literacy is available at: http://www.lib.umt.edu/informationliteracy/

Please inform the Writing Committee Chair, Nancy Hinman (nancy.hinman@umontana.edu) of potential problems meeting the deadline. Late proposals may not be approved by the end of the spring semester. Please contact the
Writing Course Guidelines

I. Overview
The ability to write effectively is fundamental to a liberal arts education, essential to academic inquiry, and important for student success in academic, professional, and civic endeavors. Composition and writing courses at The University of Montana (UM) help students become adept at writing for a variety of audiences and purposes. Effective writing both strengthens and is strengthened by an understanding of critical thinking and information literacy. Students should learn to use writing as a means of finding, synthesizing, analyzing, and evaluating information, retaining course material, and using that information and material in order to form and express coherent thoughts and arguments.

Writing Requirements for Graduation
To fulfill the writing requirements at UM and to demonstrate writing proficiency, students should satisfy the following four requirements in order:

1. Composition (ENEX 101, WTS 101, ENEX 200, or equivalent), with a grade of C- or better
2. One approved writing course (W), with a grade of C- or better
3. The Upper-Division Writing Proficiency Assessment, with a score of 3 or better
4. Departmental upper-division writing requirement consisting of one of the following options:
   a. One upper-division writing course (numbered 300-400), with a grade of C- or better defined by the department and approved by the ASCRC Writing Committee, or
   b. An upper-division writing expectation defined by the department and approved by the ASCRC Writing Committee

A. Composition Course
The Composition Program seeks to advance the University’s mission to pursue academic excellence in the context of writing instruction. Composition courses facilitate students’ achievements in exploring and enacting rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, writing and research processes; and knowledge of conventions. Writing is a powerful means of purposeful inquiry, communication, and action in the classroom and in the world. (For current information, see: http://www.cas.umt.edu/english/composition/curriculum.htm.)
B. Approved Writing Courses
Courses accompanied by a “W” designation are writing courses. These courses use informal and formal writing to enhance writing skills and promote critical thinking in content areas. Information literacy is integrated into all general education courses approved for Group I: English Writing Skills. Students are required to complete Composition (ENEX 101, WTS 101, ENEX 200), unless exempted, prior to taking a W-designated course.

C. Writing Proficiency Assessment
The Upper-Division Writing Proficiency Assessment is a two-hour essay exam that all students seeking their first undergraduate degree must pass. Students pass the exam if their essay demonstrates adequate critical reading, writing, and reasoning skills as measured against a published scoring rubric (see: http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter/documents/17.WPAScoringCriteria.pdf). The exam must be taken after students complete 45 credits and before students earn 70 credits.

D. Upper-Division Writing Requirement in the Major
These writing requirements (courses or expectations) typically focus on the student’s major area of study. For this reason, faculty members within specific disciplines develop courses or expectations based on the conventions for research, analysis, and writing in their field.

Types of Acceptable Writing Tasks

Writing tasks may include formal and informal, graded and ungraded, and in-class or out-of-class exercises. The range of possible writing tasks includes journal entries, case studies, blogs, e-portfolios, hypertext, lab reports, free writing, annotated bibliography, essay, analyses, proposals, abstracts, reviews, field notes, electronic postings, research papers, or proofs. For more ideas, contact the Writing Center at http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter/.

II. Guidelines

Writing requirements establish a logical progression of development as students move through the college curriculum. Therefore, approved writing courses and upper-division writing requirements have different outcomes. The W-designated courses and the upper-division writing requirement are reviewed and approved by the Writing Subcommittee and Academic Standards and Curriculum Review Committee (ASCRC). Proposals for all writing courses and expectations should specifically address how they will achieve the learning outcomes. Faculty who propose writing courses or are assigned to teach departmental courses are encouraged to seek guidance from the Mansfield Library, the Writing Center, and other campus resources. Specifically, collaboration with library
faculty is encouraged for addressing information literacy. Departments will determine the criteria for graders, if used.

A. Approved Writing Courses
Students should plan to take an approved writing course after completing the composition course and prior to taking the writing proficiency assessment. Upon completing the W-designated course, students should understand writing as means to practice academic inquiry and demonstrate the ability to formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing. Upon completing the W-designated course, the student should be able to:

1. Learning Outcomes
   - Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
   - Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
   - Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
   - Revise written work based on constructive feedback
   - Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
   - Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions
   - Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

2. Requirements for Approved Writing Courses*
   - Limit enrollment to 25 students per instructor or grader
   - Identify course outcomes in the syllabus
   - Provide students with detailed written instructions, including criteria for evaluation, for all formal writing assignments
   - Provide adequate instruction and require students to write frequently for specified audiences, purposes, and genres
     - Formal or informal
     - Graded or ungraded
     - In-class or out-of-class
   - Provide feedback on students’ writing and give students the opportunity to revise and resubmit at least one formal writing assignment
   - Require each student individually to compose at least 16 pages of writing for assessment over the course of the semester
   - Base a significant portion (at least 50% of a 3 credit course or equivalent hours) of the course grade on student performance on writing assignments
   - Incorporate information literacy into learning outcomes, instruction, and assignments

* Proposals requesting approval for writing courses that do not meet the requirements should include justifications for these changes that address how learning outcomes will still be achieved.
B. Upper-Division Writing Requirement in the Major

The upper-division writing requirement is defined for the major and may be met by either a course or an expectation as articulated by the program. Upon completing the upper-division writing requirement, students should be more active, confident, and effective contributors to a body of knowledge and should understand the ethical dimensions of inquiry. Upon completing the upper-division writing requirement, the student should be able to:

1. Learning Outcomes
   - Identify and pursue more sophisticated questions for academic inquiry
   - Find, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information effectively from diverse sources
   - Manage multiple perspectives as appropriate
   - Recognize the purposes and needs of discipline-specific audiences and adopt the academic voice necessary for the chosen discipline
   - Use multiple drafts, revision, and editing in conducting inquiry and preparing written work
   - Follow the conventions of citation, documentation, and formal presentation appropriate to that discipline
   - Develop competence in information technology and digital literacy

2. Requirements for Upper-Division Writing Courses*
   - Limit enrollment to 25 students per instructor or grader
   - Identify course outcomes in the syllabus
   - Provide students with detailed written instructions, including criteria for evaluation, for all formal writing assignments
   - Provide students with tools and strategies for effective writing and editing in the major
   - Require students to write frequently for specified audiences, purposes, and genres
     - Formal or informal
     - Graded or ungraded
     - In-class or out-of-class
   - Provide feedback on students’ writing and give students the opportunity to revise and resubmit at least one formal writing assignment
   - Require each student to individually compose at least 20 pages of writing for assessment over the course of the semester
   - Base a significant portion (at least 50% of a 3 credit course or equivalent hours) of the course grade on student performance on written assignments
   - Incorporate information literacy into learning outcomes, instruction, and assignments
3. Requirements for Upper-Division Writing Expectations not fulfilled by a Course

- This approach to fulfilling the upper-division writing requirement should be designed to produce learning outcomes similar to those described for upper-division writing courses.

* Proposals requesting approval for upper-division writing experiences that do not meet the requirements should include justifications for these changes that address how learning outcomes will still be achieved.

** Proposals requesting approval for upper-division writing experiences that are not fulfilled by a course or combination of courses must clearly articulate how the learning outcomes will still be achieved.