

WR courses: Fact and Fiction

Please see full guidelines at <http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/writingprogram/writingrichguidelines/>

For harried professors who need to know the short answer to “What would a WR course require of me?” we offer the following abridged version.

	This DOES mean that...	This does NOT necessarily mean...
A WR course will normally have 3 or more writing assignments.	...students have opportunities for improving their writing over the course of a term.	...three formal papers with detailed feedback from the professor on each.
A WR course will offer students feedback on their writing.	...professors provide written comments.	...professors comment on sentence structure or mechanics; ...professors line-edit students’ writing; ...professors comment in detail on all writing assignments; ...all feedback the student receives must be from the professor.
A WR course will provide students with opportunities for revision.	...students have an opportunity to write more than a single draft of at least one assignment.	...professors must read, comment on and grade multiple drafts of a single paper.

Since many faculty seem to have a “mental model” of how writing must be taught that is extremely labor-intensive, we offer here a few examples of how professors can offer opportunities for revision with no extra demands on their time—and perhaps with the added bonus of having better papers to read:

- A professor gives two due dates for an essay, one for the first draft and one for the second. Along with the final draft, students hand in a cover sheet from an outside reader (writing tutor, classmate, other) and a paragraph describing improvements made in the second draft. The professor does not read or comment on the first draft.
- A larger paper is divided into smaller steps. After each step, the professor discusses common problems, which students then incorporate into the final version of the paper.
- After students have submitted their first papers, the professor shows examples of strong and weak introductory paragraphs. Students revise and resubmit their introductions based on what they have learned.
- A professor assigns one-page response papers every week. Students then choose one of these to revise and expand.
- A professor invites students to revise and resubmit a paper, but does not give detailed feedback on the revised version.
- Students use in-class exploratory writing as a basis for a more polished essay.
- A professor returns papers marred by mechanical errors ungraded (and unedited), asking the student to fix them and resubmit.