

**POLICY MEMORANDUM NO. 231**

**TO:** All Instructional Faculty,  
Deans and Department Heads

**FROM:** Charles W. Steger

**DATE:** June 7, 2004

**SUBJECT:** Revision of the Writing Intensive Requirement

Approved by University Core Curriculum Committee: February 19, 2004  
Approved by Commission on Undergraduate Studies and Policies: April 12, 2004  
First Reading by University Council: April 19, 2004  
Approved by University Council: May 3, 2004  
Approved by the President: May 3, 2004  
Effective Date: Class Entering Fall 2005

**Whereas** the six credit hour or equivalent Writing Intensive requirement at Virginia Tech has been successful in highlighting the importance of student writing for ten years; and

**Whereas** the maturation of that program has led to a realization that varied formats of communication in a discipline, including spoken, visual, and written forms, as well as information literacy, are necessary for undergraduates to become entry-level professionals; and

**Whereas** the University's Core Curriculum affirms the importance of writing in *Area 1: Writing and Discourse* with a first-year writing requirement that is not affected by this resolution; and

**Whereas** resource limitations have resulted in increased class sizes that make it difficult to effectively provide quality writing experiences for students via courses currently designated as upper-level Writing Intensive (WI); and

**Whereas** the assessment of spoken, visual and written communication requirements in a discipline necessarily goes beyond an individual course and must reflect the discipline as a whole, with competencies identified by the professionals in those disciplines; and

**Whereas** disciplinary assessment is currently accomplished through the University's existing state-mandated, five-year departmental reporting structure; and

**Whereas**

- Products used for developing and communicating ideas have changed; and
- Processes used for developing and communicating ideas have changed; and
- Audiences have widened; and
- Undergraduates' needs have become more complex; and
- Departments can best reflect disciplinary demands; and
- Departments can best foster specific disciplinary competencies;

**Therefore be it resolved** that the University Core Curriculum Committee recommends the following actions be taken effective with the entering class of 2005:

1. That Virginia Tech affirms its commitment to ensuring that every graduate is able to effectively use a variety of spoken, visual and written communication strategies; and
2. a. That the entire writing-intensive requirement be transitioned into a **spoken, visual and written communication requirement in the major**; and  
b. That initial responsibility for planning, implementation and assessment of **writing-intensive** requirement be transitioned from the University Core Curriculum to the department level; and
3. That University-level oversight of student competencies for the **spoken, visual and written communication requirement in the major** be placed in the Office of the Provost; reporting of student success will be accomplished via the state mandated, five-year cycle of the University's departmental assessment reports, and
4. That responsibility for deciding how to implement curriculum to recognize communication needs and requirements should be centered in departments. Departments can choose to identify alternate curricular methods for addressing broader message development and presentation skills; they shall submit a plan for addressing the **spoken, visual and written communication requirement in major**. As an alternative choice, departments may decide to continue with the existing model (WI and Writing across the Major) because it best meets their disciplinary demands and student needs. The University Core Curriculum Committee will manage the initial approval process for departmental choice during the transition from writing intensive requirement to spoken, visual and written communication requirement in major. All colleges must submit departmental plans for the speaking-visual-writing requirement to the University Core Curriculum Committee by December 8, 2004. All departments must have an approved plan by July 1, 2005. Student checksheets must reflect the approved plan.

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5. That selected departments from each college may pilot test implementation of new models during the 2004-05 academic year; and selected departments from each college shall pilot test implementation during the 2005-2006 academic year, and
6. That the Office of Academic Assessment, the University Writing Program, and the Center for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, in conjunction with the Office of the Provost, shall establish support mechanisms for departmental planning and assessment related to this change.