For Instructors and Faculty

Developing Important Habits of Mind for Writers

University Writing Seminars (UWS) are inquiry-based writing courses. In them, students should use writing and reading (primarily from nonfiction texts) to investigate issues that are significant for their development as writers and readers in an academic context. Through this work, students will develop habits of mind that are important for writers: assessing audience expectations; reading critically; engaging with others’ ideas in analytic and research-based writing; developing control over surface features of writing; and discovering, cultivating and being reflective about their writing processes. This development takes place recursively—that is, students master these strategies by practicing with them repeatedly through their work in this course and others at Brandeis. This work begins in UWS and continues through other required courses, by the end of which successful students will have achieved these outcomes.

Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing
In the UWS, students will practice with the following strategies. By the end of the UWS, students will:

- Use writing and discussion to work through and interpret complex ideas from readings and other texts (e.g., visual, musical, verbal).
- Critically analyze their own and others’ choices regarding language and form (e.g., in student texts or formally published texts).
- Engage in multiple modes of inquiry using text (e.g., field research, library-based inquiry, Web searching).
- Incorporate significant research (as above) into writing that engages a question and/or topic and uses it as a central theme for a substantive, research-based essay.
- Use writing to support interpretations of text, and understand that there are multiple interpretations of text.
- Consider and express the relationship of their own ideas to the ideas of others.

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn:

- To use writing for critical thinking in their field.
- To develop relationships among critical thinking and analytical reading and writing in their field.
- To find relationships among language, knowledge and power in their field.

Processes
In the UWS, students will practice with the following strategies. By the end of the UWS, students will:

- Use written, visual and/or experience-based texts as tools to develop ideas for writing.
- Understand that writing takes place through recurring processes of invention, revision and editing.
- Develop successful, flexible strategies for their own writing through the processes of invention, revision and editing.
- Experience and understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes.
- Learn to critique their own and others' work.
- Be reflective about their writing processes.

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn:

- To build toward final products of writing in stages.
- To review work in progress in collaborative peer groups for substantive revision and editing.
- To save extensive editing for later parts of the writing process.

Knowledge of Conventions
In the UWS, students will practice with the following strategies. By the end of the UWS, students will:

- Understand the conventions of particular genres of writing.
- Use conventions associated with a range of dialects, particularly standardized written English (but not necessarily limited to it).
- Recognize and address patterns in their writing that unintentionally diverge from patterns expected by their audience(s).
- Practice using academic citational systems (MLA or APA) for documenting work.

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn:

- The conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format and documentation in their fields.
- Strategies through which better control of conventions can be achieved.

http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/instructors-faculty/uws/outcomes.html