

## **The Writing Proficiency Requirement Revised policy statement, effective August 2021**

Midwestern State University requires all students seeking baccalaureate degrees to fulfill the Writing Proficiency Requirement. Students may fulfill this requirement in ONE of the three following ways:

- Take and pass the Writing Proficiency Examination
- Take and pass ENGL 2113 Intermediate Composition and Grammar.
- Take and pass two courses designated as Writing Intensive (WI). One of these WI courses may be a Texas Core Curriculum Course, but one of those courses must be outside of the core.

Students transferring to MSU with more than 90 semester credit hours should take the Writing Proficiency Examination during their second long (fall or spring) semester at MSU and if necessary enroll in and pass 2113 in their third semester. Alternatively, they may choose to enroll in and pass 2113 in their first semester without attempting the examination or enroll in and pass two Writing Intensive courses before graduation.

Students who transfer to MSU-Texas with designated (noted on transcript) Writing Intensive courses from another university may use one of those courses to partially fulfill the Writing Proficiency Requirement. At least one of the two WI courses must be completed at MSU-Texas.

Each student's academic advisor and major program are responsible for making the student aware of the Writing Proficiency Requirement and the ways in which it can be fulfilled.

### **The Writing Proficiency Examination**

**Administration.** The Writing Proficiency Examination is administered by the Writing Program Administrator (WPA), who reports directly to the Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs. . The WPA appoints English faculty as necessary to assist in grading the exam. In consultation with the Provost and the AVP, the WPA recommends a fee schedule for the compensation of the graders, and clerical assistants as necessary. These fees then require the approval of the Board of Regents.

The Office of Writing Proficiency, under the supervision of the WPA, is responsible for the following:

- preparing the exam,
- scheduling specific dates and locations for the exam,
- disseminating information about the exam and about testing times and places,
- overseeing the grading of the exams to ensure fairness and consistency,
- recording exam results and maintaining comparative statistics of present and past results,
- arranging special accommodations for students with disabilities and/or at a distance, and
- clearing holds placed on students who have not fulfilled the Writing Proficiency Requirement by 90 hours and/or who did not pass the Writing Proficiency Exam.

**Nature of the Exam.** The Writing Proficiency Examination tests the ability of juniors to write a college-level persuasive essay. Each test-taker responds to one of two prompts by writing an essay of at least 300 words in a two-hour period. (Extra time and alternative locations may be arranged for students with documented disabilities.)

**Criteria for Grading.** A passing essay responds to one of the prompts with a clearly stated thesis, which then receives adequate support and development in the rest of the essay. Additionally, a passing essay

presents a clearly organized argument, demonstrates reasonable command of sentence structure and vocabulary, and adheres to standard American conventions of spelling, usage, and punctuation. Exam instructions and the descriptive rubric used by the graders are available on the Writing Proficiency Requirement website along with additional exam preparation materials.

**Who May Take the Exam.** Students may take the exam **only** after completing 60 university credit hours (junior standing) and **only** after passing both Communication Core courses (6 hours). Students may take the exam only once.

**When and Where the Exam Is Given.** The Writing Proficiency Examination is given through the university's online learning management system (Desire2Learn) and proctored by its internal security services (Respondus-Lockdown Browser). Each academic year, three exam windows are scheduled by the Office of Writing Proficiency. Exact dates and locations are published in each semester's *Schedule of Classes* and on the MSU web page. Beginning approximately six (6) weeks prior to each exam window, students will be able to register online at the Writing Proficiency Requirement website.

**Exam Procedures.** Potential test-takers must complete an online survey to ensure that they qualify for the exam. Then they should purchase tickets through an online link. Once the students have been vetted and tickets purchased, students will be added to a WPE D2L course. Students self-select the day and time of their examination within the exam window (usually 5 consecutive days between the hours of 8:00AM CT and 11:59PM CT).

Before beginning the exam, students launch the Respondus-Lockdown Browser and provide photo identification to the security system and verify that their testing area is secure. Students may use scratch paper, but no other materials or aids are permitted. Test-takers have 120 minutes to complete and submit their written response.

**Special Accommodations.** Students with documented disabilities who wish to arrange special accommodations for the Writing Proficiency Examination should do so through the Office of Disability Support Services at least two weeks before the date of the exam. Midwestern State University will make any reasonable accommodation that does not directly affect the skills being tested in this exam.

**Exam Evaluation.** The final draft of each essay is read by two full-time members of the English faculty, who have no knowledge of the writer's name or of the other reader's evaluation. No marks are placed directly on the essay, but each grader notes errors, records his or her evaluation of the essay based on the writing proficiency rubric, and assigns an overall grade of pass or fail. If the two graders do not agree on whether the essay passes or fails, it is read in the same manner by a third member of the English faculty, also without knowledge of the writer's name, for a final determination. The evaluation of the graders is final, and though a student, on request, may review his or her rubrics, there is no appeal. Essays and rubrics will not be returned to the student.

**Exam Results.** The results of the Writing Proficiency Examination are confidential; therefore, results cannot be given out over the phone or via e-mail. They are reported via confidential memo from the Office of Writing Proficiency to the deans of the colleges, to the Provost, and to the Registrar. The Registrar posts each **passing** result to the individual student's transcript. Students should check their transcripts through the MSU website approximately four weeks after the test window to determine if they passed the exam. A "Writing Proficiency Exam Failed" hold will be applied to students whose essays do not pass the exam. The hold must be released by our office.

### **ENGL 2113: Intermediate Composition and Grammar**

Skill in clear composition and control of standard English usage are the primary objectives of the course. The course can be used to satisfy the Writing Proficiency Requirement, but it must be taken through MSU;

no substitutions are permitted. Several sections, both online and on-campus, are offered every long semester and during the summer sessions.

### **Writing Intensive Courses**

For a Writing Intensive designation, a course must:

- Maintain a *recommended* cap of no more than 25 students
- Assign at least three formal, graded writing assignments comprising at least 50% of the final course grade
- Give attention to writing process (planning, drafting, revising), including the opportunity to revise at least one assignment
- Provide instructor feedback (notes or suggestions for revision) on writing
- Use common, but flexible WI rubric on at least one writing assignment for program assessment purposes

All MSU courses are eligible for WI designation except the required List A Communication Core Course (ENGL 1143 Academic Research and Writing). Potential WI Courses are proposed to the University Writing Council by academic colleges or departments.