Proposal and rationale for CLAS BA First-year Writing Requirement/Version 2

Proposed wording:
Students must take (or have credit for) two writing courses that satisfy Core Goal 2 Learning Outcome 1.

1. A student whose initial placement is ENGL 101 must take ENGL 101 and ENGL 102.
2. A student whose initial placement is in ENGL 102 or ENGL 105 (and who does not have credit for ENGL 101) must take ENGL 102 or ENGL 105 and an additional Goal 2 Outcome 1 course.

Students are highly encouraged to take additional writing-intensive courses beyond the minimum requirement.

Rationale
As part of its self-assessment proposal, the KU FSE (First- and Second-Year English) Program highlights the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE) 2008 annual report, which indicates that "when institutions provide[e] students with extensive, intellectually challenging writing activities, the students engage[e] in more deep learning activities such as analysis, synthesis, integration of ideas from various sources, and grapple[e] more with course ideas both in and out of the classroom" (23). The goals for writing for the current FSE sequence is based on the Writing Program Administrators’ (WPA) Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition, which emphasize rhetorical awareness and flexibility; critical thinking, reading, and writing; and effective writing strategies both within and beyond the academic environment. These goals are in line with the requirements for KU Core Goal 2.1.

The Bachelor of Arts degree, as has been noted in the context of other CUSA-recommended requirements, is unique among the degrees offered at the University of Kansas in its commitment to both breadth and depth of knowledge, and is intended to ensure graduates the greatest flexibility and choice in their future study or career. The course goals already established for the FSE program are framed to facilitate student success not only in any sophomore-level-and-higher courses with a writing component, but also more broadly to help students "use writing and reading for inquiry, thinking, learning, and communicating in a variety of environments" (see ENGL 101, 102, and 105 goals, Appendix I); these goals have guided CUSA’s approval of Goal 2.1 courses. Critical reading and clear, disciplined, inventive and effective writing are essential building blocks not only for a University degree but more generally for success after graduation.

At the current time, the KU Core does not propose any course sequencing for Goal 2.1, and the Provost’s office has suggested that students will be able to place out of the writing requirement with scores, as indeed they are able to now. Our proposal ensures some course sequencing for those students whose scores suggest the need for a full two-course introduction to college-level writing, and uses placement scores to continue to help ensure student success.

Our proposal also prevents students from testing out of College-level writing instruction entirely. The previous College general education requirements ensured that, even were students to test out of (or transfer in) their ENGL 101 and 102/5 courses, they would also have one writing-intensive course with clear writing outcomes (200-level ENGL, unless they placed out), and at least two further writing-intensive courses (the HWC sequence) with the likelihood of others distributed among the principal course requirements (especially the 2-3 humanities and 2-3 social science courses required of the various bachelor’s degrees) no matter what major they chose to pursue. Since that further writing experience is no longer ensured as part of a bachelor’s degree from the College, requiring students to take at least two writing courses will ensure some basic college-level writing experience before graduation. We also highly encourage students to build on that basic experience, and encourage departments and programs to build major-specific writing instruction into their curricula, to help compensate for these changes to the general education requirements and to prepare students for writing in their fields.

ENGL 101 and 102/105 remain specified in the requirements for the BA not only to clarify the course sequencing but to help ensure both that the University remains in line with agreed-upon Regents writing standards and that
students will be able to transfer courses fairly and logically from and to other schools with which we already have articulation agreements. The requirement will also prepare KU students for future study in graduate or professional schools where writing instruction is required for admission; KU’s ENGL 101 and 102/105 have a consistent history of fulfilling such requirements. In addition, the FSE Program is part of an intensive, multi-year assessment process (2008-2013), and the program participates with other Kansas schools and Regents institutions to ensure that its writing program continues to meet shared goals. Best practices in writing instruction are a research-based field in which the directors of FSE participate, and teachers in the FSE Program participate in ongoing training, grade norming, mentorship, and pedagogical development activities to ensure that they use best practices in writing instruction. We encourage other departments and faculty who hope to propose goal 2.1 courses to continue to be part of the professional, pedagogical conversation about writing instruction, and to ensure that their courses fulfill the goals of 102/5.

Appendix I

Goals for English 101

By the end of English 101, students should be able to do the following:

1. **Analyze how language and rhetorical choices vary across texts and different institutional, historical, and/or public contexts**
   a. Analyze multiple texts and contexts for their different purposes, audiences, subjects, and genres
   b. Analyze the language and rhetorical choices of texts and contexts and how they reflect their different purposes, audiences, subjects, and genres
   c. Critically evaluate how language and rhetorical choices reflect and represent multiple rhetorical purposes, audiences, subjects, and genres

2. **Demonstrate their rhetorical flexibility within and beyond academic writing**
   a. Analyze, frame, and respond to differences (including differences of purpose, audience, genre, and conventions) in writing tasks by varying content, structure, and language in ways appropriate to the rhetorical context
   b. Recognize how standards for syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling vary across rhetorical contexts and demonstrate an ability to fulfill standards appropriate for those contexts
   c. Use a variety of voices, tones, styles, and levels of formality
   d. Recognize and experiment with the rhetorical effects of language choices

3. **Revise to improve their own writing**
   a. Develop their ideas through interaction with other writers and readers
   b. Give and receive critical responses to writing, and use suggestions appropriately to improve their own writing
   c. Critique their own writing and revise to improve global qualities (focus, development, organization) as well as local qualities (style, usage)

Goals for English 102

By the end of English 102, students should be able to do the following:

1. **Maintain and continue to improve the abilities gained in English 101**

2. **Use writing and reading for inquiry, thinking, learning, and communicating**
   a. Work with demanding readings and learn to interpret and evaluate these readings
   b. Use writing as a problem-solving process that fosters the discovery, analysis, and synthesis of new ideas
   c. Analyze and synthesize multiple points of view so as to understand that multiple perspectives on an idea are in operation at the same time

3. **Write in ways appropriate to academic rhetorical contexts**
a. Recognize and critically evaluate how a writer’s choices (content, organization, format, rhetorical moves, style, grammar, etc.) reflect and represent multiple cultural and/or historical perspectives
b. Engage in collaborative work at a variety of levels (research, inventions, writing, etc.) to prepare students for team/group situations, communication in the workplace, and lifelong learning

4. Engage in a variety of research methods to study and explore topics
a. Propose, plan and complete research projects using research methods appropriate to the writing task
b. Effectively integrate a variety of appropriate sources into their writings
c. Learn and use at least one system of documentation responsibly

Goals for English 105

By the end of English 105, students should be able to do the following:

1. Use writing and reading for inquiry, thinking, learning, and communicating
   a. Work with demanding readings and learn to interpret these readings
   b. Analyze the language and rhetorical choices of multiple texts in order to understand how they reflect their historical, cultural, and/or generic contexts
   c. Use writing as a problem-solving process that fosters the discovery, analysis, and synthesis of new ideas
   d. Analyze and synthesize multiple texts or points of view to understand how multiple perspectives can contribute to understanding an overarching idea or theme

2. Engage in writing processes appropriate to academic rhetorical contexts
   a. Learn how to analyze a primary text and write about it using textual evidence
   b. Become adept at following a multi-step process for composing a paper (from brainstorming through final revision)
   c. Propose, plan and complete research projects using methods appropriate to the writing task
   d. Learn how to identify, gather, and evaluate sources for a research paper
   e. Effectively integrate a variety of appropriate sources into their writings
   f. Learn and use at least one system of documentation responsibly

3. Revise to improve their own writing
   a. Develop their ideas through interaction with other writers and readers
   b. Give and receive critical responses to writing, and use suggestions appropriately to improve their own writing
   c. Critique their own writing and revise to improve global qualities (focus, development, organization) as well as local qualities (style, usage)