

To: Graduate Coordinators
From: Linda Stonecipher, Director of Graduate Programs
Sue Monahan, Associate Provost for Academic Effectiveness
Adele Schepige, President, Faculty Senate
Re: Assessment of writing WOU graduate programs in 2016-17
Date: September 19, 2016

Background

Most WOU graduate programs engage in program-level assessment, especially around specialized knowledge and external accreditation standards. In addition, our accreditors expect WOU to have its own expectations for the proficiencies of our graduate degree recipients. In spring 2016, representatives of a variety of graduate programs met to review the standards laid out in the Lumina Foundation's *Degree Qualifications Profile*. There was general consensus that these standards provide a reasonable starting point for the overall assessment of the learning outcomes of WOU graduate degree recipients.

In Fall 2016, the group met again with some new participants and some past participants unable to attend. At the suggestion of the graduate director, "communicative skills," especially **WRITING**, were selected as the first skill we would assess among those who complete our graduate programs. We reviewed a proficiency standard based on the "capstone" level of writing for undergraduates from the LEAP rubric, and considered the utility of this standard in light of actual student work. After review, discussion and some adjustments to the proficiency standard, the group decided to proceed with its use in 2016-17. The target is for all students to, at a minimum, "meet most parts" of the first five criteria and "meet" the sixth criteria.

Suggestions for use

The standard for graduate writing is a tool for WOU faculty to use as we assess our programs and identify areas of strength as well as opportunities for improvement. We will use this standard at the end of Spring 2017 to evaluate a sample of student exit projects and other appropriate writing samples.

Programs should:

- Provide students opportunities to write for both specialized and general audiences because many of our graduates will communicate with both kinds of audiences.
- Identify student work samples that align with the stated criteria (that is, give students the opportunity to demonstrate the skills described in the standard).
- Share the standard for graduate level writing widely with instructors and students.
- Use the rubric to structure feedback to students on their writing skills, keeping in mind that the rubric is unlikely to be the sole determinant of a student's grade on a writing assignment.
- Join us in June 2017 when we use the rubric to review a sample of recent student work, and continue our conversation about how to ensure that our graduate students have opportunities and support to meet our expectations for writing.

If you have questions, please contact Sue Monahan (smonahan@wou.edu) or Linda Stonecipher (stonecl@wou.edu).