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to Wharton

The MBA Writing Requirement: An Overview

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Some Logistics

- Please mute yourself upon joining

- This session is being recorded

- I'll give an overview of the MBA Writing Requirement, then take your questions

- Please put your questions in the chat

- If you have a question, but need to drop off early, you can email me (Brennan Maier) at: bmaier@wharton.upenn.edu

What We'll Cover Today:

- Why is there an MBA Writing Requirement?

- What is the MBA Writing Requirement?

- The Writing Waiver Exam:

  - Where do I find it and when is it due?

  - What is the exam?

  - Can I Use ChatGPT on the exam?

  - How should I prepare for it?

  - What are some tips for doing well on it?

  - Most Common Reasons that People Fail to Waive

  - How do you evaluate it?

  - When do I learn if I waived?

- Questions?

Why is There an MBA Writing Requirement?

- **A Requirement That's Alum-Driven and Grounded in Data:**
  - Most Recent MBA Curricular Review
  - For Wharton MBA alums, the largest skills-gap between career-importance and Wharton-preparation was in writing.
    - **Alums reported that writing was crucial to their career success, but that Wharton hadn't done a very good job of preparing them to write effectively. That's why there is an MBA Writing Requirement.**

What is the MBA Writing Requirement?

There are two parts to the MBA Writing Requirement:

- **An exam** *(the Writing Waiver Exam):*
    - Required for all incoming MBA students
    - Completed online over the summer

- **A course** *(WHCP 6210: Clear and Persuasive Business Writing):*
    - Required only for students who don't waive the exam
    - Completed in-person in the fall
    - Students who take WHCP 6210 in the fall will take the other required Communication course (WHCP 6160 or WHCP 6180) in the spring

The Writing Waiver Exam: Where & When?

Where do I find the exam?

- Through the Pre-Arrival Assessments Page on the Onboarding Site
- Or under 'Courses' in the left menu if you log in to Penn's Canvas site (canvas.upenn.edu)

When is it due?

- For students admitted on or before July 1, the exam is due **July 15th (11:59 P.M. EDT)**
- For students admitted after July 1, the exam is due **July 30th (11:59 P.M. EDT)**

What is the Writing Waiver Exam?

- The exam is designed to evaluate your ability to write clearly, concisely, and persuasively for a business audience.

- To waive, you must demonstrate **mastery of—not mere proficiency in**—writing persuasively for a business audience.

- You will have two hours to write a persuasive message of approximately 500 words (2 pages) in response to an industry-related prompt. You'll have a choice of four prompts.

- **Keep in mind:** when time expires, the exam's text box automatically locks and uploads whatever is or isn't in it. **We cannot accept emailed submissions.**

- For that reason, we **STRONGLY** encourage you to work in the exam's text box, not Word.

Can I Use ChatGPT or other LLM's on the Exam?

No. Here's why:

To write effectively *with* ChatGPT, you need to be able to write *better than* ChatGPT, meaning:

1. You need to be able to recognize whether ChatGPT's output is effective or ineffective for your goal and audience (you need to know the difference between good writing and bad)
2. You need to be able to take whatever ChatGPT spits out and make it better

In other words, the fundamentals of persuasive writing actually matter *more* in the era of ChatGPT. And fundamentals are what the Writing Waiver Exam is designed to test. That's why we don't let you use ChatGPT on the exam. If this is a weakness of yours, we want to identify it early and get you the support you need.

How Should I Prepare for the Exam?

- Review the sample prompts to get a sense of what the exam prompts will ask of you

- *Carefully* review the Persuasive Memo Checklist on the exam's Canvas site

What Are Some Tips for Doing Well on the Exam?

Organization:

- Intro:
  - Recommendation and road map sentence
  - Connect recommendation to outcome (why it matters, why you should care)
- Body:
  - 2-3 fully developed supporting arguments
  - Risks & Mitigations or Counter-Arguments section
- Conclusion:
  - Reiterate recommendation and supporting arguments
  - Create positive or negative urgency to act (what can be gained if we act, or what can be lost if we fail to act)
  - Optional: Next Steps

What Are Some Tips for Doing Well on the Exam?

Formatting:

- Use bullets to introduce a recommendation or argument, not replace it (bullets are great for road map sentences in your introduction)
- Bolded or italicized recommendations and road maps
- Bolded or italicized section headers or summaries

What Are Some Tips for Doing Well on the Exam?

Developing Your Argument:

- Don't confuse bullet points for an argument (we need the sizzle and the steak)
- Don't just regurgitate the data we've given you (we know the data; we gave it to you; we expect you to do something with it)
- Remember to close the back door (state the significance of the data you've cited, explain why it matters [ex. "That matters because…" "That translates to…" "That means that…")]

Most Common Reasons That People Fail to Waive

- Insufficiently Developed Arguments

- Poor Organization (strongly encourage you to follow the checklist that we provide in Canvas)

- General Half-Assery (not putting in the effort)

- ESL Difficulties

- Extreme Verbosity:
  - If one word will do instead of three, use one word.
  - If a short word will suffice, use a short word rather than a long word (or worse, three long words).

What Do You Need to Do to Waive?

- To waive, you must demonstrate **mastery of—not mere proficiency in**—writing persuasively for a business audience.

- Each exam is graded independently by two members of the Communication Program using a version of the rubric on the next slide (there is no AI evaluation of exams).

- We evaluate the exams holistically, meaning there is neither:
  - An absolute cutoff (every score above X waives)
  - Nor a percentage cutoff (everyone who scores above X% waives)

How Do You Evaluate the Exam?

Grading Rubric (100 Possible Points)

Criteria	Points
Argument & Development	40
Style (Clarity & Concision)	30
Organization & Formatting	20
Grammar & Usage	10

When Do I Learn if I Waived?

Results available in mid-August:

- In early August, I will email you your results (waive/not waive).

- All students will also have access to a rubric in Canvas with the averaged scores of your two graders.

Next Steps:

For those who waive:

- Congratulations, you have completed the Writing Requirement.

For those who don't waive:

- You will be placed in a section of WHCP 6210 before Course Match opens

- You'll take WHCP 6210 in the fall, and WHCP 6160 or 6180 in the spring.

Questions?

If you didn't have time to ask your question in the live session:

- You might find it answered in the FAQ we've included on the Writing Waiver Exam's Canvas site

- If not, feel free to reach out to me (Brennan Maier) at: bmaier@wharton.upenn.edu