Editorial

Write to the point

The performance of freshmen and transfer students on last month's writing examination confirms the wisdom of the new Institute writing requirement. That 40 percent of those taking the test failed and another 30 percent passed only marginally demonstrates how desperate is the need for instruction in writing.

A science or engineering education at MIT has long included minimal emphasis on the non-technical aspects of the discipline. The new writing requirement introduces a coherence often lacking in MIT's program by stressing specialized writing skills.

The opportunity is flexible, reasonable and substantial. The September essay examination provides a valuable evaluation for freshmen, affording an opportunity to diagnose their need for writing instruction early or to complete the first phase of the requirement painlessly.

Many colleges require all students to pass an expository writing class: in offering four options for meeting the first phase of the requirement, the faculty recognized the value of allowing students various— including individualized— ways to demonstrate and improve their writing skills.

The second phase of the requirement introduces a coherence often lacking in MIT's program by stressing specialized writing within a student's particular field of professional interest.

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