

Institute Writing Committee

Report to Academic Senate – May, 2019

Committee

The members of the IWC committee this year were

College Representatives

Pam Conley (NTID)

Steven Day (KGCoe), Co-Chair

Seshavadhani Kumar (COS)

Yossi Nygate (CET), Co-Chair

Tae Oh (GCCIS)

Esa Rantanen (CLA)

Shawn Sturgeon (SCB) - Deborah Colton-Hebert (SCB replacement for Fall 2018)

Josh Thorson (CAD)

Nancy Valentage (CHST)

Ex Officio Members

David Martins (University Writing Program Director/Provost's Delegate)

Stanley Van Horn (English Language Center Director)

Cha Ron Sattler-Leblanc (Senior Director, Academic Support Center)

Jacque Mozrall (Dean's Delegate)

Sylvia Perez-Hardy, ICC Convener (non-voting)

Institute Writing Committee Charges

The standing committee charges for the IWC for AY2018-2019 were as follows:

Carryover charges:

1. Liaison with the University Writing Program and other writing-related initiatives
2. Monitor and report to AS the implementation and assessment of the Institute Writing Policy
3. Review proposed WI courses
4. Serve as the faculty liaison with the University Writing Program and other writing-related initiatives, making recommendations when appropriate

New charges:

1. Draft a third section of D01.5 University Writing Policy addressing graduate writing, after completing an investigation of the current state of writing in graduate programs, which includes a working subgroup comprised of at-large key RIT stakeholders (e.g., Wallace Center delegate, Writing Commons Coordinator, Graduate Education delegate, etc.) and an investigation into graduate student experience. This policy should i) provide a clear directive as to how graduate

programs participate in graduate writing support and improvement; ii) modify such policy such that full buy-in from graduate programs is accomplished, based on discussions from IWC1.

2. Add graduate writing to IWC's oversight and evaluate formulation or modification of associated policy across domestic and overseas campuses. Bring to Senate any necessary amendment to Policy B02.0 for Senate discussion and vote.
3. Provide estimates as to the cost of supporting graduate student writing based on findings from new IWC1

The following sections provide updates as to where we stand with respect to each of these charges. New Charges are discussed first.

New Charges

Charge 1 - Draft a Third Section of D01.5 University Writing Policy

Progress on this charge was presented to Academic Senate on April 4, 2019. The content within this section of this report is primarily from the slides presented to AS. After that presentation, the Committee has continued to receive suggestions and will be working on finalizing the policy draft for consideration by the Academic Senate in 2019-20 based on this feedback.

The process to implement this policy has been as follows:

- 1) Survey of all graduate programs (conducted last year) to
 - a. Understand the nature/scope of graduate writing requirements in order to focus support and resource recommendations
 - b. Identify areas of inquiry needing follow-up
 - c. Provide guidance on policy creation or revision
- 2) Development of Tenets, Policy, and Procedure (Fall AY 2018)
 - a. Consideration of survey data
 - b. Conversations with constituents
 - c. Committee debate
- 3) Gathering of feedback from stakeholders on draft (now)

The survey had 13 questions covering writing requirements and assessments for admission and beginning of program, writing-related learning outcomes in the graduate curricula, methods of writing support, and writing-related graduation requirements. The committee members spent time reaching out to program directors that did not initially respond in order to gather comprehensive feedback. The response rate to the survey was high (64 of 80 of programs are represented in the results)

Based on the feedback from the survey, a draft policy has been prepared based on the following motivating values:

- Align with current reporting procedures (e.g., for program review and assessment, for accreditation, etc.) as much as possible

- Create clear guidance for programs on ways to support student achievement in writing
- Provide clear avenues for needs assessments, which support data-driven budget proposal
- Highlight activities that programs are currently providing that support writing achievement

The Graduate Writing Policy is informed by these five basic tenets:

- 1) Students entering post-baccalaureate education must gain specialized knowledge of their field which includes understanding academic and professional forms of communication within the discipline and an ability to communicate ideas purposefully and effectively within the norms of their discipline
- 2) Each graduate program determines the specific writing requirements and outcomes for its students and prepares its students to write and communicate successfully in the discipline
- 3) Through continuous self-assessment, graduate programs provide data regarding student needs and performance on writing outcomes and activities, and these data drive and shape the work of university-wide support programs whose mission is to advance excellence in written communication
- 4) Every graduate student shall demonstrate their ability to write through a program-specific graduation requirement
- 5) In support of graduate writing, the IWC shall conduct needs analyses, incorporating information from the G-PAW, and annually report resource recommendations to the Academic Senate and Provost's Office.

A key component of the policy is the Graduate Plan for Achievement in Writing (G-PAW). The G-PAW is designed to fulfill a dual role:

- 1) To determine if a graduate program has specific program outcomes and graduation requirements related to written communication that meet the requirements of this policy, and
- 2) To articulate a clear plan to support student achievement in disciplinary writing.

The draft policy states:

- Every graduate program at RIT shall have at least one specific program-level student learning outcome and one graduation requirement related to written communication in a natural language
- Every graduate program at RIT shall include in their program requirements at least two discipline-specific activities distributed across the program plan in order to prepare students to complete their writing-related graduation requirement/culminating experience
- Every graduate program at RIT shall submit a Graduate Plan for Achievement in Writing (G-PAW) to the Institute Writing Committee (IWC) that demonstrates how the program meets the policy requirements (above) and every five years present a self-assessment of the writing-related outcome and activities.
- If a program is submitting the G-PAW for the first time and does not yet have a writing-related outcome or activities, and has not developed an assessment plan, then the initial G-PAW submission must specify the program's timeline to meet the policy requirements

This draft policy has been shared with the following key stakeholders

- Twyla Cummings, Graduate Dean
- Graduate Program Directors
- Graduate Council
- Graduate Faculty
- Provost's Office

Current (May 2019) status of development of draft policy:

The Institute Writing Committee has received a number of suggestions and will be working on finalizing the policy in 2019-20 based on this feedback. Anyone with feedback on this policy should address that feedback to IWC Chair Steven Day, as well as the Committee representative from their college or unit.

The recommended (draft) procedure to implement the policy as follows:

- Each program will submit a Graduate Plan for Achievement in Writing (G-PAW) to the IWC according to a university-wide schedule and implementation plan.
- Once programs include a writing-related learning outcome in its cycle of program review (PLOAP), each program will share its self-assessment data with the IWC to demonstrate efforts for continuous improvement of the writing-related outcome and related activities.
- If the program is not able to demonstrate how it already meets the graduate policy requirements, IWC will be available to assist the program to develop an implementation plan to create specific program-level learning outcomes related activities as required by the policy.

The IWC will work with individual graduate programs to provide guidance on how to meet the policy requirements.

Charge 2 - Add Graduate Writing to IWC's Oversight

Implementation of the above policy will include adding graduate writing to the IWC's oversight. The proposed implementation timeline is shown below

Proposed Implementation Timeline	
2019	Submit "grad writing policy" to AS for approval
2020	Submit budget proposal for centralized writing support
2021	Implementation of new university-wide writing support for graduate students; workshops for grad directors on completing G-PAW
2021-22	All graduate programs will submit G-PAW to IWC for review; G-PAW includes a demonstration of how the assessment of program-level, writing-related student learning outcome have been integrated into ongoing academic program review
2022-25	All programs assess program-level, writing-related student learning outcome as part of ongoing academic program review and submit copy of report to IWC

Charge 3 - Provide Estimates as to the Cost of Supporting Graduate Student Writing

This charge should be carried over to AY 2020-2021. It is recommended that the Senate clearly considers the intent of this charge and then clarifies wording to ensure that the committee satisfies their intent. Specifically: The IWC should provide these cost estimates to whom and when? We interpreted this as though there would be costs incurred by academic programs and by University resources, such as the UWP and ELC. The committee can work with academic programs, the UWP, and the ELC to gather these estimated costs. It does not seem to be the responsibility of the IWC to participate in budget requests.

Carryover Charges

Charge 1 - Liaison with the University Writing Program

First Year Writing (FYW)

The University Writing Program works with the Office of Educational Effectiveness Assessment (OEAA; formerly the Office of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment) to assess specific learning outcomes: Revise and improve written products; Express oneself effectively in common college-level written forms using standard American English; and Use relevant evidence gathered through accepted scholarly methods and properly acknowledge sources of information. General Education assessment reports are available [here](#). David Martins, Director of the University Writing Program, is the contact person for the assessment of FYW.

General Education Writing Intensive (WI-GE)

With the recent approval of General Education Essential Outcomes and their inclusion in the new RIT Course Outline, assessment of WI-GE courses can be accomplished following the approved General Education Assessment Plan prepared by the Office of Educational Effectiveness Assessment and has been approved by the General Education Committee. As with other General Education assessment projects, faculty teams can be brought together to assess relevant Gen Ed learning outcomes (e.g., Revise and improve written products; Express oneself effectively in common college-level written forms using standard American English). As appropriate, student materials produced in WI-GE courses might also be used in the assessment of other relevant learning outcomes (e.g., the “Critical Thinking” learning outcome as it pertains to writing projects in specific WI-GE courses).

Program Writing Intensive (WI-PR)

Every undergraduate program has developed a “Program Level Outcomes Assessment Plan” (PLOAP). The IWC recommends that each undergraduate program regularly assess its own WI course(s) as part of its assessment plan. Some programs already have a program-level writing goal and student learning outcome. If the assessment of WI-PR courses has not already been integrated into their assessment plans, programs have a number of opportunities:

1. Programs revise their current assessment plans to include a program goal related to writing and a program SLO related to writing and designate a WI-PR course(s) as the assessment method.
2. Programs align their current WI-PR course-level writing outcome and course to an existing program goal or SLO.

3. Programs align their current WI-PR course-level writing outcome and course to a **new** Program Goal and SLO.

IWC members and the director of the University Writing Program can serve as support personnel, consulting with program faculty in the articulation of program goals and in the design and implementation of the writing outcome assessment. As those assessments are completed and the results reported to the OEEA, the IWC will highlight the findings of each program's assessment as part of its own yearly reporting on the impact of the institute writing policy.

The IWC, along with other campus programs and committees (e.g., the UWP, OEEA, and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee), will collaborate together to develop a Program WI questionnaire that seeks to identify current challenges and opportunities for integrating WI-PR course learning outcomes assessment into existing PLOAPs. That questionnaire would also help identify current practice in WI-PR assessment. Existing examples of programs articulating writing-related program goals and learning outcomes, and their methods of assessing those outcomes, will be made available to the campus community.

Charge 2 - Monitor and Report Implementation and Assessment of the Institute Writing Policy

The requirements of the three courses described in policy has been implemented into the AAR system, which is used for degree audit. The committee believed that this system will ensure that the policy is implemented for every student, and therefore program.

Charge 3 - Review Proposed WI Courses

The committee reviewed all "Writing Intensive" (WI) course materials submitted. The registrar was informed of all courses approved as WI by the committee, and an IWC spreadsheet was updated online each semester. The IWC reviewed and approved **13** courses during the 2018-2019 Academic Year. Several of these courses required revision from submitting departments, so the IWC completed many more reviews than this reported number. Over all, since becoming a standing committee of the Academic Senate, the IWC has approved **183** courses as WI.

Writing in non-English languages: The committee spent a considerable amount of time deliberating if a course that is based on writing in a language other than English should qualify as writing intensive. The committee agreed that non-"natural" languages, such as computer programming languages should NOT count towards a WI course. The committee is nearly equally divided on the issue of non-english *natural languages* (i.e. Italian, Japanese). Valid arguments on either side of this issue were discussed, but are not included here. Institute Policy is silent on this issue: "writing" is used throughout, but the words "language, english, etc." are not included in policy. Because of this, the committee determined it would be an overreach to introduce additional restrictions into the requirements. We decided to judge the course based solely on the criteria described in current Institute Policy, which is communicated to the Institute Writing Committee via Appendix B of the Course Outline Form with no consideration of language. As a result, we approved one course in a natural non-english language (Japanese) that is required for a program focused on the same language (Applied modern language and culture (Japanese track), BS degree). The committee suggest that Senate considers an upcoming charge to clarify policy

about the required language of writing for Writing Intensive Courses. The committee will include clear language in the proposed Graduate Writing Policy related to the language of writing in the program.

Charge 4 - Serve as the Faculty Liaison with the University Writing Program

Continues support as per previous years.

Possible New IWC Charges for AY2019-2020

1. Propose Policy on Graduate Writing as an amendment to D01.5
2. Revise Appendix B of the Course Outline Form to more clearly articulate the expectations of the IWC when reviewing courses for WI designation, and to clarify the procedure and sequencing for course outline approvals.
3. Clarify policy about the required language of writing for Writing Intensive Courses