

University Writing Committee

Report to Academic Senate – May, 2021

Committee

College Representatives

Shawn Sturgeon (SCB), Co-chair
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Jennifer Bailey (KGCOE)
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Ex Officio Members

Twyla Cummings (Deans' Delegate; Grad Ed/Academic Affairs)
Matthew Houdek (Provost's delegate; ex officio, voting)
Pamela Kincheloe (Director, University Writing Program)
Rachel Mazique (At Large)
Cha Ron Sattler-Leblanc (Senior Director, Academic Support Center)
Stanley Van Horn (Director, English Language Center)

Institute Writing Committee Charges

The standing committee charges for the IWC for AY2020-2021 are listed on the Academic Senate website: [UWC Charges AY20-21](#)

Charge 1: Coordinate with the Office of Effective Educational Assessment about the mechanism and logistics related to implementing the Graduate Writing Policy in the revised D01.5.

The Graduate Writing Policy went into effect in Fall semester 2020. Briefly, the Program Level Outcomes Assessment Plan (PLOAP) for each graduate program will be used to assess conformance with the new policy. A summary of the writing-related learning outcomes and formative feedback activities will be prepared by each program at least once every 5 years. This information will be communicated to the UWC through the G-PAW (Graduate Plan for Achievement in Writing) form.

In Fall 2020, the Office of Educational Effectiveness Assessment (EEA) conducted a pilot program to determine the ease of incorporating the G-PAW Form into a graduate program's Annual Program Improvement Progress Report. Six graduate programs were recruited to participate and five programs from four colleges completed the G-PAW form.

An evaluation of the pilot G-PAW forms was undertaken by EEA and the results were summarized in a presentation to the UWC. A list of Best Practices that support graduate writing, a list of barriers to program efforts, and some recommendations for future consideration were all produced.

The UWC has updated the G-PAW form based on the recommendations from the pilot program. The EEA is continuing to work with university partners to refine the submission process via Taskstream and to develop a schedule for each program to complete the G-PAW form over the next 5 years. As of April 2019, only 41 of 83 (49%) of graduate programs had a student learning outcome focused on assessing writing. Therefore the EEA is also working with individual programs that do not currently have a writing related student outcome to incorporate the writing policy requirements into their program.

Charge 1 has been completed.

Charge 2: Evaluate process for the approval of proposed WI courses, including:

- a. Alignment with GEC approval.**
- b. Alignment with posted policy D01.1. Meet with GEC to discuss WI approval requirements that exist in the structure of the Course Outline itself, review new Appendix B.**
- c. Implement WI process flowchart and add it to relevant websites and documents for clarity as to the WI designation process.**
- d. Communicate this process with the Registrar, ICC, GEC, and scheduling officers across the Institute.**
- e. Work with the Registrar to develop a regular means of reporting, tracking, and reporting approvals as they come in, per the flowchart.**

One of the co-chairs met with the chair of GEC and talked about their respective approval processes. The UWC shared its process flowchart with the GEC, and notification lists for disseminating approved courses were compared so they would be in agreement. It was agreed that the two approval processes operate independently; one is not dependent upon the other, and a course can be reviewed as GE and WI at the same time since the two committees are reviewing different appendices to the course outline. However, for WI-GE courses, it is easier if the GE approval is given first.

The process indicated on the WI process flowchart (included with last year's report) is currently being followed. The flowchart will be added to the updated UWC and UWP websites and other reference documents when the website content is updated (see Charge 4 below). A standard email is being used to notify the registrar, college scheduling officer, UWC rep, and course author when a course is approved as WI. A copy of the approved outline is attached to the email. All courses submitted to the UWC for review are entered into a tracking spreadsheet on the UWC Google drive, which is maintained by the UWC chair.

Charge 2 has been completed.

Charge 3: Evaluate system for the tracking and monitoring of WI courses, and the related student requirement for Writing across the curriculum including:

- a. Determine if the implementation of the Writing Requirement within AAR is consistent with policy and aligned with Gen Ed approval process**
- b. Work with the registrar to develop regular means of reporting and tracking WI approvals.**

3a: The committee is not sure what 3a is referencing. With respect to the AAR process, each program manages their own requirements at the program level. If the degree audit process within AAS is deficient, department personnel and the registrar's office should collaborate to correct any mistakes.

3b: A system for reporting and tracking the approval the WI courses has been developed (see flow chart). However, the charge to "Evaluate system for the tracking and monitoring of WI courses" is not complete and should be carried over for next year.

Charge 3a has been completed.

Charge 4: Review IWC website with focus on mission, scope, purpose. Revisit and edit posted material related to IWC processes and structure for consistency. This should include:

- a. D01.5 University Writing Policy**
- b. D01.0 Policies for Curriculum Development**
- c. IWC Website**

In this review particular attention to should be directed to:

- i.) IWC vs. UWC as the name of committee in various places**
- ii.) Membership of IWC**
- iii.) Better defining the relation between the IWC, University Writing Program, and other units.**
- iv.) Advertising of process for submission for WI.**
- v.) Provision of resources to aid in creating and submitting courses for WI designation**

The UWC participated in minor updates of Policies D01.0 and B0.2.0 early in the year, led by the ICC. The name of the committee was “officially” changed to the University Writing Committee, or UWC, and the two policies were updated accordingly. During the update of B02.0, the membership of the UWC was changed to include the First-Year Writing Program Director, the University Writing Program Director, one representative from the Academic Success Center, and one representative from the English Language Center, in addition to the representatives from each college and at large members from the Academic Senate.

The committee has begun to edit the UWC website content to clarify the submission and approval process for WI courses. A new proposed menu structure for the updated website has been developed along with new and revised content, including examples of how each section of Appendix B should be completed.

The committee discussed working with ILI to develop optional 1-hour training tutorials/seminars for faculty as resources to aid in creating and submitting courses for WI designation. Topics could include:

- The benefits of teaching a WI course, or Why you should develop a WI course
- How to teach a WI course
- How to get a WI course approved by the UWC
- Examples of WI pedagogy and best practices

With respect to better defining the relation between the UWC, University Writing Program, and other units, Policy D01.0, Section IV.c-2 outlines the following UWC functions (among others):

- *Define priorities for adequate professional and curricular support for both students and faculty;*
- *Stay current with research on best practices in writing program administration, assess the feasibility and desirability for instituting these practices at RIT, and make recommendations accordingly;*
- *Serve in an advisory role to faculty in the development of assessment methods for writing outcome;*

The UWC members believe that these three functions are better aligned with the UWP and their goals ([UWP Goals](#)), as they are experts in writing and teaching writing. Most faculty serving on the UWC do not feel confident providing professional and curricular writing support, nor do they stay current with research on best practices in writing program administration. In order to transfer these functions to the UWP, policy D01.0 will need to be updated. During this process, the roles of UWC and UWP can be clarified and the working relationship better defined.

Charge 4 is partially completed and ongoing work should be carried over to next academic year.

Ongoing Responsibilities – Described in Policy D01.0-VI.C(2)

Responsibility 1 - The IWC will consult with the various curriculum committees regarding program objectives and the criteria for WI Courses, review courses proposed to carry a WI designation and grant approval for this designation, keep a record of applications and decisions for WI course designation, and inform the RIT community of the approved course proposals.

The committee reviewed all course outlines submitted seeking approval as “Writing Intensive”. As indicated under Charge 2, a standard email is being used to notify the registrar, college scheduling officer, UWC rep, and course author when a course is approved as WI. Documentation for approved courses is being maintained on the UWC Google Drive and includes a spreadsheet tracking the approval process for each course submitted. The UWC reviewed and approved eight (8) courses during the 2020-2021 Academic Year. Some required revision, but every course submitted for approval was eventually approved.

Responsibility 2 - Act as a liaison between all academic units to determine student and faculty needs regarding implementation of the writing policy.

The committee did not spend significant time on this responsibility this academic year.

Responsibility 3 - Define priorities for adequate professional and curricular support for both students and faculty.

The committee did not spend significant time on this responsibility this academic year.

Responsibility 4 - Stay current with research on best practices with writing program administration, assess the feasibility and desirability for instituting these practices at RIT, and make recommendations accordingly.

The committee did not spend significant time on this responsibility this academic year. See Charge #4 above.

Responsibility 5 - Serve in an advisory role in the development of assessment methods for the writing course outcomes.

The committee did not spend significant time on this responsibility this academic year. See Charge #4 above.

Responsibility 6 - Assess the Writing across the Curriculum Program.

To the best of the committee’s knowledge, the Writing Across the Curriculum program has not been assessed in a number of years. The UWC is proposing that a plan be developed to assess the writing program in AY2022-2023.

Additional Outcomes

The UWC discussed discriminatory language in the course syllabus template, developed initially by ILI, but enhanced and distributed by the CAT Teams. Specifically, the reference to “Standard American English” in the section on writing standards was considered racist by some members of the writing committee. The co-chairs and several members of the committee met with the ILI to discuss this issue, and received their permission to revise the statement. A small sub-group, which included the committee co-chairs, began exploring alternative language to replace the questionable language in the ILI sample syllabus.

It became evident that this was a larger issue of promoting language equity and linguistic justice by implementing antiracist communication standards. The UWC co-chairs did not believe that addressing issues of language equity and linguistic justice and diversity fell within the writing committee’s competence, nor was it included in the current charges. The committee felt that due to its level of importance, the issue should be addressed at the University level through a wider and more diverse group of stakeholders. An e-mail was sent to the Academic Senate Executive Committee recommending that they explore how current policies can be modified to promote language diversity across RIT.

With respect to the syllabus template, members of the UWC (also in the University Writing Program) Formed an AntiRacism in Writing Practice and Pedagogy subgroup and this group advised ILI /TLS in the revision of the syllabus.

During the process of reviewing courses, several policy-related questions related to Writing Intensive courses were answered. These are summarized in the form of FAQs and will be added to the current FAQs on the website when edited.

FAQs to add to the website

Q: Can a course be both WI-PR and WI-GE?

A: Yes, but both need to be indicated on the form when completing Appendix B. While not strictly required, it is preferable to obtain Gen Ed approval prior to seeking WI-GE approval.

Q: Can a special topics course use a “generic” or universal course outline and alternate between WI and non-WI depending upon the topic of the course each year? This is possible for Gen Ed courses.

A: No; to do this, the program would need one outline that is WI approved and one that is not WI. WI approval is based on how the course is taught, rather than on the specific course content. A WI course must have at least one topic listed that includes instruction on specific writing strategies, and contain at least one writing related learning outcome. Appendix B provides further details related to writing assignments, the revision policy, and how feedback will be provided. A course outline could be written generically for a special topics course and remain unchanged as the subject matter in the course changes. However, the list of topics and learning outcome sections of the outline and Appendix B would need to be modified as the course changes from writing

intensive to non-writing intensive, and get re-approved each time a WI version is taught. If there were two different outlines, the UWC could approve a generic writing intensive one and there would be no additional approvals necessary each time the topic changed.

Q: In accelerated programs (BS/MS, pre-law, pre-med, etc) are students still required to take an undergraduate program specific writing intensive course if they take graduate-level writing courses?

A: *If a stand-alone Bachelor's degree is awarded to the student, then all the undergraduate program requirements must be met, including those indicated in the University Writing Policy ([Policy D01.5](#)). A graduate level course designated as WI-PR could theoretically be used to satisfy the writing policy requirement. However, there are very few WI-approved graduate courses available.*

Proposed Charges for 2021-2022

Charge #1: (Continuation of Charge 1 from 2020-2021) Continue working with the Office of Educational Effectiveness Assessment (EEA) to implement the Graduate Writing Policy.

- a. Revise the G-PAW as necessary.
- b. Develop a process for communicating the graduate writing program needs analysis derived from the G-PAW forms to the UWP, the ICC and the Academic Senate.
- c. Develop a process for disseminating graduate writing best practices and examples collected from the G-PAW forms to graduate program directors.

Charge 2: Update the UWC website, focusing on the review process and developing resources to support faculty.

- a. Work with the registrar to develop a process to regularly update the list of currently running WI approved courses linked to the UWP and UWC websites.
- b. Propose training seminars to support faculty developing and teaching writing intensive courses, to be implemented by ILI and UWP (based on results from G Paw??).

Charge 3: Collaborate with the Provost's office to develop a plan and specific timeline to assess Writing Across the Curriculum at RIT in AY2022-2023.

Charge 4: Continue to articulate the relationship between the UWC and the University Writing Program, and explore modifying Policy D01.0 to assign specific responsibilities requiring writing expertise to the UWP, both in terms of the ongoing website overhaul and in terms of offering resources and instruction to RIT faculty.