

University Writing Committee

Report to Academic Senate – April, 2022

Committee

College Representatives

Gretchen Wainwright (CET), Chair
Jennifer Bailey (KGC OE)
Mari Jaye Blanchard (CAD)
Pam Conley (NTID)
Tom Hanney (SOIS)
Christine Kray (CLA)
Elizabeth Perry (CHST)
Ben Steele (GCCIS)
Shawn Sturgeon (SCB)
Leslie Kate Wright (COS)

Ex Officio Members

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 Success Center)
Maddie Tlachac (Student Government Representative)
Stanley Van Horn (Director, English Language Center)

Institute Writing Committee Charges

The standing committee charges for the UWC for AY2021-2022 are listed on the Academic Senate website: [UWC Charges 2021-2022](#)

Charge 1: Evaluate and report on the current status for proposing, evaluating, and approving WI courses, and on the system for tracking and reporting WI designations to the Registrar's Office. Propose improvements as needed.

The UWC Chair, GWainwright, met with Matt DeMayo and Stephanie Romanet from the registrar's office to discuss Charge 1. When a course is approved as WI, the UWC Chair sends a copy of the approved course outline form via email to the registrar's office, the UWC committee member from the college teaching the course, the college scheduling officer, and any others included in previous communications. All parties agreed that the current process in place for notifying the responsible parties in the colleges and the Registrar's office when a course is WI approved is more than acceptable, given the way in which course outlines are currently reviewed and approved (i.e. paper based process). No improvements were suggested at this time.

Charge 1 has been completed. There is no further action required at this time.

Charge 2: Explore what other means besides the WI designation can be used to support writing in the curriculum at RIT that the committee might want to recommend as a supplement to the WI system. Make such recommendations as appropriate.

The UWC does not understand the rationale for this charge. Many instructors utilize writing to learn concepts in their courses, including courses that are not WI designated. Writing to learn is a powerful tool that can help students learn better and retain information longer by actively thinking about the material they are learning. It can be incorporated into any type of course. The University Writing Program (UWP) is available to provide some support to faculty that wish to increase the use of writing within their courses. However, if significant support is requested by faculty, UWP's current resources will need to be expanded as each faculty member in the UWP currently teaches 4 courses each semester.

Charge 2 has been completed. There is no further action required at this time.

Charge 3: 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 Office of Educational Effectiveness Assessment (EEA) has been working with the graduate program directors to implement the graduate writing policy. As part of the annual Progress Report process (AY 2020-2021), EEA reached out to 20 graduate programs; however, only 4 programs completed the Graduate Plan for Achievement in Writing (G-Paw) form. If the G-Paw results are intended to inform best practices in graduate writing, greater participation and a larger sample size are needed. The EEA is currently working with RIT's Graduate School and the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (SLOAC) representatives to develop a five-year G-Paw schedule by college. By the end of Spring 2022, graduate programs that currently do not have a writing related student learning outcome will be notified of the need to develop one. Approximately 40% of the 84 graduate programs do not have a writing related student outcome. The UWC will continue to work with the EEA to implement the Grad Writing Policy.

Charge 3 has not been completed. It will be carried over to AY2022-2023

Charge 4: Update the UWC website, focusing on the review process and developing resources to support faculty.

During summer 2021, the UWC website was updated. The UWC continues to improve the information on the website and correct any errors or broken links.

The Registrar's Office has developed a link to a current list of approved WI courses, which will be updated each semester. Courses can be searched for by college and keyword. Selecting the name of the course provides the course description. The link will be added to the UWC and UWP websites:

https://www.rit.edu/registrar/writing-intensive-courses?keys=sustain&field_college=All

The UWC has not developed any training seminars this year to support faculty developing and teaching writing intensive courses. The UWC instead spent considerable time discussing and developing a plan for assessing the Writing Across the Curriculum program. Information about faculty needs will be collected as this plan is developed and deployed. See Charge 5 for more information.

Though Charge 4 is only partially completed, the remaining and ongoing work it describes should be incorporated into Charge 5. As additional changes are identified through the WAC assessment, the UWC website will be updated.

Charge 5: Collaborate with the Provost's Office and the appropriate university-wide resources and faculty committees (possibly including the UWP, ICC, DEIC, EEA, and others) to develop a plan and timeline to assess Writing Across the Curriculum at RIT during AY2022-2023.

The UWC spent the semester developing a WAC assessment plan. The UWC had discussions with the Registrar's Office, EEA, and the UWP throughout the year. In March 2022, a presentation on the assessment plan progress was made to the Dean's Council. The UWC wants to involve all stakeholders throughout the assessment to ensure that the assessment process is fair, comprehensive, and does not place an added burden on departments, chairs, or instructors. The assessment process will likely take several years, if it is done correctly.

Before any assessment is started, it is important that the goals be understood by all the stakeholders. The goals of the assessment are to (1) ensure that there is a culture of writing infused throughout the RIT curriculum, as befits most Tier 1 universities (and our current benchmark peers), and (2) ensure faculty are getting the resources they need to enable them to use writing to learn in their classrooms. Both the University Writing Committee and the University Writing Program believe that immersion in a culture of writing is an important part of every undergraduate student's education at RIT.

When RIT converted from quarters to semesters, the university's writing policy was modified. The policy under quarters required third-year students to be evaluated for writing proficiency as determined by their program. There were no required courses in writing beyond writing seminar. Students took courses that maintained minimum writing word requirements, but did not necessarily entail overt instruction in writing. The current writing policy is more prescriptive; students take certain courses which explicitly teach writing, but there is no widespread student assessment of writing proficiency. The writing policy was updated in governance documents in 2014, and to the best of the committee's knowledge, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) has not been assessed since implementing the new policy.

The Office of Educational Effectiveness Assessment (EEA) assesses the writing-related General Education Student Outcomes every 5 years. To accomplish this, EEA assesses a small sampling of student writing artifacts from a sampling of WI-GE courses. However, no WI-PR (programmatic writing-intensive) courses are assessed. Recent National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data has indicated that RIT students rate RIT lower than their peers at other institutions for helping them develop skills in writing effectively, for how much revision work they do, and for the number of assigned pages of student writing, all of which are known to improve writing capabilities.

As the UWC began to explore the list of currently approved WI courses, it became apparent that a number of the courses did not have outlines that included Appendix B, which is currently used to describe the writing related pedagogy used in the course. The committee agreed that we could not evaluate how writing courses were being taught and how well students were writing in courses in which the writing pedagogy was not specified (i.e. those courses missing Appendix B).

Each committee member was provided with a list of WI courses taught in their college and tasked with working with their college curriculum committee and scheduling officer to determine which courses did not have an approved Appendix B. This approach is necessary because RIT does not have an electronic, centralized system for managing course outlines. Copies of WI approved course outlines that are provided to the Registrar's Office are saved as pdf files in OnBase, which is not searchable other than for the file name. Therefore, each outline must be retrieved individually and reviewed to determine if Appendix B is

attached.

The UWC also developed a survey that will be sent to all faculty that teach a WI course. The purpose of the survey is to ensure that faculty teaching WI courses are aware of the course outline and its requirements for writing, gather input on their current writing practices, and solicit input on the type of support faculty need. The survey was provided to the Dean's Council to solicit their feedback. The survey will be distributed to faculty at the start of Fall semester 2022.

Charge 5 has been partially completed. It will be carried over to AY2022-2023.

Charge 6: Update Policy D01.0 to more clearly reflect the roles of the UWP and the UWC with respect to providing writing-related resources and instruction to RIT faculty.

The UWC did not directly work on this charge this year, given the work on Charge 5. After the WAC assessment is complete and recommendations developed, any proposed changes to the writing policy or the UWC's responsibilities resulting from the assessment will be put to the Faculty Senate for discussion and approval.

Charge 6 has not been completed. It will be carried over to AY2022-2023.

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

Responsibility 1 - The UWC 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 1, 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 **twenty-two** (22) courses during the 2021-2022 Academic Year. Some required revision, but every course submitted for approval was eventually approved. The UWC would like to reiterate that it is the responsibility of each college to maintain approved course outlines for WI courses.

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. The results of the faculty writing survey, part of the WAC Assessment, will serve to inform the committee as to how best to liaise with faculty.

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. The results of the faculty writing survey, part of the WAC Assessment, will serve to inform the committee as to how best to support students and faculty.

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. The UWP hosted a spring speaker, Dr. Chris Anson from North Carolina State, who ran a two-day workshop – one day for UWP faculty, the other a college-wide presentation on the notion of “threshold concepts,” a possible framework for exemplifying more consistency between all of the WI courses at RIT. Several members of the UWC attended Dr. Anson’s talk.

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

The committee did not spend significant time on this responsibility this academic year. However, as each course is reviewed for WI approval, suggestions for improvement are made.

Responsibility 6 - Assess the Writing across the Curriculum Program.

The UWC is currently developing a plan to assess the WAC program in AY2022-2023. Course outlines for WI courses are being reviewed. A faculty survey will be distributed in Fall 2022. See Charge 5 above for more details.

Continuing Charges from 2021-2022:

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. (Charge 3, 2021-2022)

Charge 2: Collaborate with the Provost’s Office and the appropriate university-wide resources and faculty committees (possibly including the UWP, ICC, DEIC, EEA, and others) to develop a plan and timeline to assess Writing Across the Curriculum at RIT during AY2022-2023. (Charge 5, 2021-2022)

Charge 3: Update Policy D01.0 to more clearly reflect the roles of the UWP and the UWC with respect providing writing-related resources and instruction to RIT faculty. (Charge 6, 2021-2022)

Proposed New Charges for 2022-2023:

Charge 4: Explore adding a requirement to the University’s writing policy to recertify courses as Writing Intensive at some frequency between 5 and 10 years.

Charge 5: Explore the University Writing Policy’s writing requirements and expectations for total time, topics, effort, fraction of grade, and credit hours prior to graduation as appropriate. Current policy only requires 3 courses to be taken to fulfill the writing requirement and fraction of grade required assumes a 3 credit course.

Charge 6: Propose a process for updating course outlines for currently approved WI courses that do not have an Appendix B attached to the course outline. (Note that if the course does not meet the current writing policy requirements, it could lose WI status (includes WI-PR courses)).