



Memorandum

To: Executive Committee
From: Loyd Bastin – Chair of Academic Affairs
Date: October 30, 2015
Re: Transcript Designation for Writing Enriched Courses

When Faculty Council approved the current transcript designation process on February 27, 2012, the General Education Taskforce (now the General Education sub-committee of the Faculty Council Student Learning and Assessment Committee) was tasked to generate a transcript designation proposal for the Writing Enriched program. Subsequently, the General Education sub-committee (GES) discussed the Writing Enriched designation (WE) over the course of several meetings. In those meetings, GES considered: 1) current WE criteria as listed in the most current undergraduate catalog, 2) criteria used across units for the WE designation, and 3) potential revisions of current criteria. GES submitted a recommendation to the Faculty Council Student Learning and Assessment committee. The recommendation was discussed by the Student Learning and Assessment committee and steered by Faculty Council Executive Committee to the Faculty Council Academic Affairs for consideration on October 6, 2014. The proposal recommended a revision to the criteria used to designate a course as writing enriched and the creation of a mechanism for oversight of the program.

After extensive discussion at our 17 October 2014, 24 October 2014, 10 November 2014, 1 December 2014, 26 January 2015, 23 February 2015, 9 March 2015, 23 March 2015, 6 April 2015, 20 April 2015, 28 September 2015, 13 October 2015, 23 October 2015, 30 October 2015 meetings, the Faculty Council Academic Affairs Committee voted to approve and forward a proposal for the revision of the Writing Enriched transcript designation. The proposed Writing Enriched transcript designation is described in the following pages.

Writing Enriched (WE) Transcript Designation

Current WE criteria

According to the Widener University 2013-2014 Undergraduate Catalog,

“Writing enriched courses have three or more writing assignments that include student editing and revision so that students learn to correct their writing errors. The multiple writing assignments, including revisions, total at least 25 pages. An emphasis on “writing to learn” assignments can be found in many of these courses” (p. 19).

Thus, the current WE criteria include multiple assignments (explicitly requiring 3 or more), student revisions, and at least 25 pages of writing. An emphasis on “writing to learn” may also be included, but does not appear to be required.

University-Wide Use of Criteria

Across the University, most units report that courses designed WE adhere to criteria found in the undergraduate catalog; however, a number do not. One reason may be that adherence to guidelines has become relaxed overtime; however, there are other reasons that are tied to concerns about the current criteria. For example, there are objections to the 25- page criterion with several units arguing that writing 25 pages alone does not necessarily improve one’s ability to write. Similarly, other units argue that instructor feedback--in particular, actionable feedback is crucial; significant revisions should be part and parcel of a WE designated class.

Potential Revisions to the Current Criteria

Given inconsistencies in WE criteria across units, GES considered two possible directions with respect to recommendations: 1) recommend that standards remain in place with greater oversight, or 2) recommend revisions to the criteria to which all units can adhere. The committee took the latter approach focusing on process rather than products (e.g., 25 pages), and focusing on those processes that all units considered essential in the development of writing skills.

The GES list of important criteria included multiple assignments over the course of a semester, instructor feedback, and incorporation of feedback on subsequent writing. The subcommittee found that their list mirrored that proposed by A&S in their recent revision of WE criteria (April, 2013). GES also discussed the ease with which advisors and students could identify writing enriched classes that could meet individual needs. Although some units provide ‘Advisor’s Alerts’ that list WE designated classes, other units do not. Further, although a class is identified as writing enriched with a ‘W’, you cannot easily search and list these courses as you might for an instructor or class level; currently, searching for a ‘W’ in the fall/spring schedule will bring up all classes that begin with the letter ‘W’.

Proposed Revision of WE Description, Goals, Criteria and Process

Responding to individual unit concerns, GES and Academic Affairs discussions of important components of a writing enriched class, the Faculty Council Academic Affairs Committee recommends revision of University-wide WE designation to include the following description, goals, criteria, and process:

- Description

In addition to ENGL 101 all undergraduate students must complete at least four courses (preferably one per year) that are designated as writing enriched. Writing enriched courses employ a “writing to learn” approach: students engage more deeply with course material through the writing process while also strengthening their writing skills. Therefore, students should choose courses intentionally in close and informed consultation with advisers in order to supplement and complement the major.

- Goals

- 1) To facilitate students’ ability to communicate effectively through writing.
- 2) To provide sustained focus on writing, via multiple drafts and assignments, as a way to develop writing and critical thinking skills that students can use throughout their career at Widener.
- 3) To facilitate the discovery of and the development of mastery in a discipline/field of study.

- WE Criteria

- 1) The course includes a sustained focus on writing as demonstrated throughout the syllabus, through multiple assignments and/or drafts.
- 2) Students receive actionable feedback on their writing from the course instructor.
- 3) Students substantially revise using critical thought and feedback to improve their writing.
- 4) Students incorporate the feedback from the course instructor in a critical way in subsequent writing.

- Availability of WE designated criteria to faculty, administration, and classes

We recommend that the description, goals and criteria be included in the University Catalog and listed on the University Web site. We also recommend working with the registrar and campus cruiser to provide a flag that will capture

the ‘W’ attribute. This will make it easier for students and advisors to discuss WE options that will suit individual writing goals each semester.

Approval and Periodic Review Process

Proposed review processes for Writing Enriched transcript designation by Curriculum and Planning (or equivalent) Committee at the School/College level

GES recommended a mechanism for oversight to: 1) determine whether a class meets the criteria for a WE designation, 2) to ensure continued adherence to WE criteria, and 3) to communicate status changes (i.e., when a WE class will not be offered as a WE class) to stakeholders who rely on WE designated class(es) to fulfill requirements.

In order to ensure consistency across the University, Faculty Council Academic Affairs proposes a uniform, streamlined process for the approval/reapproval of WE transcript designations for courses by the Curriculum and Planning (or equivalent) Committee of each school or college (hereafter, “local C&P committees”). The Faculty Council Academic Affairs committee recommends that each unit generate a uniform review process for approval/reapproval of WE transcript designation via the local C&P committees. The local C&P committees would be charged with (1) communicating the revised WE criteria, (2) generating a formal application process to facilitate courses seeking WE status (including current WE courses which must seek re-approval under the revised criteria), (3) review of applications for WE status of courses in their School/College, and (4) organizing the re-approval process for WE designated courses in a 5-year cycle.

The FCAAC will generate a standardized application for WE status using the new criteria, whereby individual faculty would isolate WE-specific material from their proposed course documents so that the local C&P committee might quickly and efficiently determine whether a course meets the current WE transcript designation criteria.

The FCAAC recommends that units with a high number of current WE-designated courses consider a staggered reapproval process, with all current WE-designated courses reapproved within a 5-year window beginning in Fall 2016. Approved courses under the new criteria would then enter the 5-year renewal cycle recommended for all approved WE courses.

Approval Process and Timeline

1. The standardized WE transcript designation application will be circulated to faculty in each school or college. The local C&P committee will set reasonable deadlines for applications so that WE courses might be approved in a timely manner.
2. Faculty seeking WE transcript designations for courses will use the application to submit WE-specific course details to their local C&P committee. The committee will be the deliberative body that makes the decisions on approval of writing enriched course transcript designations.

3. **Initial Cycle:**

- FCAAC recommends that each school/college develop an initial approval process that allows all of the current WE courses offered by that unit to be reviewed using the new criteria.
- FCAAC recommends that each unit process be completed within the following maximum timeframe based on the number of WE courses needing reevaluation:
 - Units with less than 30 current WE courses should complete the initial review process within one academic year.
 - Units with 31-60 current WE courses should complete the initial review process within two academic years.
 - Units with 61-90 current WE courses should complete the initial review process within three academic years.
 - Units with 91-120 current WE courses should complete the initial review process within four academic years.
 - Units with greater than 120 current WE courses should complete the initial review process within five academic years.
- Courses that currently carry the WE designation will retain the WE designation until an initial review using the new criteria is completed.

4. **Ongoing Cycle:** Each school/college will set a standing deadline for submission of the Writing-Enriched transcript designation application to the local C&P committee for each semester.

5. **Periodic Review of Courses:** Every five years all approved courses will be reviewed by Curriculum and Planning to ensure each course continues to meet the writing enriched criteria.

Existing approved courses that will add a writing enriched component

Faculty will follow the steps listed above. Please refer to the initial cycle timeline for approval .

New courses with a writing enriched component

For new courses with a writing enriched component, faculty will submit their course applications to their School/College C&P committee at any point in the process regarding the writing enriched component of the course. Once received, the steps above will be followed. Please refer to the ongoing cycle timeline for approval.

Advantages

The common goals and criteria set forth in this proposal seek to clarify the definition of the WE designation. They reflect common ideas and values among members of two assessment committees at two levels of the University (A&S General Education and Assessment and University General Education Assessment committees) and the Faculty they are charged to represent.

In clarifying the goals and criteria for the WE designation, we have sought to develop criteria to which all units could comfortably adhere, thereby leading to greater consistency across units. Further, better articulated criteria will help to guide both the development of WE classes and the assessment of WE goals.

Writing Enriched Course Designation for Student Transcripts – Cover Sheet

Please provide the information below and submit this form with your syllabus.

Faculty Name(s) _____ Date _____

Course Name _____

Course _____ Section _____ Semester to be taught _____

Please check the appropriate type of course:

Course has previously been taught as a writing enriched course

Existing approved course that will add writing enriched component(s)

New course with a writing enriched component (s)

"88" course with a writing enriched component (s)

The course must meet the following criteria to be designated as writing enriched (complete the next page to verify that all criteria are met):

- The course includes a sustained focus on writing as demonstrated throughout the syllabus, through multiple assignments and/or drafts.
- Students receive actionable feedback on their writing from the course instructor
- Students substantially revise using critical thought and feedback to improve their writing
- Students incorporate the feedback from the course instructor in a critical way in subsequent writing

This section is to be completed by Curriculum and Planning/Academic Affairs Committee of faculty member's school/college.

Date received _____

Chair of committee _____

Email address of chair _____

Date _____ Signature of Chair _____

In the box below each bullet point, list the page number from your syllabus where the evidence for providing opportunities for the students to meet the specific criteria can be found and highlight that on your syllabus or cut and paste the information in the box under the appropriate bullet after the page number.

Writing Enriched Criteria

- The course includes a sustained focus on writing as demonstrated throughout the syllabus, through multiple assignments and/or drafts

- Students receive actionable feedback on their writing from the course instructor

- Students substantially revise using critical thought and feedback to improve their writing

- Students incorporate the feedback from the course instructor in a critical way in subsequent writing

Widener University
Writing Enriched Course Designation Rubric

<u>Course:</u>	Y or N?	Comments
Writing Enriched Criteria		
1. The course includes a sustained focus on writing as demonstrated throughout the syllabus, through multiple assignments and/or drafts		
2. Students receive actionable feedback on their writing from the course instructor		
3. Students substantially revise using critical thought and feedback to improve their writing		
4. Students incorporate the feedback from the course instructor in a critical way in subsequent writing		