

Writing Across the Curriculum FAQ for Departments

Goal: Move IUP toward a full WAC model, in which the majority of courses in a students' major teach and reinforce writing skills, and eliminate Writing-Intensive courses.

- Rationale: Multiple university assessments show that students come into IUP and leave IUP writing at the same level. A WAC program can improve students' writing, enhance their learning in their majors, and make IUP a leader in PASSHE and nationally in its commitment to improving students' communication skills.

What is WAC?

- Writing across the curriculum is a pedagogical model in which writing is used as a mode of teaching/learning to help students process course content, understand complex concepts, and experiment with their own ideas and reactions to the content of a course. Like group work, lectures, labs, and other class activities, writing is used to *teach* course content, not only to measure or assess student learning in the form of essay exams or major writing assignments.
- Teaching writing is the responsibility of all members of a university faculty in all parts of a student's curriculum.
- **Writing-to-learn: ungraded and exploratory writing assignments that are used to help students write in the discipline; this writing is not meant to demonstrate proficiency in course content.**

WAC at IUP

- Currently, students take two Writing-Intensive courses. We need to do more than this to help them become stronger writers.
- Faculty currently have little incentive to teach Writing-Intensive courses; the workload is significantly higher; teaching evaluations go down when students are asked to write more (unless they're getting the WI credit).

Why WAC?

- Writing is a mode of learning; it helps students learn course content and process concepts and ideas. Using writing to teach can make teaching easier because learning can happen more effectively.
- Employers bemoan the lack of communication skills exhibited by college graduates. Yet writing instruction is unevenly distributed across the college curriculum, often occurring in only one or two composition courses in students' first year.
- Stronger writing skills can make IUP graduates more competitive in the job market.
- A WAC program brings positive attention to the university by demonstrating commitment to making students better communicators.
- Employing writing-to-learn strategies can provide research and publication opportunities for faculty who are interested in SOTL projects.
- Augments enrollment efforts: students/parents want to see that the department is committed to ensuring that students graduate with strong communication skills.

Some Suggested Program Highlights

- Discipline-specific writing plans to help departments plan how students will achieve writing goals throughout their major, with assessment plans
- Writing Fellows program (undergraduate peer-tutors in classrooms)
- Workshops throughout academic year to help faculty become more confident teachers of writing in their discipline (university-wide or by department request)
- Experts in Writing in Disciplines to speak to departments and offer professional development
- Discipline specific ENGL 202 courses (provisional, pending approval by the English department)

"Writing is so complex an activity, so closely tied to a person's intellectual development, that it must be nurtured and practiced over all the years of a student's schooling and in every curricular area." --Barbara Walvoord, eminent WAC scholar