

*Thoughts on the implementation of a Writing in the Discipline course [draft]*

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Based on discussions with composition coordinators and EWL chair

The current General Education proposal, as several faculty members and department chairs have noted, is light on specifics about how Writing in the Discipline (WID) courses would be developed. To provide perspective on the what Senate will be voting on this afternoon, I offer these suggestions for implementation.

### **1. Viability**

BCLASSE strongly recommends that, if the WID plan is adopted, that Writing 1 is expanded to 4 credits to introduce foundational research skills, on which the WID course will then build.

The WID course should not be a remake of an existing course in the discipline. It should be built collaboratively from the ground up to reflect both the major field of study and best practices in composition. The two courses should meet OT36 standards.

Implementation will require the hiring of a full-time tenure-track expert in writing in the disciplines. Immediate posting is highly desirable if we hoped to have this person on campus in the fall to prepare for fall 2024 implementation.

#### **Step 1: planning**

The proposal does not specify *who* will teach the course *in what department(s)* it will be offered, or *how* composition pedagogy or the subject matter of the discipline will inform its content, or the *timeline* for implementation. The first step is for programs, departments, and colleges to work through these issues in consultation with composition faculty, with deans and chairs as backup to address staffing and resources.

Myriad options are open under the current proposal. WID courses could be uniquely tailored to a single program, or a single course could cover several programs, a department consisting of multiple disciplines, or an entire college. That is a decision for faculty at the program, department, and/or college level, in consultation with composition faculty and relevant academic leaders.

#### **Step 2: implementation**

A WID course should be designed collaboratively by composition faculty and faculty in the discipline the course serves (target discipline). It should be piloted collaboratively, either cotaught with full load for both instructors or taught in consultation between composition and the target discipline. After a successful pilot, it could be taught principally by faculty in the target discipline, with ongoing support and consultation from composition faculty. It could be taught as a mirror image of that approach, with the target discipline and composition switching roles. It could also be cotaught by the two parties—continually, periodically, or occasionally as the need arises.

#### **Step 3: timeline, management, and ongoing assessment**

Suppose at least 1 unit (program, department, or college) elects to pilot its WID course on a small scale in spring of 2024. Pending formal approval of the new course for General Education, the pilot could be designated ENGL 1551; writing-related learning outcomes would justify teaching it under this rubric.

For units not ready to pilot a WID course that early, non-discipline-specific ENGL 1551 will continue to be available. Furthermore, that course or something similar should continue to be offered under the new General Education curriculum, since it will be needed for students who are not yet ready to declare a major by the spring of their sophomore year. Another advantage to continuing to offer ENGL 1551 is that it can serve as overflow if sections of the WID course for a discipline are all full and several additional students need to be accommodated. Even after all programs are covered by a WID course, ENGL 1551 or other non-WID equivalent will continue to be needed.

Once a WID course is ready for full implementation, it can be offered with the designation of the discipline or with the ENGL designation, depending on where workload is principally allocated. It is anticipated that a mix of full-time and part-time faculty will teach the course, depending on availability. Instructional costs would be managed by shifting of part-time funds among the departments as needed.

Responsibility for ongoing assessment of the WID courses should be shared by composition faculty and faculty in the target discipline. Assessment could include classroom observation, monitoring of student success rates, review of graded student work, student course evaluations, and/or focus group interviews. Assessment results would not be part of the faculty evaluation process for either part-time or full-time faculty, but would be made available to them to use at their discretion as evidence of contribution to teaching and service.

Professional development (PD) opportunities, jointly sponsored by ITL and the composition faculty, should be made available to participating target-discipline and composition faculty, with compensation offered for PD that requires multiple meetings and other forms of ongoing participation.

Because students frequently switch majors or delay declaring a major, course equivalency will need to be maintained for all WID courses, ENGL 1551, and any future non-WID equivalent.

### **Resources**

Because of the specialized resources and ongoing consultation required, WID course enrollment should be capped at 24. (ENGL 1551 is slightly higher.) This would result in an increase in total workload of approximately 8%, compared to what is now allocated to ENGL 1551.

Both full-time composition faculty and experienced part-time writing instructors can participate in consultation with target-discipline faculty. For design of a WID course, 3 workload hours or the equivalent should be split between composition and the target discipline.

To oversee professional development, guide faculty participants, and ensure the integrity of cross-disciplinary instruction through ongoing assessment, one additional full time tenure-track faculty member in composition with a specialization in either writing in the disciplines or writing across the curriculum. (Appointment as a lecturer is not appropriate to this role.) It is anticipated that during scale-up of the program, 75% of load of this faculty member will be allocated to consultation, oversight, and professional development; after full implementation, the load can be reduced to 50%, depending on need. The remainder of load will consist of teaching composition and/or WID courses.

The co-directors of composition, the chair of English and World Languages, and the dean of BCLASSE will continue to participate in and guide this initiative.