

University of St. Thomas

Writing Across the Curriculum Policies

According to the original WAC proposal, the WAC Advisory Committee is charged with developing program policies and maintaining the quality and integrity of the program. What follows is a description of policies the committee has developed as the program has grown over its first five years. All of these policies fall within the parameters of the original WAC proposal (Appendix A).

Mission Statement

The mission of the Writing Across the Curriculum program is to create a culture of writing at the University of St. Thomas that will enable students to think critically, to engage deeply in their learning, and to write with confidence, precision, and grace.

The WAC Advisory Committee: Composition and Process

The WAC Advisory Committee shall be composed of faculty representing the following constituencies. Committee members will be elected by faculty within their units (e.g. OCB, CAS Division 1, etc.). Members will serve on the committee for staggered four-year terms.

1. Opus College of Business: 1
2. School of Engineering: 1
3. School of Social Work: 1
4. College of Education, Leadership, and Counseling: 1
5. College of Arts and Sciences: 4, corresponding to the CAS divisions

In addition the WAC Advisory Committee will include the following *ex officio* members:

1. WAC Director (non-voting)
2. Director of the Center for Writing

Decisions of the WAC Advisory Committee will be made by majority vote.

WAC Course Parameters

Once WAC is implemented as a graduation requirement, students are required to take a minimum of two Writing Intensive courses, one Writing to Learn course, and one Writing in the Disciplines course. For courses to meet the WAC requirement they must be taught WAC-certified faculty (see below) and pedagogy must fall within the parameters delineated in Appendix B.

Enrollment Caps

Enrollment caps, specified in the original WAC proposal as well as in the parameters (Appendix B) are as follows: Writing Intensive and Writing in the Disciplines courses: 20 students. Writing to Learn courses: 25 students.

Exceptions to these enrollment caps include the following:

1. In emergency situations (a student will not graduate without the course, for example) the enrollment cap may be raised.
2. The cap corresponds to the number of papers/projects that are generated by a particular writing assignment. Therefore, in courses in which all the high-stakes assignments involve group writing (two or more students creating one written document), the enrollment cap may be higher than those listed above as long as the number of papers the faculty member is responding to and grading does not exceed the enrollment cap. To obtain this exemption, faculty members must apply for it when submitting the course portfolio for certification, explaining the pedagogical rationale for including co-written assignments.
3. For team-taught courses.
4. For courses (without co-written projects) that regularly exceed the WAC enrollment caps, we propose a Writing Fellows program as described in Appendix C.

Faculty Certification: Seminar and Portfolio

The WAC Advisory Committee is responsible for maintaining the quality and integrity of the program. The following process is intended to ensure that courses identified as meeting the WAC requirement meet WAC program standards, both initially and over time.

Seminar

A. The Full WAC Seminar

Traditional Format and Process:

1. The standard way for faculty to become WAC certified is to participate in a substantive seminar offered by the WAC Advisory Committee. See below for alternative forms now being considered.
2. After completing the seminar, faculty revise one of their courses to be Writing Intensive, Writing to Learn, or Writing in the Discipline.

3. After submission of their portfolio, feedback from the seminar instructor, and course certification (see “Portfolio” below), faculty are paid a \$500 stipend (or the going rate paid by Faculty Development for comparable seminars) and are considered “WAC Faculty.”
4. After certification, WAC faculty members are free to revise other courses to fit one of the three types of WAC courses. Each time they revise a new course or redesignate a course (from WTL to WI, for example), they submit a portfolio for course certification.

Alternative formats:

1. Instead of the interdisciplinary seminar, a department may choose to bring in a WAC specialist in its discipline. This disciplinary WAC specialist would meet the following criteria:
 - a. In addition to having credentials in the department’s academic discipline, the facilitator has publications and/or significant experience leading workshops in WAC principles and pedagogy.
 - b. The facilitator presents core WAC principles and vocabulary approved by the WAC Committee.
 - c. The seminar would last five days and include both presentation and interactive components.
 - d. Steps 2-4 for the traditional seminar would apply, with the facilitator providing the feedback on faculty materials.
2. Instead of five consecutive days, the seminar may be spread out over the course of the semester: five three-hour sessions or ten 1.5-hour sessions. In this format, the seminar would be facilitated either by the WAC director or a local WAC specialist.
3. If demand warrants it, we will provide a blended course that combines online and face-to-face components.

B. The Fast Track to WAC for Writing to Learn Certification

Process:

1. Departments that wish faculty to be certified to teach Writing to Learn courses work with the WAC Committee to offer the “Fast Track to WAC” workshop.
2. Faculty participate in a three-hour workshop jointly led by members of the department who have completed the five-day seminar and the WAC Director. This workshop focuses on key elements from the five-day seminar regarding Writing to Learn theory and practice.

3. After the workshop, faculty revise their materials and then give one another feedback on them.
4. Each faculty member submits a portfolio focused on the revised WTL course for course certification (process described below).
5. The faculty member is then certified to teach Writing to Learn courses.

C. *Limited Exemptions from Seminar Participation as a Prerequisite to Teaching WAC Courses*

1. Faculty who regularly teach using syllabi created by WAC faculty: The WAC Director (or designee) will present these faculty with a modified version of the seminar focusing on theoretical underpinnings and other support; however, they would not need to present a portfolio since the product, the course syllabus, has been provided for them.
2. New hires scheduled to teach designated WAC courses: These faculty will use a syllabus developed by a WAC faculty member teaching that course. As in #1, the WAC Director (or designee) will present these new hires with the theoretical underpinnings of that syllabus and other support. If they plan to continue to teach their own WAC courses, they would proceed to do the seminar in full within a year.

D. *Full Exemptions from Seminar Participation as a Prerequisite to Teaching WAC Courses*

Faculty may petition for a complete exemption from the seminar. To petition for exemption, faculty will provide evidence of meeting the conditions described in 1, 2, or 3 below and submit a portfolio for WAC Committee review.

1. The faculty member's disciplinary area of expertise is directly related to WAC pedagogy.
2. The faculty member has undergone comparable WAC preparation at another institution within the past five years.
3. The faculty member has undergone comparable WAC preparation at another institution more than five years previous, but has contributed through conference presentations, workshop-leading, and/or publication to the field of WAC within his/her academic discipline.

Portfolio

1. After completing the initial seminar and every five years thereafter, faculty will submit a portfolio: the latest syllabus for each course (not section) and all writing assignments, reflecting upon how these materials meet the WAC parameters. Appendix D is the form faculty will use.
2. Two WAC Advisory Committee members will review the portfolio and respond to any concerns. The faculty member will then have an opportunity to revise their WAC course materials accordingly. In the event of a conflict or issue concerning certification of a portfolio, the WAC director will be brought in as the third member of the portfolio certification team.

Assessment

The WAC Advisory Committee oversees assessment of the program. Assessment includes a survey distributed to faculty and students who have participated in WAC courses each semester (Appendix E) as well as administration of the NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) Writing Survey. In the future, our procedure also will include analysis of writing produced by students in WAC courses.

The purpose of WAC Assessment is not to assess the teaching of individual faculty members, but to assess how effectively the program is meeting its mission and goals. Based on our yearly assessment, the WAC Advisory Committee will make adjustments in the program and its policies.