

**Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) at  
the University of Virginia**

**Creating a Culture of Writing**



**Year 4 Report  
Academic Year 2020 – 2021**

*The purpose of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is to enhance the culture of writing at the University of Virginia, through increased pedagogical support for faculty and students with respect to writing instruction, a wider range of inquiry-based writing opportunities for students, and adequate infrastructure to support writing instruction.*

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
QEP Oversight Committee	5
Initiatives and Outcomes	6
Original Goals and Outcomes: 2017 Report	6
Updated Initiatives and Outcomes	6
Assessment	17
Assessment of Faculty and Graduate Instructor Preparation	17
Assessment of Curricular Efforts: Pilot of WE Criteria	18
Fostering a Culture of Writing: 2020 Faculty Survey	22
Reflection on Year 4	24
Plans for Year 5	26
Appendix A: Writing Across the Curriculum at UVA	28

Dear Faculty, Students, and Staff:

The 2020-21 academic year marked the fourth year of implementation of the University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP); an effort stemming from the University's 2017 Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) reaccreditation. As we enter the QEP's fifth and final year, we write to provide an update on the progress that was made last year towards enhancing UVA's culture of writing, and to underscore the urgency of our goals as we move towards the end of this project.

The report that follows acknowledges the considerable challenges attendant to a full academic year affected by the global pandemic, and acknowledges, too, disruption that followed from the departure of Archie Holmes, who, as Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, had overseen the QEP from its beginning. But the report mainly describes an immensely productive year—albeit one that leaves us with much work ahead. UVA has had some distinct advantages in carrying out this work: an extraordinary faculty and staff deeply devoted to student learning; students eager to enhance their writing abilities; and expert leadership, particularly from Professor T. Kenny Fountain, Director of Writing Across the Curriculum and the author of most of this report, a nationally recognized expert in this field. Though the report notes some unevenness across schools in the implementation of the QEP's goals, the broader commitment to student learning across *all* schools provides us with the most important resource we need to foster a culture in which all students will both learn to write well and to learn well through their writing.

The QEP envisions several University-wide steps towards creation of that culture: improving instructors' capacities in the teaching of writing; having those instructors teach more and better writing-enhanced courses; creating an infrastructure that will support those courses; and assessing and sustaining this work. Progress under these headings in Year 4 was extraordinary: doubling the number of training seminars for faculty and establishing an equivalent for graduate student instructors; establishing new review processes to support and oversee writing-enhanced courses; and forging considerable progress towards implementation of appropriate courses and criteria in all schools. We call your attention especially to improvements in the way students complete their Second Writing Requirement, a principal vehicle for improved undergraduate writing across many disciplines.

We will enter Year 5 with the clock ticking: in spite of continuing challenges associated with the pandemic, and in the midst of other initiatives, we must address the objectives of the original proposal, which include encouraging all undergraduate schools to implement some component of Writing Across the Curriculum instruction in their courses or curricula and develop and pilot at least one initiative. The arrival of Brie Gertler as Vice Provost for Academic Affairs; the conspicuous excellence of Professor Fountain and his Associate Director, Heidi Nobles; the diligence and creativity of the QEP Oversight Committee as managed by Matt Banfield; the acute and rigorous assessment procedures implemented by Lois Myers; and most of all the commitment to undergraduate education on the part of all the deans, our Provost Office colleagues, and especially teaching faculty who are carrying it out, assure us that we will meet these challenges. Please consider the ensuing pages as a kind of map for what has already been achieved and what is ahead and contact us if you have questions or requests for support in carrying out this essential work.



Christina Morell  
Associate Provost  
Director, Institutional Research and Analytics



Victor Luftig  
Director of the Writing and Rhetoric Program

**QEP Oversight Committee**  
*2020-2021 Academic Year*

Christina Morell, *Institutional Research  
and Analytics, Co-Chair*

Charlotte Matthews, *School of Continuing  
And Professional Studies*

Victor Luftig, *College of Arts & Sciences, Co-Chair*

Lois Myers, *Institutional Research  
and Analytics*

Matt Banfield, *Provost's Office*

Kathryn Neeley, *School of Engineering and  
Applied Science*

John Casteen, *University President Emeritus  
and College of Arts & Sciences*

Heidi Nobles, *Associate Director of Writing  
Across the Curriculum, College of  
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T. Kenny Fountain, *Director of Writing Across  
the Curriculum, College of  
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Rob Patterson, *McIntire School of Commerce*

Andy Pennock, *Frank Batten School of  
Leadership & Public Policy*

Natasha Heny, *Curry School of Education &  
Human Development*

Lisa Reilly, *School of Architecture*

Ashley Hurst, *School of Nursing*

Adriana Streifer, *Center for Teaching Excellence*

Emily Keyser, *Graduate Student*

Phil Trella, *Office of Graduate  
and Postdoctoral Affairs*

*The University of Virginia's Quality Enhancement Plan, sponsored by the Office of the Provost, aims to create a "culture of writing" across the undergraduate curriculum through a pedagogical paradigm known as **Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)**. Following the common goals of WAC, this new culture of writing aims: (1) to expand students' opportunities for writing across their academic careers; (2) to increase students' writing proficiency; (3) to deepen students' engagement with learning; (4) to foster a campus culture that supports writing; and (5) to create a community of faculty engaged in the development of student writing through instruction and mentorship. (See Appendix A for information on the benefits of and philosophy underpinning the WAC approach.)*

## **Initiatives and Outcomes**

### **Original Initiatives & Outcomes: 2017 Report**

Building on a new universal first-year writing requirement begun in the College of Arts and Sciences (College) in Fall 2017, the QEP Oversight Committee's (QEPOC's) original report focused the project's efforts on three interrelated endeavors: (1) **Instructor Preparation**; (2) **Curriculum**; and (3) **Infrastructure**.

1. Faculty and graduate **instructor preparation** in the teaching of writing:
  - a) Expand access to the week-long Faculty Seminar on the Teaching of Writing by offering it twice per year.
  - b) Increase outreach to faculty in the schools about benefits of and strategies for incorporating writing.
  - c) Create web-based and other teaching resources (related to WAC) for faculty across schools.
  - d) Offer a workshop for all newly arrived faculty on incorporating writing in their courses.
2. **Curriculum** support and oversight of writing-enhanced courses:
  - a) Adopt a new approval process for Second Writing Requirement (SWR) courses to ensure the courses foster excellence in student writing through instruction, peer review, and multiple opportunities to write and revise.
  - b) Create a Writing Fellows project (in partnership with UVA's Writing Center) in which highly proficient undergraduate and graduate student writers offer discipline-specific tutoring in writing.
3. **Infrastructure** support for WAC resources and initiatives:
  - a) Provide resources for creating, adopting, or enhancing digital portfolios, online learning platforms, and classroom design to support student writing.

### **Updated Initiatives & Outcomes**

In 2017-2018, the QEPOC's primary accomplishments were (a) hiring UVA's first Director of Writing Across the Curriculum (T. Kenny Fountain), who began in Fall 2018, and (b) creating a preliminary draft of new criteria for all SWR courses.

In 2019-2020, with the Writing Enhanced (WE) criteria developed and the crucial assistance provided by the new Associate Director of WAC (Heidi Nobles), the QEPOC adapted their original goals and outcomes as described below:

+ = Revision of an original initiative with explanation; \* = New initiative

**1. Faculty and Graduate Instructor Preparation in the Teaching of Writing**

a) Expand access to the Faculty Seminar on the Teaching of Writing by offering it twice per year.

*Update:* Since Summer 2018, the Writing and Rhetoric Program has offered five Faculty Seminars. We began offering the Seminar twice annually in 2020-2021.

**Table 1: Faculty Seminar on the Teaching of Writing Participation**

Term	Faculty Participants
2014-17	64 participants (Architecture 6; Batten 1; College 46; Education 1; Commerce 2; Engineering 1; Medicine 1; Nursing 6)
Summer 2018	16 participants (College 11; Education 1; Law 1; Nursing 3)
Summer 2019	16 participants (Architecture 1; Batten 1; College 12; Law 1; Commerce 1)
Summer 2020	14 participants (Batten 1; College 10; Education 1; Commerce 1; Medicine 1)
January 2021	14 participants (Architecture 1; College 7; Commerce 1; Engineering 3; Nursing 2)
Summer 2021	12 participants (Architecture 2; College 9; Engineering 1)
	<b>Total participants: 72 during QEP (136 since 2014)</b>

b) Increase outreach to faculty in the schools about the benefits of and strategies for incorporating writing.

*Updates:* Since Fall 2018, Fountain and/or Nobles have provided **13 faculty consultations** with individual instructors or faculty groups/committees and **22 information sessions** on WAC, the WE criteria, or integrating writing pedagogy to faculty groups across Grounds.

In Spring 2021, Fountain and Nobles began working with Alexandra Reborn (Communications Director, Office of the Provost) to create a marketing and communication strategy for WAC at UVA. Together, they developed plans for increasing outreach to faculty and leadership as well as methods for promoting the benefits of WAC.

c) Create web-based and other teaching resources (related to WAC) for faculty across schools.

*Update:* The WAC webpage was published in Fall 2020: <https://writingrhetoric.as.virginia.edu/wac>

d) \*Provide a handout on WAC-related resources to all newly arrived faculty during Faculty Orientation.

*Update:* Arranging and requiring a workshop for all new faculty would be logistically difficult. Plus, due to the diversity of new faculty members’ disciplinary orientations, writing instruction experiences, and pedagogical needs, a single workshop (without a clearly addressed need from participants) would likely not provide a meaningful experience. Since Fall 2019, we have provided a handout on WAC resources at the Faculty Orientation.

\*Two new initiatives to bolster the content provided in general workshops for new faculty were added:

e) Offer tailored workshops for faculty and graduate instructors seeking to incorporate the WE criteria and other forms of writing instruction (e.g., designing assignments, responding to student writers).

*Update:* Since Spring 2019, Fountain and/or Nobles have provided **12 tailored workshops** to faculty in Batten, the College, Continuing and Professional Studies, Engineering, Nursing, and graduate instructors from across Grounds.

**Table 2: Tailored WAC Workshops**

Term	Audience	Topic
Spring 2019	BSN Faculty, Nursing	Writing Across the BSN Curriculum
Spring 2019	College Fellows	Writing to Learn in Engagements Courses
Fall 2019	Batten Faculty	Teaching Writing in Batten Classes
Fall 2019	STS Faculty, Engineering	Evidence-Based Strategies in Writing Instruction
Spring 2020	College Faculty in WE criteria pilot	Responding to Student Writers
Spring 2020	College Fellows	Writing to Learn in Engagements Courses
Fall 2020	TAs for LPPP 3001, Batten	Evidence-Based Practices in Writing Instruction
Fall 2020	CTE/Graduate Instructors	Responding to Student Writers

Fall 2020	Continuing and Professional Studies Faculty	Responding to Student Writers
Spring 2021	Batten Faculty	Improving Student Writing
Spring 2021	College Fellows	Writing to Learn in Engagements Courses
Spring 2021	Continuing and Professional Studies Faculty	Designing Writing Assignments

- f) Create a Graduate Instructor Seminar on the Teaching of Writing to be offered twice per year.

*Update:* The Writing and Rhetoric Program, in partnership with the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, began offering the Seminar twice annually in AY 2020-2021. In that time, 42 graduate instructors have participated. (The Summer 2021 Seminar was on August 9-12 and will be included in the Year Five report).

**Table 3: Graduate Instructor Seminar on the Teaching of Writing Participation**

Term	Graduate Instructor Participants
Summer 2020	21 participants (Architecture 1; College 16; Education 4)
January 2021	21 participants (College 19; Education 2)
	<b>Total participants: 42</b>

## 2. Curriculum Support and Oversight of Writing-Enhanced (WE) Courses

- a) Adopt a new approval process for Second Writing Requirement (SWR) courses in the College to ensure the courses are designed to engage students through writing and to develop students' abilities as writers.

*Updates:* In Spring 2020, the College's Committee on Educational Policy and the Curriculum (CEPC) approved a two-year curricular pilot that allows SWR courses to use either (1) the existing SWR criteria or (2) the new WE criteria. As part of this pilot, which began in 2020-2021, any course seeking a new SWR designation will be reviewed by the newly constituted SWR Committee, chaired by Fountain. This committee, composed of faculty members from across UVA, was created in Fall 2020, with authorization from the Office of the Provost. The committee serves an advisory role, offering (a) advice to the instructor proposing an SWR course and (b) input to the CEPC Executive Committee concerning the proposed course's alignment with the criteria chosen. Appointments to the SWR Committee are for terms of three years. Due to the pandemic, the committee's work was largely virtual and minimal in 2020-2021. In Spring 2021, only 3 course proposals seeking an SWR

designation were reviewed. In Fall 2021, the SWR Committee will continue to review SWR course proposals as they are submitted to the CEPC.

In Spring 2020, Rachel Most, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Academic Programs in the College, and her staff created a faculty survey for those teaching Summer 2021 and Fall 2021 SWR courses, in order (a) to ensure the course should still be designated as SWR and (b) to encourage faculty to adopt officially the WE criteria in their SWR course. Out of the 24 instructors who confirmed their courses' SWR status, 14 have elected to adopt the WE criteria. Fountain followed up with these interested faculty to confirm their courses do incorporate the criteria.

b) Create a Writing Fellows project through UVA's writing center, in which highly proficient undergraduate and graduate student writers offer discipline-specific tutoring in writing.

*Update:* As stated in the original 2017 QEP Report, writing fellow projects are one common means of providing curriculum-based peer tutoring in writing. Administering a large writing fellow project can, however, present several challenges. First, writing centers have an obligation to fulfill their core mission of providing writing consultations to all students across the university, not just students enrolled in specialized courses that provide focused tutoring. Writing fellow projects, which require oversight from writing center administrators and dedicated tutoring hours from writing consultants, can overwhelm a writing center's other services.

Second, successful writing fellow projects require active collaboration between the course instructors and the writing consultants (or fellows), which takes time and commitment on the part of the faculty who must integrate the consultants into the courses (for example, through information sharing on the part of the instructor and in class workshops provided by the consultant). Without this integration, students in the courses may not be sure how best to use the writing consultant, or the writing consultant (and the writing center) may be positioned as a space of remediation for "less successful writers"; that perception can, in turn, discourage students from using the resource.

Two unique constraints at UVA derive from where the writing center is housed and how it is administered. The writing center is part of the Writing and Rhetoric Program, which is both a first-year writing program and a curricular unit that offers courses in writing and rhetoric, and is part of the Department of English. For decades, UVA's writing center was designed primarily to provide writing consultations to first-year writing students. While the center has significantly expanded its mission to work with students beyond the first year, and does provide writing consultations to students across Grounds, the writing center is in a moment of transition and is not yet positioned to be the university-wide resource that it could become. Also, the writing center is supervised by two directors, who report to the Director of Writing and Rhetoric (and thus ultimately to the College of Arts and Sciences through the Department of English), not to the Director of WAC. Because of this reporting structure, the director of WAC is not positioned to oversee large writing center-related projects, such as the Writing Fellows.

Ultimately, UVA adopted an approach to WAC that foregrounds course instructors as experts in disciplinary writing and knowledge who are uniquely qualified to provide students the instruction and feedback needed not only to succeed in the course, but also to develop the habits of mind required of that discipline. This approach to WAC suggests faculty preparation and curricular initiatives (such as the WE criteria) that can be successfully implemented in a variety of courses.

Often, WAC programs with strong faculty involvement are more sustainable than those in which the primary responsibility for developing student writing is shifted to supplemental resources.

Yet, a writing fellow project can provide a writing center with a host of opportunities—namely, to increase the center’s profile, to communicate across the university the center’s presence as a resource for upper-level and disciplinary writing, to pilot in-class workshops administered by the Writing Fellows, and to provide opportunities for training writing consultants in disciplinary writing. Since we began this project in Fall 2018, 6 departments, specifically Distinguished Majors, have participated. We will continue this project in 2021-2022.

**Table 4: Writing Fellows Initiative**

Year	Distinguished Majors Program with Writing Fellow
2018-2019	American Studies, Arts Administration, and Economics
2019-2020	American Studies, Art & Art History, and Media Studies
2020-2021	American Studies, Media Studies, and Psychology

\*Three new initiatives center on enhanced writing requirements were added.

In 2018-2019, the QEPOC finalized the new proposed SWR criteria—the Writing-Enhanced (WE) Criteria—by examining evidence-based practices from published research in writing studies/composition and education, while also benchmarking the writing curriculum policies and guidelines of peer and other institutions. These new WE criteria allowed the QEPOC to focus its instructor preparation, curriculum, and infrastructure efforts in the following ways: prepare instructors to incorporate these criteria; pilot and assess these criteria in courses across Grounds; encourage the official adoption of these criteria in SWR courses; and research infrastructure that supports the inclusion of the WE criteria and other forms of writing instruction. This new focus is represented in outcomes 2.c, 2.d, and 2.e below.

- c) \*Create a new writing-enhanced (WE) criteria for SWR courses, by (a) researching evidence-based practices in writing studies/composition and education and (a) benchmarking the policies and guidelines of peer and other institutions.

*Update:* As noted above, the WE criteria was finalized in Spring 2019. (See Appendix A: Writing-Enhanced Criteria Guidelines.)

- d) \*Pilot and assess the WE criteria in courses across Grounds (courses in each school).

*Update:* Since Fall 2019, the new WE criteria has been piloted in 22 courses across Grounds. Samples of student writing from seven of these courses have been assessed by the Office of Institutional Research and Analytics. (See the Assessment section of this report.)

**Table 5: Courses Piloting the WE Criteria**

<b>Term</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Courses That Have Piloted the WE Criteria</b>	<b>Total Student Enrollment</b>
Fall 2019	Batten	LPPP 3001: Public Policy Writing Lab (2 sections)	84
Fall 2019	Nursing	NUCO 2210: Foundations of Nursing (3 sections)	93
Spring 2020	College	ARTH 3591: Art History Colloquium	16
Spring 2020	College	ARTH 4591: Seminar in History of Art (2 sections)	23
Spring 2020	College	ENCW 2200: Introduction to Creative Nonfiction	12
Spring 2020	College	ENGL 2507: Studies in Drama	18
Spring 2020	College	ENWR 2520: Special Topics in Writing	16
Spring 2020	College	EVSC 4170: Spatial Ecology	13
Spring 2020	College	PHIL 3500: Political Philosophy	30
Spring 2020	Continuing and Professional Studies	ISLS 3210: Liberal Arts Seminar (2 sections)	20
Fall 2020	Batten	LPPP 3255: Comparative Policy History (2 sections)	78
Fall 2020	College	BIOL 4450: Plant-Animal Interactions	24
Fall 2020	Education	EDIS 2800: Understanding P-12 Educational Contexts (2 sections)	35
Fall 2020	Commerce	COMM 3010 – Strategy & Systems (8 sections)	315
Fall 2020	Engineering	STS 4500: STS & Engineering Practice (2 sections)	54

Spring 2021	Architecture	ARH/ARTH 4591: Vikings into Kings	13
Spring 2021	College	ANTH 3340: Ecology & Society	11
Spring 2021	College	HIST 4501: English Laws, Global Empire, 1600-1860	6
Spring 2021	College	MDST 4106: Media & the Kennedy Era	20
Spring 2021	College	SATR 3000: Women Writing in India & Pakistan	27
Spring 2021	College	RELJ 2030: Judaism, Roots and Rebellion	14
Spring 2021	College	ITTR 3280: Michelangelo	11
<b>Total students: 933</b>			

e) \*Assist each undergraduate school in implementing some component of WAC in their undergraduate courses or curricula (e.g., piloting the WE criteria, piloting Peerceptiv, participating in tailored workshops and training for instructors and GTAs, design writing-enhanced curricula for undergraduate majors, etc.).

*Updates:* Since Fall 2018, the School of Nursing (thanks in great part to QEPOC representative Ashley Hurst) has committed to strengthening their current approach to teaching writing to undergraduates. They have done this by exploring the creation of a writing-enhanced curriculum in the BSN program. Hurst has led the team of Nursing faculty and QEPOC members in creating a plan for implementing that curriculum and introducing that plan to other BSN faculty. As part of this, the Nursing's NUCO 2210 (a 2<sup>nd</sup> year requirement) was one of the first courses to pilot and adopt officially the WE criteria as well as participate in the assessment of student writing. While the pandemic focused Nursing's efforts in unforeseen ways, the BSN program remains committed to implementing WAC by identifying targets for instructor preparation, facilitating workshops for instructors, designing writing outcomes, and creating a practical plan for reaching those outcomes in key BSN courses. This work will continue in 2021-2022.

In Spring 2021, with assistance from the Office of the Provost, the QEPOC began working with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (or their designee) in each undergraduate school. Through two planning meetings, representatives from each school discussed ways to implement at least one WAC initiative in 2021-2022.

The pandemic has had a detrimental effect on our efforts to implement WAC in the undergraduate schools. Across the university, the priority has been to provide an excellent educational experience in the safest manner possible. Encouraging schools to take on new curricular initiatives during this

time has been challenging. After all, the WAC approach to pedagogy represents a fundamental shift to many instructors, who are now asked to share the responsibility of developing student writers. Some undergraduate schools are better positioned to accept this challenge and responsibility than others. One major goal of 2021-2022 is to assist each undergraduate school in implementing some component of WAC in their courses or curricula, by helping each to develop and to pilot at least one initiative. While the sustainability of WAC at UVA depends on a commitment from faculty and leadership, we acknowledge that some schools will move farther in this process than others. (See Section D for the plans for 2021-2022.)

### **3. Infrastructure Support for WAC Resources and Initiatives**

Revision of initiative 3: While digital portfolios are excellent tools for the collection and (virtual) exhibition of student writing, they are not designed to provide or assist in writing instruction. As such, they do not necessarily play a significant role in students' engagement with writing or the development of students' writing abilities. Peer review platforms provide one evidence-based form of writing instruction, i.e., the opportunity for students to revise their work in light of feedback that is informed by the instructor's guidance. Peerceptiv also encourages other forms of sound writing instruction, such as clearly articulated writing assignments and evaluation criteria calibrated to assignments and peer review. Research on the effectiveness of Peerceptiv can be found on their website: <https://peerceptiv.com/why-peerceptiv-overview/research/publications-list/>

- a) \*Pilot Peerceptiv, the peer review platform that allows faculty to incorporate the following evidence-based practices in both writing-enhanced and large-enrollment courses: (1) structured peer review; (2) more precisely articulated writing assignments; and (3) evaluation criteria calibrated to assignments and peer review.

*Update:* Since we began the campus-wide license of Peerceptiv in Fall 2020, 20 courses across Grounds have piloted the peer review platform.

**Table 6: Peerceptiv Usage**

<b>Term</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Course</b>	<b>Total Student Enrollment</b>
August 2020	Batten	LPPP: CIBO Writing Seminar	110
Fall 2020	College	DEM 7000: Democracy Initiative Grad Seminar	11
Fall 2020	Engineering	BME 4414: Biomaterials	33
Fall 2020	College	CHTR 3850: Documentary Writing & Film in China	28
Fall 2020	College	ECON 3430: Economics of Sustainability & the Environment	17
Fall 2020	College	SPAN 7850: Caribbean Environmental Humanities	11
Fall 2020	Engineering	ECE 3209: Electromagnetic Fields	49
Fall 2020	Engineering	ENGR 1624: Introduction to Engineering	33
Fall 2020	College	RUTR 2350: Russian & East European Film	50
Fall 2020	College	PSYC 2600: Introduction to Social Psychology	244
Fall 2020	College	STAT 3080: From Data to Knowledge	317
January 2021	College	STAT 3080: From Data to Knowledge	54
Spring 2021	College	STAT 3080: From Data to Knowledge	110
Spring 2021	College	ENGL 2507: Identity, Race, & Religion in Renaissance Drama	16
Spring 2021	College	BIOL 8260: Writing in Science	13
Spring 2021	College	ENWR 1510: The Personal and the Political	17

Spring 2021	College	RELG 3001: Gods, Humans, and Robots	14
Spring 2021	Engineering	APMA 6430: Statistics for Engineers and Scientists	21
Spring 2021	College	SLFK 2120: Russian Folklore	56
Spring 2021	College	STAT 4220: Applied Analytics for Business	122
<b>Total students: 1317</b>			
<b>Total number of reviews submitted by students: 10,217</b>			

b) \*Assist UVA’s Learning Design Teach and the Center for Teaching Excellence with workshops and materials to aid faculty in incorporating Peerceptiv and the enhanced forms of writing instruction it allows.

*Update:* This new initiative reflects the need to provide instructors with supplemental training materials and resources to assist in their adoption and use of Peerceptiv.

**4. Sustainability of WAC Beyond the QEP**

\*New initiative: Beginning in 2020-2021, the QEPOC devoted attention to the sustainability of WAC efforts beyond the QEP. Fountain and Nobles collected benchmarking data on WAC programs at peer and other institutions to understand how WAC at these universities is organized, where it is housed, what services it provides, and how it is funded.

a) \*Begin planning for a sustainable model of WAC at UVA beyond the QEP.

## Assessment

### 1. Assessment of Faculty and Graduate Instructor Preparation Efforts

#### Faculty Seminar on the Teaching of Writing

Five sessions of the Faculty Seminar on the Teaching of Writing were held between 2018 and 2021, with a total of 72 instructors participating.

To provide formative information to Faculty Seminar leaders, the participants were asked to complete an online survey of their confidence in multiple aspects of writing instruction both before and after the Seminar. Through the surveys, participants rated their confidence to do each of 21 teaching activities by selecting one of five levels of confidence, ranging from “Not At All Confident” to “Very Confident.” Seminar leaders received results from each pre-survey shortly before the Seminar opened, and then received a pre/post report after the Seminar.

Across the five sessions, the 58 participants who completed the Seminar and both the pre- and post-surveys were most likely to express confidence (Confident or Very Confident) in their ability to:

- Provide students with opportunities for revision
- Provide useful feedback to students on their progress in writing
- Design writing-enhanced courses
- Develop their own approach to effective writing instruction
- Incorporate writing activities in the classroom setting
- Create non-traditional writing assignments
- Organize in-class peer review and feedback opportunities
- Effectively balance teaching of content with teaching of writing
- Enhance students’ use of writing for inquiry

The most changed areas in terms of the difference between the percentage of Confident/Very confident pre- and post-Seminar responses were participants’ ability to:

- Effectively balance teaching of content with teaching of writing
- Motivate the less motivated writers
- Create non-traditional writing assignments
- Enhance students’ use of writing for inquiry
- Facilitate class discussions about writing

#### Graduate Instructor Seminar in Teaching of Writing

Two sessions of the Graduate Instructor Seminar on the Teaching of Writing were held in 2021, with a total of 42 graduate instructors participating.

To provide formative information to Graduate Instructor Seminar leaders, the participants were asked to complete an online survey of their confidence in multiple aspects of writing instruction both before and after the Seminar. Through the surveys, participants rated their confidence to do each of 21 teaching activities by selecting one of five levels of confidence, ranging from “Not At All Confident” to “Very Confident.” Seminar leaders received results from each pre-survey shortly before the Seminar opened, and then received a pre/post report after the Seminar.

Across the five sessions, the 36 participants who completed the Seminar and both the pre- and post-surveys were most likely to express confidence (Confident or Very Confident) in their ability to:

- Enhance students' use of writing for inquiry
- Design writing enhanced courses
- Incorporate writing activities in the classroom setting
- Clearly communicate criteria for assessment and grading.
- Know when and where to refer students who need extra help with their writing
- Develop their own approach to effective writing instruction
- Provide students with opportunities for revision
- Assess students fairly

The most changed areas in terms of the difference between the percentage of Confident/Very confident pre- and post-Seminar responses were participants' ability to:

- Manage teaching a class with a wide range in students' ability to write
- Facilitate class discussions about writing
- Know when and where to refer students who need extra help with their writing

## **2. Assessment of Curricular Efforts: Pilot of WE Criteria in Writing-Enhanced Courses**

### **Pre-Pilot Confidence Surveys**

Prior to the semester, instructors completed a survey that asked them to rate their confidence with 21 aspects of writing instruction. In general, across the four semesters, instructors tended to be more confident in their ability to:

- Sequence and distribute writing assignments throughout the semester
- Engage students in a multi-step drafting process
- Assess students fairly
- Provide students with opportunities for revision
- Develop their own approach to effective writing instruction

They tended to be less confident in their ability to:

- Motivate the less motivated writers
- Teach students the techniques of editing
- Manage teaching a class with a wider range in students' ability to write

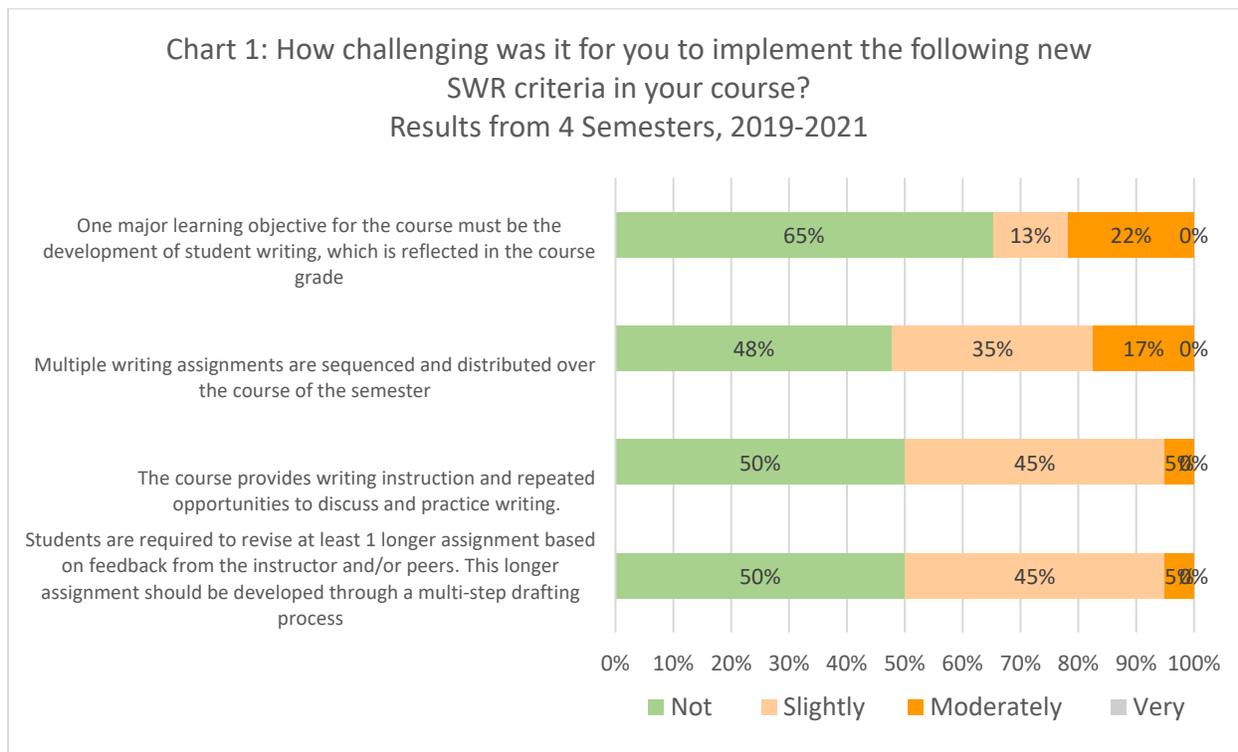
### **Instructor Reflection**

#### 1. How challenging was it for you to implement the following new SWR criteria in your course?

Instructors were asked to rate the challenge on a scale from Not Challenging to Very Challenging for four of the new WE criteria. Combining results from four semesters—Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021—revealed that for all four criteria, at least half of the total 23 instructors did not find implementation to be challenging (See Chart 1).

- No respondents reported finding any of the criteria to be very challenging to implement.

- Least challenging overall (not challenging or slightly challenging) were two criteria: providing writing instruction/opportunities to discuss writing, and having students revise a longer assignment based on feedback.
- Most challenging overall (slightly or moderately) was the criterion of having multiple writing assignments sequenced over the semester.
- Somewhat challenging was the criterion to adopt student writing as a major learning objective in the course and reflect it in the course grade.



## 2. How did students in your course respond re: writing?

Instructors were asked to rate their agreement with five statements about their class of students. Each question addressed a different aspect of student response. Instructors were given the opportunity to rate their agreement on a six-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Combining results from four semesters—Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021—revealed that no instructors registered disagreement with any of the statements beyond “somewhat disagree.” As such, Chart 2 below displays results on a scale from Somewhat Disagree to Strongly Agree.

With few exceptions, instructors agreed that among their students:

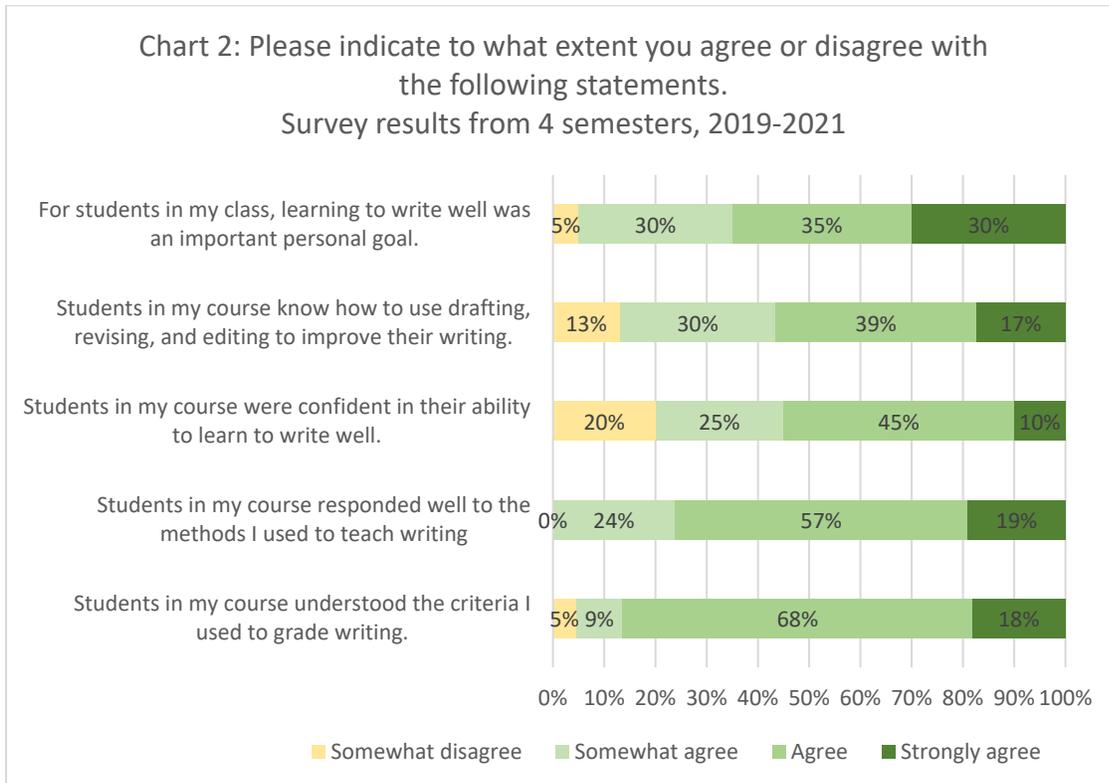
1. learning to write well was an important goal;
2. students responded well to the teaching methods; and
3. students understood the criteria used to grade writing.

Two statements elicited some disagreement from instructors.

1. students were confident in their ability to learn to write well; and
2. students know how to use drafting, revising and editing to improve their writing.

Just over half agreed or strongly agreed with these two statements.

In general, instructors felt that students responded well to the instruction, wanted to learn to write well, but also lacked some confidence in their ability to write well and to use editing techniques to improve their writing.



### Assessment of Student Writing

Between Fall 2019 and Spring 2021, rubric-based assessments of student writing were completed for seven courses in which the instructor had implemented the WE criteria. If not for the pandemic, several more courses would have had student papers assessed.

The rubric combined elements of two rubrics: the AAC&U Written Communication VALUE rubric and the rubric created for the course assignment. Raters assessed each paper according to six criteria. They scored each criterion on a four-point scale: 1=Developing; 2=Competent; 3=Proficient; 4=Highly Proficient.

The six criteria were:

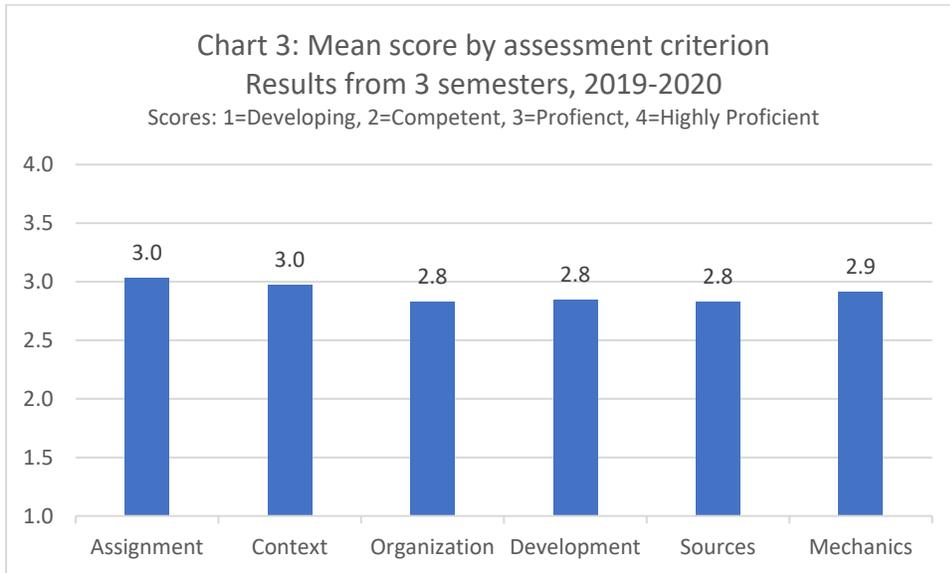
1. Assignment Guidelines: Did the paper meet the assignment guidelines?
2. Context and Purpose: Did the paper demonstrate a clear purpose for writing, awareness of circumstances surrounding the writing task, and consideration of audience?

3. Organization: Were the paper's structure and movement coherent moving from introduction through body content to conclusion?
4. Development: Did the paper include substantive and logical claims and sub claims to achieve the paper's main purpose?
5. Sources and Evidence: Did the paper include reputable sources and adequate support for claims?
6. Mechanics and Tone: Were the mechanics sound? Was the tone appropriate? Was APA format used for page layout and citations?

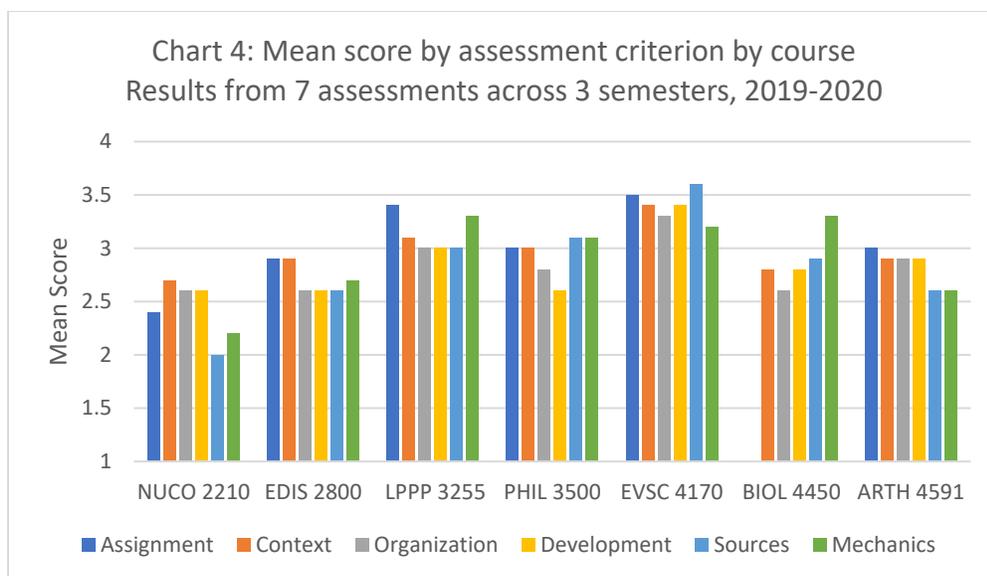
At least two raters independently read and scored each paper. A third rater read and scored papers when the first two raters differed substantially.

The seven courses represented seven disciplines: Education, Humanities (Philosophy and Art History), Nursing, Public Policy, and Sciences (Biology and Environmental Sciences).

Average scores across the seven courses and six criteria suggest that student writing submitted in these SWR courses reflect near-proficiency (Chart 3).



The courses, however, ranged from 2<sup>nd</sup>-year core courses to 4<sup>th</sup>-year seminars across seven different disciplines, encompassing a wide range in assignments, expectations, and abilities. Results varied by discipline and course level, with the 4<sup>th</sup> year EVSC literature review assignment suggesting that student performance was more than proficient, and 2<sup>nd</sup> year Nursing students demonstrating competence, nearing proficiency (Chart 4).



Based on the past experience of IRA staff in managing assessment sessions across the disciplines, assessment sessions via Zoom were significantly less robust than in-person sessions. Specifically, the discussion during the assessment sessions was minimal, less spontaneous, and less substantive. This may account in part for the modest assessment results. When conducted in person, assessment sessions offer a valuable opportunity for faculty to discuss their courses, students, assignments, etc., with others. Moreover, in assessment sessions, faculty can learn how rubrics can be applied to assess student performance systematically. That faculty were not able to benefit fully from these sessions is another cost of the pandemic.

### 3. Fostering a Culture of Writing: 2020 Faculty Survey

#### Executive Summary: March 2021

In Fall 2020, at the invitation of their deans, 1,092 instructors who teach undergraduate students completed a survey about writing and course-based writing instruction at UVA. Fully 65% of instructors responded, more than doubling the 30% response from 2018.

While it is highly tempting, differences between the 2020 results and the 2018 results cannot be directly attributed to change in respondent attitude or perception. The differences can be just as attributable to the inclusion of many new respondents.

With that caution, it appears that:

1. Unchanged is instructors' strong affirmation that an important goal of UVA is to teach students to write well and that learning to write well should be an integral part of undergraduate education.
2. Respondents in 2020 were more likely to perceive that UVA is providing pedagogical support for the teaching of writing.
3. Although respondents were somewhat more likely to assert that teaching students to write well is an important goal for them, respondents in 2020 were somewhat less likely to include

significant writing assignments in their classes and more likely to find it challenging to balance the teaching of content and the teaching of writing.

4. Just over half of respondents in 2020 felt that their work teaching students to write is valued by the University or their school, more than for respondents in 2018. It remains, however, that nearly half do not feel that their work is valued. These results vary widely by school. In general, respondents in SCPS, Nursing, and Commerce were more likely to see their school as valuing their work.
5. In 2020, two new follow-up questions were added to the survey:  
*You indicated that you agree that your work instructing students to write is valued in your school. What have you experienced that tells you that?*

Respondents attributed the interest and support of their colleagues, department leadership, and school. They also cited seeing their classes capped at reasonable size, as well as leadership support for teaching SWRs and for participating in writing pedagogy training.

*You indicated that you disagree that your work instructing students to write is valued in your school. What experiences would change your mind?*

Respondents most frequently cited pragmatic changes to their work situations: financial support; consideration in annual review and in promotion decisions; TA help; and capped class size. They also sought program support for more course-based student writing and for support from colleagues.

Both groups cited the support of their dean as important.

6. Three years into the QEP, on average, respondents still only somewhat agree that there is a high level of commitment at UVA or in their departments to teaching students to write well.

The survey will be administered a final time in Fall 2022.

## Reflection on Year 4

### Goals and Outcomes

In 2020-2021, the QEP continued to pursue its goal of fostering a culture of writing by adopting a WAC approach in spite of two major challenges. First, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed higher education in America, as most colleges and universities moved to online instruction. UVA was no exception. These changes in instruction and daily life put new pressures on UVA's faculty, staff, and students. The report has already discussed how the pandemic affected the assessment sessions. Second, UVA's Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, who was leading the QEP, left the university in October 2020 to accept a position with another institution. At this time, Christina Morell (Associate Provost and Director, Institutional Research and Analytics) and Victor Luftig (Director of the Writing and Rhetoric Program) stepped in as co-chairs of the QEP, which allowed the group's work to continue without pause.

To reiterate, the QEP's goals and outcomes are informed by research from writing studies, composition studies, and education, as well as a survey of WAC programs at peer and other institutions of higher education across the country. This research, coupled with our own assessment, strongly suggests that WAC, specifically the development of writing-enhanced courses across the curriculum, can have a positive effect on students' engagement with learning and students' development as writers. Preparing instructors to design and teach writing-enhanced courses is crucial to the success of any WAC program. Often this begins by inviting instructors to reconceive both the role of writing in their courses and themselves as teachers. As the QEP enters the final year, our efforts in the areas of instructor preparation, curriculum, and infrastructure will focus on promoting the benefits of WAC pedagogy, offering training and resources for implementing WAC, and planning a sustainable model of WAC at UVA beyond the QEP. After all, changing an institution's culture is a long-term process, one that involves the commitment of faculty, staff, students, and leadership.

### Assessment

The QEP incorporated both direct and indirect assessment methods to assess progress in implementing the initiative. From considering the initial interventions in teaching writing through gauging perceptions of a broader writing culture, assessments have provided useful information to guide decisions and to measure progress.

#### **Instructor Preparation**

Assessments documented the positive impact of Seminars in the Teaching of Writing (faculty and graduate instructors) on instructor confidence. Indirect assessment through surveys of participants' confidence in teaching writing provided useful information about each group for seminar leaders. In general, pre-Seminar surveys revealed participants' moderate confidence in teaching writing and creating writing intensive courses.

Post-seminar surveys documented generally high levels of participant confidence in implementing recommended techniques, plus confidence in designing writing-enhanced courses and in developing their own approach to writing instruction.

#### **Curriculum**

Instructors who piloted the new WE criteria went into these courses with high levels of confidence and came out with largely positive impressions of their and their students'

experience. Indirect assessment through pre-surveys revealed participants' high levels of confidence in implementing the WE techniques in their courses.

After the term, participants were asked to reflect on the challenge entailed in implementing the WE criteria. While half of respondents reported no challenge, others found the sequencing of writing across the semester to be challenging. Asked to reflect on their students' experience, participants felt that students responded well to the instruction. They were less in agreement as to students' confidence in learning to write well, possibly a reflection of different class levels (2<sup>nd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> years).

Direct assessment of student writing had two goals: process and outcome. The first goal was to engage instructors in the process of a rubric-based, systematic assessment of student writing. For some instructors, this was a new experience. Implementation of the direct assessments of student work suffered due to the pandemic; overall results are less reliable, but lessons were learned about the importance of well-attended assessment sessions held in-person. Compared to robust discussions that we saw in pre-pandemic assessment sessions (not QEP), most of these sessions via Zoom were barebones. Unfortunately, the quality of the sessions adversely affected inter-rater reliability. The second goal was to obtain an appraisal of student proficiency in writing via that assessment process. Overall, student writing was judged as "near proficient," although the results should be interpreted with care.

#### **Fostering a Culture of Writing.**

Tracking change in institutional culture, especially regarding a fundamental already familiar skill, will require time, likely well beyond the QEP.

Two biannual surveys—one of faculty and one of undergraduate students—elicit respondents' perception of a culture of writing at UVA. They ask about their experience with writing instruction, attitudes about writing, and perception that writing and writing instruction is supported and valued.

Both surveys have offered little evidence of a change in the culture of writing between 2018 and 2020. Rather, both consistently affirm overall that UVA values writing and the teaching of writing, although some faculty express dismay over lack of support for their writing instruction.

## Plans for Year 5: 2021-2022

### Goals and Outcomes

#### 1. Faculty and Graduate Instructor Preparation in the Teaching of Writing

- a) Continue offering and assessing the Faculty Seminar on the Teaching of Writing twice per year.
- b) Increase outreach to faculty and leadership in the schools about the benefits of and strategies for incorporating writing across the curriculum.
  - (1) Arrange to meet with key leadership and faculty stakeholder groups (or their representatives) to introduce and promote the benefits of the WAC approach to student engagement and student writing (e.g., school deans, Faculty Senate Subcommittee, General Faculty Council, etc.).
  - (2) Continue with marketing efforts to promote WAC resources at UVA (via email, digital screens on campus, etc.).
- c) Create additional web-based and other teaching resources (related to WAC) for faculty across schools.
- d) Continue to provide a handout on WAC-related resources to all new faculty during New Faculty Orientation.
- e) Offer additional tailored workshops for faculty and graduate instructors seeking to incorporate the WE criteria and other forms of writing instruction.
  - (1) Pilot a new workshop on writing pedagogy for GTAs and graders.
  - (2) Offer at least two tailored workshops per semester for instructors across Grounds.
  - (3) Collect assessment data (via survey) of instructors'/participants' experiences with and feedback on workshops and training sessions.
- f) Continue offering and assessing the Graduate Instructor Seminar on the Teaching of Writing twice per year.

#### 2. Curriculum Support and Oversight of Writing-Enhanced (WE) Courses

- a) Continue with and widely promote the new approval process for Second Writing Requirement (SWR) courses in the College to ensure the courses are designed to engage students through writing and to develop students' abilities as writers.
  - (1) Request to survey (in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022) instructors of upcoming SWR courses about officially adopting the WE criteria
  - (2) Work with instructors interested in adopting the WE criteria by documenting (via survey and syllabus review) their incorporation of the new criteria.
- b) Continue with the Writing Fellows project (through UVA's Writing Center), in which highly proficient undergraduate and graduate student writers offer discipline-specific tutoring in writing.
- c) Continue to promote the writing-enhanced (WE) criteria for SWR and other writing-enhanced undergraduate courses offered across Grounds.

- (1) Continue outreach to DUPs and department chairs about the benefits of the new WE criteria.
- d) Continue to pilot and assess the WE criteria in undergraduate courses across Grounds.
- e) Assist each undergraduate school in implementing some component of WAC in their undergraduate courses or curricula.
  - (1) Continue to work with associate deans and the QEPOC representative from each school to identify WAC efforts that match their needs and constraints (e.g., piloting the WE criteria, piloting Peerceptiv, participating in tailored workshops and training for instructors and GTAs, designing writing-enhanced curricula for undergraduate majors, etc.).

### **3. Infrastructure Support for WAC Resources and Initiatives**

- a) Continue to pilot Peerceptiv, the peer review platform, in courses across Grounds.
  - (1) Collect assessment data (via survey) of instructors' experiences with Peerceptiv.
- b) Assist UVA's Learning Design Team and the Center for Teaching Excellence with workshops and materials to aid faculty in incorporating Peerceptiv and the enhanced forms of writing instruction it allows.
- c) Continue with marketing efforts to promote WAC resources at UVA (via email, digital screens on campus, etc.).

### **4. Sustainability of WAC Beyond the QEP**

- a) Design a sustainable model of WAC at UVA beyond the QEP.
- b) Share the proposed model with and collect feedback from key stakeholders at UVA (e.g., appropriate CAS Deans, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Provost, etc.).
- c) Work toward implementing the final version of this model so as to create a smooth transition in 2022-2023.

## Appendix A: Writing Across the Curriculum at UVA

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### What is Writing Across the Curriculum?

The University of Virginia's Quality Enhancement Plan, sponsored by the Office of the Provost, aims to enhance the culture of writing at the University through a pedagogical paradigm known as **Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)**. The common goals of WAC are (1) to expand students' opportunities for writing across their academic careers, (2) to increase students' writing proficiency, (3) to deepen students' engagement with learning, (4) to foster a campus culture that supports writing, and (5) to create a community of faculty engaged in the development of student writing through instruction and mentorship.<sup>1</sup>

UVA's WAC initiative focuses on (1) supporting the integration of writing and writing instruction in courses across Grounds, (2) assisting in the creation of writing-enhanced courses in the disciplines, and (3) providing faculty resources on the teaching of writing. We work with faculty, departments, and schools seeking to develop students' writing abilities and to promote students' learning through writing, by using **evidence-based methods** that are **manageable, assessable, and sustainable**.

### What Is the WAC Approach to Teaching Writing?

The WAC approach recognizes that writing both communicates ideas to various audiences and deepens or augments learning.<sup>2,3</sup> In order for students to develop and sustain their writing skills, while heightening their engagement with learning, they need to practice *writing to learn* and *writing to communicate*, especially in courses in their majors.<sup>4,5,6</sup> Because writing is tied to each discipline's ways of knowing, the WAC approach encourages strategically integrating writing practice and instruction in a range of courses that use either or both *writing to learn* and *writing to communicate* strategies—through shorter writing tasks as well as longer projects.

### How Do Students Improve as Writers?

Research in writing studies and education has established that developing as a writer is similar to learning a new language or advancing as an athlete or musician. All of these endeavors take time and practice. In fact, students learn to improve their writing through repeated practice over time, with multiple occasions to write and revise their work in light of feedback and instruction that is informed by the knowledge and habits of mind students are expected to develop.

The following **pedagogical practices** can improve students' writing abilities when integrated across a range of courses:

1. The inclusion of **deliberate, focused practice** in writing through **multiple occasions to write**;<sup>7,8,9</sup>
2. The incorporation of **some type of multi-step drafting process** for major writing assignments;<sup>10,11,12</sup>
3. The requirement **to revise one's writing** in response to meaningful feedback;<sup>4,13,14</sup>
4. The inclusion of **instruction and guidance** that models the ways of writing, thinking, and learning students are expected to develop in the course and in the major.<sup>15,16</sup>

### What Are Writing-Enhanced Courses?

One successful way to implement these practices—which improve student writers and promote learning through writing—is to implement **writing-enhanced (or WE) courses**. Specifically, WE courses in the disciplines allow students to engage with and learn conventions and habits of mind from faculty with expertise in those disciplines. WE courses are recognized by the *Association of American College and Universities* as “high-impact practices” that increase student engagement and retention.<sup>17</sup> WE courses improve students’ writing, deepen students’ understanding of content, and develop students’ critical thinking.<sup>18, 19</sup>

As part of the WAC initiative, we have sought out courses to include and have also sought the instructors’ feedback to our new WE criteria. Participating faculty have piloted the criteria below and completed two brief surveys (one pre-, one post-, to provide assessment data regarding instructor self-efficacy). The four WE criteria are as follows:

1. One major learning objective for the course is the development of student writing, which is reflected in the final course grade.
2. Multiple writing assignments are sequenced and distributed over the course of the semester. Students write a minimum of 15-20 double-spaced pages (or the equivalent in word-dominant multimodal projects), which may include both drafts and final versions of assignments. Of this, at least 10 double-spaced pages are finished, polished writing.
3. Students are required to revise at least 1 longer assignment based on feedback from the instructor and/or peers. This longer assignment should be developed through some type of multi-step drafting process (i.e., a drafting-feedback-revision cycle).
4. The course provides writing instruction and repeated opportunities to discuss and practice writing.

### What Faculty Resources Are Available?

The WAC initiative offers the following resources to faculty, departments, and schools:

1. Consultations: one-on-one or group meetings on course-specific or curriculum-level strategies.
2. Workshops: sessions focused on practical suggestions for incorporating writing into any course.
3. Faculty Seminar on the Teaching of Writing: a four-day seminar offered to faculty from across UVA.
4. Graduate Instructor Seminar on the Teaching of Writing: a four-day seminar designed for graduate students teaching writing in schools across UVA. (A partnership with the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs)

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