Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs escalated in the 1980s and with them emerged a heightened level of awareness and appreciation for the power of writing as a means of both engaging students and developing their thinking skills. The philosophies underlying these programs focus on the following principles:

- that writing is the responsibility of the entire academic community and must be integrated across departmental boundaries,
- that writing instruction must be continuous during all four years of undergraduate education,
- that writing promotes critical thinking, and
- that practicing the conventions of an academic discipline allows students the ability to communicate effectively within that discipline.


Across the country, instructors have been convinced that WAC is a noble cause and one which should be implemented; yet, most faculty remain unsure of how to integrate the philosophy into their classroom. Based on WAC philosophy, National American University adopted a writing intensive program which requires students to complete multiple research papers as they progress through their academic programs. Faculty who teach courses which have been designated writing intensive may believe that the philosophy behind the program is one worth supporting. At the same time, they feel baffled by the daunting task of helping students revise their papers and correcting what appears to be a mountain of paper work.

If you are one of these faculty members, help has arrived.

Some Discouraging Beliefs

First, let’s consider some [discouraging] beliefs about what happens when a course integrates writing and critical thinking into its curriculum (Bean, 2001).

1. **Emphasizing writing and critical thinking in my course will take time away from content.**
   
   On the onset this may seem true; however, adding writing and critical thinking components to a course should restructure and transform the student’s study time outside of class. As students learn subject matter by using critical thinking skills and through writing assignments, subject matter is learned at a deeper level.

2. **Writing assignments are unsuitable in my course.**
   
   Some faculty may believe that writing is not appropriate for their subject matter. However, writing about any subject (yes, even math) helps students
develop their thinking processes, their methods for studying and reading (i.e., metacognition skills) as well as learn better inquiry and analysis skills.

3. **Adding writing to my course will inundate me in paper grading.**
   Adding a writing component will require extra work; however, there are many ways to integrate writing into the curriculum while keeping the work load manageable. These methods will be discussed below.

4. **I am not knowledgeable enough about writing and grammar to help students with their own writing.**
   Many teachers recall that English was not their favorite subject and feel they still struggle with their own writing skills. These teachers also feel that they lack the necessary skills to help students. However, one of the primary goals of having students write is for them to learn how to revise their writing. Faculty members who struggle to revise their own writing often serve as role models for students and can connect with struggling students. As outlined below (see *Encouraging Revision*), the best way to “help” students with their writing is not to edit their papers but to provide commentary which focuses primarily on their ideas. This approach doesn’t require special knowledge or terminology; teachers simply need to be honest about the student’s writing.

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**The Writing Process**

As students begin to construct their research papers, they may follow the writing process model outlined in EN1150 and EN1300. While that model covers the necessary elements of constructing a research paper, it might be helpful to you to understand the thinking processes which most academic writers experience when they develop a paper.

First, here are the basic elements of the classic writing process model (as outlined in EN1150 and EN1300 curriculum materials):

- Choose a topic
- Determine the purpose and audience
- Develop a thesis
- Conduct research
- Create an outline
- Produce a first draft
- Edit and revise

However, as students explore their thesis, and as they begin to explore the problem they have chosen to write about, they frequently find that the writing process doesn’t follow this linear model. Indeed, students can feel “stuck” if they attempt to follow this linear outline. Many students find that their writing process follows a more circular pattern, as described in the problem-driven model of writing. The elements of this model are as follows:

- Identifying a problem – the student explores an uncertainty, a doubt with some known theory, a question about some data, or a puzzled feeling over a viewpoint
- Exploration – conducting research
• Incubation – the student lets their ideas “cook” in the subconscious and may alternate back and forth between incubation and exploration as the perception of the problem evolves
• Writing the first draft – the student should be focused on getting their ideas down on paper without trying to make the first draft perfect (thus, the first draft is writer-based). During this stage, the student should not be concerned with the reader but focused on clarifying their topic and point of view. Some students may feel that the writing process is going backwards at times. Encourage students to keep on task; assure them that this is part of the writing process. Some students may find it helpful to create an outline, while other students may prefer to just start writing to see where the writing takes them. Suggest completing a concept map to gain perspective or to help re-organize. (see Using a Concept Map below)
• Revision – writers often dismantle their first drafts and start fresh. Again, this may feel like “going backwards”; however, assure students that taking apart what already has been written reflects progress. It’s just as important to know what should be deleted as it is to know what to keep. Sometimes the thesis and the rhetorical purpose is discovered in this revision stage and not at the beginning of the process. During this stage, students should begin to write with their reader in mind, and the student should begin composing reader-based prose. (Flower, 1979)
• Editing – craftsmanship takes over from the initial creativity. Students should be honing their papers, focusing on unity, coherence, paragraphing, sentence structure and – finally – spelling and punctuation.

Examples of Immature Essay Structures
As you begin to read your students’ papers, it’s important that you have some parameters of what good writing is and is not. John Bean (2001) has identified three cognitively immature essay structures that students will “fall back on” when they are unable to develop thesis-directed prose.
• “And then” writing: when the writer describes what happens between time point A and time point B. The description frequently lacks focus, selection, pacing or tension. Students will resort to this tactic when they are attempting to use data to support points.
• “All about” writing: when the paper tries to say a little bit of everything about a topic. While data is usually grouped into categories, the categories do not function to support the thesis.
• “Data dump” writing: when a writer patches together quotes, statistics and other information without a coherent plan. It reveals that the student is overwhelmed with information and uncertain about what to do with it.

Encouraging Revision
Teachers frequently believe that the main reason students don’t revise their papers is because they lack motivation. While this may be true some of the time, let’s consider a couple of other possibilities.
Some students lack the ability to read their prose from a reader’s perspective. These students have not developed formal operations thinking skills (i.e., being able to think abstractly) and, therefore, cannot imagine their draft from a reader’s perspective.

Some students may also be unable to think in a way needed to construct academic prose. Academic writing demands the consideration of multiple points of view and the ability to consider arguments while contributing to the conversation. Some students may have undeveloped capabilities which will need to be built up.

Whatever problems contribute to a student’s failure to revise, there are strategies that can help turn the tables and increase a student’s competence with revision. Here is a list of strategies which have helped many instructors engage students in the revision process.

1. Help students follow the problem-driven model of writing (detailed above). Encourage students to define problems, to pose questions and answer them.
2. Provide problem-focused writing assignments. This can include assignments completed at the end of class where students answer a question with a couple of sentences.
3. Create classroom activities which help students pose and explore questions. This can include class discussions, small group problems, etc.
4. Break down the research paper project into smaller assignments which can be handed in for feedback. (See the Suggested Deadlines table below).
5. Build in talk-time in your classroom for students to discuss their ideas and early drafts with you and one another.
6. Create due dates for drafts.
7. Develop strategies for peer reviews of drafts – either in or outside of class (see Peer Review below)
8. Hold writing conferences.
9. Require students to submit drafts, notes and doodles along with their final paper. This will provide evidence of their writing process as well as set up a defense against plagiarism.
10. Be sure your comments are revision-oriented and not editing-oriented (see Revision-Oriented Comments below).
11. Bring in examples of your own writing or that of another student’s to show your students what a work-in-progress looks like.
12. **Hold to high standards for the finished product.** Students are not going to be motivated to revise if they can earn an A or B for their edited first drafts.

**Revision-Oriented Comments**

As you, the instructor, begin giving your students revision-oriented comments (as opposed to editing-oriented comments), you are telling your students that their ideas need to be thought through again. The best advice to give students is to invite them to rewrite a passage for clarity and coherence and hold them responsible for finding and fixing their errors. When you do this, you are looking for the promise of the draft, not the mistakes.
You will begin responding to, not correcting, papers. You should come to think of yourself as coaching, not judging as you read your students’ writing.

Revision-oriented comments should be limited to two or three things that you feel the student should focus on for the next draft. Comments should be aimed at the higher-level concerns of ideas, organization, development and overall clarity. Follow the Writing Intensive Course Research Paper Rubric (below) to guide how you grade the research paper. Does the student’s draft include the elements listed in the rubric?

Here are some suggestions which reflect revision-oriented comments:

- Your thesis is unclear. What problem are you addressing?
- Your thesis is clear. However, you need to move it to the beginning of your paper.
- It would help your reader to get an overview of your argument at the beginning of your paper?
- Good comparison of X to Y!
- Expand and explain – can you give an example?
- Argument is confusing.
- I don’t see how you moved from X to Y.
- Does this part fit?
- What’s the point of this section?
- How does this relate to what you just said?
- Your introduction made me think I would hear about X, but this is all about Y.
- You’re bouncing all over – give me a road map of where we are going and where we have been.
- Too much rehashing – go ahead and summarize.
- You’ve covered X, but haven’t addressed Y or Z.
- Think about opposing views – anticipate and respond.
- What’s your evidence for this statement?
- Comment on the title – if it is good, praise it. If not, suggest improvements.
- Comment on the opening paragraph/introduction – does it catch the reader’s attention? Does it set forth a problem or question? If it’s good, praise it.
- Look at the opening sentences of paragraphs – they should encapsulate the transition with forward-looking and backward-looking elements. Praise good transitions and point out ways to improve others.

**Peer Review**

If you want to encourage students to review each other’s drafts, it will work best if you train your students first. Otherwise, the results can be disappointing, if not disastrous, for both you and your students.

There are several approaches to implementing a peer review. Research hasn’t identified any approach as being more successful than another; they each have their strengths and weaknesses.

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*Writing Intensive Course Research Paper Rubric*

- Clear thesis statement
- Strong organization
- Effective development
- Clear and concise writing
- Appropriate use of evidence
- Appropriate use of citations
- Effective conclusion
- Overall clarity
Response-Centered Reviews
This approach puts maximum responsibility on the writer for making decisions about what to revise. A group of four students reads (or listens to the writer read his or her paper) and gives feedback to the writer. Feedback is tracked on a piece of paper which is divided into three columns – “+” “−” and “?” In the plus (+) column, listeners note the parts of the paper that worked well; in the minus (−) column, they note problem areas or negative reactions, and in the “?” column, they note questions which occurred while listening.

Group members explain to the writer their comments. They don’t give advice but simply describe their responses to the draft. There generally isn’t a discussion about the listener’s comments; the writer listens to their reactions to his or her paper. Writers may hear conflicting advice about the same part of their writing – while one listener may find it confusing, another listener might find it strong.

Advice-Centered Reviews
Listeners collaborate and give advice to the writer with this approach. This approach appears to work well when there is a scoring guide provided, detailing what needs to be included in the paper.

Here’s a recommended process for an advice-centered review:
1. Divide the class into pairs and have them exchange drafts with one another.
2. Using the following checklist, the student pair compose a review of one another’s draft:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advice-Centered Review Student Checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What question, problem or issue does this draft address?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the complete thesis statement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTE: if you have trouble identifying either the question/problem/issue or the thesis, be sure to concentrate on how to help the writer clarify the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note with a wavy line in the margin the places where you got confused as a writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the strengthens and weaknesses of the paper?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will the teacher respond to this paper?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do you agree and disagree with the writer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reread the draft. Where is the quality of support?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the writer offer enough details (data,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
students exchange copies of their drafts the class period before they will be completing the review so that they have time to give it thoughtful consideration.

This same type of review can be done out-of-class as well.

When conducting peer reviews, consider the following suggestions:

- do not expect students to give very good advice on sentence structure or style
- teach your students to engage with each other at the level of ideas
- tell students to back up their comments with specific examples from the draft
- stress the importance of precision when giving advice

The following Web site offers additional thoughts and approaches to using peer review:


**Students May be More Competent at Revising than You Think**

When reading an error-laden paper, you may believe that the student is hopelessly lacking in skill. However, consider the following evidence:

1. At least half of student errors result from inattentive editing and proofreading (Haswell, 1983). Haswell found that when he quit editing his students papers and began placing an X in the margin next to the lines with errors (minimal marking), students were able to correct 60% of their own errors.
2. When a student reads their rough draft aloud, he or she will unconsciously correct mistakes. This reflects that the student understands grammar and need to begin to “talk their writing.” Students should read their drafts aloud to peers, and note where their oral reading differs from what they have written. The simple act of reading aloud can clear up a large number of errors.
3. Student errors are systematic and classifiable. After students have revised their draft using the methods detailed above, remaining errors are often reiterations of consistent mistakes. Once identified, the student frequently can pick out and correct these errors.
Using a Concept Map

A concept map, or idea map, can be very useful in the early stages of the writing process and can be used to generate and organize ideas. Start by drawing a circle in the center of a piece of paper and write down a word or phrase which identifies the student’s topic or question or thesis. As the student pursues their research or thoughts, ideas are recorded, using branches or subbranches which extend from the circle. This tool can help students visualize their developing ideas, and it can help stimulate new ideas and directions. A concept map can stimulate open-ended brainstorming while helping the writer organize and structure their ideas.

This Web site will take you to a concept map of St. Nicholas.
http://users.edte.utwente.nl/lanzing/cm_home.htm

There are numerous sources on the internet to help implement this idea; simply type the term concept map in a search engine.

APA Research Paper 2008 - 09 Checklist / Grading Rubric

The following document was developed to assist faculty who are teaching courses that have been designated as writing intensive. Instructors may or may not choose to use the following checklist. It was designed to give the writing process a framework so that students and faculty can distribute tasks throughout the quarter. However, faculty may choose to create their own schedules and timelines to fit their specific course.

Remember: the more specific you are about the assignment, the better quality of work students will hand in.
APA Research Paper 2008 - 09 Checklist
Suggested Deadlines

Student Name _____________________________________________

Course ___________________________________________________

Research Paper Format
The assigned writing project must include the following:
✔️ 2500 or more words (approximately 11 pages) formatted in APA style
  o double spaced all text, including long quotations
  o 1” margins
  o 12 point font, Times New Roman recommended
  o title page, abstract, and reference page
  o Finished APA form requires the following:
    ▪ introduction – establish the problem
    ▪ body – proof of the problem (research)
    ▪ conclusion – present possible solution, suggest future work to be done
✔️ Print and electronic resources must be used and cited correctly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Pre-Writing Strategies Weeks 1 and 2</th>
<th>Checklist/Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due by end of first week of quarter</td>
<td>Understand the assignment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due by end of second week of quarter</td>
<td>Narrow down your topic. Choose a topic that is complex enough to find multiple sources but narrow enough so that you can cover the topic in 2500 words. Draft a title and thesis statement for the paper.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❌ Deadline</td>
<td>Evaluation of Sources and Thesis Development Week 3</td>
<td>Checklist/Notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Due by end of third week of quarter | Complete exploratory research on your topic in which you scan/read sources. Be sure there will be enough adequate sources. This includes:
  ✔️ Conducting a general Web search.
  ✔️ Finding, reviewing, and evaluating books, journal, magazine, and newspaper articles.
  ✔️ Keeping careful notes, with sources clearly identified so that they can be correctly cited in your paper. |                  |
<p>| Due by end of third week of quarter | Draft an outline: begin organizing your writing by gathering information and assembling it into a logical sequence. |                  |
| Due by end of third week of quarter | Choose the writing strategy for this paper: description, narration, example, process, comparison/contrast, *argument, classification/division, cause/effect, or demonstration. |                  |
| Due by end of third week of quarter | Draft an introductory paragraph with an introductory sentence that identifies the subject. The introductory sentence may or may not be your thesis. |                  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Body of Paper/Revising Weeks 4 – 8</th>
<th>Checklist/Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due by end of third week of quarter</td>
<td>Revise the thesis statement to clearly express the main point of the paper. Place the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due by end of fifth week of the quarter</td>
<td>Introduce all main ideas in the introductory paragraph. Be sure that the main ideas support the thesis presented in the introduction. Write a first draft of your paper.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due by sixth week of quarter</td>
<td>Edit and revise the first draft and submit it to your instructor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due by eighth week of quarter</td>
<td>Revise your draft based on your instructor’s feedback.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor due dates</td>
<td>Revise and submit your paper as many times as you and your instructor feel is necessary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor due date</td>
<td>Be sure that your final paper reflects revisions made based on the feedback you received from your instructor. Revised paper shows improved focus and writing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing Intensive Course Research Paper Rubric

Student Name: _______________________________________________________________________________________________
Course Code/Name: ______________________________Instructor: ___________________________________________________

Performance Rating Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Performance Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Exceptional Work meets or exceeds criterion at a high level of competence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Proficient Work reflects an understanding of criterion with minor misunderstandings/misconceptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Basic Criterion partially met, but one or more important concepts/skills are missing or flawed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory Work reflects an attempt to meet criterion, but significant misunderstandings/misconceptions are apparent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Absent Criterion not met or work is absent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final Paper/Project Grading Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category I. Research Segment</th>
<th>Exceptional 4 points</th>
<th>Proficient 3 points</th>
<th>Basic 2 points</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory 1 point</th>
<th>Absent 0 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The research topic **fits course** and has been approved by the instructor.

The writer remains focused on the **purpose** of the paper.

The writer keeps the **scope of the paper** narrow enough to handle subject matter effectively.

The writing is **coherent**, meaning "logically consistent".

The writing is **well-organized**.

**Paragraphing** is appropriate with central points being made in each paragraph. This means that each paragraph includes a **clear topic sentence**.

**Transitions** are used to make smooth connections between ideas.

Research is drawn from the literature (i.e., peer-reviewed articles) and an in-depth analysis of at least **six (6) research articles** with no more than one non-juried/non-refereed Internet site being used.

Body should be approximately 8-9 pages and **integrates research**.

The **evidence** is accurate and contains a balance of both generalities and specifics (e.g., explanations, anecdotes, statistics, etc.). In an argument the **evidence** to support each position is reasonable.

The writer supports **generalizations** effectively, using **vivid details** and **vivid examples**.

The writer has chosen a topic in which each issue presented allows for **differences of opinion**. This difference is **clearly stated**.

The Conclusion contains a **summary** of the findings and **possible recommendations** for future research.

The writer has effectively used **quotation, summary, and paraphrasing skills** in providing information.
Overall the paper/project reflects **college level writing skills**.

## CATEGORY I – TOTAL POINTS _____________ (60 possible)

### Category II. Critical Thinking
(20 possible points / 20% of Total Score)

- The writer identifies and presents **clear issues**.
- The writer relies on **objective data** to support his/her final assertion or claim.
- The writer uses **sound reasoning** to support his/her final assertion or claim.
- The writer provides **enough information** for the audience to understand each argument in order to make thoughtful, critical decisions about the writer’s assertions or claims.
- The author **refrains from non-arguments or claims** without supporting evidence.

## CATEGORY II – TOTAL POINTS _____________ (20 possible)

### Category III. Grammar and Mechanics
(20 possible points / 20% of Total Score)

- Writing adheres to **APA style and form** (includes **Title Page**, page numbers, margins, etc).
- The paper is **free from grammatical errors** (e.g., dangling modifiers, subject-verb disagreement, verb tense shift, person shift, pronoun-antecedent disagreement, run-on sentences, comma splices, and diction errors).
- The paper includes the following:
  - a complete, one paragraph **Abstract** of approximately 150 words
  - a **main idea/thesis** statement which expresses the over-arching point of the research paper
  - an **attention-getter** to capture the reader’s interest
  - a brief **Introduction** that serves to establish the context of the topic in broad terms, states research questions (if applicable), and concludes with a clear “focusing statement” and an orientation to the main supporting sections of the paper (approximately 1 page).
- The **Body** of the paper contains **cited scholarly information**.
- The paper includes the following:
  - a **Conclusion** that restates the thesis and summarizes the main findings from the review of the literature. (approximately ½ to 2 pages)
  - a separate **Reference Page** that has cited all research sources correctly according to APA style.

## CATEGORY III – TOTAL POINTS _____________ (20 possible)

### Total points from Categories I, II, and III

**Bonus!** The writer uses **creative presentation methods** (e.g., table, figure, oral/visual presentation). **(worth 5 extra percentage points in total score)**

## FINAL GRADE

---

**Bonus Percentage Points**
Useful Web sites

http://wac.colostate.edu/intro/

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/WAC/

Plagiarism - http://wac.gmu.edu/teaching/plagiarism.html

Plagiarism across the curriculum - http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/articles/hall2005.cfm

http://wac.gmu.edu/

http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource_topic/teaching_writing?gclid=CNm58Zq8iZYCFRg6awodsQaYFA

http://wac.gsu.edu/WAC_Faculty_Guide_USB_Draft.pdf
References

