



Writing-Enhanced Course (WEC) Program Guidebook

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Websites: [Writing-Enhanced Course Website](#) • [Writing Center Website](#)

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Program Overview and Criteria

The Pace University Writing-Enhanced Course (WEC) Program was founded nearly two decades ago to foster a progressive culture of writing and support effective writing pedagogy across the university. As part of the University Core Curriculum, Pace undergraduates take a minimum of two writing-enhanced (WE) courses in their majors or other fields of interest.

In WE courses, writing and revision are centered as modes of learning and achieving course goals. Students practice their writing through drafting and revising a combination of low-stakes (informal) writing and high-stakes (formal) assignments. Instructors offer feedback on an ungraded draft of at least one high-stakes writing assignment, so that students have the opportunity to rethink their ideas, practice disciplinary norms around writing, and learn how central feedback is to the writing process. These courses also promote transparency and fairness in grading and assessment, through the use of equitable, anti-ableist and -racist assessment practices, clearly articulated outcomes and rubrics, and effective writing pedagogies.

The WEC Program aligns with the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) organization's [best practices for writing assessment](#), the 1974 resolution (reaffirmed in 2020) concerning [students' right to their own language](#), the 2020 antiracist [demand for Black linguistic justice](#), and the 2001 statement (revised in 2020) supporting [second language writing and multilingual writers](#). Additionally, the WEC Program reflects the Council of Writing Program Administrators' best practices for [defining, avoiding, and navigating academic honesty](#) in writing classrooms and the International Writing Centers Association's 2018 statement on [gender neutrality and inclusivity in written language](#).

Approval Process

Since the WE attribute follows both the instructor and the course, the course must be approved for the WE designation *and* the instructor must be approved to teach WE-designated courses.

The WEC Directors oversee WE designations. WE applications should not be brought to Dyson Curriculum Committee (DCC).

WEC approval must be granted at least one month prior to the start of the course. Except in extenuating circumstances at the discretion of the dean's office, WE attributes are not retroactively added.

- Attend a WEC workshop (offered once per semester, with specific dates/times advertised via university general announcements), or contact your campus WEC Director for a one-on-one training workshop ([Dr. Meaghan Brewer](#), NYC; [Dr. Vyshali Manivannan](#), PLV).
 - You are only required to undergo the training workshop once, but you are welcome—and encouraged!—to contact your campus WEC Director for consultations as needed.
- Complete a WEC application (included below and posted on the [WEC Website](#) under “Documents”), including your department chair's signature.
- Submit your WEC application—including application, course syllabus, assignment sheets, and rubrics—to your campus WEC director.

The application form is included [at the end of this guidebook](#) and separately on the WEC website for your convenience.

Courses that are **not** eligible for WE include:

- Independent studies and other one-on-one courses.
- 100- or 200-level courses with a cap of 8 students or fewer.
- Courses where a significant amount of writing and revision is inherently expected, like core writing or creative writing courses.

WEC faculty in Dyson and Lubin receive one \$300 stipend per semester in which they teach at least one WEC course. Stipend requests should be submitted by the WEC faculty member's department administrative assistant.

The WEC directors do not have oversight over the stipend payment schedule or how stipends are processed.

Application Criteria

1. WE course syllabi must include the WEC Statement.
2. WE course syllabi must include the Writing Center Statement.
3. WE courses have a cap of 20 (maximum 25) students. Independent studies and creative writing courses—including courses whose writing assignments are predominantly creative writing—cannot be designated WE. Small tutorials will be considered on a case-by-case basis and are also subject to approval by the dean's office.
4. At least 50% of the course grade must extend from writing assignments.
5. Courses must include a combination of high- and low-stakes writing. The majority of the assignments should be analytical and reflective, with the majority of revision tasks attached to high-stakes analytical and/or reflective writing.
6. All writing assignments must have detailed assignment sheets, complete with expectations, requirements, goals, and assessment criteria or rubrics.
7. Instructors must give feedback on at least one high-stakes writing assignment for the purpose of revision. Grades should only be assigned to final products—not to drafts

Required Syllabus Statements

Syllabi for WE courses must include the below statements.

Writing-Enhanced Course Statement

This class has been designated as writing-enhanced, a course in which writing and revision are central to learning content and achieving course goals. Students will receive detailed written handouts for each writing assignment, specifying grading criteria and clearly setting forth expectations. Writing will be thought of as a process whereby students generate ideas, receive feedback, and then revise. Students will practice their writing through a combination of low stakes, informal writing and more formal assignments. Students will receive instructor-generated feedback for revision on at least one writing assignment prior to a second submission and subsequent grading. Final drafts will be evaluated based on evaluative criteria from a checklist or rubric.

Writing Support at the Learning Commons

Writing support is available for all students at Pace University. We offer confidential one-to-one appointments (in person or online), group sessions, and drop-in sessions free of charge. Students can bring writing from all disciplines and at all stages of the writing process, from outlines to completed drafts. Students are encouraged to bring all types of writing, including resumes, internship and graduate school applications, and personal creative work. We are dedicated to developing independent learners through purposeful interactions with trained, well-qualified peer and professional staff. For more information about writing services and current hours of operation, please visit the [Learning Commons website](#), and to schedule an appointment, please use [TracCloud](#). Questions? Please reach out to the general email accounts for the Learning Commons ([NYC](#)) and ([PLV](#)) or visit Mortola Library, 3rd floor (PLV) or 15 Beekman, 7th floor (NYC). Faculty can also reach out directly to [Grant Crawford](#) (NYC) or [Alicia Clark-Barnes](#) (PLV).

Writing and AI Statement

For detailed information on how to approach generative AI (like ChatGPT) in a writing-enhanced class—along with a statement you can include in your syllabi—please refer to the [Statement on AI and Writing](#), updated each semester.

Preparing to Teach Writing

Although all writers have a process that they (often without realizing it) follow, this process might vary considerably according to the individual. Effective writing instruction encourages students to become aware of the writing processes that work best for *them*, developing what writing experts refer to as “declarative” knowledge about writing.

Abbreviated Glossary of WEC Terminology

Some terms that are useful in effective writing instruction include:

- **High-stakes writing:** “Formal” writing that requires students to engage in multiple aspects/stages of the writing process.
- **Low-stakes writing:** “Informal” writing that asks students to write to learn (e.g., responses, journals, etc.) versus writing to show mastery (e.g., one-draft project).
- **Higher-order concerns (HOCs):** The “big picture” elements
- **Lower-order concerns (LOCs):** Sentence-level concerns like structure, punctuation, spelling, mechanics, or grammar.

- **Formative assessment:** Assessments that provide students with feedback and guide their instruction.
- **Summative assessment:** Assessments that evaluate student learning against a rubric or other standards, often with numerical scores or letter grades.

As the 2015 [CCCC Statement on Preparing Teachers of College Writing](#) states, the study of writing is multidisciplinary, and effective writing instruction requires awareness of:

- How audience, purpose, and context shape writing
- Various professional genres and disciplinary conventions for writing
- Designing writing assignments and assessments that encourage writing-to-learn
- How to provide constructive feedback on students' drafts
- How to assess student writing formatively and summatively
- Writing as a research method as well as the vehicle for secondary and primary research
- An understanding of plagiarism as a spectrum

Why Assign Writing?

Return to these questions regularly to remind yourself why you're teaching a WE course.

- What purpose(s) do writing assignments serve?
- What do you hope your students will gain through the completion of writing assignments in your course?

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)/Writing in the Disciplines (WID)

WAC/WID philosophies see writing as more than an activity to earn a grade or fulfill an assignment. Writing communicates social and professional contexts to other scholars, stakeholders, and/or members of the community. Having students continue to write beyond the core writing sequence gives them access to disciplinary norms and familiarizes them with the discourse community within which they are writing, and the opportunity to write-to-learn more about their discipline.

Unfortunately, many students struggle when they begin to take classes in their major or courses that incorporate a large amount of writing because they are unfamiliar with the new discourse community that they are entering. Instructors often assume a level of familiarity with discourse norms that students have not yet acquired.

In WE courses, we want to make this knowledge explicit and make our evaluation of it transparent. Doing this gives students footholds onto the knowledge and skills they need to be building and offers ways of improving their writing and thinking.

Writing to Learn

Students need the opportunity to explore their ideas in writing, to engage in critical thinking before the final writing product is due. Along the way, writers need to ask themselves, “How do I know what I think until I say what I mean?”

Writing to learn in informal writing assignments involves giving students many opportunities to:

- Explain things for themselves
- Think on paper
- Experience learning as discovery
- Practice writing as a way of objectifying thought

According to Janet Emig (1977), writing is a mode of learning, “the deliberate structuring of the web of meaning” (p. 127). Through the process of writing, we are forced to articulate hypotheses, clarify ideas, and make abstract thoughts more concrete. In this sense, writing serves learning.

Reading to Write

Deep, mindful reading is important to effective writing and show students examples of the disciplinary norms they’re practicing in writing, from vocabulary to sentence structure to other discourse conventions. Ellen Carillo’s (2017) [A Writer's Guide to Mindful Reading](#) offers a set of strategies for mindful reading, or adapting how you process information in different situations and texts. Reading mindfully means going beyond passively absorbing a text and actively engaging with it to improve comprehension of a text’s purpose and meaning.

Types of Assignments

Here are some resources to help you effectively bring low-stakes/informal writing into your classroom.

Informal Writing in Class Discussions

Source: Bean, J. (1996). *Engaging Ideas: The Professor’s Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*.

- Students write at the beginning of class to review material from a previous class or to begin focusing on the topic of the day.

- Students write in the middle of class to refocus a discussion that has become dry or heated. This allows students to identify things to discuss, or to think about why they disagree with others on the topic.
- Students write during class to articulate questions or think about why they are confused about the topic.
- Students write at the end of class to summarize what was covered during class, what they learned, or what questions still remain.

Informal Writing Activities to do Outside Class

- **Open-ended journals:** Write a certain number of pages per week about the course.
- **Guided journals:** Students respond to specific questions.
- **Double-entry notebooks:** Students make observations about texts and reflect on their observations; they talk back to text.
- **Contemporary issues journals:** Connect course content to real-world concerns.
- **Exam preparation journals:** make a list of essay questions from which exam questions will be taken; students work out answers to questions.
- **Q&A:** Students respond to questions about a reading.
- **Summary:** Students summarize a text they will be using in a paper.

Revision and Feedback

Revising allows time for the composing process to work. In addition to informal writing to start the process, students need enough time to write several drafts before the final paper is due. Students can share some of these drafts with each other—to give both readers and writers a sense of each other’s ideas and capabilities.

Professors can give feedback in different ways:

- A short conference with each writer in the draft stage
- Written comments before the final draft
- Class discussion of models
- Classroom response
- Mini-exercises
- Editing workshops

Using Peer Feedback for Revision

Peer feedback (also called peer review and peer response), includes class activities where students read, critique, and comment on each other’s written drafts. Peer feedback is beneficial for both students and teachers. Benefits of peer feedback include:

- Helps integrate writing with the course content
- Helps students understand the importance of audience
- Encourages students to engage in the writing process
- Encourages students to hand in better, revised papers
- Provides students with a variety of models and responses
- Helps students develop abilities to critique something constructively
- Promotes self-assessment habits and independence
- Raises students' awareness of their individual strengths and weaknesses
- Gives students a sense of responsibility and ownership
- Makes teaching and learning goals transparent
- Helps align writing assignments with assessment criteria
- Reduces the "paper load" for the teacher

Source: di Gennaro, K. (2002/2003, Winter) Successfully implementing peer reviews in writing classes. *Idiom*, 32(4). New York State TESOL.

Students' observations of the value of what peer feedback helps them with:

- Know if the reader can understand what we want to say
- Identify areas that need more development
- Identify areas that are off topic
- Get more ideas to add in the next draft
- Correct a few grammar mistakes
- Revise before handing in our papers

[No One Writes Alone: Peer Review in the Classroom - A Guide For Students](#) from MIT Comparative Media Studies/Writing is a useful guide to revision for students.

Responding to Writing

- **Instructor Feedback:** Depending on the discipline/genre, instructor feedback on early drafts should focus attention more on higher-order concerns (HOCs): thesis, topic sentences and transitions, satisfying the assignment guidelines, critical thinking, cohesion, organization, development, and appropriate use of sources. Later drafts or in-class workshops can teach students how to edit for lower-order concerns (LOCs): syntax, grammar, word usage, spelling, formatting of citations. When constructing a rubric, attention and value should be placed on HOCs, with LOCs accounting for a (much) smaller portion of the grade.

- **Workshops:** Collaborative groups of roughly three student-writers who are actively engaged in critical dialogue regarding the writing of their peers. Like any component of the course, peer revision requires preparation and modeling, ensuring students are aware of what is to transpire when in groups.

Please note that this information must be articulated in the course syllabus.

Assessing and Evaluating Student Writing

The WEC Program promotes fairness and transparency in assessing students’ writing. Students should be aware of the specific criteria by which their assignments will be assessed. Criteria for an assignment should be reviewed with students when the assignment is given and in advance of when students are graded. Grading standards, checklists for evaluating writing, and anonymous samples of writing from previous semesters in response to the same or a similar assignment can give students a better idea of what works and what doesn’t.

Part of creating fairer assessment ecologies (and more inclusive spaces) in writing classrooms is working to ensure that all students have access to all course grades. You can find out more about best practices for writing assessment and anti-racist writing assessment by viewing:

- [CCCC Position Statement on Writing Assessment](#)
- [WPA-GO Anti-Racist Assessment Task Force Position Statement](#)
- [Labor-Based Grading Contracts](#)
- [CWPA Statement on “Best Practices for Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism”](#)

Example Rubrics

Here are sample rubrics from core writing and writing-enhanced courses across the disciplines, to illustrate what various writing courses prioritize in assessment. Rubrics included with permission of the faculty members who developed them.

ENG 201: Writing in the Disciplines - Rubric for Paper 1: Critique	
Points (out of 100)	Criteria
20	Complete source information for the original article is provided.
20	The critique includes an adequate summary of the article’s main points.

20	The critique includes an appropriate and supported (not simply stated) evaluation of the article.
20	The evaluative language is appropriate for an academic audience
20	The critique overall is clear and (mostly) grammatically accurate.

ENG 201 - Rubric for Paper 2: Analysis of Writing in Your Discipline(s)	
Points (out of 100)	Criteria
12.5	Cites and engages with at least one source from class.
12.5	Uses and analyzes quotes or specific details from sources in the discipline(s) being described to support the argument.
12.5	Demonstrates an understanding of the sources used, with sufficient detail so that someone who had not read the source would understand it.
12.5	Cites details as evidence for how literacy works within the discourse community of the discipline(s), including quotes from interviews, quotes from the writing observed (the two articles in the discipline(s) and/or images from the articles.
12.5	Puts forth a focused argument about the discipline(s) observed that appears at the beginning of the paper and is sustained throughout.
12.5	Organization of the overall paper demonstrates an understanding of how to use the sections specified by the assignment (i.e. Introduction, Methods, etc.).
12.5	Paper contains citations for all sources and uses in-text citations (mostly) correctly.
12.5	Paper is clearly written and (mostly) grammatically correct.

ENG 201 - Rubric for Paper 3: Honors Thesis Proposal	
Points (out of 100)	Criteria
10	Cites sources that are relevant to the paper topic.
10	Uses and analyzes concepts or quotes from sources.

10	Demonstrates an understanding of the sources used, with sufficient detail so that someone who had not read the source would understand it.
10	Gives a clear sense of what area of the topic you plan to investigate and why.
10	Has a clearly stated research problem, question, or notes a gap in past research.
10	Uses metatext to guide the reader through the organization of the proposal.
10	Reflection demonstrates an understanding of the goals of the course.
10	Reflection cites and substantially engages with at least one source from class.
10	Citations are included for all sources.
10	Paper is written clearly and is (mostly) grammatically correct.

ENG 302: Composition Theory and Practice - Rubric for Observation Assignment	
Points (out of 100)	Criteria
10	The observation report includes basic information about the context of the observation (course level, tutorial).
10	The observation report includes a detailed description of what occurred during the class.
10	The observation report draws connections between the observed class and two or more of the readings we've read in our course.
10	The interpretation of the readings is accurate and appropriate in that it shows an understanding of the readings and relevance to composition or literacy teaching/tutoring.
10	The observation report includes hypothetical follow-up questions indicating engagement with the class observation and/or course readings.
10	The observation report reveals insight about how composition courses do or do not reflect composition, reading, or literacy theory.

10	The observation report is organized in a clear and coherent manner.
10	Citations are included for all sources.
10	The tone of the report is appropriate for an academic audience
10	The language of the report is clear and (mostly) grammatically accurate.

ENG 302 - Rubric for Final Project	
Points (out of 100)	Criteria
10	The project is based on a topic relevant either to students in the community site or to composition students.
10	The project refers to relevant theory/theories.
10	The project includes a clear description of the context and audience for the lesson plan.
10	Learning objectives and goals are labeled and explicitly stated.
10	Detailed instructions for a teacher or tutor are included.
10	At least three tasks related to the learning objectives are included for students to complete.
10	Technology is integrated into the lesson plan (or at least mentioned).
10	In terms of format, the lesson plan adequately reflects the model provided.
10	Handouts and additional resources are included or links are provided.
10	The language is clear and (mostly) grammatically accurate.

ENG 396G: Language and Identity - Rubric for Final Project	
Points (out of 100)	Criteria
12.5	Cites sources that are relevant to the paper topic and literacy site (including at least one from class).
12.5	Uses and analyzes quotes or specific concepts/detail from sources.

12.5	Demonstrates an understanding of the sources used, with sufficient detail so that someone who had not read the source would understand it.
12.5	Cites details from the literacy site, including details of literacy activities, quotes from interviews, and descriptions of the site and people.
12.5	Puts forth an original argument about the literacy site that appears at the beginning of the paper and is sustained throughout.
12.5	Organization of the overall paper demonstrates an understanding of how to use the sections specified by the assignment (i.e. Introduction, Methods, etc.).
12.5	Paper contains citations for all sources and uses in-text citations (mostly) correctly.
12.5	Paper is clear and (mostly) grammatically correct.

Application for Writing-Enhanced Course Core Credit

Version: 2024-06-04

Your Name and Department:

Course Number and Title:

Course Description:

Semester/Year When the Course Will Be Taught:

Requirement Checklist

- This course is eligible for the WE designation.
- I have been approved by the WEC Director(s) as a WEC instructor.
- I have attached a separate application sheet for each WE course, my syllabus, assignment sheets, and assessment criteria/rubrics.
- My syllabus includes the WEC statement.
- My syllabus includes the Writing Support Services statement.
- Course enrollment is limited to the recommended cap of 20 (maximum 25) students. Small classes capped at 6-8 students will be considered on a case-by-case basis and are subject to approval by the dean's office. Independent studies and one-on-one tutorials are not eligible for the WE designation.
- A considerable portion (at least 50%) of the course grade extends from a combination of high- and low-stakes writing assignments.
- The majority of the assignments should be analytical and reflective (as opposed to "purely" creative), with the majority of revision tasks attached to high-stakes analytical and/or reflective writing.
- Course materials include detailed assignment sheets, complete with expectations, goals, and requirements.
- Instructors must give feedback on at least one high-stakes writing assignment for the purpose of revision.

Questionnaire

How does this course meet the following WEC Criteria (please refer to the [Program Overview and Criteria section](#) for more information)? Briefly explain.

Which of the following faculty development options have you participated in or will you participate in while developing your first WE course? Please respond with the semester and year of your participation or “N/A” if it doesn’t apply.

- Workshop(s)/meeting(s) with the WEC director(s):
- Department consultation/one-on-one faculty development session with WEC director(s):

Additional comments?

Signature of Dept. Chair: **Date:**

Please email your complete application package to your campus WEC Director:

NYC: [Dr. Meaghan Brewer <mbrewer2@pace.edu>](mailto:mbrewer2@pace.edu), Dept. of English
PLV: [Dr. Vyshali Manivannan <vmanivannan@pace.edu>](mailto:vmanivannan@pace.edu), Dept. of English, Writing & Cultural Studies

For ease of completion, this application is also included separately on the WEC website.