

At the final Academic Senate meeting of AY 2022-23, a proposal for redesigning the composition requirement within General Education was tabled mainly because that proposal lacked detail. The following is an attempt to spur our conversation about the place of composition in GenEd forward and to identify the questions we must answer as we choose a way of proceeding.

1. How do we cover the OT36 Learning Outcomes?

- The OT36 Learning Outcomes for Composition can be found in separate attached documents. While the State of OH requires only 3 credits of composition within General Education, it organizes composition learning outcomes in terms of a First Course and a Second Course. The outcomes are actually the same for both “courses,” but the second course benchmarks add to and build on those articulated in the First Course.
- We could simply meet the State’s minimum requirement (i.e. 3 credits), but I think most would agree that doing so isn’t in the best interest of YSU students. Our students benefit from more writing instruction, not less.ⁱ
- I suggest covering all First Course learning outcomes and Second Course “Critical thinking, reading and writing outcomes” in a revised Writing 1, and I suggest making Writing 1 four credit hours because of this added content.

2. What happens to ENGL 1549?

- ENGL 1549 is a co-requisite course (it is not a developmental course), and it currently serves students with placement scores below the cut-off for ENGL 1550 but above those placed into our developmental course (ENGL 1541). It does the same work as ENGL 1550 but at a slower pace; it also meets an additional hour per week, so it is currently 4 credit hours. If we add additional learning outcomes to Writing 1 as I suggest above, we’ll need to decide how that is to affect ENGL 1549. Should 1549 become a 5 hour class? Or perhaps no one is in favor of making ENGL 1550 a 4-credit course; in that case, 1549 could remain as is.

3. What happens to Writing 2 (currently ENGL 1551)?

- When discussions about this GER revision began, it appeared that Writing 2 was going to be eliminated from the general education program. However, many faculty expressed concern, in the open town hall forums and in written feedback to the GenEd Committee, about losing Writing 2. As a result, Dr. Pintar initiated conversation with English faculty and asked us to propose options for composition in the GER model. We presented four options; the option that received consensus was one that made Writing 2 a Writing in the Disciplines (WID) course.

4. What does a Writing in the Disciplines course mean?

- First, it’s important to note that this writing course would still have to fulfill 3 (out of 4) general education learning outcomes (the ones listed for the Second Course under Rhetorical Knowledge, Knowledge of Composing Processes, and Knowledge of Conventions). Then, as a WID course its additional purpose would be to introduce and give students practice with the writing conventions of a discipline and to help them gain familiarity and fluency with specific genres and formats typical of that given discipline.

5. What would this WID course look like?

- Absolutely everything I mention next is negotiable. I am providing details to give you a sense of what this WID course could look like, but nothing has already been decided.
- Disciplines could design a discipline-specific writing class (i.e. Writing for Psychology Majors).

- More broadly, colleges might design a college-specific writing class (i.e. Writing for Business Majors).
- More broadly still, we might design courses like Writing in the Social Sciences or Writing in the Humanities or Writing in the Natural Sciences.
- In addition, we could leave a generic Writing 2 option (similar to our current ENGL 1551) to catch transfer students, students who switch majors, etc.

6. Who would design these courses?

- Crucial to the initial vision for this option was the hiring of a WID Coordinator (the specifics of this position will have to be negotiated, but English faculty suggested a tenure-track faculty member). This WID Coordinator would help departments and/or colleges design these courses, and here is an opportunity for collaboration between writing faculty and content faculty.

7. Who would approve a course as a WID GER?

- I'd suggest the GER Committee, and I suggest that the WID Coordinator be a member of that committee.

8. Who would approve instructors for these courses?

- The WID Coordinator, I believe, should approve instructors to teach these courses—perhaps in collaboration with colleges and/or departments.

9. Who should teach these courses?

- Instructors from English & World Languages would certainly be able to provide instruction about research and writing processes, but they won't necessarily have specific disciplinary knowledge and knowledge of disciplinary conventions. So courses could be co-taught; courses could have a content instructor and a writing "consultant"; content faculty could be trained to teach writing. There are options, but there need to be some guidelines in place for how one would qualify to teach one of these courses and an authority to determine whether those guidelines have been met and a faculty member is approved to teach.
- It is important to me that non-English faculty are invited to teach these courses. Why? Because you are disciplinary experts, and you should already be teaching your students how to write in their chosen fields of study. Further, if you're part of YSU's writing program, you'll have a stake in its quality and a means to contribute to it.

10. What additional items have to be addressed?

- Writing course placements
- College Credit Plus

ⁱ Demographic factors illustrated by many YSU students have been associated with the need for additional support in composition; that need is satisfactorily addressed by requiring two writing classes, not one. YSU's peers (Cleveland State, Columbus State, U of Akron) require 6 credit hours in composition to satisfy the General Education Requirement. Universities that serve a similar student population recognize the need for two required courses in composition. Further, our experience tells us that YSU students often struggle with writing *after* taking two composition courses because developing proficiency in writing takes time. Students need extended practice in writing and attention and feedback from a writing instructor to improve as a writer. Finally, reducing the required number of composition courses will likely have detrimental effects on retention, DFW, and graduation rates.