

WPA CONSULTANT-EVALUATOR SERVICE
of the Council of Writing Program Administrators

Guidelines for Self-Study to Precede WPA Visit

The WPA consultant-evaluators should receive your self-study approximately one month before they are scheduled to visit your campus. The purposes of this self-study are, through the process of writing it, to help you understand more clearly the reasons for the visit and to acquaint the consultants with your institution.

Ideally, this self-study will be prepared by a team, including the writing program administrator at your institution and others who are directly involved in your writing program—and not by one individual.

The self-study should be largely a narrative report that focuses on the main concerns you have about your writing program. The questions below are intended to help you think of all the possible facets of your program you might want to describe in your self-study. You need not answer all these questions, and they are not intended as an outline for your report. You might also find that related issues (current uses of technology, for instance) are implied if not directly asked; please discuss your program and its related institutional contexts as directly and specifically as possible.

The final self-study should be about 10 pages in length, not including any supporting documents.

I. GENERAL BACKGROUND

A. Focus of the Visit

1. What are the program's current concerns?
2. What changes in the program are being contemplated?
3. What issues would you like the consultant-evaluators to address?

B. Current Institutional Conditions

1. What specific institutional changes are affecting your writing program?
2. What specific characteristics of your student body affect your program?

C. Missions

1. What is the mission of your institution?
2. What is the mission of your writing program?
3. How does the mission of your program support the mission of your institution?

D. Philosophy and Goals

1. What are the principles or philosophy of the writing program(s) at your institution?
2. What are the goals of your program?
3. How do these goals reflect the program's philosophy?
4. How do your program's practices enact the philosophy and goals?

II. INCLUSION

We encourage you to offer information about the following matters in your report.

A. Diversity and Inclusion

1. How do you understand the role of diversity and inclusion (a state of being welcomed and supported) at your institution, given its mission?
2. How do these principles of diversity and inclusion inform your curriculum, program, and faculty practices?

B. Accessibility

1. How does your campus support students, faculty, and staff with accessibility needs and concerns? What aspects of accessibility are particularly important on your campus? What offices, policies, programs, personnel, and so on are available to address them?
2. How does the program support faculty and staff who have accessibility needs? What resources and conditions are available?
3. How does the program support its students who have accessibility needs? You may discuss how professional development equips faculty to address access these needs; how faculty learn about and use available support services and resources; how curriculum, pedagogy, or assessment promote accessibility; or so on.

III. CURRICULUM

A. Philosophy and Goals

1. What are the philosophy and goals of the writing program(s) at your institution?
2. Do the goals of the writing program(s) accord with the goals of the institution as a whole?
3. How are the philosophy and goals communicated to the teachers, the students, and the appropriate administrators?

B. Courses and Syllabi

1. What writing courses are currently taught in your institution? By

- what departments are they taught?
2. How are these courses sequenced or otherwise related? Which courses are required, and of whom are they required?
 3. If your institution identifies some students as "basic writers," how are their needs addressed?
 4. Are the syllabi for the courses uniform or different for each teacher? (Or do some teachers follow a uniform syllabus, while other teachers follow their individual syllabi?) If the syllabus is uniform within each course or for several sections within each course, who is responsible for developing it?
 5. If the syllabus is uniform within each course, what opportunities do individual teachers have for experimentation with the syllabus? If the syllabi are individual, what ties or links make the course cohere across the sections?
 6. What is the logical basis for the sequence of assignments within each course? How does that sequence relate to the goals and philosophy of the program?
 7. How much writing, and what kinds of writing, must students do for each course?
 8. How are new media incorporated into writing courses—if they are? How is a focus maintained on writing as opposed to technologies?
 9. What kinds of reading are assigned in the writing courses? What instruction is given to students in the reading of these texts? In the reading of their own drafts?

C. Instructional Methods and Materials

1. What events or activities typically take place in the classrooms of the program's writing courses?
2. What textbooks are used in each writing course? Why is the program using these textbooks? What instructional materials other than textbooks does the program use? How do these textbooks and other materials fit the goals and structure of the course(s)? Who chooses the textbooks and other instructional materials used in the courses?
3. How much time do teachers devote to individual conferences?

D. Responses to and Evaluation of Student Writing

1. At what point(s) in their composing do students receive responses to their writing? What kinds of responses do they receive? At what points during the course(s) do students receive evaluation of their progress?
2. What procedures do faculty use in evaluating students' writing (e.g., letter grades on each paper, letter grades on some papers only, no grades until the end of the course)? On what bases (standards) do faculty evaluate papers?
3. What processes are used to assure consistency across sections in

evaluation of students' writing? How does the program assure that the bases for evaluation cohere with the goals of the program?

4. How does the evaluation of students' work reflect their achievement of the stated goals of the course?

E. Assessment

1. What tests and testing procedures are used in the writing program for such purposes as placement, exemption, determination of readiness to exit from a course or from the program, determination of eligibility to enter a more advanced program? What procedures are used to correct errors in placement? How do these procedures relate to the goals of the program?
2. Under what conditions are the assessment procedures conducted? Who conducts them? Who interprets and uses the results? What training do those who conduct the assessment have? If tests are scored by humans (i. e., not machines), what training do the scorers have?
3. What methods are used for continued monitoring of the assessment instruments to assure their current reliability and validity for the students and the purposes they are to serve? How frequently is the monitoring conducted?

IV. FACULTY

A. Status and Working Conditions

1. What percentage of full-time faculty at each rank, adjunct faculty, and graduate students teach writing? How many writing courses do faculty at each rank or status teach? What percentage of the writing courses are taught by faculty at each rank or status?
2. What are the qualifications for writing faculty, and how are they established? What training and experience in teaching writing do the writing faculty have? What professional organizations do they belong to? What is their record of research, publication, conference participation, and professional activity in composition and rhetoric?
3. What are the salary ranges by rank and category? How do these salary ranges compare to comparable departments? To neighboring, comparable institutions?
4. How are teaching, administration, and research in composition rewarded in terms of salary, promotion, and tenure?
5. How are adjunct faculty appointed? By whom? When in relation to the opening of a term? How are they evaluated? What is the length of their appointment? How are they reappointed? What percentage have multiple-year contracts? How are the adjunct faculty compensated in terms of salary and benefits? Are there step raises or cost of living increases for

adjunct faculty? Are adjunct faculty compensated for preparation if a course does not fill or is covered by a full-time faculty member? Is there a departmental policy on percentage of part-time faculty? Do adjunct faculty attend department meetings and writing program meetings? Serve on departmental or writing program committees? What opportunities exist for adjunct faculty to develop curriculum, choose textbooks, formulate policy and procedures? What arrangements are made for office space, telephones, mailboxes, and clerical support for adjunct faculty?

6. What are the processes and policies for assigning writing courses to available qualified staff? Include processes for assigning course overloads to writing faculty, selecting faculty for summer or winter session teaching assignments, and reassigning faculty when classes are cancelled.

B. Faculty Development

1. How is faculty development defined as a goal of the institution, the department or administrative unit, and the writing program? What are ongoing plans for faculty development in teaching writing?
2. What courses, speaker programs, workshops, teaching awards, etc. does the writing program offer or support to encourage excellence in teaching writing? Who among writing faculty is eligible for this support?
3. What opportunities for faculty development in teaching writing already exist? Who uses them? How do faculty find out about them? In what ways are faculty encouraged to avail themselves of these opportunities? Who among writing faculty is eligible for this support? Are issues of race and gender addressed in faculty development?
4. What financial resources are available for travel to workshops, conferences, and institutes related to teaching writing? Who among writing faculty is eligible for this support?
5. What avenues exist for writing faculty at each rank and status to design, implement, and evaluate faculty development programs best suited to their needs and interests? How are faculty encouraged to develop their skills in composition research and teaching writing? What opportunities exist for learning about faculty development programs in writing at other institutions? Who among writing faculty is eligible for this support?
6. Does the department or institution support faculty development by offering paid leaves or sabbaticals for further education in composition studies and rhetoric, by publishing journals, by developing software or other media for use in teaching writing? Who among writing faculty is eligible for this support?
7. What support does the department or institution give for development of institutional and individual grants to improve writing instruction and curricula and for released time, overhead, and other support to carry out the grant? Who among writing faculty is eligible for this support?

V. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

A. Institutional and Program Structure

1. What writing programs are there on campus (e.g., first-year composition, writing across the curriculum, technical writing)?
2. What is the size and make-up of each of the departments or administrative units in which these programs are housed? What is the governing structure of each? How are these related administratively?
3. What are the internal governing structures of the writing programs? Are there writing program administrators (e.g., director of first-year composition, composition committee chair, director of the writing center)? If so, what are the WPAs' administrative relations to other levels of administration? To whom are the WPAs responsible?
4. If there are night school, continuing education, or non-degree programs, who determines how writing is taught in those programs? How is control exercised? Who is responsible for the teaching of writing in other departments or colleges within the institution?
5. How are the teaching and tutoring of writing funded? Who controls these funds? On what are these funds spent? How does the funding of the writing programs compare to the funding of other programs on campus?
6. Are institutional grant funds available for program development (e.g., curriculum development and assessment)? If so, have WPAs applied for and been awarded any of these grants?
7. Who hires, promotes, and tenures the writing faculty throughout the institution? Who determines their salaries and assigns courses to them?
8. How are new teaching positions determined and by whom?
9. Who determines such things as class size, curriculum, and teaching load in the various programs?
10. How are internal problems solved? Who decides on syllabi, testing procedures, textbooks, etc.? What procedures are in place for full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, teaching assistants, and students to shape policies?
11. What permanent or ad hoc committees related to writing programs exist? How are these committees appointed? Who serves on them (e.g., full-time faculty, adjuncts, students)? What do these committees do?
12. What are the procedures for negotiating student and faculty complaints about grading, teaching, harassment, learning atmosphere, and administrative processes and policies?
13. What administrative, clerical, and technical support is there?
14. How are the writing programs' histories documented (e.g., annual reports, status reports on progress toward multi-year development

plans)? Who writes these histories and who reads them? How are they used?

B. Writing Program Administrators

1. How are the WPAs chosen and what are the lengths of their appointments?
2. What are the terms and conditions of appointments of the WPAs? Are these terms in writing?
3. What are the academic and professional qualifications of the WPAs? What are the WPAs' ranks and tenure statuses? Who decides the WPAs' tenures, promotions, and salaries?
4. What are the WPAs' teaching loads and how do they compare with other faculties' loads?
5. How much and what type of research are WPAs expected to do? To what extent are the WPAs' efforts in program development and institutional research considered scholarship?
6. How and by whom are WPAs evaluated? How are WPAs rewarded?

VI. RELATED WRITING PROGRAMS AND INSTRUCTIONAL UNITS

In many institutions the English Department's composition program is not the only place where writing instruction takes place. Other sites charged with teaching writing may include many of the following: technology/IT centers, writing centers, reading centers, learning centers, testing centers, disabled student centers, Writing-Across-the Curriculum Programs, ESL and bilingual programs, tutoring services, correspondence and extension courses, telecommunications and long- distance learning courses and programs, high school bridge programs, writing proficiency programs and exams, and discipline-based writing programs in colleges of education, business, nursing, law, the arts, and engineering.

Please address the relationships with the programs that are most pertinent to this visit. (Also include relationships that may become significant in the immediate or long term.) Briefly tell how you perceive the relationships between your program and the other academic units charged with writing instruction.

A. Administration

1. To what extent do services offered by the writing program and other units overlap?
 - a. Do their common goals and procedures reinforce each other or conflict?
 - b. In what formal and informal ways (through scheduling, a coordinating committee, etc.) is each unit related to the writing program?

2. How is each unit funded?
3. How does each unit follow up on students who have used its services?
4. How is credit determined for work in these units?
5. What arrangements exist for the evaluation of each unit?

B. Curriculum

1. How many students and faculty are associated with each unit?
2. What is the profile of the students?
3. How are students placed in or referred to each unit?
4. What kinds of materials (books, computers, television) and techniques (tutoring, workshops) does the unit use?
5. How do students learn about the unit?

C. Personnel

1. What are the job descriptions for the director and teaching staff of each unit? How are the director and staff selected?
2. What is the institutional status (faculty, full-time, part-time, graduate student, etc.) of unit personnel?
 - a. How are they compensated for their work?
 - b. How is their work evaluated?
3. What provisions exist for training and professional development of unit staff?

VI: OPTIONAL: MAY NOT APPLY TO ALL PROGRAMS

A. Online instruction

1. Do you offer hybrid and/or fully online writing courses?
2. If so, describe the activities and framework of these classes: content delivery, discussion format, workshopping, seat time, instructor response, online teacher-student conferences, essay grading, course evaluation procedures, etc.
3. How is writing improvement demonstrated in online courses?
4. What is the student-teacher load in online courses?
5. What training/support is provided to instructors of online courses?
6. What forms of oversight of the online writing courses does the writing program have in place?
7. Does the WPA have access to online syllabi, modules, courses in progress?
8. Are online classes "observed" by peers or the WPA?
9. How are online classes funded? Do online students pay differential tuition? How are online instructors/graders compensated, particularly in comparison with F2F instructors/graders? If students are charged a separate online fee, who receives that additional revenue?
10. How does your institution assure that students have sufficient computer

access to enroll and complete online courses?

11. What data do you have on student enrollment, persistence, completion, and overall success in online courses? What processes are in place to systematically collect this data?
12. How are instructors for online writing courses hired and evaluated?
13. How are online writing courses assessed/evaluated?

You will not want to overwhelm consultants with background materials, but you may want to include the following in an appendix to the narrative report:

- Statistical information for the previous and current academic year: enrollments, class sizes, composition of the teaching staff, final grade distribution.
- A description of each course within the program(s) to be evaluated (objectives, syllabuses, texts, placement and exemption procedures, grading criteria).
- Copies of evaluative instruments.
- Materials pertaining to teacher training (both faculty and graduate students or adjuncts), including orientation meeting agendas, workshop descriptions, and syllabuses for training courses.
- School catalogues, department handbooks, and departmental student materials.

Last reviewed by WPA Consultant-Evaluator Service Panel and Advisory Committee and by the Executive Board of the Council of Writing Program Administrators, July 2016