



THE WORD

NEWSLETTER FROM WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM (WAC) PROGRAM

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A Toolkit for WAC Assessment

By Kamran Moshref

Assessment is an important part of any Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) or Writing in the Disciplines (WID) initiative, but what does “assessment” mean? The basic idea: a method for measuring students’ progress toward goals as they move through a given curriculum.

There’s no one-size-fits-all model for how to create and use assessments, since different settings (academic departments, writing centers, and so on) require different methods. However, the following overview condenses several best practices into modular “pieces” that anyone can use and assemble in ways that make sense for their situation.

I. Defining Objectives and Outcomes

The first step in creating an assessment is to define, as a group, your preferred goals for student writing. These outcomes are related to the overall learning outcomes for an academic department or other setting but will be more focused on writing and WAC principles. Generally speaking, assessment should be “student-centered”: that is, directed toward tangible products of student work and mechanisms like surveys and student self-assessments.

One way to think of assessment is that the goals are nested within one another, going from the most general to the most specific, as follows:

- the department as a whole (English, Chemistry, etc.);
- majors in the department;
- WAC/WID pedagogy/writing-intensive (WI) courses in the department;
- the development of foundational skills in

specific courses and assignments (recursive writing, writing to learn, etc.); and

- the foundational skills that students need.

II. Assessment Mechanisms

Examples include:

- rubrics, surveys, self-assessments, student focus groups, and faculty meetings to discuss assignments together or evaluate the same set of student essays;
- rubrics that can be applied to a wide variety of student writing—for example, essays from first-year composition courses and research-based papers in more advanced courses; and
- rubrics for both WAC (e.g., “Does the paper have a clear and analytical thesis statement?”) and WID (“Does the student use discipline-specific language to convey complex ideas?”).

III. Additional Ideas

The best assessments are:

- locally controlled with questions and measures developed by those who have a stake in the process and the results;
- led by faculty and other writing professionals; and
- conducted with an awareness of the beliefs and assumptions underlying our actions.

Also, consider “curriculum mapping” to determine where in the curriculum of your major or minor writing goals are already being addressed.

The CUNY WAC Resources Website Goes Public

By Ting Zhang

Welcome to CUNY WAC Resources! This site is an online forum designed for collecting, categorizing, archiving and annotating the materials related to WAC principles and pedagogy. Originally, this site is a resource center for all of CUNY’s WAC programs, collecting submissions from [The WAC Resource Center](#) group on [CUNY Academic Commons](#). Now it is open to everyone who is involved in and interested in WAC pedagogy to excite conversations and discussions beyond CUNY. Use the menu across the top to find a variety of WAC resources, and links to WAC sites across CUNY and beyond.

Do you have a great WAC-inspired syllabus, rubric, or writing assignment? Do you have questions about materials on this site? Do you want to further discuss something related to WAC pedagogy? Any suggestion or advice concerning the website? Please reach out! You can submit new materials and ask questions to this email address: resourceswac@gmail.com. If you are in CUNY Communities, you can [submit new materials](#) through the group, and discuss WAC pedagogy on [the group forum](#). The WAC Resource Center’s most popular and most recently uploaded materials are featured in the right sidebar.

Recent Group Documents

- 2018_05_CCL_Minutes_final.docx posted in CUNY Council of Chief Librarians: Agendas & Minutes
- 2018_09_CCL_Agenda_prelim.docx posted in CUNY Council of Chief Librarians: Agendas & Minutes
- Meeting topics from Book posted in Reading Group: What the Best College Teachers Do by Kenneth Bain
- MAT012 Course Syllabus for Fall 2018 posted in MAT012 Fall 2018
- CONSTITUTION AND BY LAWS OF CUNY COUNCIL ON WORLD LANGUAGE STUDY (CWLS) posted in CUNY Council on World Language Study

The CUNY WAC Resources website (wacresources.commons.gc.cuny.edu/) was created by a WAC fellow at York a few years ago to collect, categorize, and archive materials, resources, and links pertaining to WAC principles and pedagogy.

However, the website has only been used within the CUNY community. As the biggest university-wide WAC program in the U.S., we decided it would be great to showcase the things we’ve been doing over the years that are potentially useful to other WAC programs across the country. Thus, after checking the copyright of the current materials on the website, we launched the site publicly in order to excite conversations and discussions about WAC pedagogy beyond CUNY.

The website already featured documents about WAC history and theory, materials about teaching and learning strategies, and plans and handouts for workshops. I fixed broken links and removed resources that are old or can be found elsewhere. I also re-organized the menu structure so that it’s easier for visitors to find what they’re looking for. Finally, I reached out to colleagues at other CUNY WAC programs to solicit new resources that reflect the vibrancy of current writing-centered pedagogy.

Meet the WAC Coordinators and Committee...



George Lam, assistant professor of Music, assumes the role of WAC coordinator of writing-intensive (WI) courses and student advisement this academic year. Lam coordinates the Music Program at York and is co-artistic director of the new opera ensemble Rhymes With Opera. He studied Composition and Music Education at Duke University, the Peabody Conservatory of Music, and Boston University. Current projects include *The Emigrants* for New Morse Code and *Shrewsbury Fair* for Oak Middle School in Shrewsbury, MA.

George Lam of the Music Program assumes the role of WAC coordinator of writing-intensive (WI) courses and student advisement this academic year.



Jonathan Hall is the coordinator of WAC fellows and assessment and the faculty director of the Collaborative Learning Center. He is an associate professor of English and earned his Ph.D. in American Literature and his M.F.A. in Fiction Writing at Cornell University. His research focuses on college writing studies, including plagiarism prevention, writing program administration, and the teaching of college writing to multilingual learners.



Fenio Annansingh-Jamieson, assistant professor of Business and Economics, is a member of the WAC advisory committee. She holds a Ph.D. in Information Studies from the University of Sheffield. Her areas of expertise include organizations, management, and information systems; knowledge management and knowledge leakage; risk management; Internet security and e-safety; and assessment in higher education.



Elizabeth Alter, associate professor of Biology, is a member of the WAC advisory committee. She holds a Ph.D. from Stanford and uses molecular phylogenetic methods to understand the evolutionary histories of species and populations, especially in the marine environment. Her work examines the genetic vestiges of past environmental and ecological conditions and draws from evolutionary genetics, phylogenomics, and population modeling.



Matt Garley, assistant professor of English, is a member of the WAC advisory committee. He holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics with a specialization in Sociolinguistics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In his research, he uses both qualitative and quantitative (corpus) methods to investigate the properties of varieties of English; the linguistics of hip hop culture; the linguistics of computer-mediated communication; and writing systems.

...And the New (and Returning) WAC Fellows!



Katherine Payne is a Ph.D. student in Comparative Literature at the Graduate Center and a new WAC fellow at York. She studies postmodern fiction and poetry and the intersection between nonfiction content and poetic forms. She is the co-translator of *Power of Gentleness: Meditations on the Risk of Living* by Anne Dufourmantelle. She received her M.F.A. in Creative Nonfiction Writing and Literary Translation from Columbia University. She also leads free creative writing workshops in Harlem and Washington Heights.



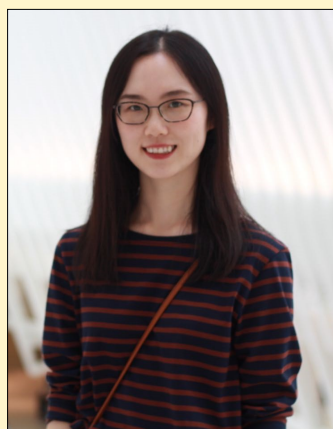
Katie Entigar is a Ph.D. candidate in Urban Education at the Graduate Center of CUNY and a new WAC fellow at York. She focuses on the nonprofit education of adult immigrants, and she is currently exploring the roles of dialogue, silence, and resistance in language education. Katie has a background in applied linguistics and has taught ESL in the U.S. and abroad for over 13 years and courses on second language acquisition and bilingual education at City and Hunter Colleges. She supports immigrant-rights activism in New York City.



Michael Healy is a Ph.D. candidate in Comparative Literature at the Graduate Center and a new WAC fellow at York. His doctoral research focuses on modernism in English, Spanish, and French. Before his doctoral work, he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in English Education from the Wheelock College of Education and Human Development at Boston University.



Sean M. Kennedy is a Ph.D. candidate in English at the Graduate Center and a returning WAC fellow at York. He holds an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Rutgers University–Newark, a B.A. in English and Modern Studies from the University of Virginia, and taught at Medgar Evers College for two years. His dissertation re-reads the gangster genre as a formation of global racial capitalism and settler colonialism, turning away from the dominant critical focus on white-ethnic mafias in Italy and the United States.



Ting Zhang is a Ph.D. student in Comparative Literature at the Graduate Center and a returning WAC fellow at York. She is interested in the intersection between philosophy and literature, and her current research is on the epistemological questions of knowing others in the nineteenth-century British novel and the doubts about the possibility or usefulness of sympathy and social responsibility. Ting received her B.A. and M.A. degrees in English from Peking University, China. She currently teaches at Baruch College.



Kamran Moshref is a Ph.D. student in Political Science at the Graduate Center and a returning WAC fellow. His research is in political theory and critical theory broadly conceived and concerns political theories of collectivity in the context of globalization, among other topics. He currently teaches political science at Lehman College and previously taught at Queens College.