

What the research says about WEC

✓ Introduction to Writing-Enriched Curricula (WEC)

In the Introduction to *Writing-Enriched Curricula: Models of Faculty-Driven and Departmental Transformation*, Chris M. Anson, who was instrumental in taking a faculty or departmental approach to discipline-specific writing at North Carolina State University, which helped to launch the design of WEC (Flash, 2021), writes that '[t]he writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) movement has become one of the most enduring educational reforms in history ... [and] ... continues to develop in new directions and promote extensive research, theory, and instructional practices' (Anson, 2021a). While WEC and WAC are sometimes used interchangeably, WEC is based on the WAC model and is a more focused approach targeting individual departments or programs to integrate writing instruction into their curricula, rather than a university-wide WAC initiative (Galín, 2021).



✓ Effectiveness of Writing-Enriched Curriculum

The research on writing-enriched curriculum suggests that it is an effective approach to enhance student writing and can have a positive impact on student writing performance. In addition, integrating writing instruction into departmental curricula in a faculty-driven, discipline-specific manner leads to a better understanding between staff and students about expectations around writing. When students are enabled to meet writing expectations, as a result of improved alignment between expectations and instruction, the quality of written assignments improves. Thus, WEC, when implemented through a faculty-driven, discipline-specific process, can significantly improve student writing (Anson, 2021b). As writing is integral to learning, a deepening engagement with course materials through writing to learn has also been observed.



Benefits for Faculty and Staff

There are also benefits for staff. Interactions with students around writing, such as written assignments and providing student feedback, become more purposeful and explicit when expectations are planned and conveyed with departmental consensus and support. As noted on the Department of Writing and Rhetoric at University of Mississippi's webpage:



Not only does writing take different forms in the humanities, in the sciences, in journalism, business, medicine, and law, but the methods of inquiry, the conventions of evidence, and the modes of presentation differ significantly, even as some of the basic elements of writing remain the same. This means that faculty in the disciplines are best suited for teaching students how to think like, argue like, and write like members of a given field.

Source: <https://rhetoric.olemiss.edu/wec/>

Meaningful Integration of Writing Instruction

WEC supports the meaningful integration of writing instruction into disciplinary curricula in a way that enhances the quality of the overall writing output in degrees or programmes, as staff define the desirable student writing outcomes. As Pamela Flash, founding Director of the WEC programme at the University of Minnesota notes: 'WEC activates shifts in *location* (from interdisciplinary and course-specific to departmental and curricular), *control* (from administration to faculty), *stance* (from one of expertise to one of inquiry) and *pacing* (from episodic to enduring)' (Flash, 2021, emphasis in original). With WEC, staff get the opportunity to effect change. Moreover, the success of WEC is dependent on staff, as Anson points out:

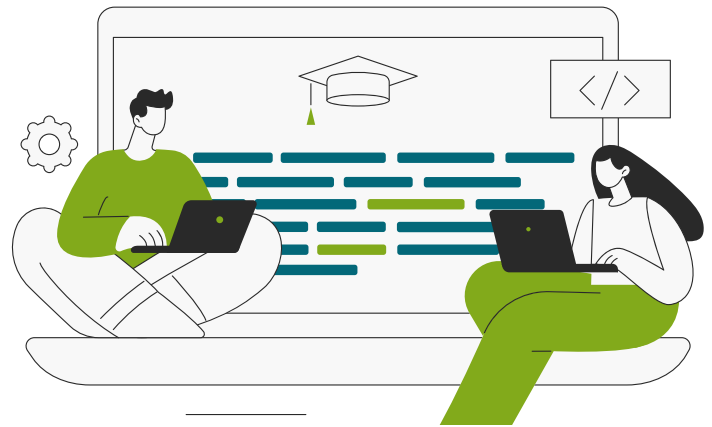


When members of academic departments and programs are inspired to focus on writing and how best it should be integrated into their curricula and their goals for students' success, and are given the support needed to bring out their understandings and examine their practices, they rise to the challenge in remarkable ways. (Anson, 2021a)





With the evolution of Generative AI more broadly and its impact on the higher education experience, supporting staff and students in research-informed approaches to writing is essential. WEC's focus as an evidence-based approach emphasises enquiry driven pedagogy which contributes to both practice and scholarship.



References

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Writing-Enriched Curriculum (WEC) is a Maynooth University Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) professional learning and curriculum initiative towards supporting students as writers.

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