

Frequently Asked Questions

What does this mean for “the writing requirement”?

In effect, the “one course” writing requirement will vanish, to be replaced with a multi-course “embedded” model. Because writing instruction will be woven into courses students already take and will be used to enhance teaching and learning, no students will have to take an extra course, as most currently do, to fulfill the writing requirement. This will free up one Gen Ed requirement, taking the number of courses most students are expected to complete from 10 to 9. Tracking student completion will require coordination with the Registrar to ensure that Banner and Degree Audit are up to the task; we don’t anticipate substantial problems with the software.

Is this part of the General Education program or is it a departmental thing?

It’s both. Writing skills will be taught in Gen Ed courses, which may enhance interdisciplinary and/or integrative thinking and communication, and in courses in the major, where students learn the craft of writing in a specific discipline or for a specific audience and set of needs. Planning effective writing instruction in this way allows Gen Ed and major to enhance and reinforce each other's efforts in a coordinated, conscious way, and students will then benefit from what is, effectively, a four year writing syllabus. As a result, we should see Stetson's graduates writing with increased, consistent excellence.

What will happen to ENGL 101?

Because the writing instruction at Stetson will be carefully distributed across Gen Ed and coordinated with work in the major, ENGL 101 Writing & Rhetoric will be removed from the Foundation requirements of the Gen Ed curriculum. Thus, Gen Ed requirements for most students will be reduced from 10 courses to 9. Because writing instruction will be expected at several points throughout the Stetson curriculum, rather than in one “gen ed writing course,” the question of “double dipping” will be moot.

How will writing courses in majors and departments be developed?

Many, if not most, departments and programs already offer a course in research methods or writing in the discipline. Although some of those courses are already visible with WI designations--for example, PSYC 203, BIOL 497, ENGL 241, BADM 205-- more will need to be designated. Department/program chairs will work with their faculty to determine the proper course(s) or, perhaps, create a course if none exists. A few programs or majors, for instance in performance or creative arts, may need to consider what kinds of writing are appropriate for students majoring there.

Will WI courses still keep a cap of 16-20?

Yes. Institutional Research has already confirmed that a course cap of between 16-20 students is manageable. Stetson currently caps FSEM and JSEM courses at 16, for example; some courses already designated WI (for instance in HIST and in ENGL) carry a slightly higher cap.

What about the ongoing faculty development efforts? Will faculty be required to attend?

Presumably, faculty who are new to WI pedagogies would be strongly encouraged to attend; our collective passions for learning and teaching are already strong, and there should be natural interest in new techniques and strategies. Faculty already familiar with the process would be welcome to join for refresher purposes or for mentoring purposes.

How will we know whether this enhanced curriculum is working any better than what we currently have?

Assessment plans will be developed along the lines of our current, highly effective assessment methods; those plans will offer the chance for gen ed and major to work together to coordinate for highest effectiveness.

What about students who need a lot of work on their writing?

To support Stetson's weakest writers, the English Department has agreed to continue offering a course similar to the current ENGL 100, which is most often taught as a developmental or remedial course.

How will students who need a lot of help be identified?

Students who typically place into ENGL 100 are generally well aware of their need for a great deal of support to compensate for substantial deficiencies in writing coherent, accurate, developed prose; in lieu of the sketchy predictive validity of standardized test scores –currently complicated by Stetson's adoption of a score-blind admission process--we will ask students who need a great deal of extra assistance to self-identify, as part of a placement system called Directed Self Placement (DSP). This method prioritizes student agency and allows the well informed student to make his or her decision about what courses to take.

Will everyone have to teach a WI course?

Although it would be beneficial for all faculty to be comfortable teaching a writing-intensive course, the logistics suggest that not every faculty member will need to offer one. However, because the pedagogy is very effective at helping students learn and teachers to teach, faculty are strongly encouraged to consider finding ways to implement more attention to student writing. As long as students are provided with sufficient choice, and as long as Stetson offers enough WI courses other than FSEM/JSEM, the needs will be met.

What about faculty who aren't comfortable with teaching writing?

The Task Force recognizes the concerns some faculty may have about using writing to teach their courses. The Writing Center will be developing a Writing Fellows program. In this program, experienced tutors will be given additional training to serve as writing mentors in a WI course. The Writing Fellow can help the instructor with draft workshops, designing effective writing assignments, and helping to liaise between a teacher's goals and a student's abilities.

Will the English Department still teach first year courses?

Yes. Along with other departments and programs, English and Creative Writing will offer some WI courses in the first year curriculum. It's important to note that in this proposed model, all Stetson's faculty will be expected to share in (and supported in doing so) the responsibility of writing instruction.

Who will oversee and coordinate the initiative?

The WEC Task Force anticipates the implementation of this plan in two stages: first, curriculum planning and approval (with support from the WEC Task Force), and second, programming and logistical detail management (guided by a second faculty group, with input from critical personnel in IR, the Registrar's office, and Advising). Some key members of the Task Force will be part of both groups, presumably the Writing Program Director and the Writing Center Director.

Once the curriculum is approved and implemented, the work of guiding, supporting, and maintaining the quality of Stetson's writing curriculum will be the task of a faculty-led group, headed (at least initially) by the Writing Program Director with reliance on disciplinary faculty, members of GEAC and UGEC, and various other members. The writing curriculum at Stetson should always be a joint, coordinated effort, and the best configuration to ensure that writing instruction remains vital and forward-thinking is a team of interested, invested, motivated faculty. Presumably, a committee or council will form.