

Aims Sub-committee Report

BCCAT English Articulation Committee

Background for New Articulation Members

In 1998, a sub-committee was formed to look at “Aims for First-Year Writing Courses” and to draft an “Aims” document, the first draft of which was presented to the 1998 Articulation Committee. The sub-committee participants included Don Precosky (CNC), Al Valleau (Kwantlen), Janet Allwork (Douglas), Judy Brown and Margery Fee (UBC), David Dowling, Dee Horne and Karin Beeler (UNBC), Elizabeth Grove-White (UVIC), Maureen Shaw (BCCAT), and Mark Battersby (BCCTT). Simon Fraser, represented by Carole Gerson, was initially a member of the sub-committee but subsequently withdrew as a direct participant while remaining an interested observer. The sub-committee presented the revised document at the 1999 and 2000 Articulation Meetings. The aims presented below as part A were approved at the 2001 Articulation Meeting.

In 2001, a new sub-committee was formed to expand the initial document to include “Aims for Six Credits of First-Year English.” The subcommittee participants included Terri Doughty (Malaspina), Gordon Fulton (UVIC), Paul Headrick (Langara), Kevin Hutchings (UNBC), Glen Lowry (Coquitlam) and Glenn Deer (UBC). The new sub-committee accepted the rationale as expressed by the original sub-committee:

- to enhance student learning through clear and explicit articulation of the skills and abilities a particular course is designed to help students develop;
- to enhance transfer among institutions;
- to enhance curricular freedom within individual institutions while recognizing shared curricular expectations.

The intent of the original sub-committee and the subsequent sub-committee was not to limit or shape curricula across the province, but to recognize the conventions of discourse common to our discipline and to find, within the different audiences, styles, conventions and discourse communities that academic writing and writing about English literature serve, the commonalities that bind us.

The 1999 English Articulation Committee supported the NCTE guidelines for appropriate class size and environment for writing classes and appended the guidelines with the approved document. Those guidelines are also appended to the new blended document.

Aims for Six Credits of First-Year English

A. Aims for First-Year Writing Courses

1. Reading

At the end of the course, a student should be able to

- a. paraphrase/summarize texts to reflect accurately and coherently the original's ideas, organization, and tone;
- b. perform university-level critical analysis of texts, including scholarly and other texts, by recognizing, identifying, and evaluating controlling ideas, supporting ideas, dominant rhetorical patterns, tone, context, and features of style;
- c. discuss and debate texts using terminology specific to discipline and rhetorical context;
- d. read comparatively, using a range of critical perspectives.

2. Writing Process

At the end of the course, a student should be able to

- a. practice a post-secondary writing process which involves planning, drafting, peer review, revising, and editing /proofreading with an expectation of grammatically-correct style and rhetorically-effective and discourse-appropriate content and structure;
- b. produce clear and effective writing under time restrictions and exam conditions.

3. Content and Organization

At the end of the course, a student should be able to

- a. write essays that develop an academic argument with a thesis or controlling idea, using appropriate language and rhetorical patterns, and accurate, relevant, specific, and sufficient supporting evidence for its audience and purpose;
- b. write unified, coherent paragraphs, including effective introductions and conclusions, and make transitions between and within paragraphs within an academic context;
- c. write correct, clear, cohesive, and effective English

4. Style

At the end of the course, a student should be able to

- a. apply stylistic considerations (eg. sentence variety, diction, and figurative language) and understand their relevance to purpose and audience;
- b. format the writing for its audience and purpose, using a recognized style, such as presented in the *MLA Handbook*.
- c. use inclusive language.

5. Research and Documentation

At the end of the course, a student should be able to

- a. find and evaluate source material, which may include personal knowledge and interviews, print and electronic media, and any other form of data gathering;
- b. integrate source material (including quotations, paraphrase, and summary) purposefully and effectively, providing suitable authority and context;
- c. document sources fully and ethically according to a current and audience-expected documentation system;
- d. recognize and use primary and secondary sources appropriately.

B. Aims for First-Year Literature Courses

1. Reading and Analysis

At the end of the course, a student should be able to

- a. recognize a range of modes and genres and their conventions;
- b. demonstrate a working vocabulary of literary and critical terminology;
- c. understand a variety of interpretive and critical approaches;
- d. recognize the relevance of context to literary interpretation, e.g. historical, cultural, global;
- e. demonstrate appropriate interpretive skills where non-print texts are studied;
- f. compare and contrast issues and formal elements in assigned texts.

2. Writing About Literature

At the end of the course, a student should be able to:

- a. use a post-secondary-level writing process that involves prewriting, planning, multiple drafting, conferring (including giving and responding to constructive commentary), revising, and editing/proofreading with an expectation of grammatically correct style;
- b. produce a substantial body of successful writing under time and exam restrictions as well as out of class;
- c. develop an argument with a thesis or controlling idea, using appropriate language and rhetorical patterns and accurate, relevant, specific, and sufficient supporting material for its audience and purpose;
- d. write unified, coherent paragraphs, including effective introductions and conclusions, and transitions between and within paragraphs;
- e. write correct, clear, cohesive, and effective English.

In addition, a student, at the end of the course, should be able to

- a. distinguish between summary and analysis;
- b. develop and argue, in academic essay format, a coherent reading of a literary text;
- c. select and integrate primary textual evidence that effectively supports the argument;
- d. make appropriate use of secondary sources where applicable;
- e. format essays using a recognized style guide, such as *MLA*;
- f. use inclusive language.

3. Discussion

At the end of the course, a student should be able to

- a. demonstrate an ability to discuss and analyze literature in a shared setting, such as in class or online;
- b. engage respectfully with different interpretations;
- c. assess validity of a given interpretation.

4. Research Skills

At the end of the course, a student should be able to

- a. find and evaluate secondary material, which may include print and electronic media;
- b. integrate secondary material (including quotations, paraphrase, and summary) purposefully and effectively, providing suitable authority and context;
- c. document sources fully and ethically according to the current *MLA* documentation system

The sub-committee recommends that this “Aims” document be adopted as criteria for transfer for first-year, semester-length writing courses and first-year, semester-length literature courses. In principle, this means that courses, which, in the judgment of the receiving institution, meet these agreed-upon aims, would receive one of two province-wide designations (English 1st Writing or English 1st Literature, for example). In practice, receiving institutions will continue to examine individual course outlines to designate any specific course equivalency that might be appropriate in addition to the designation already received. Course equivalency would continue to be determined largely by content similarities.

✓ *updated April 30, 2010; last updated May 11, 2012*

NCTE Guidelines for the Workload

of the College English Teacher

In an era of increasing public concern over the writing and reading ability of college students, it is especially important that the workload of English faculty members be reasonable enough to guarantee that every student receive the time and attention needed for genuine improvement. Faculty members must be given adequate time to fulfill their responsibility to their students, their departments, their institutions, their profession, the larger community, and to themselves. Without that time, they cannot teach effectively. Unless English teachers are given reasonable loads, students cannot make the progress the public demands.

Economic pressures and budgetary restrictions may tempt administrations to increase teaching loads. With this conflict in mind, the College Section of the National Council of Teachers of English endorses the following standards:

1. English faculty members should never be assigned more than 12 hours a week of classroom teaching. In fact, the teaching load should be less, to provide adequate time for reading and responding to students' writing; for holding individual conferences; for preparing to teach classes; and for research and professional growth.
2. No more than 20 students should be permitted in any writing class. Ideally, classes should be limited to 15. Students cannot learn to write without writing. In sections larger than 20, teachers cannot possibly give student writing the immediate and individual response necessary for growth and improvement.
3. Remedial or developmental sections should be limited to a maximum of 15 students. It is essential to provide these students extra teaching if they are to acquire the reading and writing skills they need in college.
4. No English faculty member should teach more than 60 writing students a term: if the students are developmental, the maximum should be 45.
5. No more than 25 students should be permitted in discussion courses in literature or language. Classes larger than 25 do not give students and teachers the opportunity to engage literary texts through questions, discussion, and writing. If lecture classes must be offered, teachers should be given adjusted time or assistance to hold conferences and respond to students' writing.
6. Any faculty members assigned to reading or writing laboratories or to skills centers should have that assignment counted as part of the teaching load. Identifying and addressing the individual needs of students is a demanding form of teaching.
7. No full-time faculty member's load should be composed exclusively of sections of a single course. (An exception might occur when a specific teacher, for professional reasons such as research or intensive experimentation, specifically requests such an

assignment.) Even in colleges where the English program consists mainly of composition, course assignments should be varied. Repeating identical material for the third or fourth time the same day or semester after semester is unlikely to be either creative or responsive.

8. No English faculty member should be required to prepare more than three different courses during a single term. Even if the faculty member has taught the same course in previous years, the material must be reexamined in the context of current scholarship and the presentation adapted to the needs of each class.

9. The time and responsibility required for administrative, professional, scholarly, and institutional activities should be considered in determining teaching loads and schedules for English faculty members. These responsibilities cover a broad range, such as directing independent study, these, and dissertations; advising students on academic programs; supervising student publications; developing new courses and materials; serving on college or departmental committees; publishing scholarly and creative work; refereeing and editing professional manuscripts and journals; or holding office in professional organizations.