

THE WRITING CENTRE

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Enhancing the Quality of Writing at Queen's

A CROSS-CURRICULAR FORUM Beamish Munro Hall Design Studio (Room 109)
Friday, March 25, 3-5 pm

Panelists: Christopher Ferrall, Department of Economics; Brian Frank, Faculty of Applied Science; Shannon Goodspeed, School of Business; Josh Karton, Faculty of Law; Gabrielle McIntire, Department of English; Kim Nossal, Department of Political Studies

PRESENTED BY QUEEN'S WRITING CENTRE AND THE FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND APPLIED SCIENCE

The poster features a background image of a modern building with a glass facade. The text is overlaid on a dark horizontal band.

ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF WRITING AT QUEENS: FORUM SUMMARY

The recent forum on writing at Queen's, co-hosted by the Writing Centre and the Faculty of Applied Science on Friday, 25 March 2011, was a great success. Students, staff, and faculty filled the Design Studio in Beamish-Munro Hall, where they exchanged views with six panelists, whose cross-curricular perspectives demonstrated the timeliness of the forum's topic.

More than one panelist emphasized that teaching writing goes beyond teaching mechanics. Rather, the faculty at Queen's should be urging students to concentrate on sustained analytical thinking, conciseness of expression, precision in English usage, and support from peers. The iterative process of writing must also be stressed in Queen's classrooms, whose growing size threatens to further corrode the skills of students already reliant on the casual diction and syntax of our fully wired culture.

Practice and feedback, small-group interaction, and discovering ideas through the drafting of a document: these essential features of any serious writing curriculum were discussed throughout the two-hour forum.

One issue emerged clearly in the end: how best to move forward in promoting the centrality of writing on campus. Such forward movement depends not only on small class sizes but also on the commitment of resources to ensure that instructors are versed in the pedagogy of academic writing. Furthermore, the university's central administration must work to break down departmental barriers that impede coordinated – or at least standardized – action.