



Cyclical Program Review Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan for the Certificate in Academic Writing

Overview

In accordance with Queen's University Quality Assurance Processes (QUQAP), this final assessment report (FAR) provides a synthesis of the external evaluation, internal responses, and assessment of the above programs. This report identifies the significant strengths of the programs, and opportunities for program improvement.

An implementation plan (IP) is attached that identifies:

- who will be responsible for acting on and monitoring progress on the recommendations,
- any resource or governance implications resulting from the recommendations, and
- timelines for implementation of the recommendations.

Final Assessment Report: Executive Summary

Summary of Review

- 1) The program produced a self-study document that was reviewed by the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science and the Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning). The self-study was approved on July 12, 2024.
- 2) The program was reviewed by desk audit in February-March 2025 and the report completed on April 10, 2025. The reviewer was Dr. Jay Timothy Dolmage, Professor and Chair of English, University of Waterloo.
- 3) The desk audit included meetings with the Head, Department of English and Creative Writing, and the Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), Faculty of Arts and Science, and the Director of Academic Writing, Department of English and Creative Writing.
- 4) This is the first cyclical program review of this certificate. The certificate first enrolled students in 2016.
- 5) The Head, Department of English and Creative Writing and the Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science responded to the review team report by September 3, 2025.
- 6) The Senate Cyclical Program Review Committee considered the review team report and a draft Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan which includes the academic unit and dean's responses at its meeting on September 24, 2025. The Report and Plan was approved on that date.

The following strengths were noted:

- Student experience in the program is positive; students develop critical thinking and research skills as well as writing skills.
- Instructors are extremely qualified and well supported in developing and delivering courses by instructional designers and technical support staff.
- The program's courses are replete with genuine enactments of the degree level expectations and program learning outcomes. The program is an efficient vehicle for helping students reach these expectations and outcomes.
- Courses are designed with a fulsome integration of technology - preparing students to engage with technical tools involved in writing and review. The courses teach skills that are measured in other classes, but rarely explicitly taught.
- The Writing in the Community course is an excellent example of embedding Queen's in the community.
- Extensive materials, procedures, training and communication around use of artificial intelligence in the classroom. The program has been proactive, educating instructors about artificial intelligence and building guidelines for designing assignments and assessments.
- I-EDIAA initiatives in the program follow best practices. In addition to statements on syllabi, there is diversity in course readings and assignment topics.
- Teaching in the program is a highly valuable experience for graduate students.

The following opportunities for enhancement were noted:

- Ensure teaching approaches and descriptions of the program are informed by current research in the field of writing studies.
- Use a focus on grammar to address decolonization and the politics of standard English. Train teaching and academic assistants in this work.
- Consider ways of addressing the demanding nature of the teaching assistant role in this program, such as rethinking course caps.
- Consider how to encourage a greater number of students who take Academic Writing courses to complete the certificate.

Summary of Review Team Recommendations

The reviewer made 5 recommendations in the following areas. For a full list of the recommendations, please see the Implementation Plan.

- The program should seek alliances and alignments with other programs at Queen's. Courses should be included in breadth requirements and as electives in programs outside the English department. Undertake a systemic study of the majors of students taking the courses. Then network with other departments.
- Students taking certificate courses should be more readily able to use these courses towards their degrees.
- Promote Academic Writing courses to students in the coming years.
- De-emphasize grammar and other structural instruction in course design, focus more on higher-order thinking.
- Plan for an environment of constrained resources.
- Create a formal Academic Writing Committee in the Department of English Literature and Creative Writing.
- Create more on-campus presence for the program. Experiment with more on-campus iterations of courses.

Status

The Certificate in Academic Writing has been approved to continue.

Date monitoring report due: March 2027 (To be confirmed following changes to the Senate Certificate and Diploma Policy in Winter term 2026).

Date of next review: To be determined following revisions to the Senate Certificate and Diploma Policy.

Prepared by Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning) with contributions from the Academic Unit and Faculty Dean: May-September 2025

Approved by the Senate Cyclical Program Review Committee: September 24, 2025



Implementation Plan

Recommendation 1:

The program should actively seek alliances and alignments with other programs at Queen's. Courses should be included in faculty or university-wide breadth requirements and should appear in plans in other units, as electives to begin with. Other diploma programs like the Artist in Community Education or Global Action and Engagement diplomas could utilize WRIT electives (specifically the community writing course). But English and WRIT should be actively looking for other units to work with. You can look at who is taking the classes now: students from what faculties, schools, and majors? In the data I saw, for example, I saw a good number of Commerce students choosing WRIT classes. A systemic study should be done, with a good-will campaign to network with other departments to follow. Are there units who would do better on their accreditation if they required a WRIT course?

Students already taking these courses should be more readily able to use these credits towards their degrees – and then they will seek further WRIT electives. Currently, it seems as though only English and Computing students can use WRIT courses towards their degrees.

Planned Action(s) (Completed by Unit)	Faculty Dean's Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation. (Completed by Unit)	Resource and/or Governance Implications (Completed by Unit and Dean)	Timeline and Milestones (Completed by Unit and Dean)
Action A: Survey course enrolments over the last five years to compile statistics about who is taking WRIT courses: which Faculties/Plans? Is there a difference between 100- and 200-level WRIT courses?	N/A	Director, Undergraduate Chair, Undergraduate Assistant	None	Short term: complete by the end of 2025.
Action B: Confer with Undergrad Chairs/Curriculum Committees of other Departments in Arts and Science and other Faculties to gauge interest in WRIT courses satisfying Plan requirements.	N/A	Undergraduate Chair	WRIT courses are usually full: if this initiative resulted in greater demand for WRIT courses, additional teaching and TA support would be required.	Medium term: changes to Plan requirements by 2026 curriculum cycle.
Action C: Gauge interest in the creation of a course on writing with generative AI. Find out which units are already offering such training or are considering offering it, and what such a course would have to do to make it valuable to different professions.	N/A	Director, Undergraduate Chair	None initially, though resources would be required if a course were to be developed (resources that would presumably be recouped if demand were sufficiently strong).	Short term: Conduct discussions in 2025–2026. Medium term: if a course were to be developed, that would happen in 2026–2027, in time for the 2027 curriculum cycle at the latest.

Recommendation 2:

WRIT should have more visibility.

I am told that there should be a lot more opportunity for Queen's students to choose electives in the coming years. There have to be courses there for students to take, and the WRIT courses are going to be very attractive. So how do you promote the courses? Showcase some of the people who have completed the program? Reach out to alumni? Reach out to students who have taken a single WRIT course to show them the pathway to the certificate, or which course they might take next?

Planned Action(s) (Completed by Unit)	Faculty Dean's Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation. (Completed by Unit)	Resource and/or Governance Implications (Completed by Unit and Dean)	Timeline and Milestones (Completed by Unit and Dean)
Action A: Add testimonials from recent WRIT students to the English Department web site (note that WRIT courses and instructors are already publicized there).	N/A	Undergraduate Assistant	The loss of funding for our communications position means that the work of maintaining the departmental web site falls to the Undergraduate Assistant, whose workload is already very high.	Short term: 2025–2026 academic year.
Action B: Publicize WRIT courses on the Department's social media channels	N/A	Undergraduate Assistant	See above	Short term: 2025–2026
Action C: Reconceive AWRI Certificate so as to make it available to on-campus students.	N/A	Writing Studies Advisory Committee, Director, Head, Undergraduate Chair	None for the curricular work, but if this work results in greater demand for WRIT courses, that demand would require teaching and TA resources.	Short term: curricular discussions in 2025–2026, Curriculum Committee submission in the 2026 curriculum cycle.

Action D: Explore the possibility of creating a Minor in Writing Studies.	Work with the unit to explore a Minor in Writing Studies	Writing Studies Advisory Committee, Director, Head, Undergraduate Chair Confer with CTL, Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning)	None for the curricular discussions. WRIT courses are entirely taught by adjunct instructors, so a sustainable Minor would require at least a continuing adjunct position.	Short term: Discuss feasibility of a Minor (2025–2026 academic year). Medium term: Develop the Minor, with a possible Curriculum Committee submission in 2026 or 2027.
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Recommendation 3:

I suggest that the program seek to de-emphasize grammar and other structural instruction in course design, with greater emphasis on research, genre and rhetorical analysis and understanding, information literacy, argumentation, and other forms of higher-order thinking.

Planned Action(s) (Completed by Unit)	Faculty Dean's Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation. (Completed by Unit)	Resource and/or Governance Implications (Completed by Unit and Dean)	Timeline and Milestones (Completed by Unit and Dean)
Action A: Share with current WRIT instructors the latest research on the relationship between grammar and higher-order thinking.	N/A	Writing Studies Advisory Committee	None	Short term: 2025–2026 academic year.

Action B: Confer to with SASS and CTL to help ensure that writing is taught in a way that respects students’ background and knowledge.	N/A	Director, Writing Studies Advisory Committee	None	Short term: 2025–2026 academic year.
Action C: Revise WRIT course descriptions and learning outcomes.	N/A	Director, Undergrad Chair	None	Short term: 2025–2026 academic year.

Recommendation 4:

In the current fiscal climate, a review like this is difficult to write. WRIT should imagine all the things that they could do with unlimited resources, but also imagine how to retain the program over the next 5 years if the resources are removed significantly. I would advocate for worst-case scenario planning, assuming continued hiring freezes, cutbacks in sessionals and TA/AAs, and so on. Is there capacity in English for existing faculty to teach some WRIT courses? Could some WRIT courses be used in English plans or “held-with” courses in other degree plans if teaching resources in English or other units diminish?

Are there units in A&S struggling to offer enough courses to their students? Or will there be? Could WRIT be part of their plans to keep those programs going?

But as mentioned earlier, surveying who currently takes WRIT courses is one way to begin working to embed WRIT as a requirement or elective across other departments. Global Development Studies, for example: could their students take the Community Writing course for credit? Opportunities like these cannot be forced, but could be explored.

Planned Action(s) (Completed by Unit)	Faculty Dean’s Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation. (Completed by Unit)	Resource and/or Governance Implications (Completed by Unit and Dean)	Timeline and Milestones (Completed by Unit and Dean)
Action A: Plan for various scenarios, including a protracted hiring freeze.	N/A	Writing Studies Advisory Committee	None	Short term: 2025–2026 academic year.

Action B: Confer with other units to determine whether WRIT courses could fill gaps in course offerings.	N/A	Undergraduate Chair	None, though if this step results in greater demand for WRIT courses, teaching and TA support will be required.	Short term: 2025–2026 academic year.
Action C: The recommended survey is addressed under Recommendation 1 above.	N/A			

Recommendation 5:

There should be a formal WRIT committee in English. Then you can reward work with service credit, and it helps integrate WRIT into English at the same time. In keeping with this, there should be an effort to create more on-campus presence for WRIT. Office hours are currently available by email and zoom. For example, WRIT should take part in the departmental research forum – WRIT could bring in a speaker every year. Could you also experiment with more on-campus iterations of courses? Being online-mainly makes WRIT flexible and efficient. But there could be advantages to having more on-campus presence that should be explored.

Planned Action(s) (Completed by Unit)	Faculty Dean's Contributions to Plan, where appropriate:	Person(s) Responsible for Leading Implementation. (Completed by Unit)	Resource and/or Governance Implications (Completed by Unit and Dean)	Timeline and Milestones (Completed by Unit and Dean)
Action A: A Writing Studies Advisory Committee already exists, consisting of the Director, Head, Undergrad Chair, and current WRIT instructors.	N/A	Writing Studies Advisory Committee	None	Already implemented: the Committee will meet at least twice per term during the regular academic session.

Action B: The instructor of the in-person WRIT course already holds on-campus office hours.	N/A	Director	None	Already implemented.
Action C: Investigate whether the Research Forum could invite a Writing Studies speaker.	N/A	Associate Head (co-ordinates the Research Forum), Grad Chair, Department Manager	Visiting speakers are paid from Department trusts, upon which there are several calls: additional speakers may be invited only if funds permit.	Short term: 2025–2026 academic year.
Action D: Roster more in-person WRIT courses in 2026–2027, if the Department’s budget permits.	N/A	Head	Contingent on the availability of teaching and TA support.	Medium term: 2026–2027