

## Writing Across the Curriculum

### EPR Workshop, 8 August 2006

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#### Summary

Across the curriculum, students are writing; in five years, only three programs reported that they did not include writing as a major or minor emphasis. At least half, if not the majority of programs mentioned that they give faculty and/or peer feedback on larger papers. Aside from listing assignments (which are most often seminar papers, two or three 3-6 page papers, and one larger synthesis or research paper at the end of the quarter), faculty most frequently commented that they did faculty feedback, peer review, and writing workshops. However, it's quite difficult to tell what faculty mean by these terms—what extent/kind of faculty feedback? what happens in a “writing workshop”?—so it's difficult to tell how much writing *instruction* is happening at Evergreen.

While some programs reported major emphasis in writing, and others reported a minor emphasis, the commentary was much the same. Programs that reported a major emphasis often mentioned revision after faculty or peer review, and we hypothesized that faculty who reported a major emphasis perhaps did more writing instruction than those who reported a minor emphasis. A couple faculty articulated that they hosted writing workshops that addressed the most common problems they found in students' papers, and only once was instruction in self-editing specifically mentioned. In short, students are writing, students are critiquing specific papers, faculty are critiquing specific papers, but there is little evidence that students are *learning* to write, rather than *practicing* writing.

#### How do students work on writing better?

Review and Revision: peer review, faculty review, peer-to-peer written responses (often online, through Web-X or Blackboard), revision with re-submissions, progressive due dates for large papers with revisions,

The Writing Center: Requiring students to work with tutors, encouraging students to work with tutors, requiring additional tutoring for specific grammar and syntax issues.

Workshops: On organizing information in order to create convincing arguments; on technique; on constructing introductory paragraphs, creating and supporting theses, and referencing texts; on clarity and grace; on creative writing; on self-review techniques; on APA formatting; on defining terms, quoting and citing correctly, and structuring written arguments; on interviewing and observation writing; on writing self-evaluations.

Other: Writing essays on writing, “writing seminars,” “in-class writing marathons,” asking students to write for specific external audiences, “specifically taught editing skills.”

#### To what ends are students writing?

To learn about what they want to know more about, to submit for publication, to gain a more thorough understanding of themes in seminar readings, to become better at reading for content, to discover new dimensions of critical thinking and writing, to demonstrate interpretations of readings, to tell stories, to help faculty determine how well or poorly

students were learning to analyze photos and films, to learn the value and content of citing scientific references, to express themselves, to improve vocabulary and writing style.

What are students writing?

Most common: Seminar papers, lab notebooks, research papers, synthesis essays, Blackboard or Web-X postings (often including responses to other students' postings), project proposals, in-class writing.

Less common: Creative essays, funding proposals, journals, workshop responses, short stories, grants, project reports (art, education), curricular materials for K-12 education, summaries of readings, art/photo/image/music analysis, observation journals, thesis-based expository essays, learning logs, take-home essay exams, scientific reviews, abstracts, novels, personal narratives, concise 1-P arguments, required self-evaluations (end-of-quarter and mid-quarter), poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, essays on writing, dialogues, close text analysis, appellate briefs, discourse analysis, essays in Spanish, literary analysis papers, folklore collection essays, scripts, art history papers, contemporary art/artist papers, blogs, concert reports, biographical profiles, popular writing about scientific subjects, wikis (collaborative), zines, history articles, writing for the web (sites, etc.), writing for children, autobiographies, letters to the editor, song lyrics, cheers, political speeches, executive summaries, business memos, storyboards, group writing (often research papers), magazine articles.