

Writing Capacity Committee
Status Report
May 2020

During the spring semester, the Writing Capacity Committee collected data about faculty experiences and opinions concerning the Writing Level II (W2) capacity. The survey included questions about W2 learning goals, course structure, fit with the general curriculum, advising, resources, and future direction of the program. About half the faculty, or 51 people, completed the survey. Of those, some 84% of the respondents reported they have taught a W2 course. The committee will use the survey results as an initial resource for thinking about revisions to the W2 learning goals and structure.

A Writing Level 2 (W2) Committee will be formed next year to examine all aspects of the W2 general education requirement. The committee will make recommendations about the appropriateness of the W2 learning goals and the best way to achieve them. The committee will also review such topics as:

- Do the current learning goals reflect what we want and need to achieve today?
- Should these learning goals be achieved within a course or throughout a major?
- Departmental and College-wide assessment
- Optimal timing for taking W2
- Universal standards versus discipline specific standards
- Role that W2 should play within a major
- Separation of course grades and W2 credit
- Class size limits
- Requirement that W2 be completed at Hendrix
- Instructor preparation and resources

Addressing these topics systematically will help steer a conversation about writing intensive learning goals and whether we should keep W2 as is, make minor revisions, shift the learning goals to other parts of the curriculum, or completely start over.

Although the Writing Capacity Committee has not yet conducted a detailed analysis of the survey responses, a first look at the data provides a good insight into the faculty's thoughts regarding W2. Here are a few examples.

Starting with the concluding thoughts gives a good summary of where the faculty stand.

When the faculty considers revamping general education requirements in the near future, what should happen with W2?

48 responses



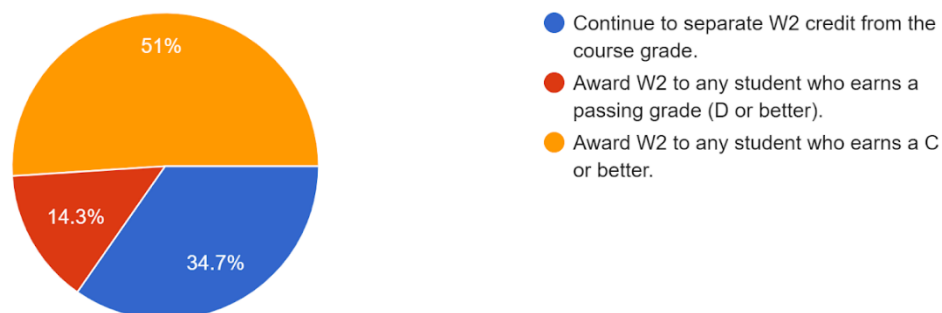
Less than 1/3 of the respondents think W2 should remain unchanged. However, about 3/4 of the respondents think we can achieve our goals through revising the current structure. Open-response comments vary in suggesting a course of action, but all consistently demonstrate how highly we value the development of student writing skills. Examples include

- *What we really need is a wholesale reworking of our approach to writing.*
- *I think W2 as a competency is 100% a skill we should double down on as a liberal arts college.*
- *I think that developing strong writing skills is one of the most valuable skills for our graduates.*
- *All majors should have this as a goal. It should be built in.*

A general agreement on our values will provide a good basis for working out the logistics for achieving writing intensive learning goals. One of the logistical aspects that will receive a lot of attention is the way we separate course grades from W2 credit. The faculty who responded are split close to 50/50 on whether we should continue doing this.

Should we continue to separate course grades from W2 credit, or should W2 be automatically awarded upon successful completion of the course?

49 responses



The faculty clearly expresses their support for the W2 program goals of writing across the curriculum. There is less unanimity about how to restructure the W2 program to meet the needs of our students and the concerns of our faculty. The thoughtful responses from the survey provide a good guide for the work of the Writing Capacity 2 Committee in 2020-2021 academic year. We look forward to this conversation and seeing how we can most effectively support our students.