

Westmont English Department (Sarah Skripsky et al.)

7 April 2022 [draft approved by English department for Academic Senate review]

Proposal: Revised Placement for the Writing for the Liberal Arts (WLA) GE Requirement

This proposal is motivated by changes in standardized testing (limiting the effectiveness of the new SAT, etc., in writing placement) as well as by a growing body of scholarship that supports **alternative placement methods** as a means of increasing equity, justice, and diversity in higher education.

Our proposal involves the following elements and steps:

1. **For our Writing for the Liberal Arts (WLA) GE requirement, Westmont should adopt a procedure similar to Directed Self-Placement (DSP), a method in which students participate in identifying the best way to satisfy a [writing] requirement.**¹
2. To minimize faculty labor in making writing placement recommendations (while retaining some of the benefits of DSP), **Westmont’s alternative WLA placement method should involve the following steps:**

- **Step 1:** Incoming Westmont students (who have not already completed an ENG 002-equivalent course at another institution) would receive a recommended WLA placement based on two “preferred indicators” used by professional writing program administrators (WPAs), i.e., (1) high-school class rank and (2) GPA in 11th- and 12th- grade English courses. *These indicators would allow us [the registrar—with input on benchmarks from English faculty] to make recommended placements from among these options (new placement elements are highlighted):*
 1. [Typical placement:] Completion of ENG 002/002ENV (Composition) only
 2. [Advanced placement—i.e., for students who have earned sufficient scores on a relevant AP or IB exam, and for students whose preferred indicators are also strong:]
 - a. ENG 002/002ENV (Composition); or
 - b. a Writing-Intensive (WI) GE course other than ENG 002/002ENV **which has been approved to satisfy WLA in Fall 2022+ (from a more limited list² of Writing-Intensive [WI] courses than those 80+ courses currently accepted as ENG 002 substitutes).**
 3. [Placement with enhanced instruction/support:] **Completion of ENG 002/002ENV plus a one-unit Academic Writing lab (IS-051L).**³

Commented [MOU1]: Reduction of the approved Writing for the Liberal Arts course list allows for more consistent instruction in fewer courses, which can in turn be better supported by Writers’ Corner tutors and other staff such as librarians.

Instructors in these courses should commit to collaborating with librarians in teaching a source-based writing unit, a unit taught in all ENG 002 sections, which encourages students to build a relationship with librarians; practice critical thinking and information literacy; and practice ethical source integration, among other benefits.

¹ A sample DSP procedure is available on the University of New England’s [writing placement](#) website.

² Recommended courses to be retained as Writing-Intensive [WI] substitutes for ENG 002 are as follows, all of which are part of our Writing Minor curriculum:

ART/PHI 131: *Theory and Criticism in the Arts* (4) *spring only
COM 101: *Theories of Rhetoric and Communication I* (4) *fall only
COM 103: *Communication Criticism* (4) *fall only
ENG 104: *Modern Grammar and Advanced Composition* (4) *fall and spring
HIS 198: *Senior Research Seminar* (4) *fall only

Other possible WI courses to retain as WI substitutes for ENG 002 (after further review and potential revision):

ENG 087: *Introduction to Journalism* (4) *fall only
Advanced English courses with a significant research paper, i.e.,: ENG 117, 135, 151, 152, 163
IS 020H: *Augustine and the Christian Tradition II* (4)
KNS 072: *Foundations of Kinesiology* (4) (includes library instruction)
PHI 015: *Intellectual Virtue and Civil Discourse* (4)
Other courses for which department chairs request review.

³ A one-unit Academic Writing Lab, IS-051L (already approved by Senate and in the academic catalog) would provide accountability for weekly writing center tutoring for a limited group of incoming students. This lab requires staffing by a professional, faculty-level tutor and includes attention to linguistic diversity. *An alternative to Placement Option 3 (ENG 002 +*

- **Step 2:** Students would be allowed to appeal their recommended placement by completing a DSP survey as well as submission of 2-3 academic writing samples, including a sample research paper.
- **Step 3:** Qualified faculty/staff (primarily English department faculty, including interested adjuncts) would receive stipends to review student appeals in the summer/period preceding that student's first semester at Westmont. *Alternatively, select faculty could receive a 1- or 2-unit load reduction for review of such appeals.*

Proposal support (budget/staffing implications): This proposal needs support from the Provost, Academic Senate, Registrar, and Admissions staff.

Support would be needed for the following changes to current practice:

(1) for the Registrar and/or Admissions staff to gather information relevant to placement recommendations and to communicate those placements to incoming students;

(2) for the Provost and English department to staff the Academic Writing Lab (IS-051L) with a professional tutor (or tutors), preferably with TESOL certification; and

(3) for the Provost to provide compensation (stipends or load reductions) for qualified faculty/staff to evaluate DSP surveys and academic writing samples from students who appeal their placement recommendations.

lab) would be having select English faculty teach select ENG 002 sections [ENG002B?] with a reduced enrollment cap of 12-15 [vs. 20] in which those faculty held expanded office hours and/or partnered with undergraduate writing tutors and/or librarians for targeted support of students.