



Writing Across the Curriculum

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<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/wac>

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WAC: Looking Back on Our First Year

The WAC program, based at CUHK, was established in September 2002 as the first of its kind in Asia. It included CUHK, City University, and Polytechnic University. In its first year (2002-2003), the WAC program enjoyed a period of smooth and dynamic growth.

At the beginning courses were affiliated with the program on a voluntary basis. As a result, a total of 17 CUHK professors, teaching 21 courses and representing 16 departments, became affiliated with the program. Several TAs, each with a Master's degree in English, were hired, trained, and assigned to the WAC-affiliated courses. Importantly, the physical and virtual infrastructure was also established: WAC moved into a spacious office in Academic Building #2, and "moved" into the internet with the website www.cuhk.edu.hk/wac. Equipped with its own office and website, and with a full schedule of courses, the program was quickly operational.

In the courses affiliated with the program, WAC has successfully facilitated students' writing. Following the philosophy of "process writing", the written assignments in WAC-affiliated courses have been adjusted to allow for the development of the writing process. For example, instead of a single term paper being required at the end of the semester, a proposal and a first draft may be required at earlier points during the semester. The WAC TAs then work with the students, in tutorials and in individually scheduled student conferences, to provide feedback to the students at different stages of the writing process. The TAs also give workshops on various aspects of writing skills, e.g., *Four steps to a successful research paper* and *Plagiarism: what it is and how to avoid it*. During the first semester, the TAs provided feedback on 440 student papers, conducted a total of 239 one-to-one writing conferences with students, and gave 15 writing workshops. (Cont' d on Page 2)

OUR TEAM

Principal Supervisor

Prof. George Braine

Co-supervisor

Prof. Carmel McNaught

Research Fellow

Prof. Joanna Radwanska-Williams

Teaching Assistants

Derek Chan

Paulina Cheung

Wience Lai

Stacey Ng

Ada Young

Well Attended WAC Workshop

A WAC workshop titled "How to enrich your courses with writing assignments" was conducted on August 5, 2003. The workshop, which was attended by 14 professors from various disciplines, covered topics such as sequencing of writing assignments, adding preliminary drafts, conducting peer reviews, and writing reflective papers. The WAC Program is pleased to note that a number of professors have already included these writing practices in their courses.



WAC: Looking Back on Our First Year (Cont' d from Page 1)

The second semester of the WAC program witnessed its consolidation and expansion. As an indication of growth, the amount of interaction with students approximately doubled, with feedback given on 1,329 student papers, and a total of 363 one-to-one student conferences and 34 workshops being conducted. The program expanded to include three courses at the City University and five courses at the Polytechnic University. The WAC program is proud to be at the leading edge of teaching development at Hong Kong tertiary institutions. In addition to support for students' writing, WAC also offers training to professors on the methodology of incorporating written assignments into their courses.

Throughout the past year, the WAC program has undergone ongoing evaluation, which has provided useful information for its future growth. Evaluation takes place during discussions at weekly staff meetings, and the analysis of weekly reports written by the TAs to report and reflect on their teaching experience. All workshops are evaluated through a feedback questionnaire. At the end of term, the TAs are evaluated by the professors through an appraisal form. Taken together, these forms of feedback have provided information on the progress of students, the performance of TAs, and any problems encountered in the teaching methodology. In addition, a University

Writing Committee has been established for the ongoing evaluation of the WAC program as a whole. The mandate of the Writing Committee is to oversee and evaluate the program, and establish criteria for the future accreditation of WAC-affiliated courses.

All in all, WAC has had a very successful first year. This would not have been possible without the commitment of professors from across the disciplines and the dedication of its staff. Throughout the year, both the TAs and the supervisors put in tireless hours and worked as a well-integrated team. Special thanks are due to the TAs for their enthusiasm and professionalism, which ensured the smooth implementation of the program.

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TA Ada Young with a student



Feedback on Student Writing, Conferences and Workshops

Our TAs have been attending the lectures/tutorials of WAC-affiliated courses. Also, one-to-one writing conferences were conducted by the TAs with students on their papers. Written and oral feedback was provided on students' writing in terms of organization, structure, language (grammar), coherence, flow, and citation style.

In the first term of 2003-04, the TAs provided feedback on **545** papers and conducted **209**

one-to-one writing conferences. In addition, the TAs conducted a total of **44** workshops for students of the WAC affiliated courses. The workshops were successful in motivating students to come for advice on their drafts.

These are the new workshops introduced this year:

- Guide to theses and dissertations writing
- APA citation

- How to write a good history essay
- Writing a sociology report
- Preparing a research proposal
- Preparing a literature review
- Writing a thesis in geography and environmental science
- Thesis writing for business students
- Writing and revising papers
- Organization of a research paper

Using Process Writing in Management Courses: An Interview with Prof. Bee Leng Chua

Prof. Chua teaches Organizational Behavior, Human Resource Management, and Principles of Management in the Department of Management at CUHK. Her graduate MBA course, Principles of Management, was affiliated with the WAC Program in the Fall term.

Q: How did you enter the academic field?

A: Although my degree was related to organizational behavior, I never thought of teaching in the university. If you learn about business, you have to have some kind of exposure or experience in the real world of work. And so, after getting my Ph.D., I worked in industry for a year and a half. Then I joined the Ministry of Defense at Singapore, doing personnel research and organizational development work. I also taught team building, leadership, and motivation in the military there. After staying there for six years, I came to Hong Kong and, on the suggestion of my husband, I entered the university environment. I have stayed there since.

Q: You have been teaching in CUHK for 14 years. What do you like most about your job?

A: Its independence. There are responsibilities, objectives, and guidelines you have to follow, but it's up to you to decide how to carry them out, and so there is tremendous room for creativity. Besides, the open environment of the University enables you to create, disseminate, and share knowledge freely without constraints. That's what I like about it.

Q: What are your beliefs about writing?

A: I think we have lost the art of writing, or at least I have. I used to love to write creatively and for leisure, but I don't do that anymore. I don't even write letters, I send emails. I think that's really a sad thing about the state of writing nowadays. Ever since I've become acquainted with WAC, I've done quite a bit of self-reflection as well, and I ask myself, "If I expect this of my students, then what about myself?" That's why now I'm doing a "morning writing". I do it after I wake up in the morning, or after my first cup of coffee. It takes about 45 minutes, and I stick to three pages only. I call it "unleashing your creativity". You can write about anything—your fears, your concerns, your dreams, and reflections on what happens in life. Reflective writing is an essential vehicle if you want to discover what your potentials are. And WAC has challenged me into rediscovering my own writing behaviors and orientations.



Prof. Chua with WAC TA Stacey Ng.

Q: What do you think are the best ways for Hong Kong students to improve their writing?

A: I think you have to overcome your fear of judgment. Many students don't speak out or don't want to write for fear of being judged negatively. Actually, the only person who can judge is yourself, and the only way to measure your progress is to write without any fear of judgment. I tell my students that I prefer a person who speaks freely with all kinds of grammatical errors to someone who knows wonderful English but doesn't speak at all or speaks very little.

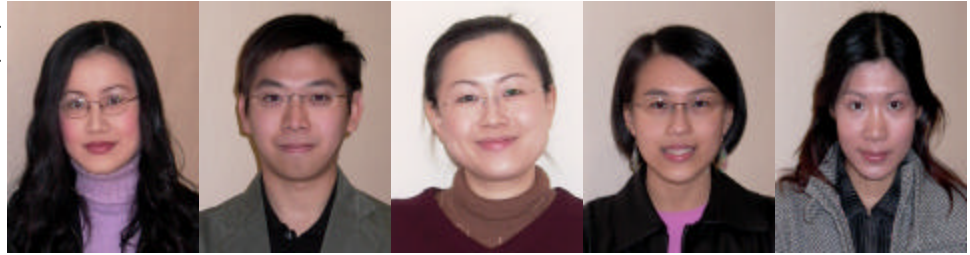
Q: How important is writing in your courses? What do you expect students to achieve?

A: Frankly, until I knew about WAC, I never required my students to write, except for exams and project papers. Individual writing is difficult to implement because you're dealing with a huge number of students, and the logistics of grading those papers is just a frightening burden. Nevertheless, after attending the WAC Workshop and speaking to a colleague there, I tried out the "reflective/ reaction paper" activity, and it worked well. I required my students to write five one-page reaction papers throughout the term, which were handed to me for brief comments but not graded. They then select one (out of those five), improve upon it and submit it for grading. So at the end of the term, I have one paper and another group project to grade, which is very manageable. But, in the students' experience, they've written a lot, and they had a chance to improve on it. I think this works very well.

Q: What is the impact of the WAC Program on your courses?

A: Besides the reaction papers, I also tried out the peer reviews, which were very good too. Most of the students took it very seriously and they came prepared and interacted a lot with one another in class. The MBA students all have their own professions and they really respect and value each other's views. You'll never know, maybe one of your classmates could give insights you've never thought of, and that could make a difference in the outcome of your paper. On the other hand, the students were impressed by my WAC TA's feedback on their papers. She gave them a lot of suggestions, much more than I would, and also provided them with abundant ideas and personal observations to improve their writing.

Meet the Teaching Assistants of the WAC Program



Ada Young received her BA and MPhil from CUHK, and is working towards her Ph.D. She is affiliated to courses in social work, religion, and biochemistry.

Derek Chan obtained his BA and MPhil from CUHK. He is affiliated to courses in sports science and physical education, information engineering, anthropology, geography and resource management.

Paulina Cheung, BA (City University) and MPhil (CUHK), is affiliated to courses in journalism, history and management.

Stacey Ng, BS (Texas) and MPhil (CUHK), is affiliated to courses in nursing, statistics, management, sociology (at Baptist University), and the Centre for Health Education and Health Promotion.

Wience Lai earned her BA and MPhil from PolyU and MPhil from CUHK. She is affiliated to courses at history and pharmacy departments.

Participating Professors and Their Courses — 2003-04, Term 1

WAC@CUHK

Faculty of Arts

Prof. Cathy Potter
HIS 3317 History of Food & Food Cultures

Prof. Lynne Nakano
JAS 0330 Studies in Modern Japan

Prof. Gale A. Yee
RST 2142 Religion and Gender Studies

Faculty of Business Administration

Prof. Ping Ping Fu
MGT 2040C Human Resource Management

Prof. Bee Leng Chua
MGT 5010A Principles of Organization & Management
MGT 5010B Principles of Organization & Management

Faculty of Education

Prof. David Johns
SPE 2710 Sociology of Physical Education and Sports

SPE 3410 Curriculum Planning for Physical Education

Faculty of Engineering

Prof. Peter Yum
IEG 4140 Teletraffic Engineering

Faculty of Medicine

Prof. Frances Cheng
HEZ 7001 Professional Practice of Health Education and Health Promotion

Prof. Carmen Chan
NRS4600 Coordinating Nursing Practice

Prof. Yuan Yuan Ho
Thesis Writing (PG & UG)

Faculty of Science

Prof. Chui Ping Lee
PHA 3611 Written Communication
PHA 5830 Communication Workshop

Prof. Mary Au-yeung &
Prof. Chui Ping Lee
PHA 5924 Graduation Project
PHA 5812 Basic Principle of Pharmaceutical Care

Prof. Tai Shing Lau
STA 2103/GEE 247N Statistics in Modern Society

Faculty of Social Science

Prof. Bill Tsang
SWK2110 Human Behavior and the Social Environment
SWK5630 Mental Health and Mental Disorders

Prof. Gordon Mathews
ANT 2110 Anthropological Theory
ANT 5010 Seminar in Anthropological Theory

Prof. Maggi Leung
GRM1014 Sustainable Development
GRM3021 Final Year Thesis I

Prof. Bryce McIntyre
COM2120 English News Reporting
COM3610A English News Editing

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Faculty of Social Science

Prof. Jacqueline Adams
Thesis Writing