Braine, G., & McNaught, C. (2007). Adaptation of the 'Writing Across Curriculum' model to the Hong Kong context. In J. Liu (Ed.), *English language leaching in China: New approaches, perspectives and standards* (pp. 311–328). London: Continuum International Publishing Ltd.

Adaptation of the 'Writing Across Curriculum' Model to the Hong Kong Context

George Braine
Department of English
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Shatin, New Territories
Hong Kong
Phone: (852) 2609 7445
georgebraine@cuhk.edu.hk

Carmel McNaught
Centre for Learning Enhancement And Research
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Shatin, New Territories
Hong Kong
Phone: (852) 2609 6028
carmel.mcnaught@cuhk.edu.hk

Key words
English writing; Writing Across the Curriculum; writing tutors; feedback; Hong Kong; adaptation of model

Abstract
The English language problems in Hong Kong are serious and permeate the whole of the education system. Further, attempts to provide support for teachers and students have yielded relatively minor outcomes. However, it is rarely useful to adopt a language support model from elsewhere without careful adaptation. This paper focuses on support for writing in English at university level, and describes how the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) model developed in the United States (US) was adapted for the Hong Kong context. Key differences between the US and Hong Kong context include: the use of applied linguists rather than subject specialists as tutors; tutors having a more prominent instructional role in the course; and the program having a stronger staff development role with university professors. Challenges of the implementation process are described and reflections provided on the validity of this model for the Hong Kong context.

Bios
George Braine, BA (Kelaniya, Sri Lanka), MA (American U.), PhD (Texas), is an associate professor at the English Department of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. His areas of research include academic literacy and second language writing. He is the Principal Supervisor of the University's Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program, and the coeditor of the *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching* (AJELT).

Carmel McNaught, BSc(hons), DipEd, MEd (Monash), PhD (Natal), is professor of learning enhancement in the Centre for Learning Enhancement And Research (CLEAR) at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Carmel has had appointments in eight universities in Australasia and southern Africa, working in the discipline areas of chemistry, science education, second language learning, eLearning, and higher education curriculum and policy matters. Current research interests include evaluation of innovation in higher education and strategies for embedding learning support into the curriculum.

Adaptation of the 'Writing Across Curriculum' Model to the Hong Kong Context

Abstract

The English language problems in Hong Kong are serious and permeate the whole of the education system. Further, attempts to provide support for teachers and students have yielded relatively minor outcomes. However, it is rarely useful to adopt a language support model from elsewhere without careful adaptation. This paper focuses on support for writing in English at university level, and describes how the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) model developed in the United States (US) was adapted for the Hong Kong context. Key differences between the US and Hong Kong context include: the use of applied linguists rather than subject specialists as tutors; tutors having a more prominent instructional role in the course; and the program having a stronger staff development role with university professors. Challenges of the implementation process are described and reflections provided on the validity of this model for the Hong Kong context.

Background

Hong Kong is a special administrative region (SAR) of China with its own flag, official languages (Cantonese and English), and legal and educational systems. Hong Kong is a predominantly (96%) Cantonese-speaking Chinese community.

The education system in Hong Kong consists of nine years of compulsory education—six years at primary and three years at lower secondary (Forms 1-3) level. Most students continue for two more years in Forms 4 and 5, and those who wish to enter university may study for an additional two years in Forms 6 and 7. Seven highly competitive, publicly funded universities are located in Hong Kong. Three of them—the University of Hong Kong, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology—have been consistently ranked among the top 10 universities in Asia by *Asiaweek* magazine (Asiaweek.com, 2000). The language problems that are described below thus occur at highly ranked, prestigious universities. Most undergraduate degrees take three years to complete.

The English language has played a significant role in Hong Kong since 1842, when the territory was ceded to Britain. As a British colony till 1997, English had a predominant role in business, the government, higher education, and the professional sectors. In fact, as Cheung (1984) has pointed out, English was considered "a symbol of power" (p. 278) in the colony. Although Falvey (1998) has argued that English now has the status of a foreign language in Hong Kong, it was long regarded as an "auxiliary language" (see Luke & Richards, 1982), that is, neither a second nor foreign language. After Hong Kong's handover to China in 1997, English has continued to play an important role in business, government, and higher education. It is one of Hong Kong's official languages, the other being Cantonese.

Teaching English in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, students start learning English when they enter kindergarten. Although Chinese is the medium of instruction throughout the six years of primary school, English is taught as a compulsory subject. During the seven years of secondary schooling, too, English is compulsory. In fact, till 1998, over 90% of secondary school students were receiving

"English-medium" education. Because many students and teachers had problems learning and teaching in English, the Hong Kong government compelled most secondary schools to switch to Chinese as the medium of instruction, and, after 1998, only 25% of the 460 secondary schools were allowed to teach in English.

At primary level, the Education Department recommends five to eight periods of English instruction per week. At the secondary level, the recommendation is increased to seven or eight periods. Lee (1995) claimed that the teaching of English is "rigidly compartmentalized" into separate components such as "dictation, oral, listening, grammar, reading and writing" (p. 38). According to Lee (2005), most schools rely on commercially produced English language textbooks. The government promotes the use of a variety of resources in the teaching of English. For instance, the Extensive Reading Scheme enables schools to purchase English books, magazines, and multimedia material in order to promote extensive reading. The inclusion of information technology (IT) in the English curriculum is also encouraged though funding for computer hardware and software.

The Hong Kong curriculum is heavily examination-centred. Students in Form 5 of secondary schools take the Hong Kong Certificate of Education (HKCEE) examination. Those who succeed take the Hong Kong Advanced Level (HKALE) examination in Form 7, which is also the university entrance examination. In both examinations, students' English proficiency is examined at micro-level, and they are tested separately in speaking, listening, writing, and integrated skills. Lee (2005) stated that these examinations have a profound effect on the English curriculum, because teachers focus on preparing the students for the examinations with "a heavy dosage of examination practice, model answers, [and] examination tips" (p. 39). Innovative teaching approaches have little chance to succeed in an examination-centred classroom.

At tertiary level, all universities offer English language enhancement courses, usually through English Language Units or English Centres. Most of these "English for Academic Purposes" (EAP) courses are electives and are quite separate from the discipline courses the students study for their major. However, some courses, "English for Specific Purposes" (ESP), are offered specifically for business, engineering or health care majors for instance, and are compulsory. While ESP courses are linked to the discipline domain, they are seldom referred to by the professors teaching the discipline courses, and students tend to view them as being on the periphery of the curriculum. Few of the EAP or ESP courses focus indepth on writing.

All tertiary institutions except for CUHK also offer English-medium instruction. At CUHK, the official medium of instruction is bilingual (Cantonese and English), although some courses are offered in Putonghua (a Chinese language common in Mainland China).

English Language Problems at School Level

Anyone familiar with Hong Kong classrooms would be struck by the students' apparently passive approach to learning. This is probably the result of instruction being heavily teacher-centred, with knowledge transmission being the primary objective. Another possible cause of the students' passivity is that most regard English not as a living language but as another, possibly boring, subject to be mastered in order to pass examinations. At every possible opportunity, students usually interact in Cantonese during English classes. Outside the English classroom, the preferred language is almost always Cantonese.

A perennial issue in the past two decades has been the "decline" of English standards among Hong Kong students (Bolton, 2002). The low English proficiency of both content and English teachers at secondary level may be a prime cause of this situation. For instance, of the 5,240 secondary English language teachers studied by Coniam, Sengupta, Tsui, and Wu (1994), only 18.9% had majored in English in their undergraduate studies. As a result of public concern, the government launched a language benchmark test for English and Putonghua teachers in 2001. English teachers are tested on reading, writing, listening, speaking, and classroom language assessment, and they have fared poorly in most areas since the inception of the test. In the latest test conducted in September 2005, 41% of the test takers failed to reach the benchmark in reading, 61% in speaking, and 70% in writing.

The medium of instruction in Hong Kong's secondary schools could be described as based on "code-switching" between English and Cantonese. As Bruce (1990) has shown, the code-switching occurs along functional lines. Usually, a topic statement is made in English, based on the textbook. This is followed by explanation, illustration, and elaboration in Cantonese. A re-statement or conclusion in English is often made afterwards, referring students back to the textbook. Meanwhile, students annotate between the lines and along the margins in Chinese what each English word means. As a result, instead of developing proper reading skills in English, most students develop "lexical-based translation", identifying the Chinese equivalent of the content words in a text and then constructing a meaning around them. As Johnson (1997) pointed out, even the meanings students locate in bilingual dictionaries are often contextually inappropriate. As reading skills are closely linked to writing skills, this level of poor reading performance is problematic for the development of good writing skills.

Yu and Atkinson (1988a; 1988b) analyzed the English language problems of students in secondary schools and found that over 70% of them found it difficult or very difficult to write a composition, answer essay-type questions in examinations, write grammatically correct sentences, and take part in a discussion. McNeill (1994), who studied two groups of secondary students, concluded that in addition to a large quantity of phonological confusions, the students only had a weak grasp of vocabulary. Johnson and Yau (1996) studied the reading strategies of primary and secondary students in Hong Kong and found that many students could only "guess at meanings or adopt survival strategies which can operate almost independently from the meanings of texts" (p. 137).

As for writing, the focus of this article, students are seldom asked to compose at length, not even during examinations. Lee (2004), who has researched extensively on the teaching of writing in Hong Kong secondary schools, stated that writing is mainly tested (not taught), and that teachers focus on teaching grammar and language instead of teaching writing. In an earlier (1998) study, Lee showed that many English teachers at primary and secondary schools still focus on form in the teaching of writing, using outdated practices such as pattern drills, copying from textbooks, and filling in the blank exercises. Most writing is done in class, and peer reviews are rarely used; when teachers provide feedback, it is mainly on grammar. The emphasis on examinations leaves little time for much writing instruction. In essence, the teaching of writing in primary and secondary schools appears to be frozen in pre-process approach practices, long abandoned in the West since the 1970s. According to Lee, although teachers spend a "massive amount of time" marking errors in student writing, the students continue to make the same errors again and again (2004). Johnson (1997) cites the following "extreme … but … not rare" writing example from a student with 11 years of

English learning experience: "Separation the mixable from water the water is upper. We take some cold surface make the gas condenses change to water" (p. 181).

English Language Problems at Tertiary Level

At university level, every aspect of Hong Kong students' English has been called into question. In a comprehensive study of first year university students' English proficiency, Littlewood and Liu (1996) found that the students lacked an adequate command of grammar, vocabulary, speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Although both students and teachers acknowledged writing as most important to academic success, writing (along with speaking) was the lowest rated and least confident skill. In fact, the students' ability to use grammar and vocabulary appropriately in their academic writing was rated lowest by not only the students but also the teachers. Littlewood and Liu (1996) pointed out that "even Hong Kong's most proficient students made three times as many grammatical errors as their native speaker counterparts" (p. 102). One expects native speakers to be more proficient; it is the extent of the gap which is of concern.

Stone (1999) used a word knowledge recognition test and compared the results of 73 second-year science students at one English-medium Hong Kong university with those of American and Australian students of similar age, and concluded that a "yawning gap [existed] between the English language standards of the two groups" (p. 97). Stone's conclusion was justified by the results of study on lecturing at another English-medium Hong Kong university conducted by Flowerdew, Miller, and Li (2000). All the lecturers complained about their students' low proficiency in English, and the Chinese lecturers in particular stated that their students exerted pressure on them to use Cantonese in their lectures.

The pseudo nature of the "English-medium" instruction at Hong Kong universities has been revealed by Li, Leung, and Kember (2001), who examined the language use by Hong Kong university students through diary studies and interviews. The researchers observed discrepancies between the English-medium policy and its actual use at the universities. The students in this study clearly described how they persuaded teachers to use Cantonese by not responding when the teaching was in English. They were aware that the lack of opportunities to practise English had led to declining English standards among the student population but did not seem willing to break the pattern.

So, our own experience and the results of many studies indicated clearly that, at university level:
- standards of English in Hong Kong are falling;
- the English-medium instruction policy is not working as intended; and
- EAP and ESP courses do not impact strongly on the curriculum.
We realized that another approach was needed.

The WAC Model

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) is a term that became popular about three decades ago in the United States (US) to denote attempts by some tertiary institutions to extend student writing beyond the English departments into the discipline departments where students study their majors. In the past three decades, WAC programs have become a standard feature in American tertiary education. According to Townsend (1994), "four different surveys of U.S. higher education institutions conducted between 1984 and 1991 found from one-third to one-

half of the respondents reporting that they had already established or expected to establish WAC programs." Considering that the US has nearly 2,000 four-year colleges universities, it could be assumed that WAC programmes have been established at approximately 1,000 tertiary institutions in the US.

Although these programs are usually initiated by English departments, other academic departments from across the university have input into the implementation of the programs (Young & Fulwiler, 1986). Central to the philosophy of WAC is the question "Who owns writing?" Because effective writing is fundamental in tertiary education, responsibility for writing should ideally be vested in the disciplines where writing takes place and with the discipline teachers who are the ultimate authorities over what is considered effective writing in their respective disciplines. As such, WAC has played an important role in emphasizing the importance of writing in all disciplines, beyond its traditional home in English departments.

Why should teachers from all disciplines encourage writing in their courses? Because writing is intimately connected with two fundamental processes that teachers attempt to instill in their students—thinking and communicating. Requiring students to write about the content of academic courses is a way of getting them to think about the contents in an active manner, instead of passive memorizing or textbook underlining. Active, critical thinking requires higher-level intellectual skills such as the understanding of concepts, the analysis of information, the evaluation of evidence, and the construction and testing of hypotheses. If teachers want students to think about the contents of their course, the students should be given the opportunity to write, and thinking will be hard to avoid. (See Fulwiler & Young, 1990, for a number of reports on WAC programs in the US which show that they can develop students' critical thinking and communication skills.)

The Place of Process Writing in WAC

The backbone of the WAC program is the process approach to writing. Until well into the 1960s, the focus of writing instruction in the US was the correction and grading of students' papers with the emphasis being placed on writing style. As Leki (2003), coeditor of the *Journal of Second Language Writing* stated so succinctly, during her "college years [in the US] professors didn't give feedback; they gave grades, and there were no second drafts, no peer commentary. It just wasn't done, didn't exist" (p. 109).

In the pre-process approach days, the composing process was entirely the students' responsibility: "The assignment went in at one end, and out came the final paper at the other" (Bizzell, 1986, p. 50). However, with more and more under prepared students entering tertiary education, students began to show more than stylistic deficiencies; organizational, grammatical, and mechanical errors also became prevalent. American teachers began to realize that instead of grading the finished product, they would have to intervene in the writing process. Accordingly, the process approach to writing instruction, which includes prewriting exercises, journal writing, peer reviews, multiple drafts of papers, and teacher-student conferences, began to be used in writing instruction. These activities were termed the "process approach" to writing. According to Fulwiler and Young (1990), who coordinated a pioneering WAC program at Michigan Tech, one of the goals of the WAC movement is to promote "process oriented composition pedagogy" (p. 2).

Although the process approach has been advocated by Hong Kong's Department of Education since 1994, research indicates that due to various constraints, the process approach is not utilized in Hong Kong secondary schools (Braine, 2003). At tertiary level, at least courses conducted by English departments and English Centers, the evidence suggests that the process approach is being used. But to extend the approach to courses across the curriculum, taught by teachers unfamiliar with writing pedagogy, is a challenge.

The essence of the WAC model is that students receive instruction about writing and feedback on their writing through an iterative process of writing and rewriting drafts of assignments that are relevant to their own discipline of study. These two key principles of feedback on drafts and discipline relevance are essential to a functional WAC program.

Adapting the WAC Model to the Hong Kong Context

English language proficiency, at the level of sophistication worthy of tertiary education, is vital for Hong Kong's global competitiveness. Among the language skills, writing is ranked highest in terms of cognitive complexity and presents difficulty even to native speakers. As noted earlier, educators in the US have recognized the intimate connection between writing and higher cognitive skills of critical thinking and effective communication, and have established WAC programs at hundreds of colleges and universities.

In Hong Kong, research has shown that writing in English is the most important language skill for academic success (see Littlewood and Liu, 1996, cited earlier). Hence, the WAC program could have a significant impact on the University because of the drive to improve the English proficiency and critical thinking skills of students. Under the three-year curriculum, some CUHK students may graduate from the University without taking any writing courses, and few courses taught in English. Thus, to enhance the students' writing skills and English proficiency, a significant amount of writing needs to be introduced into existing courses in the discipline domain.

What is critical in the Hong Kong context is that this ability to communicate specialized knowledge effectively to an audience needs to be developed in the students' second language, English. Hong Kong students need to have more writing practice than their native speaker counterparts in the US, but at present they have less. At CUHK, we hoped to redress that imbalance through a WAC program, customized for the Hong Kong language context.

In essence, WAC aimed to promote more writing across the curriculum. If a course does not include writing assignments, we hoped at least one writing assignment could be included. If a course requires only a term paper (to be submitted at the end of the semester), we hoped that a proposal could be required halfway through the semester, so that students could think about and plan the term-paper better. If a course requires only the final version of a paper, we hoped that a draft could be required, so that students could receive feedback on their writing and revise for a better final paper. We also hoped that peer reviews of papers could be introduced to courses across the curriculum. Reflective writing, without the pressure for a grade, is also another possibility.

In 2002 a WAC grant proposal was successful and awarded HK$4 million. This enabled us to launch the WAC program in September 2002. The project was based at CUHK but had supervisors at the City University of Hong Kong (CityU) and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). In the grant proposal, we outlined the objectives as follows:

- identify undergraduate courses that could be included in a WAC program;
- conduct mini-workshops for teachers from the university;
- conduct workshops for teaching assistants;
- assist teachers to incorporate writing in their courses;
- establish a University Writing Committee consisting of teachers of various disciplines and chaired by co-supervisors of this project; and
- provide a model of implementation for the further expansion and dissemination of WAC programs in Hong Kong.

Because the concept of WAC in higher education is American, we had to make certain adaptations for Hong Kong. First, in the US, although WAC is generally housed in English Departments (mainly because that's where the writing specialists are), the teaching assistants or tutors who actually interact with students are not from English departments. For example, a US course in biology affiliated with the WAC program may have a teaching assistant (TA) who is a graduate student in biology, who, in addition to her/his tutoring duties would also provide feedback on students' writing assignments, having been trained by the WAC program. These TAs, as undergraduates, would have taken one or more writing courses, where the process approach to writing would have been practised. They also have the advantage of being native speakers of English.

In Hong Kong, the attitude to writing among local (Cantonese-speaking) professors who are not in English departments is different. Considering that they have (formally or informally) the option of teaching in Cantonese, it is admirable that some professors do indeed teach in English. However, having received little or no writing instruction during their secondary school and undergraduate studies in Hong Kong, they do not focus on teaching their students to write well (Braine, 2001). It was therefore important to provide active outreach to professors at CUHK about the philosophy of WAC and the value of the strategies involved in process writing.

Second, normal TAs affiliated to various courses (who themselves are graduate students in a discipline), unlike their counterparts in the US, may not have taken any writing courses as undergraduates, and, in any case, may be mediocre writers. Almost all TAs at CUHK are from Hong Kong or Mainland China and have the deficiencies in English noted earlier in the paper. Hence, instead of training TAs from across the curriculum, the WAC program provided the TAs.

A third adaptation was the decision to affiliate graduate courses as well. The American model focuses on undergraduates, on the assumption that WAC courses are extensions to required first year courses in writing (the so-called freshman writing courses). However, early in our program, we received requests to work with graduate students as well, especially as they wrote their MA theses in the summer months. So WAC in CUHK affiliated to a few graduate courses as well, on the assumption that we would be most effective where we were invited to participate.

A fourth innovation was the writing miniworkshops often designed and always conducted by the TAs. Early in our program, some professors saw the need to provide their students information about process writing, plagiarism, etc. Because our TAs had higher degrees in applied linguistics and had a solid grounding in second language writing, we decided to become proactive and conduct miniworkshops, which, for the most part, have been very well received. These four key differences are summarized in Table 1. It is important to

highlight these differences as much of the WAC literature is based on the original US-based WAC model.

Table 1 Differences between the US and Hong Kong WAC Programs

US	Hong Kong
• Low staff development profile	• Active engagement with university professors
• TAs are subject specialists employed by academic departments	• TAs are applied linguists employed by the WAC program
• Undergraduate courses	• Undergraduate & postgraduate courses
• Miniworkshops rare	• Miniworkshops frequent

Implementing WAC in Hong Kong

Our first task, upon the award of the grant, was to recruit TAs. We chose MPhil degree holders in applied linguistics, especially those who had taken a postgraduate course titled "Second Language Writing", taught by the first author. These TAs thus had postgraduate experience with an indepth focus on writing. We conducted an intensive workshop for the TAs, on providing feedback on writing.

Then we sent out invitations to all the professors on the main campus of CUHK. The response wasn't overwhelming. Two professors questioned how writing generalists could respond to discipline-specific writing. So we reached out to professors we knew personally, explained our objectives, and persuaded them to join the program. We did make some mistakes in the first semester and stumbled into courses where our resources were wasted. Some courses that were affiliated to the WAC program did not include any writing assignments, and others only had one term paper, due at the end of term.

In the first semester of 2002-03, 17 professors from CUHK were affiliated with the program. They taught a total of 21 courses and represented 16 academic departments. One workshop for the professors was conducted and there was also a huge amount of informal staff development through face-to-face conversations and email. It does need to be stressed that we were facing a truly challenging task. We were cognizant of the extent of this challenge as research that the first author had conducted research at the University of Texas at Austin and the University of South Alabama (Braine & Bradford, 1993) which indicated that professors are prone to emphasize the quantity of writing more than the process approach. Of the 51 WAC courses examined in this research, only 26 used at least one process-oriented technique. It is not surprising that in Hong Kong, where most professors are nonnative speakers of English and writing receives less emphasis in courses, the adoption of WAC practices was slow to take off.

More workshops for the TAs were also conducted. In addition, we held weekly program meetings, and weekly reports were submitted by the TAs so that they could hone their own professional reflective skills. We also created a website (http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/wac) and published a newsletter which was distributed to all teachers of CUHK on the main campus and selected staff at CityU. (All newsletters are available at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/wac/pro_main.htm.)

As the semester progressed, a few professors requested that the TAs conduct miniworkshops for their students on various aspects of writing. So we designed a number of 30- to 60-minute miniworkshops, such as "How to be a better writer", "Plagiarism: What it is and how to avoid it", "The writing process: 8 steps", "Writing a scientific report", "Conjunctions", "Making an effective oral presentation", and "Process writing." The decisions about which topics to choose were guided by the expressed needs of teachers and students in the courses we served. At this early phase of implementation it was especially critical to be responsive and flexible. By the end of the semester, 15 miniworkshops were offered to students. The TAs had also provided feedback on 440 papers written by students and conducted 239 one-to-one writing conferences with students. Their performance was evaluated by the professors to whose courses the TAs were affiliated.

In the second semester of 2002-03, 17 professors from CUHK were affiliated with the program. They taught a total of 21 courses and represented 16 academic departments. We also extended the program to CityU and PolyU. At CityU, two professors teaching three courses were affiliated with the program. At PolyU, four professors teaching five courses were affiliated. We continued to hold weekly program meetings and the TAs wrote weekly reports. We also designed additional miniworkshops titled "Effective professional presentations", "Using connectives", "Tenses", "Writing a proposal in manufacturing engineering", "Writing and delivering a speech", "Writing a venture idea proposal", "Writing a fieldtrip report", "Writing literature reviews in quality management", "Academic writing skills for human resource management students", "Annotated bibliography writing tips", and "Abstract writing tips." In all, 34 of these miniworkshops were conducted. (There are now 50 miniworkshops available at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/wac/new-resources.htm.) During the semester, the TAs provided feedback on 1,329 papers and conducted 363 one-to-one writing conferences with students. As in the first semester, the TAs' performance was evaluated by the professors.

A University Writing Committee, designed to monitor the WAC program and also act in an advisory capacity, was formed. In addition to the project supervisors, the committee consisted of professors from journalism, systems engineering, sports science, and the English Language Teaching Unit. The second newsletter was issued and distributed to all nonmedical teachers of CUHK and selected staff at CityU and PolyU. A workshop titled "How to enrich your courses with writing assignments" was conducted for professors.

At the beginning of our second year, we took a long and hard look at the program. When we began the program, we extended an open invitation to professors to be affiliated with WAC. We later conducted two workshops on process writing for professors and also described the principles of process writing in our newsletters. However, we realized that some professors still required only end-of-term papers, with no requirements for drafts and thereby no allowance for feedback. Hence, from the second year, we became more selective and decided not to affiliate TAs to some courses. With one of the project supervisors leaving CityU, we decided not to return there. We also realized that the culture of PolyU was quite different, and decided not to return to that institution. But, we affiliated one course from the Hong Kong Baptist University at the request of the professor concerned. In all, 18 professors from CUHK were affiliated with the program. They taught a total of 25 courses and represented 15 academic departments. In the third semester of operation, our TAs provided feedback on 545 papers and conducted 209 one-to-one conferences with students. They also gave 44 workshops.

The WAC program continued with this design successfully. We felt we had optimized the use of our resources. From having to seek interest from professors at the beginning of the project, there was clear unmet demand by the end of 2004-05 when the WAC program formally ended. Overall, up to the end of its third year, the WAC program had been affiliated with 92 courses taught at CUHK, CityU, and PolyU. At CUHK, WAC has been affiliated with 83 courses, some for more than one term. A total of 4,248 students had benefited directly from the WAC program. In 2005-06 a limited service is being provided and additional funding sources are being explored. The program's statistics are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 Statistics for the WAC program in Hong Kong

Academic year (term)	Number of academic departments	Number of courses	Number of students served	Feedback on papers	One-to-one conferences	Mini-workshops
2002-03 (1)	16	21	645	440	239	15
2002-03 (2)	16	21 + 8 *	683	1,329**	363	34
2003-04 (1)	15	25 + 1	601	545	209	44
2003-04 (2)	18	27 + 1	908	987	96	28
2004-05 (1)	13	15	695	445	103	30
2004-05 (2)	14	18	716	987	96	28

* + indicates non-CUHK course
** The high number here is due to the SARS crisis (Chan, 2003).

Evaluation of the Success of WAC in Hong Kong

The WAC program's effectiveness can best be judged on the basis of the amount and types of writing in courses before and after they were affiliated with WAC. Quantitative and qualitative evidence suggests that this is occurring. A scrutiny of course syllabi of WAC-affiliated courses shows that reflective writing is practised, proposals are being written, multiple drafts are encouraged, and peer reviews are being conducted. The second author visits all departments at CUHK to advise on curriculum matters, and the reports produced for departments do show that, in general, there has been an increased interest in and focus on students' writing skills at CUHK. It would be unrealistic to suggest that is only due to the WAC program; a shift in government funding policy towards an outcomes-based focus is undoubtedly highly pertinent. However, the WAC model is noted frequently in departmental consultations.

Other quantitative evidence is some data we have on error analysis of students' writing to examine the effects of the TAs' feedback, as well as some data which come from a holistic evaluation of students' papers before and after the TAs' interventions.

Qualitative evidence, in the form of interviews with a few professors (for the WAC newsletters), also indicates that both the quantity and quality of writing has seen an improvement. At the end of each semester, the professors evaluated the TAs who were affiliated to their courses. Decisions on course affiliations for subsequent semesters and contract renewals for the TAs were made on the basis of these evaluations. Students also provide feedback on the TAs' performance, especially their conduct of miniworkshops, and these evaluation reports are discussed with our TAs.

While each of these datasets is by itself somewhat limited, all have provided positive feedback to the WAC program which has been encouraging, given the challenges of this type of language support work. Figure 1 shows the overall design and logic of the WAC program and the sources of evaluation data. We have been enormously heartened that each of these seven datasets has indicated that the WAC intervention was positive with respect to improvement in students' writing. More detailed analysis of all the data is in progress.
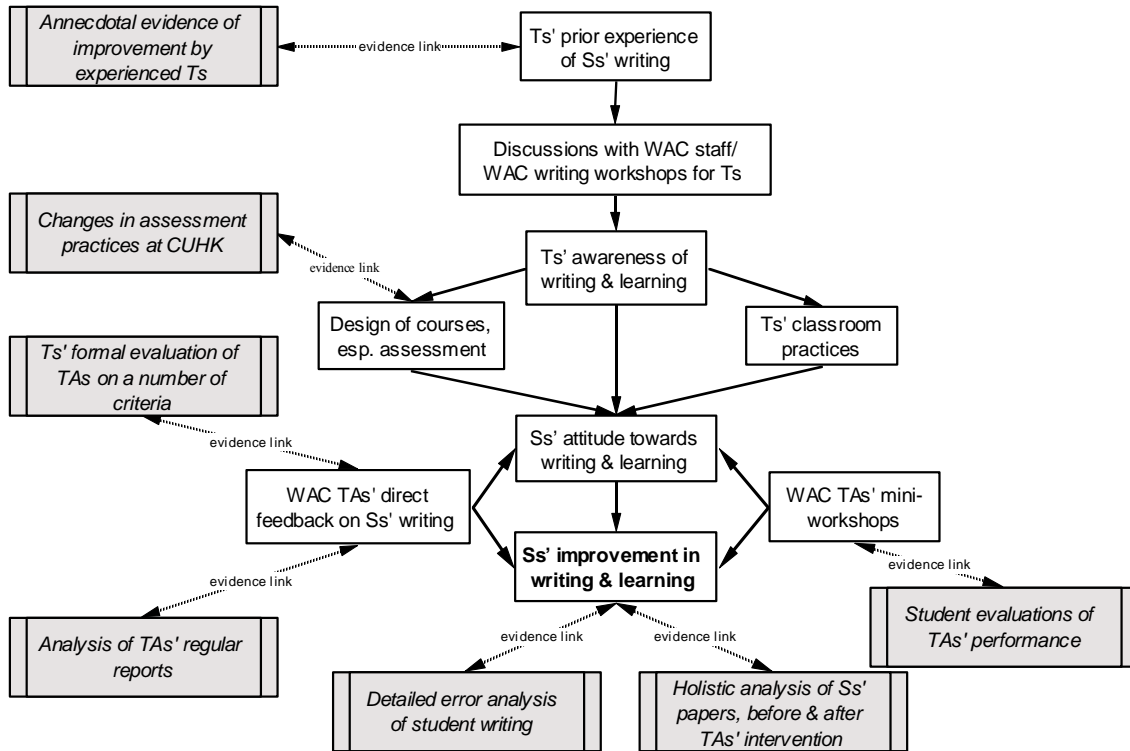

Figure 1 Design of the WAC program and associated evaluation data

Conclusion

The future of WAC in Hong Kong is unclear at this stage. The language policy at CUHK is changing as the University seeks to increase its international image. However, in all possible scenarios for this and other universities in Hong Kong, there is a tremendous need for focused, customized and adaptable English writing support. The WAC program described in this paper has contributed to the pool of experience and evidence about how this huge challenge can best be met.

Acknowledgments

References

Asiaweek.com (2000). *Asia's best universities 2000.* Retrieved June 10, 2006, from http://www.asiaweek.com/asiaweek/features/universities2000/schools/multi.overall.html

Bizzell, P. (1986). Composing processes: an overview. In E.R. Petrosky & D. Bartholomae (Eds.), *The teaching of writing* (pp. 49–70). Chicago: The National Society for the Study of Education.

Bolton, K. (2002). Introduction. In K. Bolton (Ed.) *Hong Kong English: Autonomy and creativity* (pp. 1–25). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Braine, G., & Bradford, L. (1993). Writing across the curriculum: A study of faculty practices at two universities. *Issues in Writing, 5,* 157–186.

Braine, G. (2001). When professors don't cooperate: A critical perspective on EAP research. *English for Specific Purposes, 20,* 293–303.

Braine, G. (2003). From a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication, 13*, 267–286.

Bruce, N. (1990). EL2-medium education in a largely monolingual society: The case of Hong Kong. *Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching, 13*, 9–23.

Chan, D. (2003). Virtually WAC: Coaching students on their writing during SARS. *Educational Research Journal, 18*(2), 73–82.

Cheung, Y. (1984). The uses of English and Chinese language in Hong Kong. *Language Learning and Communication, 3,* 273–283.

Coniam, D., Sengupta, S., Tsui, A. B. M., & Wu, K.-y. (1994). Computer-mediated communication and teacher education: The case of TELENEX. In N. Bird, P. Falvey, A. B. M. Tsui, D. M. Allison & A. McNeill (Eds.), *Language and learning* (pp. 352–369). Hong Kong: Government Printer.

Falvey, P. (1998). ESL, EFL, and language acquisition in the context of Hong Kong. In B. Asker (Ed.), *Teaching language and culture: Building Hong Kong education* (pp. 73–78). Hong Kong: Addison Wesley Longman.

Flowerdew, J., Miller, L., & Li, D. C. S. (2000). Chinese lecturers' perceptions, problems and strategies in lecturing in English to Chinese-speaking students. *RELC Journal, 31*(1), 116–138.

Fulwiler, T., & Young, A. (1990). *Programs that work.* Portsmouth, NewHampshire: Boynton/Cook.

Johnson, R. K. (1997). The Hong Kong education system: Late immersion under stress. In R. K. Johnson & M. Swain (Eds.), *Immersion education: International perspectives* (pp. 171–189). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Johnson, R. K., & Yau, A. S. N. (1996). Coping with second language texts: The development of lexically-based reading strategies. In D. A. Watkins & J. B. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese learner: Cultural psychological and contextual influences* (pp. 123–140). Hong Kong and Melbourne: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong, and The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.

Lee, I. (1998). Writing in the Hong Kong secondary classroom: Teachers' beliefs and practices. *Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics, 3,* 61–76.

Lee, I. (2004). Error correction in L2 secondary writing classrooms: The case of Hong Kong. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 13*(4), 285–312.

Lee, I. (1995). English language teaching in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR): A continuous challenge. In G. Braine (Ed.), Teaching English to the world (pp. 35–45). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Leki, I. (2003). Tangled webs: complexities of professional writing. In C. P. Casanave & S. Vandrick (Eds.), *Writing for scholarly publication* (pp. 103–112). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Littlewood, W., & Liu, N. F. (1996). *Hong Kong students and their English*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University/ Macmillan.

Luke, K. & Richards, J. (1982). English in Hong Kong: Functions and status. *English World-Wide, 3,* 47–64.

McNeill, A. (1994). Hong Kong learners and English words: The formal-semantic gap. In D. Nunan, R. Berry & V. Berry (Eds.), *Language awareness in language education: Vol. 2. Proceedings of the International Language in Education Conference 1994* (pp. 69–86). Hong Kong: Department of Curriculum Studies, The University of Hong Kong.

Stone, R. (1999). English in Hong Kong: Word knowledge skills of science undergraduates. *Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics, 4*(2), 93–100.

Townsend, M. A. (1994). Writing across the curriculum. In A. C. Purves (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of English studies and language arts*. National Council of Teachers of English (Volume II, pp. 1299–1302). Retrieved June 10, 2006, from http://cwp.missouri.edu/cwpinfo/aboutwac.htm

Young, A., & Fulwiler, T. (1986). *Writing across the disciplines: Research into practice.* Upper Montclair, New Jersey: Boynton/Cook.

Yu, V., & Atkinson, P. A. (1988a). An investigation of the language difficulties experienced by Hong Kong secondary school students in English medium schools: I The problems. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 9*(3), 267–284.

Yu, V., & Atkinson, P. A. (1988b). An investigation of the language difficulties experienced by Hong Kong secondary school students in English medium schools: II Some causal factors. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 9*(4), 307–322.