An Introduction to Writing in the Disciplines

Rachel Riedner

Íde O Sullivan

& Alison Farrell

This series is dedicated to the
memory of our dear friend
and colleague, Dr John Panter,
15 April 1941 – 13 November 2015.

Suaimhneas síoraí dá anam dílis

The All Ireland Society for Higher Education
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the particular topic to help readers situate the
experiences presented in other sections of the
booklet. Case studies or examples of practice
from contributors' higher education experience
are presented and, finally, each booklet suggests
resources that the reader may find helpful in
their own practice.

We wish to acknowledge the National Forum
for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning
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project through writing, providing case studies
and co-ordinating contributions in order to
bring the series to publication.

Moira Maguire, AISHE President
Saranne Magennis, Series Editor

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AISHE
All Ireland Society
for Higher Education

NATIONAL FORUM
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

An Introduction to Writing in the Disciplines

Foreword

This booklet is one of a series commissioned by the All Ireland Society for Higher Education (AISHE) and the Irish Network for the Enhancement of Writing (INEW). It is intended as a first step for colleagues who are new to the idea of a Writing in the Disciplines (WID) curriculum in higher education.

The booklet is organised into two sections. Part 1 provides a brief rationale, which answers the broad question of what is a Writing in the Disciplines curriculum (also called Writing Across the Curriculum). Part 2 presents four case studies of WID curricula.

We are grateful to the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, who contributed to the funding of this publication, to the Higher Education Authority (HEA), who supported Professor Rachel Riedner's visit to Ireland through the Strategic Innovation Development Fund (SIDF), and to the associated Maynooth University, Athlone Institute of Technology, Dundalk Institute of Technology and Dublin City University cluster partnership. We also acknowledge the help of our AISHE colleagues, particularly Saranne Magennis and Moira Maguire, and the work of Jessie L. Moore, Paula Rosinski and Pauline McGlade, who also contributed to the case studies in this publication.

Dr. Rachel Riedner
Director, Writing in the Disciplines
University Writing Program
The George Washington University, USA

Dr. Íde O Sullivan
Regional Writing Centre
Centre for Teaching and Learning
University of Limerick

Dr. Alison Farrell
The Writing Centre
Centre for Teaching and Learning
Maynooth University

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Part 1 – Introduction to this booklet

**Rachel Riedner, Íde O Sullivan
& Alison Farrell**

Purpose and audience

The purpose of this booklet is to provide readers with an introduction to a Writing in the Disciplines (WID) curriculum in higher education institutes. It is intended to provide an overview of the ethos and practical work that occurs in Writing in the Disciplines curricula.

It is not a guide to establishing a WID curriculum. This booklet is intended for any intelligent reader with a broad interest in the topic. It will be of particular interest to colleagues working in higher education in Ireland.

Overview and rationale

Internationally, there is a large WID community, which is global in reach and highly collaborative. The nascent Irish WID community reflects that collegiality with a great deal of sharing of expertise and resources across the sector.

In Ireland, WID curricula in higher education institutions, where they are named as such, are a very recent phenomenon. Because Irish Higher Education does not have a tradition of Rhetoric and Composition, or of writing programmes, the Irish experience of formally using writing to learn and establishing writing programmes is different to that of many of our international colleagues, particularly those from the United States. Nevertheless, higher education staff have always maintained the importance of writing for enquiry and communication and have sought to support and nurture this in a variety of ways albeit not under the headings of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID).

Why an institution in Ireland or elsewhere might choose to set up a WID curriculum is a matter for themselves, not least because it will reflect their own student needs and institutional contexts. Any WID curriculum establishment will require development for colleagues, resources and support for departments. It will also require collaboration with key units such as the library and the writing centre.

Some of the reasons and contributing factors as to why WID curricula are currently being established in Ireland may include the following:

– *the acknowledgement that academic writing practices are not generic but are instead the products of distinctive disciplinary traditions and conventions;*

– *the understanding that for students to successfully participate in disciplinary study, they must develop the skills for distinctive writing and communicative practices of different disciplines;*

– *the recognition that these distinctive writing and communicative practices must be taught within and across modules;*

– *the understanding that writing requires sustained instruction and that students most effectively learn to write when expectations and disciplinary values are made explicit;*

– *the recognition of the importance of graduate attributes, which frequently include statements about written communication;*

– *the diversity of the student population and the multifarious demands of stakeholders;*

– *the understanding that writing for specific disciplinary purposes can be learned, can be transformative and can be enjoyable.*

We do not suggest that this list is exhaustive, neither do we propose that some of these factors did not exist in the past. What we suggest is that the current prominence of these issues may be contributing to the growing provision of WID in higher education in Ireland.

Overview of a WID curriculum

Susan McLeod's seminal article, 'The Pedagogy of Writing Across the Curriculum', provides a wonderful overview of the purpose and impact of a WID curriculum. A WID curriculum, she notes, 'focuses not on (general) writing skills per se, but on teaching both the content of the discipline and the particular discourse features used in writing about the content' (McLeod, 2012: 54). In McLeod's essay, a key message is that, in a WID curriculum, the purpose of writing is to use the formal language of a particular discipline to communicate. When we write in disciplinary communities, we use the different practices of those communities, and these practices vary across disciplines (e.g. technical writing in the Sciences vs. persuasive writing in Business vs. policy writing in the Social Sciences or argumentative writing in the Humanities). Moreover, the goal of a WID curriculum is to invite students to learn the writing conventions and practices of that particular discipline and to participate in those practices. McLeod argues that, in a WID curriculum, lecturers 'teach students to observe disciplinary patterns in the way [their language] is structured, helping them understand the various rhetorical

moves that are accepted within particular discourse communities, explaining conventions of reference and of language' (McLeod, 2012: 59). Therefore, teaching the distinctive writing and communicative practices of a disciplinary community are inseparable from teaching disciplinary knowledge. Because writing embodies ways of knowing and values of a discipline, disciplinary knowledge and writing are inextricable from each other.

These emphases on helping students learn the writing and communicative practices of a discipline are similar to the relationship of a professional to an apprentice. It requires development of processes that will enable students to learn disciplinary writing practices over time. Writing assignments are designed around genres of a discipline. Writing activities in and out of the classroom are organised to give students practice. These activities might include setting up sessions for students to model the writing behaviours and practices they will need as members of a disciplinary community, giving them feedback on their writing, opportunities for revision and peer review and other opportunities to learn writing and associated communicative practices of a discipline. Lecturers mentor students throughout this process.

For each institution, and for each WID curriculum, the mission and values may vary. However, the focus on different writing and communicative practices across disciplines and on writing to learn and instruction on writing are foundational concepts of WID curricula.

HOW TO CREATE A WRITING CULTURE

Each discipline has its own expectations and conventions. A good writer is always aware of purpose for writing, specific audience or audiences, questions asked by scholars and practitioners, types of evidence used, accepted methodologies, language and writing conventions, citation styles and even how changes in knowledge production entail changes in writing and communicative practices. Similarly, lecturers of a WID curriculum must know that disciplines have distinctive (and dynamic) analytical tasks (e.g. discussing results in Biology vs. close reading in Literature), diverse genres and audiences (e.g. project proposals in Design vs. technical meta-data in Computer Science) and divergent research and writing purposes. All of these expectations, conventions and changes must be communicated to students as part of a thorough and robust undergraduate education.

In the United States, in most higher education institutions, WID is part of an undergraduate curriculum though it may not be described using the terms WID or WAC. At many universities in the US, students participate in a WID curriculum and are often required to take at least one or two WID modules in order to fulfil their degree. Additionally, many higher education institutions offer WID modules for postgraduates, including PhD candidates, who require instruction in the practices, conventions, methodologies and genres of their disciplines.

As noted previously, one of the primary purposes of WID curricula is to support students in their disciplinary enquiry through their writing, particularly in first year. Because this is a pedagogical concern, support for WID programmes is largely lecturer facing. Colleagues who are interested in the teaching of writing in Ireland (and indeed this is true elsewhere, including in the US) need support and development to help them to work effectively with students. Strong WID programmes provide workshop training, consultation and opportunities for professional conversations and collaboration. This frequently takes two integrated forms. The first of these is where WID staff work directly with lecturers to support them in the development of specific module assignments and teaching materials. The second is where colleagues work with departments to assist them to develop a staged WID curriculum across a degree programme. The former may take the form of one-on-one meetings or focused workshops around particular aspects of a WID curriculum. The latter might involve a series of discussions among department lecturers about how WID is implemented at different stages of a degree course, including discussions of different skills that are sequenced across different modules. WID staff may also coordinate with staff from the writing centre and from the library to provide support for students within specific modules or department curricula.

STEP I:
CONTRIBUTING TO THE
DEVELOPMENT OF AN INSTITUTION'S
STUDENT WRITING CULTURE

In order to build capacities for lecturers to implement a WID programme, WID staff or staff from the Centre for Teaching and Learning (or equivalent) may offer a range of writing-related supports. Initially, WID staff might offer workshops for faculty across disciplines that would focus on foundational concepts of a WID curriculum (e.g. disciplines have distinctive writing practices) and/or on practical strategies that can be brought into the classroom (e.g. designing writing assignments, conducting effective peer review, organising effective revision). These workshops serve to contribute to the 'culture of writing' in higher education: the shared understanding that writing enhances student learning and knowledge of practical pedagogical practices that constitute a robust writing curriculum. As an understanding of the value of a WID curriculum takes hold, key enthusiasts and advocates are identified in different departments. As this happens, WID staff begin to develop focused engagement at the department level that concentrates on developing the specific conventions, practices and genres of disciplines, as well as on how a WID curriculum might be staged within departments.

STEP II:
CONTRIBUTING TO THE
DEVELOPMENT OF A DEPARTMENT'S
STUDENT WRITING CULTURE

In order to build capacities for departments to build a strong WID curriculum, WID staff may assist with extensive curricular discussions that articulate the functions and locations of writing within a discipline. Critical to this process is that it is generative not normative. It is an internal process for departments to use in understanding and enhancing their own curricula with writing. The process often begins with a department discussion of writing, the format of which will vary; the following, however, is a reasonable description of what one might expect to see. A department will begin a conversation in which lecturers discuss the role of writing in their discipline and how it bears upon what undergraduate students should be able to do at various stages of their degree programme. Some departments will designate a single person or a small committee to take the lead with this role. This group will solicit comments from lecturers or even have an initial discussion at a department meeting.

These discussions and plans for implementation are developed by lecturers, as they are best placed to determine good practices and envisage what obstacles and opportunities exist toward the achievement of a strong WID curriculum; they will also be the ones to implement changes.

Bringing in lecturer input will ensure consideration of diverse viewpoints and any points of disagreement can be explored. This collaborative process can produce not only heightened awareness and knowledge of writing pedagogy but also new levels of interdepartmental collegiality. Furthermore, conversation helps to strengthen lecturer ownership of the process.

ADVICE FOR LECTURERS
AND DEPARTMENTS

The following may be useful advice for lecturers and departments when they are developing a WID curriculum:

– *most students are unfamiliar with the conventions, practices, genres of a discipline so they will need sustained instruction in these areas;*

– *because writing in the disciplines is a learned process, students should have opportunities to write throughout a module rather than at the end of a module; equally, they should have opportunities to write throughout a programme of study rather than solely at the end;*

– *students should have many opportunities to revise their writing so that they can learn from the writing process;*

– *lecturers might assign multiple writing projects along an informal/formal continuum designed to communicate for different purposes and for a variety of audiences;*

– *lecturers should communicate to students the different curricular values of a writing task, a writing sequence or an entire writing curriculum so that students understand the purposes and learning goals;*

– *lecturers should communicate to students how writing tasks, assignments, sequences and curricula give them critical capacities, communicative skills and writing proficiencies that will contribute to their personal and professional lives.*

The WID ethos is one of support for, and patience with, student learning. We look for changes in student writing over time, not dramatic advancements in a single assignment or semester. Students require cumulative practice and sustained instruction. The different values of an assignment, a writing sequence or an entire writing curriculum should be *clearly communicated* so students understand the purposes and learning goals of everything they write. Students must also understand what is at stake in their work – an issue, a problem or an intellectual pursuit that they can connect to as part of their disciplinary study and their intellectual growth.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

In addition to contributing to a writing culture among lectures, departments and schools, a WID programme might also be involved in a host of other writing-related activities including:

– *liaising with the writing centre around support for student writing;*

– *referring to and collaborating with other relevant on-campus departments and services/supports;*

– *connecting with other WID programmes on campus, nationally and internationally;*

– *contributing to scholarship on WID.*

The extent to which any/all of the above might occur is entirely institution dependent.

Other considerations

As with any other undergraduate curriculum, there are a number of things to be considered when one sets up a WID programme. They include the rationale for the establishment of the curriculum, designation of lead staff, consideration of what resources are needed, agreement around how the curriculum will be communicated to and by campus leaders, how it will be managed and funded, how the work will be evaluated and rewarded, its scope and so on.

Some last words

In 'The Pedagogy of Writing Across the Curriculum', McLeod explains that lecturers 'need to try out various techniques and decide for themselves how to adapt them to their own teaching and achieve their own pedagogical ends' (2015: 63). Because not every technique is workable in every module, or for every discipline, WID curricula should be grounded in the particular design of a module, strengths of a lecturer, focus of a department and culture of an institution. WID is a situated curriculum that takes on different forms in different university contexts. This is one of the things that makes a WID curriculum exciting; it is a location for lecturers and the entire university community to develop distinctive practices that draw from their own knowledge and strengths. It is also a wonderfully collaborative curriculum through which to work and learn.

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Part 2 – Exploring Writing in the Disciplines – four case studies

Four case studies

As we mentioned at the outset, this booklet is intended as a first step for colleagues who are new to the idea of Writing in the Disciplines.

In this second part, we share some experiences of implementing writing in the disciplines through four case studies, national and international. We are very grateful to our colleagues from the below listed institutions for their contribution and assistance.

The case studies are from:

– *George Washington University, United States*

– *Maynooth University, Ireland*

– *Dundalk Institute of Technology, Ireland*

– *Elon University, United States*

NAME OF INSTITUTION

The George Washington University (GW), Washington, DC, USA

CONTRIBUTOR

Rachel Riedner

The George Washington University is a mid-size, private US institution located in downtown Washington, DC. It has an undergraduate enrolment of approximately 11,000 students with an additional 10,000 graduate students. The undergraduate students arrive at GW well prepared. They are articulate, motivated students who are often drawn to GW because of its location in Washington.

The University Writing Program at GW consists of three divisions: First Year Writing (FYW), Writing in the Disciplines (WID), and the Writing Centre. All undergraduate students take first-year writing and subsequently two WID courses in different semesters. FYW introduces students to college-level research and writing with special attention to the tremendous diversity of modes, genres and rhetorical situations that they will encounter as they make their way through their lives as writers,

both in and beyond the academy. WID modules introduce students to the distinctive writing and communicative practices of different disciplines with emphasis on the writing process. All modules include revision and peer review. WID is part of the undergraduate curriculum for all schools including Arts and Sciences, International Affairs, Public Health, Engineering and Business. The Writing Centre offers writing support for all GW undergraduate and graduate students in a tutorial setting. GW's University Writing Program has appeared on US News and World Reports list of the twenty writing programs in the US that 'best support student writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum'.

Description of how WID works in this institution

At GW, all undergraduate students are required to complete three modules in writing to fulfil their degree requirements: first-year writing and two WID modules that are taken in different semesters. While students are not required to take a WID course in their major, the majority do. Many students, particularly in the Humanities and Social Sciences, take more than two WID modules. The pre-eminent objective of a strong WID program like GW's is to develop and sustain in-depth writing pedagogies that are particular to disciplines and to promote best practices for the teaching of writing. Therefore, WID focuses on developing and strengthening writing curricula within departments and schools.

WID instruction is motivated by the idea that writing practices are not generic across disciplines but are the products of disciplinary communities. Strong WID modules emphasize that writing is inextricably linked to the specific practices of a discipline and the particular curriculum of a department. Students most effectively learn to write when writing is integrated into their modules, when the disciplinary nature of writing tasks and lecturer expectations around writing are made explicit and when they are given feedback and opportunities for revision which enable them to learn from the writing process.

Implementing a WID curriculum entails significant investment from the university and commitment from lecturers, administrators, departments and schools. At GW, WID has a Director and a Deputy Director. These administrators receive course releases and stipends. WID administrators create and sustain a *culture of writing* at GW. They oversee WID operations (e.g. review course proposals and hire graduate students), develop WID curriculum (e.g. meet with faculty, departments, and administrators and train graduate students), create public programming (e.g. lecture series) and contribute to national and international scholarship on WID.

Specific WID initiatives include:

– *WID Faculty Support: WID administrators direct much of their attention to curricular development*

with individual lecturers and within departments and schools. Their work focuses on faculty development as the vast majority of faculty who teach WID courses have no prior training in writing pedagogy in their disciplines. Initially, the WID programme offered 3-4 workshops per semester for faculty new to the teaching of WID. Now WID faculty are familiar with best practices for teaching of writing although workshops are offered for new faculty. In this second phase, WID administrators have shifted to discipline-specific engagement with faculty and departments through an in depth assessment project called the Writing Review. One-on-one consultations with departments and individual faculty continue.

– *WID Distinguished Lecture Series: a series that brings in prominent members of the academy, the professions and the public sector to speak about strong ethics and practices of research and writing and to lead workshops for graduate students and faculty.*

– *WID Distinguished Teaching Award: an award given to two lecturers each year. This award recognizes exceptional teaching in WID.*

– *WID Graduate Assistants (GAs): GAs support writing in WID modules with 20 or more students. They comment on student papers, lead peer review sessions, develop curricular materials and provide other curricular support.*

– *Peer Writing Preceptors (PWPs): PWPs are a small cohort of advanced undergraduate students who provide mentoring to WID modules.*

– *WID GA Training and Support: a series of instructional workshops and summer training for WID GAs. While many of these students have expertise in their field, like lecturers they have not been trained in the teaching of writing.*

Key benefits of the WID curriculum for students, staff and the institution

At GW, the WID program has a positive impact on teaching and on student writing, as evidenced by assessment efforts, faculty and student self-reporting and stronger disciplinary engagement with the teaching of writing.

WID enables students to become critical thinkers and problem-solvers as well as developing their communicative skills. In WID modules, there is a shift away from lecture mode of teaching ('delivery' model) to focus on writing process and active student engagement with their own learning. Students are introduced to writing as a means

of learning in order to make sense of module material. For example, in our Biology modules, lecturers have shifted from multiple choice answer questions to short answer questions as this format enables students to work through and synthesize new and challenging material. In French, Business and Mathematics modules, students build increasingly complex writing capacities through in-class work and homework assignments and receive feedback from lecturers.

Additionally, **students** are introduced to writing in the conventions, practices and the communicative style of a discipline. For example, in our Chemistry modules, students receive instruction in writing a scientific report, in our Systems Engineering modules students receive instruction in writing a technical proposal and in English modules students receive instruction in writing an academic essay. This instruction guides students with regards disciplinary patterns and style, understanding rhetorical moves and genres that are specific to disciplines, explaining reference conventions, using evidence, choosing methodology, paying attention to audience and understanding of purpose. For many students who will pursue graduate study or enter a professional field, this instruction is key to their professional life. WID programs enable them to develop practices and identities as engineers, biologists, philosophers, chemists, political scientists, public health experts or historians.

In a WID curriculum, **lecturers** need to be able to conceptualize writing in a way that is grounded in

the disciplines themselves, not as a generalizable container of knowledge. This conceptual shift for lecturers can be powerful as it enables them to identify core values and articulate (to themselves and to their students) how these values are instantiated through the distinctive writing practices of their disciplines.

A WID curriculum has benefits at the **departmental** level. WID can contribute to a collaborative departmental culture where lecturers discuss how and where WID is implemented, including discussions of different skills that are sequenced across different modules. WID enables a department to identify learning outcomes thus setting up an explicit and well-conceived curriculum that is clearly communicated to students and to other audiences.

For a **university** community, a robust writing culture has multiple benefits. A WID curriculum breaks down barriers that divide departments and lecturers by creating common ground through its focus on teaching and learning. Along with a first year writing program and a writing centre, WID produces students who are adept thinkers, skilled writers and who are attuned to nuances of communication across different contexts and fields. For universities whose students will work locally and globally, a strong writing culture gives them writing and communicative skills as well as critical capacities that are necessary in a competitive job environment.

Contributor's reflections – inspirations and aspirations

As the previous section indicates, a strong relationship between GW's Writing Program and a department can have a transformative impact for undergraduate students, graduate students, lecturers and an entire departmental culture. As a professor of Political Science at GW observes, on-going workshops and one-on-one interactions with the WID program have 'blossomed into an enduring relationship' which has transformed teaching and approaches to disciplinary study. This relationship with Political Science was built over time, starting with an assessment project and branching off into workshops and individual meetings that have led the department to revamp its entire undergraduate curriculum around writing.

Building a writing program takes time and it also entails resources. GW has committed significant resources to WID through module releases, graduate student labour, stipends for WID administrators, public programming and other events. While every university may not be able to commit the same amount of resources, a well-conceived and integrated writing program cannot be an unfunded mandate. At the very least, it should be acknowledged that lecturers need time and support to shift module design and that a strong writing program requires designated staff (at GW, someone drawn from the faculty) who can take the lead with creating and sustaining a robust writing curriculum.

At this point in time, the WID program at GW, and the Writing Program overall, is seen as a strength by students, lecturers and administrators. Students come to GW because the Writing Program has achieved a national and international reputation. They recognize that continuous support for writing – from a first year course, which introduces them to research and emphasizes writing process, to WID courses, which give them instruction in disciplinary practices and genres, to the support they receive in the Writing Centre – will serve them well in their coursework and in their professional lives.

Resources we found useful

University of Minnesota Writing Centre: http://writing.umn.edu/tww/additional.html#discipline

University of Wisconsin Writing Center: http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/

Duke University WID Program: http://twp.duke.edu/faculty/wid

Coventry University – Centre for Academic Writing: http://www.coventry.ac.uk/study-at-coventry/student-support/academic-support/centre-for-academic-writing/

Statement of WAC Principles and Practices: http://wac.colostate.edu/principles/statement.pdf

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NAME OF INSTITUTION

Maynooth University, Ireland

CONTRIBUTOR

Alison Farrell

Context – description of institutional setting

Maynooth University, part of the National University of Ireland, was formally established as an autonomous university in 1997, though it traces its origins to the foundation of the Royal College of St. Patrick in 1795. The University is located in the historic town of Maynooth, 25 km from Dublin, and its campus combines 'the peaceful and historic beauty of fine eighteenth century buildings with the very best of modern research and teaching facilities' (Maynooth University, 2015). The University has over 9000 students (undergraduate and postgraduate) and 800 staff. The University's teaching, research and engagement is founded in three faculties namely: Faculty of Arts, Celtics Studies and Philosophy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Faculty of Science and Engineering. These faculties also include various research institutes.

The Institution describes itself and its purpose in its Strategic Plan (2012-2017) as 'a university dedicated to people, ideas and culture, where we work together as a scholarly community to inquire and discover, to teach and learn, to create, conserve, disseminate and apply knowledge, and to engage with the problems and challenges that face modern society; through all these things in combination, we are central to innovation, economic growth, social development and cultural vibrancy, and are essential to a free, open, equal, democratic and sustainable society' (Maynooth University, 2012: 12). The University has a particularly diverse student population and a commitment to serving under-represented groups; its student population in 2014-2015 was made up of 18% mature students and 24% access students.

Description of how WID works in this institution

Unlike our colleagues in the United States, Irish universities do not have a tradition of Rhetoric and Composition, Foundation Composition Courses, Writing Programmes and/or Writing Centres. Though writing is valued as part of a university education, and indeed much of higher education (HE) assessment employs writing as a preferred medium, formal, defined writing support, particularly at undergraduate level, is relatively recent in most HE providers. In the past, such support was offered generally as part of the teaching and learning experience and specifically as part of pedagogical interventions which served

to enhance the experience for students. Given the interest in this type of staff-driven student support, scaffolding for students' writing has come through, amongst other avenues, a focus on learner-centred pedagogies, active learning, problem/enquiry-based learning, Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), service/community-based learning, collaborative learning, small group teaching etc. There is a growing tradition of these approaches to teaching in Irish HE and there are several examples of innovative and learner-centred practices across the sector.

In Maynooth University, formal writing support, and by extension WID as a central provision, has evolved as both a student and staff-facing endeavour. The former of these is best evidenced in the establishment on campus of the University Writing Centre in 2011 on a pilot basis. This centre has since been mainstreamed, has had much success on campus and has contributed greatly to the national discussion and provision around HE writing centres in Ireland. The latter, a more staff-facing orientation to writing support, has been developing, with the help of some central support, from its existing foundation which has been entirely dependent on the work of dedicated colleagues.

For Maynooth University the development of WID themed curricula is occurring through three elements as illustrated in the below figure.
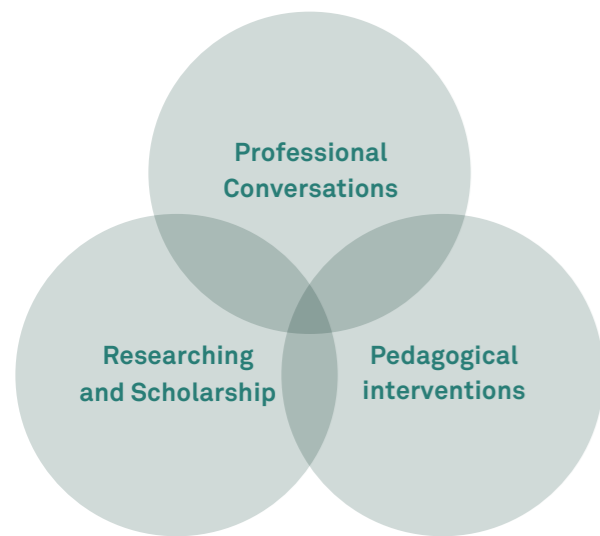
The first of these is professional conversations. These have always existed but they began formally around central support for writing in the consultation about setting up a writing centre; this consultation happened in academic year 2009-10. The cross campus, inter-disciplinary conversations about writing have been ongoing since then as face-to-face, one-to-one, small group and virtual interactions. Through these conversations we learn a great deal about the writing concerns that we share including:

– *that many of us across the disciplines are facing the same challenges*

– *that some of our students are very reluctant writers*

– *that there are very strong connections between reading, writing and speaking and that we need to help our students to develop all of these*

– *that it is useful for our students to look at models of writing*

– *that all our students need to be aware of audience and genre*

– *that they need to practise their writing, early and often and that they need help to become good writers (this may include scaffolding processes)*

– *that meaningful feedback is very important*

– *that writing can be usefully employed to help us to think, to reflect and to learn*

– *that our different disciplines and our various discourse communities require different flexibilities with language*

– *that there are a range of stakeholders who are interested in our students becoming good writers.*

The second articulation of WID-themed work on campus is the implementation of four key pedagogical interventions which we have recently piloted. These are:

– *Summer Writing Institute For Teachers (SWIFT)*

– *Exploring the pedagogies of WAC, WID and WEC*

– *Writing Liaison Scheme*

– *Assignment Litmus Test.*

It is beyond the scope of this booklet to describe each of these bullets in full but the second of them merits further elaboration even in a publication as brief as this. For us, in academic year 2014-15 'Exploring the pedagogies of WAC, WID and WEC' involved:

– *workshops with visiting experts – one off*

– *workshops with colleagues (on campus and off campus)*

– *week-long working with visiting experts*

– *curation and design of resources, including this booklet*

– *planning around a collection of in-class writing activities.*

This work builds directly on the professional conversations and helps to move our dialogue into action both within and outside the classroom.

The third element of our WID themed efforts on campus has been through writing programme design (and delivery) and scholarship around writing. Our work with colleagues in the development of writing programmes in particular departments is part of course/curriculum design in the context of a broader emphasis on critical thinking and graduate attributes. Similarly, where possible, we try to connect this curricular work with the scholarship of teaching and learning where we either research and publish ourselves on our moves towards supporting writing or we co-author with colleagues in this area.

Key benefits of WID curriculum for students, staff and the institution

Because we are relatively new to the integration of WID curricula (and given that we may still have a reluctance to even name it as such), it is difficult to express definite benefits for our students, staff and institution as of yet. We have strong feedback that suggests to us that the student-facing writing support that we have in place, for example through the writing centre, is of value to students. The centre also serves to prompt conversation more broadly on campus about writing, which is also valuable.

Where discussions with colleagues about integrating more writing into curricula occur, they are generally contextualised in enhancing the learning experience through an emphasis on enquiry and critical thinking.

We believe that any headway we can make towards encouraging more writing in the curriculum will be of value to our students. We assert that students need practice to become better thinkers and better writers; integrating more informal and formal writing into the curriculum can give our students this practice. They also need to be agile writers who can communicate across genres for a variety of purposes and to a range of audiences. We can help them to achieve this through WID curricula, WID pedagogies and through aligned assessment.

In the coming academic year, 2015-2016, Maynooth University will offer a first year module which, though it is not designated as such, will involve much writing as enquiry and as a demonstration of learning. The approach to this module is around critical skills but in its pilot phase in the coming year there is an opportunity to explore how the desire to acquire these critical skills can be blended with a broad exploration of written composition and with many occasions to write.

Contributor's reflections – inspirations and aspirations

Given where the University is at present in terms of institutional and national priorities, and given where it has come from in terms of tradition, a WID curriculum may not become a reality using that nomenclature or under that designation. However, there is a desire centrally and among many individual colleagues to achieve the following:

– *to help students to become better writers*

– *to include more writing in the curriculum*

– *to use writing to learn – both in class and out of class*

– *to connect good writing with effective reading strategies and the ability to present orally*

– *to develop information literacy skills in tandem with academic writing skills*

– *to continue to explore how we as staff can share good practice in terms of supporting student writers*

– *to support staff in the curricular elements associated with integrating more writing and different types of writing into the learning experience.*

Personally, I am excited about what we might achieve, what I can learn from students and colleagues, and how we can work collaboratively (nationally and internationally) to bring more writing into the Irish HE experience. I am also convinced of the need to bring the conversation outside of the HE walls and to contribute to a national and global discussion about writing along the learning continuum, from early childhood to lifelong learning.

Resources we found useful

Emig, J. (1977) 'Writing as a Mode of Learning' in *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. 28, No. 2. (May, 1977), pp. 122-128.

Maynooth University (2012) *National University of Ireland Maynooth Strategic Plan 2012-2017* [online]. Available at https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/strategicplan20122017.pdf (accessed 4 August 2015).

Maynooth University Website (2015) *About Us* [online]. Available at https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/about-us (accessed 4 August 2015).

Melzer, D. (2014) Assign*ments Across the Curriculum. A National Study of College Writing*, Logan: Utah State University Press.

The WAC Clearinghouse Website (2015) Available at http://wac.colostate.edu/index.cfm (accessed 4 August 2015).

NAME OF INSTITUTION

Dundalk Institute of Technology, Ireland

CONTRIBUTORS

Moira Maguire
Pauline McGlade

Context – description of education/ institutional setting

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) provides high quality undergraduate and postgraduate education to approximately 5,000 students. The majority of our students are drawn from the region and a high proportion are among the first generation in their family to participate in higher education (HE). Since opening as a Regional Technical College in 1971, DkIT has grown and developed into a vibrant, forward-looking institution, committed to serving the border region and north east corridor.

Undergraduate programmes are offered by four Academic Schools: Business and Humanities; Engineering; Health and Science; and Informatics and Creative Media, predominately at levels 7 and 8 on the National Qualifications Framework, and

to a lesser extent, at level 6. As such, the majority of our offerings are degree programmes. In recent years, DkIT has significantly developed provision of both taught postgraduate programmes at level 9 (Masters) and research degrees at levels 9 and 10 (PhD). DkIT is one of the most successful ITs in terms of attracting research funding and has notable strengths in the areas of Energy and Environment and ICT, Health and Ageing.

In 2009, the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) was established to support and guide the development of Learning and Teaching in the Institute. Significant progress has been made in embedding student-centred approaches to learning. There is strong commitment to best practice in learning and teaching throughout the institute and a high rate of participation in learning and teaching related CPD. For example, 39 staff have successfully completed the MA in Learning and Teaching with a further 34 staff currently engaged with the programme. This commitment is particularly impressive considering that, as is the case throughout the Institute of Technology (IoT) sector, lecturers teach 18-20 hours per week.

The Student Learning and Development Centre (SLDC) was set-up in 2010, as part of CELT, to provide learning support to students, particularly in academic writing, study skills and IT. This support takes the form of scheduled workshops, small group and one-to-one tutorials; increasingly, the writing tutor has been working with lecturers to develop programme-specific support.

Description of how WID works in the institution

We are very much at the beginning of this journey, having made a commitment to promoting WID in the academic year 2014-15. In common with other Irish institutions, we do not have a tradition of writing programmes. That said, academic writing has traditionally been supported and developed within modules or programmes. In some cases, academic writing is part of the formal curriculum, for example in Research Skills or 'Learning to Learn' modules, particularly, though not exclusively, in the first year. Often, however, the focus on writing is implicit. As noted in the previous section, additional writing support is provided by the SLDC. Initially, this support was predominately generic skills focused, and lecturers would refer students who appear to be 'lacking' specific writing skills. However, as the service has developed, the emphasis is shifting to supporting academic literacy and engagement with scholarship. Increasingly, the writing tutor has been working with lecturers to develop support specific to the needs of students on particular programmes. Possibly the most important recent driver has been the opportunity to enhance learning supports as part of a Higher Education Authority (HEA) funded project, in collaboration with colleagues in our regional cluster partners (Athlone IT, Dublin City University and Maynooth University). This funding allowed us to offer additional writing support and enabled our writing tutor to work on the development of specific activities. A vital part of that project, from the perspective of

this initiative, has been the close collaborative relationships which have developed with colleagues in our partner institutions and which have enabled us to share ideas and to build capacity. This work, the commitment of individual lecturers and our MA in Learning and Teaching, has done much to raise the profile of academic writing across the institution and the time seems right to build on this momentum.

The challenge for us has been how to identify ways to apply WID principles and develop an approach to WID that suited our local context. We decided to start by building capacity (particularly confidence) among lecturers to develop and use writing activities as part of their subject teaching. We hoped that they would then implement pedagogical interventions in their classrooms. We used the WID and wider academic writing literatures to develop a short series of sessions focused on embedding low-stakes writing activities into classroom teaching. While informed by the wider scholarship, these sessions were very practical, hands-on interactive sessions as our priority was implementation. Given the very heavy teaching loads, these sessions were an hour long and gave lecturers ideas and materials to take away. Later sessions dealt with writing and the curriculum. As part of the SIDF project, each partner institution hosted a visiting scholar, Dr Rachel Riedner (George Washington University), to work closely with individual lecturers and small teams on embedding writing into their teaching; and this was enormously beneficial in raising the profile of the initiative.

Key benefits of WID for students, staff and the institution

As mentioned, this initiative is very much in its infancy. Nonetheless, one very clear benefit has been the increased collaboration between the SLDC and lecturers, across a wide range of disciplines. This has opened up conversations around writing and led to a number of collaborations around discipline-specific writing, for example writing technical reports. This has also been very beneficial in terms of raising the profile of academic writing at the institutional level and increasing awareness of the potential offered by writing as a vehicle for learning. Further, the initiative has helped to emphasise the importance of being explicit about the expectations associated with specific disciplines and genres and highlighted the role of lecturers in supporting the development of their students' academic writing.

The sessions for staff were well attended and evaluated very positively. In particular, lecturers valued the practical focus and enjoyed completing the writing activities themselves. They told us that they enjoyed being in the position of learners and felt able to empathise with their students. They also welcomed the opportunity to talk about the teaching of academic writing in their own disciplines and to listen to colleagues' experiences in other disciplines. We know that many of the lecturers have implemented these activities in their own teaching, and informal feedback suggests that they are working well and popular with students. Certainly we would expect that these activities

would be beneficial for students; however, it is unlikely that significant lasting benefits would be realised at this early stage. We propose to develop this work over the next academic year and identify ways in which we might assess the impact.

Contributors' reflections – inspirations and aspirations

This has been a very positive experience for us here at DkIT and one we hope to continue to develop and grow. We have been able to build on the collaborative relationships developed in the SIDF project and the sense of momentum around academic writing in the institute. The Irish Network for the Enhancement of Writing (INEW) was also an important source of inspiration and support for us. INEW hosted a Winter Writing series of seminars that were incredibly useful to us in developing and implementing our approach, and the opportunities to share experiences with colleagues were invaluable.

We feel that our approach of focusing on practical workshops for staff was a good way to introduce WID principles in our context at this time. However, we need to identify ways to take this momentum forward. The sessions were well attended and participants asked for follow-up sessions, yet these did not work well and were poorly attended, owing to workload towards the end of the semester. Nonetheless, there was a real demand from colleagues to hear from others about how the techniques worked in different classes.

We are planning to work with staff to develop very brief podcasts or videos outlining what they did and how it worked, which we will make available on our website.

The writing tutor who had a central role in the initiative (Pauline McGlade) has since left the institution. We have taken some time to reflect on how to continue to move forward. Drawing on the feedback, we are developing a series of workshops around supporting high-stakes writing and giving feedback to students on their writing. We also plan to run the sessions on low-stakes writing again. We have not been able to further develop the collaborations with lecturers around supporting specialist writing as yet; however, this is something we hope to be in a position to return to before the end of the academic year. The next challenge for us is to explore ways to identify if and how this educational development is having an impact on practice and the student experience.

Resources we found useful

Bean, J.C. (2012) *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking and Active Learning in the Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Deane, M. and O'Neill, P. (2011) *Writing in the Disciplines*. London: Palgrave.

Professor Martha Townsend's seminars on *Exploring WAC, WID and WEC* as part of INEW's Winter Writing Series.

Elon University, Elon, North Carolina, USA

CONTRIBUTORS

Jessie L. Moore
Paula Rosinski

Context – description of your education/institutional setting

Elon University is a private, mid-sized university that enrolls approximately 5900 undergraduate students and 700 graduate students. Elon demonstrates a commitment to engaged and experiential learning and is nationally recognized for its first-year experiences, internship and co-ops program, senior capstones, undergraduate research, learning communities, study abroad opportunities, service learning initiatives, and writing in the disciplines program.

The university's curriculum is grounded in the liberal arts and sciences, and all students complete 58 to 62 of their 132 required semester hours in coursework in the Elon Core Curriculum; the Core Curriculum includes first-year foundations courses (including first-year writing), a world languages requirement, studies in the arts and sciences, and a writing-intensive, interdisciplinary capstone course.

Elon offers over 60 major degree programs; half of Elon's students complete majors in the Arts and Sciences, while others pursue degrees in Business, Communications, or Education. The university's four-year graduation rate is 78%, and the first-year retention rate is 90%. With 424 faculty/academic staff, the university benefits from a 12 to 1 student/faculty ratio. Elon students come from all 50 U.S. states and from 49 other countries.

The university's 4-1-4 calendar facilitates 15-week semesters in fall and spring, with a one-month, intensive Winter Term in January. In addition to on-campus classes, Elon's Winter Term features dozens of faculty-led, short-term study abroad and off-campus domestic study courses. Writing-intensive courses are scheduled across all three terms, and academic majors include at least three courses that forefront writing in the disciplines.

Description of how WID works in your institution

Elon University students develop their writing knowledge over their four years of study, beginning with a required, first-year writing course, continuing through courses in their majors that support writing in the disciplines, and ending with the writing-intensive, interdisciplinary capstone course.

Writing: Argument and Inquiry provides students with a foundation in writing knowledge and practices in a one-semester, four-credit-hour writing course taken during their first year at Elon. Drawing from the Council of Writing Program Administrators Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition, the course aims to enable students to develop more sophisticated writing processes, more sophisticated understandings of rhetorical situations and writing conventions, and an appreciation for the capacity of writing to change oneself and the world. It also helps students acquire language to talk about writing in subsequent disciplinary contexts.

Elon's Writing Excellence Initiative is a university-wide project whose goal is to enhance the teaching and learning of writing across the disciplines and make writing a signature experience of every student's Elon education by building on this first-year experience. Developed with extensive participation by Elon's students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends, the project complements the university's mission of integrating learning across the disciplines, putting knowledge into practice, and preparing students to be global citizens and informed leaders motivated by concern for the common good.

The Writing Excellence Initiative seeks to enhance the teaching and learning of all academic, professional, and co-curricular writing of students, faculty and staff. It asks each academic department and student life program to participate in a four-phase process to enhance writing in its discipline. During Phase 1, degree programs set aspirational writing goals in at least one of three areas (writing to learn, writing in a discipline, or writing as a citizen) and complete a mapping of current WID practices across their curriculum. In Phase 2, degree programs assess past senior writing using the new aspirational writing outcomes to identify areas in student writing that could be improved; promising WID practices are then identified for pilot testing. Phase 3 involves pilot testing the program's plans in the contexts that would be encountered in full implementation. With assistance from the Center for Writing Excellence, majors and programs gather and analyze relevant data concerning their pilot tests and refine their plans for broader implementation. In the final phase, programs implement, monitor, and assesses their full-scale WID plans, setting a pace for implementation that assures success based on their needs and goals. After initial implementation, programs employ ongoing assessment in pursuit of continuous improvement. The Writing Excellence Initiative also is developing assessments of alumni writing in workplace contexts.

Students, faculty, and staff are supported by the Writing Center, which helps all members of the university community with all of their academic, personal, and professional writing needs and questions. Elon's Writing Center consultants are experienced undergraduate students from a variety of majors. All consultants must successfully complete Writing Center Workshop, a four-credit-hour course, in order to work in the Writing Center, so they are trained in consulting practices and able to help clients with writing from any discipline.

The Writing Center's Fellows program deepens Writing Excellence Initiative efforts by pairing trained Writing Center consultants with faculty from any discipline who are interested in enhancing writing instruction in their classes. The consultants work closely with the course faculty to learn about writing assignments and discipline-specific conventions and they provide one-to-one support for students.

Collectively, these programs provide WID instruction and practice across students' four-year degree programs.

Key benefits of WID for students, staff and the institution

Through the Writing Excellence Initiative, Elon aspires to prepare every student, undergraduate and graduate, in every major, to be an excellent writer.

The initiative focuses particularly on developing students' abilities related to three kinds of writing that are aligned with the university's goal of educating "engaged minds, inspiring leaders, and global citizens":

– *Writing to learn: Using writing to understand new content and perspectives, analyze information and problems, and generate knowledge.*

– *Writing in a discipline: Developing and communicating ideas effectively to readers, for purposes and in contexts that are appropriate for his or her field of study.*

– *Writing as a citizen: Communicating effectively with other members of his or her communities on issues of local, regional, or global significance.*

– *As a result of the Writing Excellence Initiative, students write across their university experiences, both in and outside the classroom, preparing them to write effectively in future professional and civic contexts.*

In addition to supporting students, Elon's Writing Excellence Initiative offers academic faculty and staff with targeted professional development opportunities related to writing. Faculty who teach Writing: Argument and Inquiry, the first-year writing course, participate in monthly

faculty development workshops about applying writing pedagogies, research, and theories to classroom instruction. Through the Center for Writing Excellence and the Writing Across the University program, all teaching faculty and staff have the opportunity to participate in an intensive one-week workshop on teaching writing in the disciplines, with support to develop and revise writing assignments based on best-practices. The Writing Across the University Program also provides professional development for all teaching faculty and staff through individual consultations, group workshops, and scholarship and teaching grants for writing-related projects.

The Writing Center extends this support by offering an Anonymous Assignment Feedback service. The service is designed to give teaching faculty and staff insight into the kinds of questions students often have about writing assignments, with the intention that this feedback can be used to make writing assignments clearer and more effective. Two experienced Writing Center consultants independently and anonymously give faculty feedback—from their perspectives as consultants and students—on how students are likely to understand, respond to, and approach the assignment. To ensure consistent and valuable feedback on assignments, the consultants use a detailed feedback form that was constructed by writing specialists with the Writing Excellence Initiative and modeled on those offered at peer and aspirant institutions.

Reviewers give feedback on areas related to the purpose and audience of the assignment, the process for successful completion, using outside sources, clarity of assessment/evaluation, visual design, and assignment mechanics (such as clarity of due date, technical requirements, citation format, and submission directions).

These professional development opportunities help faculty become better teachers of writing, which in turn helps prepare students to develop as writers. As a result of these efforts to improve the teaching and learning of writing on campus, the university recently was recognized in the 2016 edition of "Best Colleges," published by *U.S. News & World Report,* for its writing in the disciplines initiatives.

Contributors' reflections - inspirations and aspirations

The Writing Excellence Initiative grew out of extended efforts by local writing program administrators and writing scholars. The first-year writing course, for example, was the site of an early, intensive program assessment that subsequently informed curricular assessments in several programs across campus. Previous first-year writing coordinators also worked extensively with writing across the curriculum directors (in a precursor to the current WID program) to help faculty across the university understand what foundational writing knowledge and strategies are introduced in

the first-year writing course so that faculty in the disciplines can help students transfer and remix that foundational knowledge to write in disciplinary contexts.

From 2011 to 2013, Elon University hosted the Elon Research Seminar on Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer, facilitating ten multi-institutional research projects on how writers repurpose writing knowledge as they move among unique writing contexts. The seminar provided an infusion of interest in writing research at the same time that the university was developing its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), a required component of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation process. The ongoing writing program administration efforts and the focus on writing research, paired with international research on writing, provided inspiration for the Writing Excellence Initiative as the focus of the university's QEP.

Now, as WID has a strong foothold in the university culture, we hope to extend the culture of writing research on campus. By fostering scholarship of teaching and learning about writing on campus, the university can help teaching faculty and staff build their confidence in their ability to teach writing in the disciplines and in co-curricular contexts and to better understand writing pedagogies that work most effectively in their situations.

In turn, this investment in writing scholarship by faculty across campus would enrich existing efforts to teach students to write to learn, to write in a discipline, and to write as a citizen.

Resources we found useful

Bean, J. (2011) *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Council of Writing Program Administrators. WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition. 17 July 2014. http://wpacouncil. org/positions/outcomes.html

About the authors/contributors

ALISON FARRELL

Alison Farrell is Teaching Development Officer in the Centre for Teaching and Learning, Maynooth University where she is also Head of the University's Writing Centre. She has been directly involved in education since 1994 and has worked in a wide range of pedagogical areas at all levels. She is a founding member and current co-chair of the Irish Network for the Enhancement of Writing (INEW). She is also the founder of the Summer Writing Institute For Teachers (SWIFT). Her research interests include composition and enquiry, literacy, academic writing and collaboration. She holds a PhD in English.

MOIRA MAGUIRE

Moira Maguire is Head of Learning and Teaching at Dundalk IT. This role includes responsibility for the Student Learning and Development Centre which supports students in their academic writing. Moira is a co-editor for the *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education* and a member of the editorial team for the *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education (AISHE-J)* and is currently President of the *All Ireland Society for Higher Education (AISHE)*. Her research interests include transitions in academic writing and the development of authorial identity.

JESSIE L. MOORE

Jessie L. Moore is Associate Director of the Center for Engaged Learning and an Associate Professor of Professional Writing and Rhetoric at Elon University. Her recent scholarship focuses on transfer of writing knowledge and practices, multi-institutional research and collaborative inquiry, and writing residencies for faculty writers.

ÍDE O'SULLIVAN

Íde O'Sullivan is an Educational Developer at the Centre for Teaching and Leaning, University of Limerick, where she leads Ireland's first Regional Writing Centre. Since 2007, Íde has lead the design, delivery and evaluation of writing-support interventions at UL, grounding writing centre initiatives in good practice and sound theory. Íde also works with faculty on the development of their professional writing for publication. Íde is a founding member and co-chair of INEW. Íde's PhD investigated the role of corpus consultation literacy in enhancing language learners' writing skills. Her current research focuses on adapting academic writing development to particular national contexts and on enhancing peer tutoring in academic writing. Other areas of interest include second language acquisition research and the development of new literacies.

RACHEL RIEDNER

Rachel Riedner is Associate Professor of Writing and Women's Studies and the Director of the Writing in the Disciplines Program at The George Washington University in Washington, DC. During her tenure as WID Director, her program was recognized by *US News and World Report* as the one of the twenty writing programs in the US that 'best support student writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum.' She has recently been accepted into the Fulbright Specialist Program to do WID work internationally. Rachel is the author of two books and multiple articles, and she is the lead series editor with Lexington Books. Her research interests include feminist rhetorics, writing studies and cultural studies.

PAULA ROSINSKI

Paula Rosinski is a Professor of Professional Writing and Rhetoric and the Director of Writing Across the University at Elon University. Her recent research focuses on the transfer of rhetorical knowledge and writing strategies between self-sponsored and academic texts, reframing rhetorical theories and practices in multimodal environments and the re-production of rhetorical subjectivity in writing and rhetoric.