

UHM W Board: Annual Report

Spring 2006

Recent Program Changes

Since F04, Instructors are approved to teach a course as writing intensive during a 3-year period. Before that, the approval period was 2 years.

The Faculty Senate's General Education Committee, to which the W Board reports, is working with all of the Focus Boards to craft policies that allow entire courses to receive Focus designations.

Personnel

Thomas Hilgers serves as Director of the Manoa Writing Program (MWP). He chairs a 7-member Writing Focus Board. The W Board makes W recommendations to the Faculty Senate's General Education Committee, which must approve all Focus designations.

The General Education Office (GEO) staff assists with all Focus areas. The MWP secretary, the GEO clerk-typist, and a student worker maintain records and assist the Director and the Writing Focus Board.

The MWP maintains a network of support for instructors of W courses:

- MWP offers workshops every semester.
- Board members and the Director are available for consultation and department workshops.
- The MWP website includes *Writing Matters & Quick Tips* issues, which contain specific writing-intensive teaching strategies, as well as additional information on teaching with writing, including examples from over 20 different courses.

W Classes

Enrollment in W sections is administratively limited to 20 students. (Team-taught classes maintain a 20-to-1 student-to-teacher ratio.) Individual instructors (not department chairs) may admit additional students in light of their course's typical attrition. Instructors who enroll more than 23 students receive a friendly warning letter. Average W class enrollment for AY06 was between 16 and 18, which is consistent with previous years.

Department Chairs and individual faculty members decide which courses might be appropriate for the W Focus designation, given a department's ability to limit enrollment to 20, an instructor's workload, and the Hallmarks of W courses.

438 W Focus sections were offered in F05 (enrollment was 7803 students) and 460 W Focus sections in S06 (enrollment was 7469 students). Additional classes will be offered in summer. Over 15,000 seats in W classes were filled during AY06.

While the overall number of W sections is adequate, certain fields do not offer enough sections for students to take 2 W classes in their majors. Students in these majors take W classes outside of their major in order to fulfill the requirement.

Each semester, the printed and on-line *Schedule of Classes* includes a list of Focus classes (W is one of UHM's 4 Focus areas). W-class expectations are described in the section on Focus requirements. A current Focus class list is also posted on the UHM GenEd website. An "Information for Students" brochure is sent to all W instructors for distribution in their classes.

Focus Designation Process

Departments receive a Focus packet with designation instructions and forms. Departments complete the Checklist Form to indicate which faculty will be offering their approved Focus class(es). Interested faculty who do not have a three-year approval complete the W Proposal Form, which is reviewed by the W Board and approved by the General Education Committee (GEC).

The W Hallmarks are included on the Focus Designation Proposal form. Faculty members are also directed to the GenEd web site, where the Hallmarks appear with explanatory notes.

The 7-member W Focus Board reviews all proposals and negotiates with an instructor if the proposal does not meet all five W Hallmarks. The Board recommends approval for W designation based on the recommendation of the Board member who reviewed the proposal. All problematic proposals are considered by the full Board. The Board's recommendations are given to the GEC, which must approve all Focus classes.

Effective Fall 2004, instructor approvals are granted for a three-year period. The only exceptions involve directed reading courses and "staff" (instructor not yet assigned) courses, which are approved for one semester only.

Evaluation Procedures

Evaluation is decentralized at UHM; primary responsibility is with departments. However, some W instructors voluntarily distribute a W survey form to their students at the end of the semester (10-12% return rate). Other instructors select *Course and Faculty Evaluation* (CAFÉ) questions that address the writing components of the course (faculty select questions from a list of 300+ items).

The W Board has developed a working statement of the program's mission, goals, and learning outcomes.

College/school advising units are responsible for monitoring student progress. However, MWP does monitor the number of W classes offered to ensure that student needs are being met. MWP also periodically reviews course-taking patterns for particular majors.

Faculty Training

Voluntary *teaching with writing* workshops are offered each semester for all interested faculty and graduate teaching assistants.

Information is mailed to W instructors at the beginning of each semester and the MWP web site is advertised as a faculty resource. Workshops, offered at the beginning of each semester, are publicized far in advance. They are recommended but are not required.

Resources—such as *Writing Matters*, *Quick Tips*, course descriptions, a 10-minute video—are available in hard copy and on the web. One-on-one help and workshops for departments are available on request.

Issues

The W Board has been somewhat frustrated by inconsistencies in the details of syllabi that members review in conjunction with W designation proposals. The matter will be brought to the attention of GEC, which may choose to convey questions concerning campus course syllabi to the Faculty Senate.

The W Board has grappled with policy and procedures relating to an earlier decision: to entertain W proposals involving all sections of a course. Last year, the GEC determined that course Focus designations would be allowed for courses that *inherently* meet a Focus area's hallmarks. As of this writing, some issues relating to the meaning of *inherently* remain to be resolved.