

Appendix C: Conference on College Composition and Communication Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments [Excerpt]

(The complete statement is available at <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/digitalenvironments>)

ASSUMPTIONS

Courses that engage students in writing digitally may have many features, but all of them should

1. introduce students to the epistemic (knowledge-constructing) characteristics of information technology, some of which are generic to information technology and some of which are specific to the fields in which the information technology is used;
2. provide students with opportunities to apply digital technologies to solve substantial problems common to the academic, professional, civic, and/or personal realm of their lives;
3. include much hands-on use of technologies;
4. engage students in the critical evaluation of information (see American Library Association, “Information Literacy”); and
5. prepare students to be reflective practitioners.

As with all teaching and learning, the foundation for teaching writing digitally must be university, college, department, program,

and course learning goals or outcomes. These outcomes should reflect current knowledge in the field (such as those articulated in the “WPA Outcomes Statement”), as well as the needs of students, who will be expected to write for a variety of purposes in the academic, professional, civic, and personal arenas of life. Once programs and faculty have established learning outcomes, they then can make thoughtful decisions about curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment.

Writing instruction is delivered contextually. Therefore, institutional mission statements should also inform decisions about teaching writing digitally in the same ways that they should inform any curricular and pedagogical decisions.

Regardless of the medium in which writers choose to work, all writing is social; accordingly, response to and evaluation of writing are human activities, and in the classroom, their primary purpose is to enhance learning.

Therefore, faculty will

1. incorporate principles of best practices in teaching and learning. As Chickering and Ehrmann explain, those principles are equally applicable to face-to-face, hybrid, and online instruction
 - Good Practice Encourages Contacts Between Student and Faculty
 - Good Practice Develops Reciprocity and Cooperation Among Students
 - Good Practice Uses Active Learning Techniques
 - Good Practice Gives Prompt Feedback
 - Good Practice Emphasizes Time on Task
 - Good Practice Communicates High Expectations
 - Good Practice Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning
2. provide for the needs of students who are place-bound and time-bound.
3. be guided by the principles outlined in the CCCC “Writing Assessment: A Position Statement” for assessment of student work in all learning environments—in face-to-face, in hybrid, and in online situations. Given new genres, assessment may require new criteria: the attributes of a hypertextual essay are likely to vary from those of a print essay; the attributes of a weblog differ from those of a print journal (Yancey). Because digi-

tal environments make sharing work especially convenient, we would expect to find considerable human interaction around texts; through such interaction, students learn that humans write to other humans for specific purposes. Good assessment requires human readers.

Administrators with responsibilities for writing programs will

1. assure that all matriculated students have sufficient access to the requisite technology, thus bridging the “digital divide” in the local context. Students who face special economic and cultural hurdles (see Digital Divide Network) as well as those with disabilities will receive the support necessary for them to succeed;
2. assure that students off campus, particularly in distance learning situations, have access to the same library resources available to other students (see American Library Association, “Guidelines for Distance Learning”);
3. assure that reward structures for faculty teaching digital writing value such work appropriately. Department, college, and institutional policies and procedures for annual reviews and for promotion and tenure should acknowledge the time and intellectual energy required to teach writing digitally (see CCCC “Promotion and Tenure” and “Tenure and Promotion Cases for Composition Faculty Who Work with Technology”). This work is located within a new field of expertise and should be both supported—with hardware and software—and recognized. Similarly, institutions that expect faculty to write for publication must have policies that value scholarly work focused on writing in digital environments—the scholarship of discovery, application/engagement, integration, and teaching (see Boyer; Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff; Shulman);
4. assure that faculty have ready access to diverse forms of technical and pedagogical professional development before and while they teach in digital environments. Such support should include regular and just-in-time workshops, courses, individual consultations, and Web resources;

5. provide adequate infrastructure for teaching writing in digital environments, including routine access to current hardware; and
6. develop equitable policies for ownership of intellectual property that take effect before online classes commence

Writing Programs, in concert with their institutions, will

1. assess students' readiness to succeed in learning to write in digital environments. Programs should assess students' access to hardware, software and access tools used in the course, as well as students' previous experience with those tools. In order to enhance learning, programs may also assess students' attitudes about learning in online environments; and
2. facilitate the development of electronic portfolios where such programs are in place or are under consideration. As important, writing programs will work to help develop the infrastructure and the pedagogy to assist students in moving their portfolios from one course to another, one program to another, one institution to another, as well as from educational institutions to the workplace, working to keep learning at the center of the enterprise and to assure that students learn to use the technology, not just consume it. To accomplish this goal, institutions need to work with professional organizations and software manufacturers to develop portfolio models that serve learning.