



Literacy in Context: A Transatlantic Conversation about the Future of WAC in England

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Having attended graduate school together at a U.S. university, we discovered only a few years ago how we both, by very different paths, found ourselves engaged in similar work. Donna currently directs a composition program in the U.S. and Viv coordinates an English education program in England. Over the past few years, in conversations about our work, we have been alternately fascinated and bemused at how literacy is conceived, institutions organized, and national pressures manifested in strikingly similar, yet still divergent ways. Both of us have benefited greatly over the years from these conversations: ones in which each of us seeks to explain to the other what is taking place in “our country” and why. It is the “why” that has proven so fascinating. Although we both attempt to “keep up with” published work across the Atlantic, the understanding only a local-perspective can provide for the contexts in which such work takes place has proven invaluable. When asked to discuss writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) efforts in an international context, then, it seemed only natural that we would do what we have always done: engage in a contrastive discussion that inevitably highlights our own contexts, and all the vagaries therein, much more clearly than when we think and act only within our own national contexts. Rather than write a cohesive, single argument collaboratively, we decided to reproduce the kinds of conversations that have proven so worthwhile to us over the years and to represent this contrast in

the terms in which it originally took place, in the conversational manner of e-mail exchanges. We have, however, made some concessions to the published format of this essay by organizing and referencing in a manner that, hopefully, will provide some cohesion to a conversation that frequently ran far afield of the topic at hand. Although we deliberately avoided following a single argument when writing the essay, what emerges is a story of WAC efforts that are indelibly marked by national differences in higher education and institutional structures which account not only for differing statuses for WAC efforts in our respective countries, but also for, surprisingly, different conceptions about writing itself and its function in higher education.

Before we conceived of this exchange as an essay, we had already engaged in phone conversations, initiated by Viv's experience at a recent conference on writing at an English university, which immediately highlighted for us the different ways in which writing is conceived in our national contexts. We begin, then, as the conversation began (minus the phone conversations), with two initial e-mails focused on this conference from which the themes for the rest of the essay emerged. The essay then picks up on these themes separately, pointing to the divergences and convergences in our political and institutional contexts that account for some of the differences we note in both the conceptions of writing and the success (or not) of current WAC efforts. Even as we tried to organize according to topics, however, questions of how best to conceive of writing recur throughout the discussion, as each new contextual focus continually brought us back to the central question: how do we conceive of literacy within any WAC effort? These conceptions, we try to make apparent, are constantly shifting in light of both scholarship and the political contexts of literacy in which we operate. As such, rather than a separate thread—originally imagined as something like “theoretical conceptions of writing”—we embed these discussions of theory within the other themes to highlight how dependent (and fluid) our discussions of writing always are on the contexts in which we operate. Given that we are writing for an audience of presumably mostly U.S. compositionists, we also give less detail on the U.S. context and use that context, instead, as a contrast to highlight WAC in England, the main goal of the essay. We thus conclude with a discussion on the potential future for WAC in

England. We must issue one caution, however, before proceeding. Couched in the easy familiarity of long acquaintance, our conversations are frequently casual, peppered by gross generalizations about the teaching of literacy in England and the U.S. Speaking for one's nation is an uncomfortable position to be in, and one which we hope will be taken as we understand them: clearly our own personal "take" on national situations influenced by our own investments and institutional locations.

Initiating the Conversation

Viv's Initial E-mail

I've just returned from the conference at Warwick University I mentioned: "Teaching Writing in Higher Education - A Transatlantic Exchange". It was extremely interesting and not a little strange. Dominated by English participants (many from academic staff development or study skills backgrounds), there was also a small group from the US and other colleagues from around the world. It was organised by the Warwick Writing Programme - which is unusual for England in that it is based in the university's English department.

My overwhelming first impression was that the US participants were clearly coming out of a disciplined subject and that they shared what we might call a "geography" of discourses. English participants were not disciplined in this sense and there was no shared geography; in fact, some looked profoundly disorientated by the US keynotes. The Warwick conference organisers were remarkable for their Romantic/expressive approach to writing production and proud of an avowedly "anti-theoretical" position. At the opening session, the conference convenor produced a horn that he threatened to blow if any "educational jargon" was used. In fact, he issued all conference session chairs small replicas of this horn and encouraged them to use it during paper presentations. Pride of place at the conference - adjacent to the horn - was taken by novelists, poets and literary biographers who spoke of their "confusion" about "all this talk of teaching writing: it's just something you do." So I was thrilled when Andrea Lunsford grabbed the horn and blew it loudly before she spoke!

By the end of the first day, it was clear that the conference had brought together three distinct groups: first, those who taught "creative" writing (poetry, fiction, drama, etc) and were themselves published practitioners; second, teach-

ers of “expository” writing or “writing for the academy” (however defined); and thirdly, those who adopted a social practices approach to academic literacy but didn’t themselves have an institutional responsibility for teaching “Writing”. The greatest tension was between the first and third of these groups as the “creative” writers claimed that writing was something that one “just did”; they disliked explicit teaching and were even unsure about whether writing could be taught at all (even though they did graciously concede it could be learned). They also criticised the language used by researchers as “self-perpetuating semantics” and, occasionally, the atmosphere became distinctly frosty and the horn - sitting awkwardly on the presenters’ rostra - became the powerful symbol of this fallacious separation of theory from practice.

I began to wonder why we in England were now beginning to pay attention to writing in higher education (HE) and why we had shown very little interest in it at all prior to the early 1990s. There seemed to me to be a number of catalysts for this change. First - and perhaps most importantly - there has been an increase in the numbers taking up higher education in England since the early 1990s, something reflected by the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education chaired by Sir Ron Dearing in 1996 -97. All universities are now obliged to set themselves targets for widening participation and this is particularly true of the “new” universities (referred to as polytechnics prior to 1992). Public concern generally in England about standards of literacy has been echoed by those teaching in higher education and this has led to initiatives designed to improve skills. Second, since 1997, the government body that funds higher education in England has required teaching quality assessments of subject departments in all universities. These have been conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The QAA procedures have monitored the teaching in subject departments, the mechanisms for student support and the progress made by the students over the course of their degree programme. This has inevitably focused attention on the assessment of students’ written work and their literacy skills. And thirdly, there has been an increasingly active research interest in a social anthropological approach to literacy generally and particularly to literacy in educational contexts.

The diverse nature of these catalysts was reflected in the demography of the conference participants and their institutional homes. Some were based in university Student Services or Student Support departments which ran Study Skills programmes or programmes for overseas students with English as an additional language. These programmes were often described using medical metaphors, the university offering writing “clinics” or “surgeries” which would attempt to diagnose a malady and cure a deficit in the student. Others were located in university Centres for Learning and Teaching (CLTs) or their equivalent. These centres’ principal function concerns academic staff development in relation to the criteria for subject departmental QAA inspections. They would, perhaps, be most interested in embedding a writing across the curriculum or “within the disciplines” model. Another, far less frequent location is the English department of the university. This is true of the Warwick Writing Programme and the “Speak-Write” project at Anglia Polytechnic University. The former - at Warwick - takes the missionary position and offers other subject departments the opportunity to benefit from interaction with (“creative”) writers. The Warwick programme is closely associated with the Royal Literary Fund Fellowship scheme that places writers in university departments to “provide expertise in Practical – as opposed to Creative – Writing” (Spurling 2). The Anglia Polytechnic “Speak-Write” programme is for English students only. And finally, there is a small band of academics in Education and Linguistics departments who have either taken an interest in writing development *per se* or in the study of literacy and literacy practices. All of which is a long way from English 101!

Donna’s Reply

The conference sounds fascinating for its insights into what’s going on with writing in the U.K. I couldn’t help but note some parallels to the history of composition in the U.S., which, as you correctly intuited, is much more “disciplinary” in its conversations. After a long battle, composition is now firmly entrenched here as a field within English studies and has its own conferences and journals and quite a dazzling array of interests in its scholarship and university outreach. As a result, composition and creative writing share very little in their disciplinary homes anymore, although some in com-

position are trying to make better connections between the two fields.

Composition's disciplinarity, however, certainly does not equate with consensus; one of the most exciting aspects of being in composition, for me, is that we are constantly arguing about and searching for new ways to understand writing that might best serve all our students. This lack of consensus emerges with WAC as well, and results in some of the same tensions you notice in the U.K. WAC initiatives began here mostly through initiatives to improve teaching and were primarily promoting what Sue (McLeod) has called the "cognitive" approach to WAC: writing to learn. In this approach, the main focus is on more free-form writing like journals, etc. where students use writing to interact with and come to better understand the subject matter they are learning. The writing in the disciplines approach is more recent, and probably now the most predominant, although advocates of writing to learn still exist. For many, including myself, the writing to learn approach has become a part of the WID approach, serving as invention and prewriting to more WID-oriented forms of transactional writing. Others are arguing that WAC should primarily be directed at helping students directly—through writing centers and ICT initiatives (my colleague, Mike Palmquist, is one of the primary proponents of the latter)—rather than being aimed only at faculty. I have to admit to being personally drawn more in the direction of writing to learn as a way of allowing students to consider cultural differences in writing and knowledge creation. Sometimes I think in our push for WID at different institutions, the personal—for me a way of thinking about the multiplicity of cultural identity our students bring with them to the classroom—has been somewhat undercut. But, frankly, that reflects my own interests in cultural studies, postcolonialism, and critical pedagogy: all even more theoretical strands within composition here. (Don't sound off that horn at me for invoking theory!)

What I found most intriguing in your summary of the conference is that writing-to-learn (WTL) approaches seem absent. Although you might call them more Romantic or expressive, they still form an important part of most WAC programs whose theoretical basis is more social constructionist: i.e. working from the presumption that epistemology and writing practices are mutually constitutive (what McLeod

calls the rhetorical approach). The lack of WTL surprised me, I think, because so much of the expressive end of composition in the U.S., especially writing to learn, was influenced by the work of James Britton and the London Schools' Council Project. What happened to that movement in England? Did it never make it into higher education?

The other surprising note for me was what appeared an institutional barrier between scholars of WAC (e.g. Brian Street and others' work on academic literacies: what you label the "social practices" approach) and the people working directly with teachers. As you probably know, there's quite a bit of research on academic literacies taking place in the U.S. as well that investigates the link between writing and knowledge in various disciplines (e.g. physics, engineering, law, history, etc.). Although sometimes there is a disciplinary split between people doing this research—some of it, for example, emerges from the Iowa Project on the Rhetoric of Inquiry, mostly out of their speech/rhetoric division—and those who work directly with teachers, a good deal of the research is being done by people in English who also direct WAC efforts. In fact, much of my own WAC work with faculty is influenced by this scholarship. My guess is that even those of us not directly involved in researching academic literacies read what others are doing and have it influence our work with teachers. Is there much of a conversation/collaboration between what you referred to as teachers of "expository" writing and researchers into academic literacy? Why is there such a seeming separation between teaching and research?

Your reference to English 101 might account for some of these national differences. Composition, although the discipline predates this time, really took off in the U.S. after Open Admissions policies in the late 60s and 70s (most of which are being retracted or have been retracted in the post-Reagan years). The increasing numbers and diversity of students brought on by Open Admissions (which sounds very similar to Dearing's efforts in the U.K.) also encouraged renewed interest in writing and literacy in U.S. universities. The difference seems to be, though, that this interest primarily came from English departments who were already seen to be the arbiters of writing "skills" because of the freshmen course. Although this led to easier collaborations among scholarship and teaching, it also has its downfalls. The institutionalization of the first-year course suggests that English depart-

ments, not disciplinary teachers, are responsible for writing quality throughout the university. As a result, work with other faculty is frequently peppered with comments such as “if you were doing your job in English, we wouldn’t have to worry about writing.” How do faculty in other departments react to the initiatives from the Centres for Learning and Teaching? Does the fact that most of the WAC work takes place in Study Skills programs mean that a skills-model of writing is predominant? And/or does this institutional location result in any sort of ghettoization of writing because it’s not located in presumably more “academic” departments?

Obviously, the conference elicited more questions for me than anything. What it all comes down to is whether there is anything I, as a “disciplined, U.S. subject” might call WAC in England, and whether you think the kinds of barriers present at the conference can be broken down? Should they be? What might WAC be—if it gets off the ground—in England?

National Contexts: The Politics of Literacy

Viv: The conference certainly raised many questions for me also! Your final question - concerning the future development of WAC programs in England - is interesting and one I’d like to come back to later. This one also caught my eye, however: “The lack of WTL surprised me, I think, because so much of the expressive end of composition in the U.S. was influenced by the work of James Britton and the London Schools Council Project. What happened to that movement in England? Did it never make it into higher ed?”

The work of Britton, Barnes, etc. along with Moffett, Emig, Graves and Elbow was only ever partial in its influence on the teaching of writing in schools in England. (I think Britton’s impact on the status and development of oracy in schools was much more profound). I would also assert that the social psychology that underpinned Britton’s work and led to the “writing as a mode of learning” movement was never fully understood nor developed in practices by teachers in English schools. A link between thinking and writing or - to use Moffett’s formulation - the movement from conceptualization to verbalization into literacy never came to be the guiding principle in English schools that outside observers may imagine it to have been. I think this is partly to do with the nature of educational research and the perceived “representativeness”

of the schools and practices that were investigated. What was taken from the work of these researchers was, firstly, distinctions between different kinds of writing (“expressive, transactional, poetic”) that relate to purpose, audience and context (but more obviously from Halliday) and, second, the process model of writing production and pedagogy that placed emphasis on drafting (and this more specifically from Graves). Both of these key ideas were aspects of the dominant approach to writing in the 1980s and they were embedded in the first National Curriculum for English that came into effect in 1989 and which had the support of most school teachers. These approaches were developed by England’s own National Writing Project which operated in the late 1980s/early 1990s and - in a similar way to the US model - involved a great many classroom teachers in action research and curriculum development projects that led to publication. Pat D’Arcy was one of the key figures in this movement.

In the 1990s, the then Conservative government began to militate against what they saw as a literacy crisis in our schools and amongst young adults. One outcome of this was a gradual shift towards viewing literacy as a set of discrete skills that could be explicitly taught and easily measured. This approach chimed with the government’s other key criticism of high school English that was that they felt that it didn’t teach the English literary canon as a method of reinforcing notions of national identity. The National Curriculum was revised on a number of occasions, although the most controversial and instrumental version never came into effect. We also saw the proliferation of national testing in schools from age 5. The focus had begun to shift from expressive, cognitive approaches to a particular focus on text and language.

Although the explicit teaching of writing had never really taken hold in higher education (for a variety of reasons, including the fact that only a tiny minority of the population went on to full-time study right up to the early 1990s), the skills debate of the mid-1990s did make it into higher education as widening participation in HE was high on the political agenda at this time. The “key skills” movement (of which communication/literacy is but one) is now firmly part of the higher education debate as is the promotion of what are seen as “transferable” skills such as “problem-solving”.

The new Labour government of 1997 decided to continue with the previous government's commitment to a National Literacy Strategy (with a dominant focus on the explicit teaching of skills in relation to the production and analysis of text) although superficially motivated by commitments to social inclusion and the kind of arguments put forward by Lisa Delpit in "The Silenced Dialogue". At the same time, people like Wray and Lewis were developing an approach to the teaching of writing in schools that drew on a reading of Vygotsky, genre theory and functional grammar. They were probably the individuals responsible for the huge interest in the use of writing frames in England, although Maureen Lewis now deplores the poor practice that is associated with many teachers' use of these "scaffolds". There was renewed interest in the kinds of interventions that teachers could make "at the point" of writing rather than as a response to writing. When the National Literacy Strategy toots the horn, it invokes - among others - Scardamalia and Bereiter, and Glaser. The National Literacy Strategy's avowed aim at present is to teach children to "get it right" on their first attempt at writing.

Meanwhile, the government department responsible for the National Curriculum, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA; formerly SCAA), has invested substantial sums of money in promoting the linguistic analysis of texts as a "bridge" to writing. Their "Technical Accuracy Project" of 1998 - based on a review of written answers in a sample of school English examinations - and other evaluative work around the study of grammar in schools led to publications such as *The Grammar Papers* and *Not Whether but How*. I think it's obvious that the expressive or cognitive approaches to the teaching of writing in schools have fallen out of favour with policy-makers in England (and, as you know, the educational policy machine in England is extremely powerful and heavily policed through inspection). There are many of us who are arguing for a careful examination of the ways teachers are being asked to position themselves in relation to the teaching of writing in schools but in such a highly-politicised environment - when test results for 11 year olds could determine the outcome of a general election - we are having to work extremely hard. Pat D'Arcy's recent pamphlet, *Two Contrasting Paradigms*, was a useful polemic but perhaps focused too sharply and rather belatedly on the process/genre debate rather than on the more fundamental ques-

tion about conceptions of literacy and teachers' professional identities.

Donna: Whenever we talk about literacy in England and the US, I'm amazed at both the corollaries and the differences (how's that for a non-comment). What I mean is that despite the fact that writing, as you say, is much more disciplinary, entrenched, and institutionalized in the U.S., for both good and for bad, the national pressures are remarkably similar. On the "good" side, of course, we have required first-year composition courses like the one you and I taught as TAs at good ole WSU, and active WAC programs—albeit in multiply variant configurations—at most of our universities. Such institutionalization of writing has led to the disciplinarity of the composition field where, despite our differences, we do share a vocabulary for discussing writing and even some paradigmatic assumptions about process approaches to teaching writing and social constructionist philosophies (which, admittedly, makes the talk of creative v. expository, practical writing v. academic literacies, etc. at the Warwick conference seem strange indeed and a reflection of a hopefully long gone past in the U.S). But we also have a similar movement to standardize literacy and police schooling through testing. For a time these initiatives were mostly on the state level, but with the recent passage of President Bush's educational bill, we now have mandated testing in every public school across the U.S.

Given the size of the U.S., though, the kinds of monitoring you speak of in England are impossible. Rather, each state is allowed to devise its own test as long as they report scores to the federal government. In Colorado, for example, we can use the CSAP, instituted a few years ago that, luckily, asks students to actually compose a text for the literacy exam. The fear about such testing, though, is that it will encourage even more skills-based, teaching-to-the-test kinds of curriculum in secondary schools. We haven't felt the bite so much in higher education yet, but there are moves in this direction. In Colorado, it's manifested itself in the call to have students graduate more quickly. The push by the CCHE (Colorado Commission on Higher Education) is for public universities to revise degree programs to 120-credits (a four-year graduation model). This has had disastrous results for things like teacher education where all "excess" (like courses in language across content areas) has had to be cut or made

optional. It's also having a significant impact on WAC efforts as faculty, feeling quite rightly beleaguered, believe they have little enough time to teach their "content," never mind doing what they see as the English department's job as well.

In a cynical reading, the predominance of WID models over WTL or more critical pedagogy models of WAC might also be seen as a response to national contexts, especially economic ones. In recent years (although to me this seemed to hit a hiatus during the Regan years and has since become almost an unquestioned truism), public rhetoric about higher education more and more assumes that the purpose of a college degree is economic. Students pursue higher education in the hopes of employment; the public presumes a bachelor's degree should equate almost directly with a job. As a result, the professionalization purposes of higher ed (or what some might even call vocational) are highlighted more and more as students (at least in my classes) come to see courses not in their majors as, at best, ancillary to their educations, and at worse, a complete waste of time. While WID is admittedly trying to serve a much loftier goal than merely professionalizing students by connecting writing practice to the epistemologies of professional communities, it could also be seen as the writing model well suited to such a technocratic, economic function of higher education.

The connections between our contexts, then, seem driven by the economic mandate which education seemingly can't escape in this century of global capitalism. Do you think any of this economic definition of education also accounts for the growing disillusionment with the writing to learn model in England?

Institutional Structures and Conceptions of Higher Education

Viv: As I said in my last message, the writing to learn movement never really made it into schools in England never mind higher education. I am certain that "economic" definitions of education are part of the reason. With reference to higher education specifically, there are several reasons for this. It really was the case that the tiny minority that made it into university education here were perceived as having high levels of literacy acquired during the final years of schooling when they were studying for what were known as A-level examinations. Not only were they able to demonstrate com-

petence with the transcription aspects of writing but they had also been disciplined into their subjects by their A-level teachers. For some in England, this represents a time when A-levels were the “gold-standard” - serving both a disciplining and a gate-keeping function for higher education. In this context, there was no perceived need to pay any attention to the teaching of writing, and when problems with students’ writing did occur, the response was often just to blame the deficiencies of the secondary school system for having failed the student or to ascribe some quasi-clinical condition to the more deserving cases. Another reason was that ideas about teaching in higher education then were very different to what they are now. For a long time in this country, university education was loosely based upon a model seemingly derived from Oxford and Cambridge in the late Renaissance: large whole cohort lectures on a weekly basis combined with high expectations about commitment to independent reading and regular meetings with a tutor at which the student would *read* their weekly paper aloud or engage in disputation. Perhaps the only occasion on which a student’s writing would be assessed was in the final written examinations taken at the end of the degree course. As I mentioned, it is only since 1997 that universities have been closely monitored for their teaching by the QAA process and this - together with the widening participation agenda - has refocused some universities on how they teach their undergraduates and for some, I am sure, it has made them consider this very seriously for the first time. Indeed, at the time of my writing this, some of the elite universities in England were saying that they would no longer submit themselves to the QAA process and one of the reasons was that they feel its agenda distracts them from their research (for which funding – relatively speaking— is more generous and which offers them greater prestige).

Donna: While the economic mandate seems to figure somewhat differently in England, the class structure of the old A- and O-level examinations seems, as you imply, to undergird some of how writing is conceived even with the new literacy initiatives. These new initiatives and changes in admissions policies, though, make me wonder how the status of writing itself has changed. In particular, how is writing now institutionalized in England? Is it? I’m thinking here that we have a distinct advantage in the U.S. because the first-year course has made writing seem like the natural

work of higher ed, making WAC efforts perhaps easier. (Although this is a fight continually being fought about basic writing, a course which many administrators and legislators see as inappropriate work for colleges and universities. In Colorado, for example, we have a law about not remediating at four-year institutions.) This institutionalization had a long, hard history that many tie to the public universities (created through the Morrill Act in the 19th century to create land-grant institutions such as the one I teach in), community colleges (which gained in numbers significantly during the Open Admissions period so similar to the recent initiatives you spoke of in England by Labour), and to the meritocratic impulses of places like Harvard in the 19th century. Don't get me wrong, though, there are still institutions in the U.S. where writing is presumably something the students "should have learned" prior to entering college, especially in Ivy League institutions, although with the hiring of Joe Harris at Duke and Andrea Lunsford at Stanford, composition does seem to finally be making some inroads at these institutions. The future of the first-year course is also still being debated (see Sharon Crowley's recent book on the topic) in composition itself, because of the acculturation into dominant language using practices it encourages and its implicit support of a skills-based model of writing (i.e. if pictured as a "service" course to other university classes, first-year writing again suggests that writing can be learned once and for all before entrance into other courses). Thus, we still have vestiges of the cognitive skills model you point to as alive and well in England wherein literacy is reduced to a functional skill that can be mastered, but this way of talking about writing tends to exist more in the public sphere than in institutions, and is especially absent in composition scholarship which consistently seeks to work against such assumptions.

The hierarchy of universities you talk about here, though, is somewhat anomalous for me. Although we certainly have a tier system in the U.S. of research universities (e.g. Carnegie I classifications) and ones whose primary goal is seen as teaching, the research universities still incorporate teaching to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the institution. (At my own, a Carnegie I, for example, teaching makes up 50% of my annual evaluation, although my sense is that this is a fairly high percentage for this type of university). Do researchers at the research institutions also teach? Is this

what you think leads to the teaching/scholarship split you spoke of?

Viv: The teaching/scholarship disjuncture I noted at the Warwick Conference is, I think, related to a number of contextual factors but I feel I may have over-emphasised it. (Many of those now research active in the field began as tutors in “surgeries” or drop-in study skills centres). First, I would estimate that most of the (for want of better words) explicit teaching of writing in higher education in England takes place outside academic departments in study skills or student support units. Therefore those who teach writing are usually not on academic contracts and are not directly subject to either the QAA process nor the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) which assesses departments’ and individuals’ performance in academic research outcomes. This latter point means that there is no incentive (and perhaps therefore no departmental pressure) to engage in research or scholarly activity. At my own university - one of the influential Russell Group of English research universities - writing instruction for students is currently provided by the Study Skills Unit located (along with the Dyslexia Unit and other support and welfare functions) in the Academic Registrar’s department. My colleague Geraldine Price has recently completed a survey of Study Skills provision in the Russell Group universities. She found that Study Skills – which includes support for writing – was usually located in Student Services or Student Support departments. There were two particularly interesting findings: firstly – and perhaps unsurprisingly – students had to fail before they were considered “at risk” and in need of support with study skills, including writing; second, the study skills in which most provision was offered (in response to perceived need) related to reading strategies (library and information skills, speed-reading, etc), oral presentation skills and time management. Only then came aspects of writing practice such as summary skills, planning and appropriate style.

As I have mentioned previously, much of the “high status” writing in higher education research and scholarship in this country tends to come from departments of Education and Linguistics and from academics who do not have direct, institutional responsibilities for teaching writing other than the attention they give to this with their own students or in the research they may undertake collaboratively with other

departments. There is no general writing course here, as you know. Additionally, those who work in the Centres for Learning and Teaching do not have an institutional responsibility for teaching writing. They do, however, have an institutional responsibility for developing the quality of teaching and learning and they are usually on academic contracts (perhaps as Lecturers in Academic Practice or Higher Education) so it seems to me that it is in this institutional location and through these academic posts that writing - across the curriculum or within the disciplines - might be developed in higher education.

Donna: Despite the institutional advantages we have for WAC emerging from English departments in both scholarship and teaching (although WAC is also in study skills centers, centers for teaching and learning, and education departments as well), we also have similar impediments. In my first e-mail, I think I implied that we have no such split in the U.S., but that's really not accurate. What I was thinking is that we don't, at least in composition, really have such a split with those who research writing. One of the things I love most about my institutional location in composition is that scholars/researchers, like Sue and Andrea, not only care deeply about their own teaching, but almost all research in this area attempts to make a pedagogical connection—i.e. to see how theory/research might impact teaching practice. What is disturbing is that this doesn't often work the other way because of systemic problems. The majority of writing courses in this country, especially at the freshmen level, are taught by part-time, adjunct faculty and TAs who, because of heavy teaching loads, no security, and no support, really aren't able to engage in research. Although the composition community continually discusses how to address this issue of working conditions, it seems part and parcel of the McJob/Wal-Mart approach to employment that makes up so much of the workforce now in the U.S. Thus, I think except for those of us in tenure-track positions (and there are fewer and fewer of those) the teaching/research split still exists. Is this a split that might be exceeded by the Centres for Teaching and Learning in England, which at least grant academic status to practitioners? Are the CLTs, what you call the best possibility for WAC, involved in research as well?

The Place of Writing in Higher Education: Theoretical Conceptions of Writing in National and Institutional Contexts

Viv: Higher education's interest in writing to learn as indeed in all approaches to writing was long confined to university departments of Education and Colleges of Education that trained primary and secondary teachers. Most of the key figures in writing in England have always come out of the education service or university Education departments: James Britton, Tony Burgess and Gunther Kress have all been associated with the London Institute of Education; Richard Andrews is in York University's School of Education; Pat D'Arcy was a local authority (school district) advisor; and Brian Street - after some time in Anthropology at Sussex University - is currently located in King's College London's School of Education. The other site for interest in writing in higher education has been the Open University, an institution that from its inception has set out to open access to higher education for part-time students, for mature entrants and for those considered "non-traditional". As the Open University is principally a distance-learning institution, student support and induction have always been prime concerns. It is in the Schools of Education (including the Open University's) that the interest in the "new literacy studies" (to use Street's description) has arisen and the interest in academic literacy as social practice has been developed. Key figures here are Street himself plus Mary Lea (from the Open University) and Barry Stierer (previously at the Open University and now at the University of Brighton) and they have produced interesting research arising out of their work in the relatively new (for England) academic areas such as Nursing and in more traditional university disciplines. Lea's work has paid some attention to on-line tutoring and support (a key area for the Open University) in addition to analysing paradigms of writing pedagogy across higher education.

The other important location for some of this work has been in departments of linguistics or applied language studies. Perhaps unsurprisingly, much of this is language- or text-based and mirrors the interest in linguistic analysis promoted in school English teaching by the QCA. Research in this area has looked, for example, at the significance of the grammatical subject and the effect of nominalisation with the assumption that analysis of sentence-level features can

give writers answers about the rhetorical structure of academic writing. The positivist approach to linguistic analysis demonstrated by some of the linguists interested in this area does not sit easily with the more situated and provisional approach adopted by the “new literacies” folk. Roz Ivanic is a notable exception: although institutionally located in Linguistics, her work investigates the complex negotiations of identity and authority in students’ academic writing.

Donna: This leads me to a more WAC-oriented question. Given the context you describe, I wonder again about the potential of WAC programs in England. Lacking the kind of disciplinarity we have in the U.S. (although consensus may not be the right term), what direction might a WAC program take? Are such programs even possible within such a skills-laden discourse or might the WID model be more viable because it can appeal economically? Is there any hope for the “new literacies” model you spoke of? I’m most interested in the latter, I must admit, because it is this conception of writing, I believe, that has had the most potential in the U.S. to open up how we view literacy itself as multiple and contextual, hopefully leading to a greater acceptance of multiple cultural literacies as well as academic ones. (Question woman strikes again, it seems....)

Viv: I take your earlier point about disciplinarity not equating to consensus. By using the phrase “shared geography of discourses”, I was trying to indicate that in the US - disciplinarity aside - you all seem to know where you are coming from. The Warwick conference for me was startling in that it was clear that this wasn’t true of its English participants and that this created confusion and disorientation on all sides. The distinctions between “creative” and “expository” or “academic” or “expressive” or, indeed, “practical” writing are, of course, highly problematic.

To answer your question about which theoretical model might work best in England, I need to go back over old ground. You’ll remember the conversation we had about the influence of the British WTL people on the teaching of writing in the US and its lesser impact in England. Following the Bullock Report (*A Language for Life*) in 1975, the ‘Language Across the Curriculum’ movement started which encouraged teachers of all subjects in the secondary schools to consider how they were using language in the classroom and how their pupils were using language - not only to communicate what

had been learned but as part of the learning activity itself. It also led to the recognition of the importance of “talk” in learning and the creation of the National Oracy Project in the 1980s. As a young teacher in the English Midlands, some of my earliest professional development opportunities came out of the National Oracy Project and I remember my sadness at the termination of the project during a time of increasingly authoritarian control over curriculum content. Indeed, whole-school language policies went out of educational fashion and I vividly recall a government inspector’s response in 1991 to my offer to discuss my school’s language policy: “Oh, we don’t bother with Bullock any more,” he said.

In 1997, language across the curriculum in secondary education underwent something of a renaissance with the publication of *The Use of Language: a common approach* by SCAA (now called QCA). They published a useful handbook for curriculum managers going over the same ground covered by Bullock and also separate leaflets for every National Curriculum subject which gave practical advice on how teachers could make the language involved in learning visible to their pupils and placed the same degree of emphasis as Bullock on classroom talk and what it referred to as “tentative” opportunities to use language. One element was the writing to learn approach from nearly twenty years’ previously but it is fair to say that the emphasis continued to be on spoken language in the classroom. In 1999, we saw the first pilot of a National Literacy Strategy in the early years of secondary education. The materials produced for this initiative once again drew heavily on the work of Britton and, particularly, Douglas Barnes. Indeed, the videotape provided for teacher training sessions included some excellent examples of teachers developing pupils’ critical language awareness in the classroom and some examples of particularly good geography teaching that demonstrated, to use Barnes’ terms, the transformation of “school knowledge” into “action knowledge.”

However, the success of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in primary education (judged by progress towards targets set for pupil performance on national tests for 11 year-olds), with its focus on what I sometimes call the “architectural history” of text, encouraged the Labour government to fund a National Literacy Strategy for Key Stage 3 (the early years of secondary education) and an important strand of this is what is now referred to as “cross-curricular literacy”.

There is a particular focus on writing in the Strategy materials. This was a pragmatic decision prompted by the slower progress of pupils toward national targets for writing at age 11 and a desire to make explicit to pupils their socialisation into the disciplinary sub-cultures of the secondary school. The focus, however, is not on “writing to learn” but on lexical, grammatical and textual differences - reduced now to the NLS formulation of “word-, sentence- and text-level features” - particularly with regard to register and genre. At the Warwick conference, I attended one presentation from an institution that was attempting to apply the NLS approach to the teaching of writing in higher education. My feeling generally, though, was that where some universities were now attempting to develop their own WAC programmes, they were importing models from the US that were influenced in part by earlier exports from England. In those universities, the development of students’ writing was closely tied to the development of their learning and this was being encouraged by the staff development provided for university lecturers by their Centres for Learning and Teaching.

Current changes to the induction and training of university teachers is being influenced by the recently formed Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT). This national organisation was set up by government to encourage and accredit training programmes for new entrants to university teaching. Most universities have supported the aims of the ILT, although for some perhaps this could be described as “lip-service”. Indeed the Association of University Teachers - an organisation that represents the employment rights of university lecturers - has not encouraged its members to join the ILT. Nevertheless, if the ILT does succeed and the Centres for Learning and Teaching flourish, then the kind of isolated WAC - or rather WID - experiments we have at present may indeed thrive.

Given the differences in how writing seems to be approached, I have some questions for you:

1. Can we clarify the difference between WAC and WID?
2. At what point does WAC/WID become critical? I can see many examples in the US and some here of the emphasis on WAC being some kind of cultural learning but when does “socialization” stop and a critical/academic literacies pedagogy become possible?

3. Is it possible to conflate critical pedagogy with an academic literacies pedagogy?

Donna: In the short run, I'd say that what you describe in England is somewhat similar to the U.S. in that writing as a mode of learning (as a WAC effort) preceded any attempt at WID. WAC began, and continues to be, primarily focused on student *learning*. WTL became the predominant model for so long because such strategies effectively combine writing with more action-oriented pedagogies and help facilitate a more personal connection to disciplinary content. WID, as I've mentioned, came later. For most of us, now, I think WAC could be said to refer to both WID and WTL as well more genre-based approaches to disciplinary writing. The real advantage to WID within other WAC efforts, though, is undoubtedly its focus on the connection between ways of knowing and writing, and thus, its emphasis on multiple literacies connected to multiple communities and contexts.

WID began greatly influencing the WAC movement in the last decade or so, prompted, in my opinion, by the "social turn" in composition. (This is much my personal "take"; however, there are much better, researched histories of this. See David Russell, for example.) As we began to think of writing within discourse communities (e.g., Bizzell, Bruffee), and literacy as multiple (due in part to Street and Heath, etc.), compositionists started to reconceive of writing as creating knowledge rather than merely reflecting it (although there was certainly this emphasis in the writing for discovery emphasis of expressivists like Peter Elbow in the 70s). At the same time, more work on rhetoric in the disciplines was becoming available—like Charles Bazerman's history of rhetoric in the sciences—which demonstrated how historically specific what we think of as standard genres are, particularly how they emerged in response to a variety of social and political circumstances. And, with the social turn in composition, we also returned to the rhetoric as epistemic arguments begun by Robert Scott in the late 60s. In this completely idiosyncratic history, I think what happened here were several opportunities—in rhetorical theory, in composition, and in literacy studies—that converged to make WID seem like a natural extension of current WAC efforts more focused on learning content via writing. Thus, writing in the disciplines—given their different epistemologies—suggested an academic literacies approach where WAC consult-

ants began to work with faculty on seeing not only how rhetorical patterns were different across academic disciplines (i.e., the more text-based approach you mention in England), but also *why* they were different. In short, much of the work turned to how genre, style, etc. emerged from ways of knowing rather than simply stylistic or audience differences.

Given its links to multiple literacies, WAC (as WID) does seem to be well suited to a more critical/cultural approach as your question suggests. If my reading of its emergence as partially a result of the “social turn” in composition is correct, then it should point even more so in this direction. Much of the discourse community/social work in composition came about as a way of understanding the diversity of students and literacies that teachers were seeing in writing classrooms. Many now read this switch as a corrective to the “deficit” and “accommodationist” models of literacy brought on by Open Admissions in the 70s (e.g. Lu, Horner). In this way, such work sought to value the multiple literacies students brought with them from their “home” communities. The terms of this discussion have since been critiqued by people like Joseph Harris and John Trimbur in favor of a more poststructural/cultural studies understanding of multiple subjectivities and culture as an ongoing process in an attempt to disrupt the problematic framing of writers as insiders and outsiders invoked by the community concept. Despite the change in theory, the attention to valuing difference continues. In the WID movement, however, the focus has primarily been on academic literacies, not on multiple, cultural literacies. On the positive side, the influence of WID on WAC efforts does open up the question of what precisely “good writing” might be, and encourages faculty and students to see literacy as a contextual and social act rather than associated only with a particular form of dominant literacy and dialect. On this end, I think it can do (and is doing) some important critical work. In response to your question of whether academic literacies can be conflated with critical pedagogy, however, I’d say no. As I argue elsewhere, I think the focus on WID can work (and does work) to the detriment of cultural difference. In short, it seems to emphasize multiplicity, but only within the already sacrosanct walls of the institution. If we see academic discourse as having multiple forms, yet still located institutionally such that it works to exclude other discourses (in a more Foucauldian idea of power

even within multiplicity), I'm not sure we can call it critical pedagogy.

I do think it opens the doors to something more critical, however. Making the literacy and epistemology link in various disciplines seems like a step in the right direction. I simply think we need to take it to the next level: ideology. Looking at what investments different epistemologies (and the literacies that create/sustain them) allow, in ideological terms, would allow us to make that next step to critical pedagogy and encourage students to see what ways of knowing they are implicitly accepting when they write in a particular academic literacy. Then, questions of cultural difference might also be introduced as we could examine conflicting ways of knowing/literacies and see what opportunities they might provide for resistance to a given academic epistemology. I don't think we're there yet in the U.S. WAC as WID still primarily strikes me as performing a socialization function in favor of the mandate of professionalizing education (see my earlier comment). It would seem, though, given the predominant theories you've pointed to in England—romantic/expressive approaches, skills-laden writing models, and text-based approaches—that you're operating in a context where critical models may be even less likely. So, the penultimate question comes up again: What you see as the future possibilities for WAC in England? Will the “new literacies” approach gain a foothold in the CLTs and other places where WAC might flourish?

Future Possibilities for WAC in England

Viv: We are entering another very interesting period of development in higher education in England. Ambitious new targets have been set for participation in university education. New “vocational” degrees (similar to associate degrees) are being planned. The new minister for higher education has given her backing to the QAA agenda and, interestingly, in a newspaper interview on taking office, cited her own experience of higher education (in which she claimed she was only asked to write one essay in three years!) as a reason. Centres for Learning and Teaching are expanding - even in the elite universities at present - and new academic posts in these areas are being created. There are also increasing opportunities to develop and publish research in higher education. It seems to me, then, that the focus on student learning

and progression that has arisen out of these developments will create opportunities to re-think the role of writing and the teaching of writing in higher education. It will no longer be economically viable - never mind desirable - to consign a proportion of students to remediation in study skills units; the proportion will simply be too large and the needs of those students more fundamental than some help with proofreading and instruction in spelling strategies. Reconceptualising the teaching of writing in HE merely as cultural learning will also not be a possibility if we still aspire to the transformative and critical aims of a "higher" education. WAC can offer us a way forward but it is not going to be an easy process for a whole host of reasons - political, institutional and personal - nor will it necessarily allow us to develop the kind of understandings about literacy in academic contexts to which we'd aspire.

Widening participation in higher education is a pragmatic political objective, presumably in the same way as the Open Admissions policy of the 1960s was in the US. Politically, the National Literacy Strategy has many admirers; for them, it sets out a very clear framework of functional objectives that must be implemented uniformly across a sector. Progress can then be measured on national tests and this is useful and attractive to politicians. So we may speculate - perhaps wildly - that the National Literacy monolith may be adapted for the higher education sector under its usual "social inclusion" guise but may offer little more than a simplified and partial text-focused approach which socialises individuals into the right way of writing. It is important that those leading any WAC development confer with those in departments of Education and Linguistics who have knowledge and experience of research and teaching in writing. There continues to be a great deal of expertise in this country that could offer a usefully critical perspective on new initiatives - local and imported. Institutionally, any strategic development around developing students' writing will have to be located in such a way that it commands the authority of the university as a whole and has the research credibility of an academic department. The Centres for Learning and Teaching seem to offer an ideal location if they continue to combine staff development (university-wide) with academic functions. As new academics are inducted into the profession and undertake accredited courses in pedagogy and as more established lecturers can be encour-

aged to reflect upon their own academic practices, a gradual shift in the culture may take place as more attention is given to students' learning, how they learn and how they may transform that knowledge. A theoretical dialogue between CLTs and Education/Linguistics would be fruitful and is perhaps essential for the development of disciplinary understanding of literacy in higher education. Personally, though, many academic staff across the departments of universities may balk at the thought of paying any attention to students' writing for the usual reasons. It is the development of this understanding of writing, of learning and of academic literacy that will be the most fragile and tendentious. At my own university, it is at this personal level that we begin. Over the next year, a variety of speakers - some from the US but most from England - will be presenting papers as part of an informal seminar series jointly organised by the Centre for Language in Education and the Centre for Learning and Teaching. The speakers will present reports on their own work in WAC and its theoretical context and consequently build a sense of disciplinary awareness which is vital if attention to writing is to have personal credibility on academic terms with university teachers. These seminars will create opportunities to explore the kind of literacy we expect and would wish to develop in university students and ourselves. If we continue to eschew subject-specific terminology and refuse to problematise academic literacy, then we're on a hiding to nothing.

Donna: I really like the way you are working to get all the different interest groups talking at Southampton. It sounds very promising. Also, on a more optimistic note than I seem to have taken in this exchange, I do think the focus on *learning* that you mention is a key one here. One the greatest benefits of WAC in the U.S., and many comment on this, is how work with faculty initiates a dialogue about student learning among departments that is sometimes too rare given how separately we all work in our own departmental enclaves. WAC has made a lot of inroads here as teachers come together with great concern about their students: frankly selling learning is easier than selling writing. If faculty can see the connection between the two, the "balking" at the kind of work teaching writing involves is usually ameliorated (although certainly not for everyone).

I'm still curious about the potential critical side, though. As I said, I don't think we're doing much with that in WAC as yet (for very good reasons: how much we impose on faculty what we think students need to learn is a very touchy area—it can easily result in an overly “missionary” approach that, frankly, doesn't usually work). But what has worked here, on that end, is the first-year composition course. Figured within the critical aims of higher education (educating for citizenship), this course (and other upper-division writing courses in English departments) can take up these cultural/critical issues more directly. As you know, there is a great deal of work on applying cultural studies and critical pedagogy to the teaching of writing which, I hope, leads to a more critical sense of literacy and ideology that students take with them to other classes as well. So, my final question (I know I've said that before, but I mean it this time) is whether there would be any benefit to institutionalizing writing in an academic department that communicates with others, or is this totally untenable given institutional structures? I ask because I'm still unclear about three issues in terms of the future of WAC in England: (1) whether “imported” models are really the route to go given all our political and institutional differences, (2) whether there is any movement toward a more full-fledged WAC initiative in higher ed, and more importantly, (3) what you think the goals of a WAC initiative—if you can get it off the ground—ought rightly to be?

Viv: One of the signs of the considerable growth of interest in writing in higher education in England over the last five to ten years is the relatively new organization, Writing Development in Higher Education (WDHE), an organization that has its own conference, publications and electronic newsgroup. Many of the teachers of writing in English universities (wherever they are located institutionally) are members of this organization and so, given what I have already said about the Centres for Learning and Teaching, I posted a question to their newsgroup enquiring about the extent of developmental activity in relation to student writing and academic literacy in which these Centres are currently engaged. I have received ten replies to date from an even mix of “old” (pre-1992) and “new” (former polytechnic) universities. The variation in activity and the divergent interpretations of “development of student writing” and “academic literacy” were

quite striking and confirmed my first impressions from the Warwick conference about disciplinarity.

The majority of Centres that responded were still working within a Study Skills paradigm although they wanted to make it very clear that this was not on the basis of remediation. They indicated that part of their work was to provide students with drop-in support for study skills, some of which was related to writing, either directly or through an associated Study Skills Unit. These drop-in facilities, they made clear, were open to PhD students as well as “struggling undergraduates” and they were explicit about how this differed from the separate provision made for overseas students with English as an additional language. They also described short courses they were offering academic staff to raise their awareness of how to incorporate the development of skills (whether “key” skills or “transferable” skills or “study” skills) into their teaching. However, two of the ten respondents (in two very different institutions: one “old” and one “new”) described nascent WAC initiatives, either using the acronym explicitly or by using the key indicator “writing to learn.” The one respondent in a Teaching and Learning Unit (another term for a Centre for Learning and Teaching) who used “WAC” in her reply was introducing reflective learning journals in a small number of departments. It was significant, I feel, that her own academic and professional background was in an Education department. However, there was an awareness in both respondents’ outlines of activity that attitudes to student writing are changing rapidly in their institutions and, in both cases, were related to major curriculum reforms at the institution-level.

I think that WAC may indeed have some future in English higher education subject to certain contextual factors. I don’t think these should be under-estimated, especially given what I’ve said about the policy context in England, and I would say that there is virtually no possibility of a general writing course in the same way as first year composition. WAC, if it does develop widely in HE here, would be programmed as WID and, as I’ve already said, I think it would be incubated in the Centres for Learning and Teaching. WAC will only develop, however, if the increasing numbers of students taking up higher education don’t cause the system to change its assessment mechanisms fundamentally either to mostly “objective”, multiple-choice tests or to single, end-of-

teaching-sequence essays for which there is effectively no feedback. There is some interest in the development of assessment techniques using computer-technology, not necessarily the optically-scanned “bubble” tests so beloved of the Educational Testing Service but techniques that have come out of web-based distance learning such as on-line quizzes. The modularization of university courses has also had an effect on assessment of learning and consequently on writing development. As students here now tend to take a number of modules each year to build up credits (in a similar way to the US) and these usually have a written task to complete at the end upon which a grade is assigned, the opportunities for tutors to engage with students’ writing through the course have diminished and the only feedback on writing happens once the module is over and the grade is assigned. Lea and Street see this as a key issue.

The other contextual factor that will affect the development of any larger-scale WAC initiatives here is whether the text-focused approaches adopted by the secondary phase National Literacy Strategy will transfer to higher education. The emphasis on linguistic analysis as a “bridge” to writing does not easily coincide with an approach that seeks to link literacy to epistemology! This is an important concern: the transition from secondary to higher education is still a difficult one for many students and a text-focused approach to literacy in higher education would be appealing to some that value consistency in order to ease the transition.

However, it does seem that we are beginning to make connections between writing, learning and disciplinarity in higher education, wherever these efforts happen to be located in institutions. These efforts could easily stop at what Lea and Street refer to as “academic socialization,” however – showing students the ways in which writing is structured, referenced or presented, etc. in a particular discipline. It seems almost ironic that it would be the WAC movement with its 30-year history of “writing to learn” – exported from the UK to the US and returned via Composition studies - that moves us on to thinking about the complex negotiation between personal identities, disciplinary authority and the ideological nature of knowledge.

Conclusion

Throughout this e-mail exchange, what has become more and more obvious to both of us is how incredibly complex any literacy effort is. In England, like the U.S., the future of literacy education cannot be separated from public conceptions of education, admissions policies for higher education, governmental interventions into higher education, institutional locations for writing, and the political mandates about education's function which organize institutions and their priorities. In fact, some time after our e-mail exchange petered out, the specifics of the transatlantic context changed. Although change was, of course, to be expected, the decision by the UK government to significantly reduce the impact of QAA "inspections" of university departments (and consequently downgrade the QAA's status) was perhaps unexpected given the new minister's initial public statements. This led to the resignation of the QAA's Chief Executive and a period of some uncertainty as to the agency's future. Given some universities' opposition to the way in which the QAA system worked, the relative importance of teaching quality and attention to student learning vis-à-vis research output and entrepreneurial activity is at present unclear. Combine this with renewed commitments to widening participation and the complete reorganization of research funding mechanisms and the trajectory of higher education policy in the UK begins to look even more complex.

In order to meet the UK government's targets for participation in higher education - without either the much-feared "dumbing-down" of quality or the separation of the university sector into a two or three tier system - it seems that a number of important decisions have to be made and that the experience of the US may be useful in identifying the key questions: does opening up access to higher education necessitate an altered concept of literacy? what role should literacy play in higher education—a socializing or a critical function? how might the teaching of literacy be reconciled with the research mission of British universities? what restructuring of institutions might be necessary for complex concepts of literacy to thrive?

There are no easy answers here, but our collaboration has suggested some fruitful directions based on the U.S. experience with similar changes in admissions and governmental roles in education. Changes in admissions cannot be allowed to support impoverished concepts of writing based in

skills and scaffolds or positivist linguistic analysis. Rather, the increasing diversity of students brought on by altered admissions will hopefully issue a different challenge, one wherein writing comes to be seen as intimately connected to social and political contexts, as inextricably linked to cultural identity. The “new literacies” approach is well positioned to support writing as both a complex act and one inextricably linked to disciplinary, academic work, thus suggesting that writing be more intimately connected to the teaching of “subject” rather than housed separately in study skills centers. The diversity inspired by new admissions standards also points to a possible critical role for literacy as a question of citizenship, of achieving a public voice about authoritative forms of knowledge. Changes in admissions, that is, can easily function to disrupt assumptions about the privileged status of certain literacies. The key question remains, however, of how to incorporate a changing sense of literacy into an institutional system wherein writing is only beginning to be seen as inextricable from learning. If the literate graduate is to be imagined as one who can both participate in professional discourses and offer a critical view in public discourse, then the role of writing in individual classrooms, the amount of teacher-student interaction about writing, and the exchanges between researchers and teachers needs to be expanded beyond what is currently taking place. These are difficult challenges. Given the frequent alterations in government policy, resistance of institutions to change, and the public’s conceptions of literacy, meeting such challenges will not be easy: neither in the U.K. nor the U.S.

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