

**UNCA**  
***Academic Policies Committee***

---

***Report on Language 101 and 102***

On March 23, 2000, The Academic Policies Committee met with Language Department faculty to discuss the two writing requirement courses.

Senate Document 3684 requires that students satisfy the writing requirement by passing a competency examination either with a “high pass” supplemented by an advanced course or by passing the competency exam after taking two “3-hour college level courses in writing.” The requirement is defended this way:

“Most students need the experience of two courses in writing to reach the level of competence expected of college students. Some students with superior preparation will only need one course at an advanced level to perfect their skills. The examination can serve both for placement and for exit competency.”

The document neither provides guidance as to the course’s content nor does it clarify what “level of competence” is “expected of college students.”

From the report and the discussion, APC draws four conclusions.

1. *The Language program needs to clarify and improve its assessment procedures.*

The object of assessment is to determine whether courses are achieving their goal. This can only be done by determining the degree to which students actually improve their writing skills from the time they enter the course until the time they leave it. The Language program makes reasonable efforts to standardize the assessment of student work for assigning grades within courses, but must seek measures external to the course to determine the program’s overall effectiveness.

2. *The Language Program must clarify its charge and purpose.*

Efforts to improve assessment are futile, however, unless the purpose of the language courses is clearly defined. Senate Document 3684 is inadequate for this purpose. It specifies that UNCA students must reach “the level of competence expected of college students.” The Language program, should guide the entire faculty in determining what that phrase means by making an effort to redefine and clarify the purpose and value of a writing requirement.

3. *The relationship between the writing requirement and other general education courses as well as the major programs is unclear.*

There appears, for example, to be a natural connection between Language 102 and the communication issues raised by the Library Research faculty. The integration of the two requirements should be considered.

Equally unclear is the relationship between the Language courses and the major programs. Since writing is a skill, it can only improve with continued practice and must be continually practiced and refined in the major courses. The language department is aware of this and has developed the writing center and a writing across the curriculum program to assist student development. Both, however, require substantial institutional commitment to succeed. There is little evidence, however, that such commitment exists.

Other ways of helping students improve their writing skills include merging writing and general education courses or instituting a writing course within the student’s major. The Language faculty should investigate ways these could be implemented and inform the University faculty of the advantages and disadvantages of the different alternatives.

4. *The Language requirement relies too heavily on temporary and non-tenure track faculty.*

The discussions revealed that for a variety of reasons, the Literature and Language Department cannot currently support the Language requirement without supplementing its faculty with non-tenure track teachers. The Department must work with the Administration to identify more efficient ways of allocating scarce resources so this dependence on non-tenure track faculty for these important courses can be minimized.