1. Overview and Definitions:
   a. How does UWG define students’ ability to write in Standard English or apply writing to discipline-specific communication? (Definitions should be standard across a college or content area)

Definition:

In the disciplines in the Humanities and the Arts, writing is extremely important as a tool for:

1. understanding oneself and others;
2. making sense of and explaining complex ideas, texts, artworks, cultures, and histories to oneself and others;
3. explaining and exploring human experience for oneself and others;
4. inquiring consciously and critically into human consciousness, values, systems, ideologies, languages, and cultural production; and,
5. documenting clearly in both analytic/critical and artistic/creative ways (sometimes in more than one language) the results of all such inquiry described above.

Analytic writing consists of thesis-driven essays (in clear and grammatically correct prose) that demonstrate a skillful and insightful use of data (broadly interpreted to include narrative) to convincingly convey a point or argue a position. Creative writing consists of the expression of the writer’s ideas/experiences/thoughts/feelings in imaginative and unique ways in fiction (including poetry, scripts, screenplays, stories, etc.) and non-fiction.

b. How did you arrive at this definition?

The process in COAH began when Dr. Clark sent an e-mail to Chairs at the end of the fall semester outlining current DSW definitions (from a long-standing Writing Committee) and asking them to verify that these current definitions and practices were still in place. At the beginning of the Spring Semester (2012), the College Writing Committee was asked to take up the work begun in late fall. In the first week of the semester, the committee met. All department Chairs were then asked to take the questions provided by Dr. Anderson to their faculty, to draft answers, and to submit those to the Writing Committee. The Committee read through the materials submitted by all departments, assessed the answers from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, filled in gaps where necessary, and came up with a synthesized definition. This definition and document were then circulated again. Additional feedback led to the final definition and to the final draft of this document as a whole.
c. Who was engaged in the process?

The faculty and administration of the College of Arts and Humanities were all asked to participate in and provide feedback on this process. The members of the Writing Committee compiled, synthesized, and documented the results as representatively as possible.

d. How widely is this definition shared and understood?

Given the process described above, everyone in the COAH had access to the draft of the definition and the opportunity to provide feedback on it. Feedback suggests that faculty members now know about and understand the definition.

e. Are students aware of this definition? If so, how?

Students are probably not yet aware of this specific definition since we are still in the process of producing it. Students ought to, however, be familiar with the basic concepts outlined in the definition, since they form a part of all courses in the Humanities and the Arts.

2. Overview of Current Practices

a. How is the discipline defined?

The College of Arts and Humanities includes seven disciplines: Art, English, Foreign Languages and Literature, History, Music, Philosophy, and Theatre. English, Foreign Languages and Literature, History, and Philosophy are what are considered Humanities but include artistic endeavor.

Art, Music, and Theatre are considered Arts but also include humanistic modes of inquiry. The Humanities are branches of knowledge/modes of inquiry concerning human thought and cultural production. The Arts are fields in which the focus is on harnessing creative and imaginative impulses in order to produce aesthetically pleasing works of music, literature, art, and theatre.

b. What are the current practices in teaching discipline-specific communication?

All departments include a variety writing assignments in the classes they teach: journals, essays, analyses, poetry, fiction, biography, scripts, essay exams, reviews of performances, reflections, and so on. Individual faculty provide directions and explanations (generally written) for the individual assignments (outlining expectations and parameters), and evaluate and provide feedback (a technique intended to show students how they can improve on what they’ve done) on those assignments using either formal, shared, and written rubrics or informal, individual, and internalized rubrics. Writing is taught in classroom discussions about the structure and mechanics of papers and artistic works, in one-on-one sessions in office hours in which drafts are analyzed and work-shopped, in student work-shopping in class, in University Writing Center tutorials (run exclusively by COAH faculty), and in the evaluation of drafts of students’ writing assignments.
In general, faculty members require a step-by-step writing process, providing feedback at every stage of the process: proposal, sample paragraphs, rough draft (between one and three of these), and final drafts. All departments have writing-intensive classes teaching discipline-specific communication at the 3000-level or above. All departments include elements of discipline-specific writing in all upper-level-classes, and most include these at the lower level as well. In at least two departments, extra-curricular activities are provided on a regular basis to help encourage and improve student writing.

In addition, it is important to mention that writing is a practice that is intimately linked to reading. Artistic and critical literature constitute some of the most sophisticated, clear, and articulate prose available. We believe, therefore, that improving writing is tied to reading good writing in the disciplines. All departments require substantive amounts of reading in the discipline in their upper-level-courses and, in many cases, in their lower level courses too. Providing good models of what we expect, analyzing them in terms of structure and content, and discussing them in detail likewise contribute too in significant ways to the development of strong writing skills.

c. **How are the students taught and at what point in the curriculum does this teaching take place?**

In the College of Arts and Humanities, students are taught writing at every level of the curriculum in every department. Within the disciplines in COAH, we articulate as part of our regular curriculum a year-by-year progression from introductory writing at the 1000 level to developmental and pre-professional writing at the 2000 and 3000 levels, culminating in a honing and refining of those skills at the 4000 levels. In a variety of courses, faculty members teach a shared set of writing skills, but specific courses within the disciplines also emphasize the development of specific skills as well. For the College of Arts and Humanities, learning how to write better is an infinite process, a kind of life-long learning that is never completed – like staying physically fit. It is not something one achieves for once and for all. It is something one works to maintain and tries to improve upon every day and with practice.

3. **Assessment of Current Practices:**
   
a. **What evidence exists that supports whether or not current practices are effective?**

   Evidence is collected in individual departments in a variety of the following ways:

   1. Anthologies of student writing for Senior Seminars.
   2. Results of student performance on external, accredited exams that include writing portions.
   3. Individual writing assignments from individual courses.
   4. Online portfolios of student writing that show progress over a 3-4 year period.
   5. Records of graduating majors.
6. Presentation of papers at conferences/Publication of papers in journals.

7. DFW rates.

b. **What measures are used to assess current practices?**

COAH assesses whether or not current practices are effective in various ways, including but not limited to:

1. Discussions in departmental and section meetings that lead to critiques, ideas for change, and the implementation of those changes in many cases.

2. Ongoing interpretation and analysis of SACS data at the departmental level.

3. Generation of faculty-approved rubrics that are revisited and honed in accordance with the experience(s) of faculty in courses in which writing is taught.

4. Reading of single papers by additional faculty members (not just course instructor).

5. External exams and competitions.

6. Team or partner grading (a kind of mini external check).

c. **What rubrics are currently in use?**

In most departments, individual faculty members create and use their own rubrics. English, History, and Philosophy, however, have all developed departmental rubrics which are available on their websites.

d. **What are the results over time?**

Discussions and assessment of data collected on student writing have led, over time, to curricular and other changes designed to enhance our practices. Those include but are not limited to:

1. The addition of more specialized writing classes (technical writing, a second composition course in FLL majors, changes to the Capstone/Senior Seminar courses).

2. The revamping of WAC to DSW.

3. The establishment of a College Writing Committee (Subcommittee of the Executive Committee).

4. The addition of extra-curricular workshops within departments and also at the University Writing Center.
5. Changed requirements in individual courses (more and different kinds of writing added as reported in SACS assessment).

4. New Practices
   a. In order to enhance the quality of students’ ability to write in Standard English or apply writing to discipline-specific communication, what new practices does the college intend to implement or support?

   The College recommends the following:

   1. Reduced enrollment caps, particularly in lower-division courses, so that instructors can assess problems in students’ writing as early as possible, assign more writing, and can develop and implement a more extensive drafting/feedback-loop process.

   2. Consistent expectations across all disciplines for writing assignments and instruction in lower level classes.

   3. The Development and implementation of program rubrics to standardize expectations and assessment.

   4. A more effective implementation of DSW writing requirements in the College.

   5. Additional editing labs and more workshops.

   6. The Creation of online tutorials.

   7. More and better communication and collaboration with the University Writing Center, and COAH-wide participation in its work.

   8. The hiring (in some departments) of faculty members who are experts in writing pedagogy.

   9. A thorough-going assessment of writing instruction and writing assignments in all courses in all departments.

   10. Entrance and exit exams for multi-section courses devoted to the teaching of writing.

   11. Higher entrance requirements for the student population in general; particular attention should be paid to the writing portion of the SAT exam. If a student has not achieved a basic level of writing competence before entering introductory college courses, s/he proves unable to keep up, master the material, and/or succeed. Having large numbers of unprepared students in any given class also hampers the development of those students who do have a foundation on which to build.
b. Are there practices that have been found to be ineffective that will be eliminated?

COAH teaches the majority of core courses devoted to college-level writing skills; we find that large classes in the first two years are detrimental to the development of strong writing skills that students could hone later in DSW courses (both in our own and other colleges). Because extremely large classes make the drafting and feedback loop almost impossible, students do not always get enough practice early on, remain insufficiently skilled in the basics, and thus not poised to succeed in their upper division, writing-intensive classes.

c. How and where will these practices be implemented (i.e. courses, outside of class, degree requirements)?

We will implement the new practices both in courses and outside of class. Degree requirements do not need to be changed since the College already focuses on improving student writing throughout students’ careers. The goal will be to help more students more effectively achieve the outcomes which the University and the College have set.

5. Intended Outcomes
   a. What student outcomes will result from implementing these new practices or replacing old practices?

   Again, given that writing has always been very central to all of the disciplines housed in the COAH, we do not see a need to change learning outcomes related to writing at this time. With few exceptions, courses in the COAH include some kind of writing-related learning objective. As we move through the multi-year process of examining how we can help more students to more effectively achieve the goals already in place, we will continue to adjust and hone our practices and may revisit and redraft learning outcomes where judged necessary or important.

   1. Students will write a discipline-specific, faculty-directed advanced project that demonstrates analytic engagement with discipline-specific literature.
   2. Students will write organized, discipline-specific texts.
   3. Students will write texts free of major grammatical error.
   4. Students will adhere to a widely acknowledged academic honor policy in their writing, recognizing and avoiding plagiarism.

6. Assessment
   a. What evidence will be collected that will identify if these new or replacement practices are effective?

   The College will continue to collect evidence as it has done in the past: anthologies, student publications, data from individual courses each semester, results from external exams, and some
departments will develop a portfolio system in order to demonstrate progress from first through fourth/fifth year. The College will consider instituting entry/exit writing assessments for classes, constellations of classes, and degree programs.

b. How, when, and by whom will these data be collected?

The faculty will collect data in their courses and extra-curricular initiatives and submit it to their department Chairs, who will, in turn, record the data online (SACS central website) and in the departmental offices.

7. Rubrics or Measurements
   a. Include the rubric or measurement used to assess the effectiveness of new or replacement practices.

This rubric does not yet exist because we are in the process of defining the new and replacement practices. Once they are finalized, work on developing the rubric will begin immediately in the Writing Committee.

8. Budget

1. The College requests several new tenure-track lines so that enrollment caps can be reduced where necessary and stability created in order to allow students in all disciplines and all classes more practice and feedback than is often currently possible. This measure will make possible more writing assignments involving more drafting, individualized feedback, and a quicker feedback loop mechanism.

2. The College requests funds for more Graduate Research and Graduate Teaching Assistants to assist with an increased number of writing-based assignments in high-enrollment core courses

3. The College requests additional operating funds in order to establish more editing labs and workshops and to fund some travel for faculty to writing pedagogy workshops/conferences.