JOURNEY TO OZ: HOW UNIVERSITY ENGLISH INSTRUCTORS VIEW TRANSITION PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ENTERING FIRST YEAR ENGLISH

Jennifer Watt, Current M.Ed. Student, Language and Literacy

I am a graduate of an undergraduate degree, a survivor of teaching high school English, and the wife of an assistant professor of English. When I think of the complicated issues surrounding the transition from high school to university, I must admit a sound track starts to play in my head. I hear Munchkins singing “Ding, dong the witch is dead” or I spontaneously hum “We’re off to see the wizard.” Indeed, I begin to think of the classic novel and film *The Wizard of Oz.*

The tornado sucked me into the world of the yellow brick road in September 1995. I do not recall the title of the disastrous essay that had sent me spinning away from my comfortable life with Auntie Em, but I do remember the hideous C- scrawled on top of the first paper of my undergraduate career. It suddenly felt much harder to breathe than it had only moments earlier, as I desperately checked to make sure I had picked up *my* paper and not someone else’s. Yes, it was mine. Yes, I deserved the grade.

I was not yet initiated into the academy. This was explained to me by my English professor who, although kind, seemed somewhat bored by my predicament: “We see it every year. You were the top of your class in your high school, right? Now you’re in my office in tears, wanting to know how I could be so mean. It is different here. We expect more: we expect you to write with evidence, revisions, critical analysis, and clarity. Either learn to step up to the expectations and you will find your grades more acceptable, or don’t and live with the grades you receive. It is your choice.” A decade has passed, so the professor’s words are paraphrased, but the
experience of knowing I was not “in Kansas anymore”, as Dorothy discovers in *The Wizard of Oz*, is still vivid and raw.

Oz provides quite an apt metaphor for how many first-year university students feel about the mysterious and awe-inspiring land of academia. Behind a veiled curtain, there is someone who has all the answers. The revered and feared wizard can give them the brain, heart, or courage they are seeking, but first they will be set a task that seems almost impossible: they will need to kill the wicked witch of the west through sophisticated and academically accepted discursive practices.

My journey to Oz peaked my interest in transition from my first moments in university. When I later became a high school English teacher, I was conscious of how my content, instruction, and philosophical choices were affecting the preparation of my students for their lives beyond secondary school. I listened carefully and somewhat hopelessly as my husband and his colleagues at various universities shared frustrations about students who were ill-prepared for the academic rigour of university. These academics questioned how they as individual teachers or members of an English Department could influence positive changes to support students in their reading and writing. My interest in the complex issue led me to graduate school and eventually to this project, which acts as an initial glimpse into how a “writing intensive” program in the English Department at the University of Manitoba may be addressing issues of transition from high school to post-secondary literacy processing.

In the past five years, the University of Manitoba has reported a loss of approximately one third of students enrolled in first-year studies after only one academic year (www.umanitoba.ca/admin/institutional_analysis/new_rept/). The transition from high school to university is unsuccessful for a significant portion of the population. In the interviews I conducted for the pilot study, two current
instructors and one administrator in the English Department at the University of Manitoba communicated concern that literacy processing skills (Straw, 1990) of critical reading and analytical writing may contribute to the success or failure of students during their transition years to post-secondary studies. Each participant identified funding issues as a barrier for the English Department to implement imaginative programs to meet the needs of at-risk students who do not have the literacy skills, experiences, cultural background, or support to succeed in first-year university. In this paper, I will provide a background to this issue through an overview of the literature, give a synopsis of the context and design of the study, and discuss some of my major findings and conclusions regarding funding issues.

Connection to Literature

Challenges of Transition

Every year, first-year university students perform an astonishing act of daring and skill as they leap across the great chasm that separates high school from university. Some do not make it, plunging into the depths of the canyon we dispassionately refer to as “attrition.” Those of us who teach at universities barely notice this amazing high-risk feat, except to express our displeasure that the students who arrive in our classes are not better prepared and more motivated (Sears, 2004, p. 166).

Alan Sears, a professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Windsor, shares his experiences developing interdisciplinary courses designed to facilitate the transition of students from high school to university in his article “Mind the Gap: Prospects for Easing the Transition from High School to University” (2004). This article provides an insightful examination of the issues facing university students as they negotiate the change from their relatively safe and
controlled home and school environments in high school to the minimal guidance environments of university. Sears states, “Universities are basically designed to teach self-starters” (2004, p. 167), a method that may have worked 50 years ago “when universities were far more elitist as institutions and admitted only the tiny proportion of the populations deemed best suited for the environment” (2004, p. 167). He argues that although universities have traditionally adopted a model of assumed student self-reliance taught by professors who are self-starters themselves, this might not be the best way to teach undergraduates. The assumption that students will be able to grasp successfully the skills and attitudes required at university if they work hard enough may be false and worth investigating.

Sears questions the pedagogical sense of bombarding first-year students with courses structured as “a survey of the discipline that gives some sort of overview” (2004, p. 168). He claims “the skills students require to complete this kind of survey often align neither with those they developed in high school nor with those they will need to for academic success in subsequent years” (Sears, 2004, p. 168). Instead, he argues that universities should be working in closer contact with high school teachers and in greater co-operation within their departments to design a continuum of content and skill development. He cautions university instructors against playing “the party game of pin the blame on the high school, which absolves us of responsibility for systematic skills development” (Sears, 2004, p. 168). The challenge, Sears argues, is for the university to develop the skills required for their students:

As long as we regard the higher-order skills required for university success to be someone else’s responsibility and a prerequisite for entry into our system, we can avoid considering a systematic approach for developing the capacities of our students. Success at university requires certain higher-order skills in
such areas as reading, writing, research, and analysis that cannot and will not be developed elsewhere (2004, p. 168).

Universities need to move beyond surveying the content of the discipline in the first year to teaching explicit skills required for success.

Sears is aware of the challenges for academics to teach specific skills, as “university faculty members are experts who are long past the initial experience of learning the difficult skills we now use everyday” (Sears, 2004, p. 168). Writing is a clear example of a skill academics are likely to have grasped through trial and error as students themselves. However, many may not feel comfortable teaching others how to accomplish the required style, structure, and discourse: “It can be difficult to explain even a rudimentary skill like tying a shoelace or driving to a rank beginner if you have mastered it to the extent that you do it without thinking” (Sears, 2004, p. 169). Sears suggests in order to move towards teaching skills to students, universities will “require a break with the individualistic teaching strategies that tend to dominate” (2004, p. 169). Co-operation amongst colleagues will be required to develop innovative approaches to teaching, but this may be met with reluctance as academics may fear taking risks with their teaching. Sears explains:

The message we often get in this profession is that one will be promoted on the basis of research as long as the teaching record is clean, without obvious problems. The best way to a clean record in this sense is to take very few risks because they might create tensions with students or colleagues. The development of a genuinely innovative research-based teaching culture requires openness to taking chances, making mistakes, and learning from them (2004, p. 169).
The shift to this “innovate research-based teaching culture” would require an ideological shift in the focus of university settings.

More successful transition to university requires a shift from discipline-based learning to learner-centred learning: “attention to the gap between high school and university ultimately requires that we begin with the learner rather than the discipline” (Sears, 2004, p. 169). This shift would require teaching needed skills to first-year students and developing awareness that “the most valuable skills our students learn are trans-disciplinary, that is, they cross the lines of many or all disciplines” (Sears, 2004, p. 170). This move to interdisciplinary approaches to teaching are currently being trialed at the University of Windsor within “a new course … designed to expose first-year students to the breadth of ways of knowing across the arts and the social sciences by showing how different disciplinary perspectives can come together to cast light on a particular problem” (Sears, 2004, p. 171). This program is in its initial stages, so Sears’ article is meant to be an exploratory piece reflecting on the challenges of transition, rather than evaluating this new program’s outcomes. However, I find his overview of some of the complex and highly ideological issues involved in teaching first-year students particularly illuminating, providing a contextual backdrop to the specific studies that are contributing to the enlarging collection of research on transition issues.

Determinants of Success in Undergraduate Education

“The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion from High School Through College” is an American longitudinal quantitative study published in February 2006. The National Centre for Education Statistics followed a national grade-cohort in a study known as NELS: 88/2000, which began with a sample of 12,000 eighth-graders in 1988. The cohort was followed through to December 2000,
through regular interviews and collection of high school and college transcripts. From
the original sample, 83% participated in post-secondary education by age 26 with
68% of the population participating in a four-year college at some time. The study’s
purpose was to assess what factors may affect the completion of academic credentials,
giving students 8.5 years to earn degrees from four-year colleges. Results of the study
showed that 33% of “traditional-age students who started in a four-year college
earned a bachelor’s degree from the same school in a ‘traditional’ four-year period”
(Adelman, Executive Summary, 2006, p. 5). By 8.5 years, 70% of the students who
started in a four-year college had completed a degree. The major factors contributing
to a student’s successful completion of a degree were also discussed, including the
role that high school plays: “the academic intensity of the student’s high school
curriculum still counts more than anything else in precollegiate history in providing
momentum toward completing a bachelor’s degree” (Adelman, Executive Summary,
2006, p. 2). Beginning college immediately after high school with no delay had
statistical significance in degree completion. Full-time, continuous enrolment also
contributed to degree completion, as did enrolment in summer classes. Socioeconomic
status was the only demographic characteristic significantly associated with degree
completion. Although this study was not primarily focused on high-risk populations,
some discussion was also directed to the difference in degree completion for minority
groups.

Colleen Dorothy Bower’s dissertation “Student development in university:
Predicting students’ persistence and success during their undergraduate careers”
(2002) is a study of 944 (272 males, 672 females) undergraduate students in a
Canadian university. It explores what predictors of persistence (measured by degree
completion and degree type) and success (measured by cumulative graduating GPA)
may account for only 57.9% of the sample graduating within the five years of the longitudinal study. The abstract does not give details about how data was gathered, but indicates results from the study. Gender, generational status, parental support, parental reciprocity, social adjustment, academic adjustment, school attachment, and first-year GPA were direct predictors of graduation and/or degree type. Depression, high school average and stress were discussed as indirect predictors. High school average and first-year GPA were direct predictors of success as defined as cumulative graduating GPA. Through the quantitative data gathered in studies such as these, big picture trends of what factors emerge about what may be affecting how likely a student will continue in education and how satisfied they are with their undergraduate life.

Students’ Perspectives of Transition to University

Thompson and Joshua-Shearer use data from questionnaires administered to 156 undergraduate students enrolled in a comprehensive four-year university in Southern California to discuss transition issues in their article “In Retrospect: What College Undergraduates Say About Their High School Education” (2002). The survey was voluntarily completed by 62% of a sociology class, with nearly 60% of the participants at a junior level and 30% a senior level of their degree program. Univariate and bivariate statistics were used to analyze the data. One of the major findings from the study were that 52% of the students claimed to have more than one “best” high school teacher, with over half of those students identifying English teachers as their best teacher. Math and Science teachers were most often cited as “worst” high school teachers. More than 60% of the students rated the quality of instruction as “good.” However, ratings were linked to students’ academic tracks with higher track students more likely to rate the quality of instruction as high. Students
were asked to identify characteristics of a good teacher. Thompson and Joshua-Shearer state, “six of the 10 most frequently cited characteristics (patience, enthusiasm, fairness, gives extra help, friendliness, and humour) deal more with the teacher’s personality than pedagogy” (2002, p. 8). This led the authors to conclude that English teachers were most likely considered the best high school teachers because they met these criteria. Students identified a need for more explicit teaching of “better critical thinking skills” and “study skills” (Thompson & Joshua-Shearer, 2002, p. 7) to prepare them more thoroughly for college.

Doug Enders, an assistant professor of English, also investigated what students have to say about their high school education in “Crossing the Divide: A Survey of High School Activities that Best Prepared Students to Write in College” (2002). Enders surveyed 315 of his own freshmen composition students at the University of Toledo and Indiana State University about their writing in high school and college. Enders administered surveys to his students who completed them anonymously at the end of the semester after most of their work had been completed. He states, “the purpose of the survey was not so much to obtain quantitative information as to elicit students’ qualitative responses” (Enders, 2002, p. 2). One third of Enders’ students identified writing practice as the activity that best prepared them for post-secondary writing. High school writing assignments were most frequently described as reporting, describing, or summarizing information usually in research papers or book reports, leading Enders to conclude his students “felt unprepared when college assignments asked them to develop, analyze, and interpret their own ideas and those of others” (2002, p. 3). Students identified a lack of specific feedback from high school teachers on written assignments. When discussing peer editing, students were far more likely to refer to “editing…the practice of addressing problems of wordiness, unclear
language, and errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling in a text” than
“revision…the process of rethinking, clarifying, developing and reorganizing an
author’s ideas and purpose” (Enders, 2002, p. 5). Enders described his most disturbing
result as the 25% of the students who claimed that “nothing” they had done in high
school had prepared them for college writing. Enders is quick to point to the timing of
the survey, which is at the stressful end of term, or the inability to transfer knowledge
from one setting to another as likely causes for this pessimistic view of how prepared
the students felt for university. However, he elaborates on the experience of the
quarter of his sample who felt unprepared for college writing:

   Ninety percent of those who claimed that nothing helped prepare them said
   that they wrote twenty or fewer papers in four years of high school, with 60%
   of them writing ten or fewer papers. Moreover, 90% also noted that they
   weren’t graded as thoroughly, given as much feedback, or challenged as much
   in high school as they were in college (2002, p. 6).

Enders clearly states the limitations of his survey and suggests this is an area that
warrants further research.

Description of the Context of the Pilot Study

The University of Manitoba is Manitoba’s largest post-secondary institution, and its only research-intensive and medical and doctoral-granting institution. It
currently has a population of over 27 000 students (University of Manitoba, 2005-
2006, p. 5). Most first year students at the University of Manitoba enter into a
program of study known as University 1, a program “designed to give entering
students the opportunity to adjust to university life and its academic demands, explore
options, and gain experience before they make definitive decisions on their academic
and career goals” (University of Manitoba, 2005-2006, p. 53). Within the parameters
of the University 1 program, students are required to take a minimum of “one three credit hour course with significant content in written English” (University of Manitoba, 2005-2006, p. 5), although many faculties require a minimum of 6 credits of written English for acceptance into their programs. Students have some choice of courses that they will take to cover the written requirement, but the majority of these courses come from the English, History, Religion, or Philosophy departments. In order to meet the writing requirement, many first-year students will take an introductory English course, even if they have no intention of further studies in English.

Since 1990, two of the most widely subscribed first-year English classes at the University of Manitoba have been English 4.120: Representative Literary Works and 4.130: Literature Since 1900. Many first-year students choose these courses to meet the writing requirement so many different “sections” or classes of each course are offered. Each section has its own instructor who determines the texts to be studied and the focus of each class and assignment. Writing intensive sections have only been in existence since 1996, developed with funding the administrator explained, “do [es] not come from the Department, or from Arts, but from Central Administration.” This extra funding provides enough resources for two sections of writing intensive classes for 4.120 and 4.130. The resources are spent on setting a cap for the section of 35 students and providing each section with a Teaching Assistant (TA), so each written assignment can be drafted and marked twice. The writing intensive sections’ instructors are highly encouraged to use writing workshops and peer review as part of the drafting process.

Methods

Participants
This study investigated how two instructors and one administrator from the English Department at the University of Manitoba perceive how first-year students’ needs are being met through the writing-intensive sections’ unique curricular focus. The instructors offered different perspectives on the writing intensive sections as one, Dr. Nielsen (pseudonym or fake names assigned to all the participants) was teaching the English 4.120 Representative Works course. The other, Dr. Johnson (pseudonym or fake name) was teaching the English 4.130 Literature since 1900 course. Their perspectives also differed due to experience levels, as Dr. Nielsen is a very new teacher, only two years into his career, and Dr. Johnson has been teaching at the University of Manitoba for over twenty years. The administrator, Dr. Phillips (pseudonym or fake name) provided another part of the picture of the writing intensive sections. She was involved in the original development and teaching of the sections. She is currently teaching in the department, but also has an administrative role with the undergraduate programs in the Department.

Methods

I tape-recorded and transcribed interviews with the three participants. The interviews lasted up to 60 minutes and consisted of eleven open-ended questions (see Appendix A). Each instructor also provided a copy of his current syllabus. Interview and syllabi data were analyzed using a grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to organize emerging categories and themes. The constant comparative method highlighted similarities and differences between formal curriculum documents of the instructors’ syllabi and the descriptions of the implications of implementing sections from the individual interviews.
Limitations

In order to make it achievable within the time frame of the course and in its framework as a pilot study I limited this study in three ways: sample, method of data analysis, and data collection methods.

The sample was limited to two of the four instructors of the 2005-2006 writing intensive sections. The instructors were nominated by the administrator due to their varying levels of experience and the fact that each represents one of the first-year English courses that offers a writing intensive section. Due to time constraints, no control group of instructors from the regular sections of the same courses was interviewed. I chose to focus on implementation of the course from an instructor and administrator perspective, rather than the reception of the course from a TA or student perspective.

The choice of using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is in itself a limitation of the study. By choosing to work with any model, other forms of analysis are excluded. Discourse analysis might be a helpful way to glean further information from the interviews, but it was not used with this pilot study. Observations of the teachers in the classroom might also have provided further insights into how the instructors are conveying the different elements of the curriculum to the students, but again this research method was beyond the scope of this current study.

Findings

As illustrated in Figure 1, three major themes arose from the data collected in the interviews: (1) implementation issues, with two subthemes of instructional issues and funding; (2) content choices, broken into writing process and literature and writing; and finally, (3) contextual issues, as explored in student preparedness for
university and curriculum continuity. Due to the genre of syllabi writing, which values brevity and pragmatic communication of structures and policies, the data collected from the syllabi was divided into only two major themes, as illustrated in Figure 2. Implementation issues and content choices remained, and although some of the contextual issues may have been implicitly addressed through content choice or class structure, this part of the instructors’ concerns were not primarily communicated in the formal document provided to students. I will focus the remainder of my time briefly discussing the findings pertaining to funding issues as explored mainly through the interviews with the participants.

Discussion: Funding and its Effects on Instruction

Administration seems inevitably linked with funding. Administrators need to manage programs with the means available. My questions for the administrator focused on funding issues, and included direct questions about resource allocation and additional support required. However, I was surprised at the range of issues to which funding was directly tied. Dr. Phillips spoke of how many students are completely unaware that they have registered for a writing intensive section and at first she questioned the students’ abilities to read fine print. However, when I probed and explained my own difficulty finding out about the writing intensive sections in both the undergraduate calendar and in the on-line course descriptions, Dr. Phillips admitted that these descriptions could use some updating. She explained that there are funding issues involved in acquiring the software and staff resources to do so.

Funding also became an interesting part of a discussion about the demographic trends about who takes the writing intensive sections. Dr. Phillips said that the department does not do any statistical record keeping nor do they receive any data about admissions or trends of specific courses from the university’s Office of
Figure 1

Representation of themes and aspects of curriculum identified in the interviews
Figure 2

Representation of themes and areas of curriculum in the syllabi
Statistical Information. She explained that this type of data gathering may be helpful and is something the department would consider doing, but she said “it would be awfully difficult” due to the large number of regular sections that would act as a control group. Later in the interview she also shared that they did not have any statistical information about how the University 1 program affected how many students chose to take an English course for their writing requirement. She is aware that there are now fewer sections of 4.120 and 4.130 offered than in past years. However, without demographic statistics she was not sure whether this drop was caused by the English department’s more varied offerings of three credit courses or whether more students were opting to take 99.111, which is a University 1 course satisfying the writing requirement. At the end of the interview, Dr. Phillips shared that “the Department was hoping to produce data on these types of issues.”

Dr. Phillips predicted that writing intensive sections help students improve one letter grade during the course of the year. She felt that statistical data could help provide evidence of substantial student improvement to the powers granting funding, so that the English department could expand the number of writing sections available. The funding issues being expressed here show a common cycle for the implementation of many curriculum ideas: administrators need funding to gather data and evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum, but in order to gain funding, evaluations and hard data are required as evidence before further resources are invested.

The instructors also explored funding issues in variety of ways. The first issue about funding expressed by both instructors was the cost and value of texts for their students. Dr. Nielsen described his process of choosing texts for his class as “long” and “laborious” because he wanted “to ensure my students read the texts, but
also that they don’t feel like there are a bunch of texts they have purchased that they are not going to read.” Interesting editions of texts with strong critical material was also a high priority expressed by Dr. Nielsen, but certainly affordability for students was the first thing he discussed. Perhaps this is why funding became one of the dominant themes emerging from Dr. Nielsen’s syllabus. I counted each time the writing text was referred to on the syllabi because both instructors stated they wanted their students to feel there was a value to the writing text because they were using them often. Dr. Nielsen’s syllabus made direct reference to the writing text 53 times. On his syllabus, he breaks down each day into what needs to be read and how the class will be focused.

Dr. Johnson also discussed his process in choosing a writing text. He shared an experience from his first years teaching the regular sections. At this time he chose a text everyone else in the department was using, but quickly discovering it was not helpful in his classes: “the text was under-used and I couldn’t even make it an effective reference guide.” Instead, he went “looking for a text that I could use because I trusted it, valued it, and I could convince the students very quickly that this was worth the money it was costing them.” Dr. Johnson’s syllabus mentions the direct use of the text nine times, but his outline is far simpler and less elaborate than Dr. Nielsen’s.

One of the issues that Dr. Johnson spoke of in great detail was the need for “a constructive attempt to understand how we’re meeting the needs of students all the way along and what kinds of continuity there is between high school and University teachers.” Although he never addressed funding explicitly, within his suggestions to help students prepare for academic writing and university life, there are many funding issues implied. Dr. Phillips also spoke of communicating with high school teachers
about the writing intensive sections, but she was more pessimistic about the dissemination of this information, questioning the feasibility of this type of undertaking considering they were such a small program.

Dr. Nielsen raised another funding issue that directly affects the implementation of the curriculum, which is the availability of technology in the classroom. He explained that having constant access to technology like interactive whiteboards and digital projectors might change the way he taught the course. He said that he currently does not use as much technology as he would like because he has to book access to projectors and he can not always depend upon them showing up at the right time. Since the technology on loan is not always the same, he would have to learn how to use the individual piece, slowing down the class. He stated, “if I knew that sort of thing was going to be in my classroom at all times, I might be willing to take more advantage of it...Not feel I needed to use it every day, but to use it where appropriate.”

The role and responsibility of the Teaching Assistant is a final and important area where funding affects instruction and the implementation of the course is evident. Dr. Phillips describes the way the TA offers “extra guidance” for students during the writing process and also explains how the TA offers the opportunities for drafting of work to be assessed intensively. Both instructors spoke highly of working with their TA’s and both shared a similar experience of the advantage of having, as Dr. Johnson terms, “a second teacher in the class that means I have a second set of eyes and ears.” Both discussed the advantage of having someone to discuss how the class went and to share reflections on how to improve communication in the future. Dr. Nielsen elaborates on this benefit of working with a TA:
The other reward is having some feedback about how the class is going from someone other than the students. ...When a class doesn’t go particularly well it is also nice to hear from the TA whether there was some other mood in the class...

Funding for a TA in the writing intensive sections improves the instructor’s teaching through reflective dialogue with a fellow practitioner.

Conclusions

The three participants in this pilot study expressed a belief that the writing intensive sections have positive affects that help first-year students transition to university demands. Dr. Nielsen expressed his desire for more writing intensive sections, but explained the restraints of funding upon the feasibility of this development:

I would actually like to see less diversity [in the English department’s course offerings] in that I think every class in some extent should be a writing intensive section. Simply funding and staffing issues wouldn’t allow us that at the moment and probably classroom space...we simply don’t have enough rooms...

Research into current effectiveness of the program and demographic trends of course choices may be one means for the English department to develop further programs focusing on first-year students’ needs. Communication with high school teachers may provide another part of the needs assessment.

The initial project confirmed my belief that this area warrants further examination. I recently conducted another pilot study with three first-year students in writing intensive sections of English 4.120. These pilot studies are helping direct the research proposal for my thesis. I am planning to use a phenomenological qualitative
design to further explore how instructors and students in both the regular and writing intensive sections describe the issues of transition for students entering first-year university.
References


University of Manitoba. *Office of institutional analysis current enrolment reports*. http://www.umanitoba.ca/admin/institutional_analysis/new_rept/
Appendix A: Instructors’ Interview Questions

1. Have you taught an English 4.120/130 Writing Intensive section before? How many times? Have you taught the regular 4.120/130 section before? How many times? How do you structure the writing intensive section differently to the regular section?

2. What do you know about the history/context of the development of the writing intensive curriculum? Do you think this knowledge (lack of knowledge) affects how you design your own course? In what way(s)?

3. What are the aims and objectives of your course?

4. What text(s) did you choose for your course? Why?

5. How do you address the instruction of writing process and product in your course? How do you address the instruction of literature? Do you address writing and literature separately or together?

6. How do you use your allotted Teacher Assistant hours? What challenges/rewards are there for you as an instructor working with a T.A.?

7. From your experience with your students, what reasons do they give for choosing to take the writing intensive section over the regular 4.120/130 section?

8. Do you feel your students arrive at 4.120/130 prepared for the demands of academic writing? What skills, attitudes, or tools do you think need to develop?

9. Do you think there could be other ways to diversify the curriculum offerings or instructional approaches for first-year students within the English Department?

10. What additional support(s) from the Department, Faculty of Arts, University 1 program or outside sources (for example, high school teachers) would help your instruction or implementation of the course?

11. Is there anything else you would like to add?