



FIQWS

An Introduction



Goals of FIQWS

1. Build a [Learning Community](#) for Students – FIQWS students spend 6 hours a week working collaboratively on common academic goals: 3 hours exploring a specific topic and another 3 hours practicing composition.

2. Support Students' [First-Year Experience](#) – FIQWS courses are designed to help students prepare for the transition from high school to college. Instructors teach and reinforce basic college-level skills.

3. Cultivate [Academic Success](#) – Inviting freshmen to explore an exciting college-level subject, FIQWS supports students in developing critical thinking and communication skills. Such support helps cultivate academic achievement.

How Can You Promote a Learning Community?

- **Regularly communicate** with your co-instructor to plan this course together (meet, email, talk on the phone, whatever works). During the semester, keep your partner informed about activities happening in your section and about student progress. Don't let your partner's calls or emails go unanswered; collaboration is key to the success of this course.
- **Work closely with your teaching partner** to create shared writing assignments that reflect the course learning outcomes. Giving students the same/common guidelines for shared assignments increases closeness and collaboration.
- **Create opportunities for student-to-student engagement.** Make explicit efforts to help students establish relationships with each other and to build a community of scholars. Encourage peer-to-peer dialogue and discussion and give frequent opportunities to students to work in small groups.

How Can You Support Students' First-Year Experience?

- **Make students feel welcome and worthy.** Encourage, include, honor, and support students and their differences.
- **Actively help students understand and practice college-readiness skills:** attendance, timely submission of assignments, navigating Blackboard, time management, study skills, how to communicate with instructors via email, and familiarity with campus resources available to students, including Academic Advisement, the Writing Center, and Counseling Services.
- **Refer struggling students for interventions.** If you notice during the first 2-3 weeks any students who may be at risk of failing an assignment or the class, refer them to CCNY's Early Alerts system so that they can get support.
- **Keep students informed about their progress.** During week 6-8, meet briefly with each student to review a Midterm Progress Report.

How Can You Ensure Students' Academic Success?

- **Make expectations clear and student-centered.** Course expectations should be in line with an introductory course geared toward first-year students who are not always prepared for college-level work. Course content should be designed with students interests in mind.
- **Build on students' critical thinking.** The focus of FIQWS is to develop students' critical thinking and communication skills through immersion in an academically defined topic. Students should not be overwhelmed with excessive information and facts; rather, guide them to think, analyze, and synthesize information and to form and communicate a stance or argument based on evidence.
- **Support students through the research and writing process.** All FIQWS courses should include at least one research (source-based) essay that co-instructors work collaboratively to design. Topic instructors should provide students with clusters of materials to be used as possible sources and must schedule a library visit. Both instructors should support students in brainstorming, research, drafting, revision, and editing processes.

✓ Collaborations Checklist

- Do I know how to get in contact with my co-instructor?
- Do we (my co-instructor and I) have a plan for collaborating and regularly communicating?
- Have we decided whether we will provide one shared syllabus or two (aligned) syllabi?
- Have we collaboratively designed a research-driven essay? (required)
- Have we collaboratively designed other assignments and parts of the course together? (optional)

✓ Course Learning Outcomes Checklist

- Have I familiarized myself with FIQWS benchmarks (see FIQWS Handbook) in order to provide best guidance?
- Have I (the Topic Instructor) familiarized myself with the Pathways learning outcomes that my course addresses (see FIQWS handbook)? Have I designed my course with these outcomes in mind?
- Have I (the Writing Instructor) familiarized myself with the English Composition outcomes? (See FIQWS handbook.) Have I designed my course with these outcomes in mind?

Syllabus Checklist

In my syllabus, have I included

- course learning outcomes (Topic Instructor, see handbook, pp. 12-14; Writing Instructor, see handbook p. 11)?
- the Gen Ed (Pathways) category your course addresses?
- a grade breakdown?
- a schedule and assignment deadlines?
- CCNY's academic integrity policy?

✓ Calendar Checklist

In my calendar, have I

- included due dates that are aligned with my co-instructor's calendar?
- set aside a day for a library visit? (Topic instructors are required to schedule these visits during regular class time and writing instructors are strongly encouraged to schedule a follow-up session if they cannot lead one on their own)?
- set aside a class period during weeks 6-8 for meeting one-on-one with students to briefly review their Midterm Progress Reports?
- made space to help students master college-readiness skills (time management, timely submission of assignments, attendance, etc.)?
- remembered to NOT schedule a final exam? (there are NO FINAL EXAMS in FIQWS)