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Office of General Education

**FIQWS Overview and Goals**

The Freshman Inquiry Writing Seminar (FIQWS) provides incoming freshmen at CCNY a communal learning experience where participation, discussion, and critical engagement with challenging material are encouraged—classroom elements that students don’t always experience sufficiently in their beginning semesters. Close interaction among students and with instructors is an important part of each FIQWS. All incoming freshmen, except students from the School of Engineering and students with College Now or AP credit in English, take FIQWS. About 50 sections are offered in the fall and 4-5 in the spring of each year. By successfully completing FIQWS, students earn 3 credits in English composition and 3 credits in an area of the Flexible Core (Creative Expression, Scientific World, World Cultures and Global Issues, US Experience in its Diversity, and Individual and Society).

The main goals of FIQWS include:

* A first major step in developing the reading and **writing skills** necessary for college study.
* Experience in researching and writing a **research paper**
* An environment to further students’ analytic writing and **critical thinking** by engaging with an **interesting and engaging topic** of their choice
* A “**learning community**” in the form of 6 hours spent with the same group of students and the same team of instructors
* An understanding of **college readiness skills** (attendance, handing in work on time, and academic integrity)
* **Close contact with full-time faculty** (class size is capped at 22)

**Assessments in FIQWS 2007-2015**

A variety of assessments on FIQWS effectiveness have been conducted since the implementation of the course (the course was partially implemented in Fall 2007 and fully implemented in Fall 2008).

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| Goal Assessed | Assessment | Comments |
| * Writing * Research Paper * Critical Thinking | **Direct assessments of student learning** in terms of[writing](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/gen-ed-writing-rubric-fall-11.pdf), [critical thinking](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/CriticalThinking.pdf) and [information literacy](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/info-literacy-rubric-gen-ed.pdf) in FIQWS were conducted in [Fall 2009](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/FIQWS-Writing-Skills-assessment-report.doc), [Fall 2010](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/Fall-10-FIQWS-WRITING-AND-INFO-LITERACY-ASSESSMENT.doc), [Fall 2011](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/FINAL-fall-11-FIQWS-assessment-report.doc), and [Fall 2012](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/fall-12-FIQWS-assessment-report.doc) by FIQWS instructors/Gen Ed Office. | Assessment data was used to make adjustments in course curriculum, course delivery and support services for students. Improvements have been noted in student scores over time. |
| * Writing * Critical Thinking | The **CLA exam** was piloted by CUNY in Spring 2012 as a means to measure student ability to improve the critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving and written communication skills. [Data analysis](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/CLA-Pilot-Data-Analysis-sp-12.docx) of the Spring 2012 exam was conducted by the Institutional Research (IR) office of CUNY Central. | As per the IR Office at CUNY Central:  “Of note is that the both freshmen and seniors that participated in FIQWS had higher CLA total scores, despite the fact that they both had lower EAA/SAT scores than those who participated in Freshman Comp only. This effect is very strong for the Freshmen.” |

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| * Writing * Research paper * Critical Thinking * Retention | Research has shown that **learning communities** improve student retention rates as well as have a positive effect on student learning and achievement. A [comparison study](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/Writing-and-Critical-Thinking-Skills-One-Year-After-ENGL-11000-or-FIQWS.docx) of freshmen who started at CCNY in Fall 07 (when both FIQWS and ENGL 110 were offered) was conducted by Annita Alting, Director of Assessment at CCNY at the time. | The comparison study indicated that students who took FIQWS fared better in their ability to write a research paper (based on instructors’ opinions) and had higher retention rates from the 3rd to 4th semester than students who took ENGL 110. The College’s [retention and graduation rates](http://www.cuny.edu/irdatabook/rpts2_AY_current/RTGI_0007_FT_FTFR_BACC_SR-CC.pdf) have improved since the implementation of FIQWS; although this cannot be linked to FIQWS directly, it is a positive indicator. |
| * Learning community * Academic engagement * Writing * College readiness skills | A [Student survey](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/results-for-fall-13-student-survey-in-FIQWS-2.xlsx) in FIQWS addressing the main elements of the course was conducted in Fall 2013 by Gen Ed Office. | Results display students’ positive opinions about the effectiveness of the main elements of FIQWS: learning community, academic excitement, learning how to write, and implementation of support services. |
| * Writing * Learning community * College readiness skills | An analysis of open-ended questions on a [C&T survey](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/FALL-2010-FIQWS-C-T-survey-summary.docx) in FIQWS was conducted by Gen Ed Office (the C&T survey is conducted by the Institutional Research Office). | Student responses on learning were well correlated with course learning outcomes. Students saw the significance and commented on other important parts of FIQWS such as having an opportunity to form close relationships with classmates and teachers and gaining time-management skills. |
| * Learning community * Academic engagement * Writing * College readiness skills | **Faculty surveys** addressing the main elements of the course were conducted in FIQWS in [Fall 2010](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/results-of-FIQWS-Faculty-survey-Fall-10.doc) and [Fall 2013](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/final-results-for-fall-13-faculty-survey-in-FIQWS.xlsx) by the Gen Ed Office. | Instructors’ responses on student learning, faculty collaboration, interaction with students, academic excitement, and student support services were overall positive although the collaboration did not receive as good scores as other aspects. To improve collaboration a [handbook](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/FIQWS-Handbook-august-2015.docx) for instructors with guidelines was developed and three-hour orientation/ syllabi development sessions for new partners were instituted. |
| * Learning community/ collaboration * Writing | [Syllabi review](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/Fall-14-FIQWS-syllabi-review-report.docx) to ensure compliance with program requirements is conducted every semester by the Gen Ed Office. | Overall, the syllabi are satisfactory. Most of the syllabi also show good coordination between the two sections of the course. Only a few of the syllabi raise concerns either by not including enough information or the information between the two sections does not correlate. |
| * Writing * College readiness skills * Learning community – close interaction with students | Part of the FIQWS experience is **learning how to be a college student**. FIQWS instructors monitor student behavior and actively intervene when students encounter difficulties. Instructors alert the Director of General Education when students are struggling by submitting specific information via the Early Alert and [Midterm Progress Report](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/Fall-2010-Midterm-Intervention-Report.doc) forms. This information is forwarded on to the relevant offices ([support services](http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/gened/upload/Fall_2011_Midterm_Intervention_Report.doc) ) to follow up with the students. | Collaboration between the Office of Academic Affairs/Gen Ed with FIQWS instructors and with other offices on campus – the writing center, the advising offices, the ELS program – has enabled the institution to implement successful support systems for students in FIQWS: writing tutoring, ESL support, supplemental instruction, time-management workshops and advisement based on specific information from instructors. |
| * Close contact with full-time faculty | Over the years, full-time faculty participation has declined from 60% to 40%.  FT participation not including ECP sections  semester total FT % FT  Fall 2015 48 17 35.42%  Spring 16 3 3 100.00%  **year 15-16 51 20 39.22%**    Spring 2015 4 1 25.00%  Fall 2014 48 23 47.92%  **year 14-15 52 24 46.15%**    Spring 2014 4 3 75.00%  Fall 2013 51 26 50.98%  **year 13-14 55 29 52.73%**    Spring 2013 4 1 25.00%  Fall 2012 54 28 51.85%  **year 12-13 58 29 50.00%**    Spring 2012 8 8 100.00%  Fall 2011 56 30 53.57%  **year 11-12 64 38 59.38%** | This has been the main challenge of the program as departments are stretched to assign faculty to major courses, electives, and General Education. A silver lining is that a consistent adjunct force teaching FIQWS topic sections has developed over time.  It is important to mention that Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education has embraced the course; the School has developed the “**Narrative Medicine”** FIQWS and hired a full-time faculty member to teach 2 and coordinate all 5 sections of the course. The School has obtained a Pathways waiver that allows them to require this course of their students. |
| * Close contact with full-time faculty | FIQWS **participation by Division/School**  Div./School Fall 20015 Fall 2014  FT PT FT PT  H&A 9 16 8 21  Powell 1 5 4 5  Science 4 1 4 0  Education 2 0 2 1  Architecture 0 1 0 2  Sophie Davis 2 3 4 1 | Analysis of participation per Division/School shows that the majority of offerings in FIQWS come from the Division of Humanities and the Arts. |

**Conclusion**

Several forms of assessments, both direct and indirect, were utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of the main aspects of FIQWS: learning community, development of writing skills, critical thinking skills and ability to write a research paper, development of college readiness skills, and establishing close interactions among students and with instructors, preferably full-time faculty. The data/reports shown above indicate that the program does well with respect to the majority of its goals. The main challenges come in the way of lower than desired full-time faculty participation and occasional collaboration issues between teaching partners.