

We recognize that the COVID pandemic has made this year difficult for all and an exceptionally hard one for some. As a group of working parents, we worked to develop a list of recommendations to support caregivers, broadly conceived, with the hope that they will be helpful to everyone in the program.

Ultimately, we want to (1) acknowledge the exigent and ongoing circumstances we've been living in since March, and (2) support all faculty, instructors, tutors, and staff (and in particular those in caregiving roles, broadly conceived) with care, generosity, and flexibility. To that end, we have developed a set of modifications to WSAP policies and practices in consultation with the Executive Director of WSAP. The resulting policies (see below) are meant to support everyone in our program and will be implemented for the 2020-2021 academic year.

COVID Policy & Practice Changes for Academic Year 2020-2021

- WSAP recognizes that all instructors face unprecedented COVID-related challenges and trusts that all members of the WSAP community are doing their best to manage and balance these new and simultaneous challenges at work and at home.
- Furthermore, WSAP recognizes the particular challenges faced by parents of young and school-aged children, including unpredictable or risky childcare options and the need to oversee and in some cases take the lead in educating school-aged children. These unprecedented home-life responsibilities might result in, for example, children being present during and possibly even interrupting meetings or classes.
- Recognizing these exceptional challenges, WSAP trusts that even during this difficult time our instructors will continue to do their best to maintain our program's high standards. As much as possible, we seek to promote flexibility and respect all WSAP members' circumstances. We also know that we may not be aware of the challenges our colleagues are facing. As always, we encourage individuals to bring concerns related to their particular circumstances to the Executive Director so that she might support you and work with you to address them.

Program Meetings, Service, and Scholarly Activity: The guiding principle is that teaching is the core work of instructional track positions. For this reason, we look to non-teaching activities first to find flexibility and ways to lighten loads. Additionally, recognizing that there is service both within and beyond WSAP, service within WSAP should be prioritized over external service.

- **WSAP Program Meetings:** WSAP will continue to hold program meetings, but will be flexible to allow those unable to attend to participate as much as possible. We will share agendas ahead of time and invite those who cannot attend to send information ahead of time, share meeting recordings, and allow those unable to attend to respond to meeting recordings/minutes before major decisions are made.

- **WSAP Committees:** Whatever committee work that can be suspended for this year should be suspended, unless committee members choose to continue with the work. Committee chairs should check with their committee members to determine who has the time, energy, and drive to continue with the work and should excuse anyone who cannot commit to it this year. Committee chairs who cannot commit to the work this year should reach out to the WSAP Executive Director to decide on a course of action (such as appointing a temporary chair or suspending the committee itself for the year).
- **Scholarly Activity:** While scholarly activity and the related pedagogical innovation are always celebrated and encouraged, this year faculty members who only have time to focus on effective teaching should recognize this as success.

Performance Review: Concerning Faculty Activity Reports (FAR) and performance reviews, we recognize that time constraints and additional obligations in multiple contexts might reshape our collective understanding of success this year as focusing primarily on effective teaching.

Teaching Policies

- **Policy Changes:** WSAP will avoid non-essential changes to department policies or teaching practices for 2020-2021. As an exception, WRTG 27X has made a minor change to grading to allow an internal-only A+ for exceptional portfolios. Additionally, WRTG 27X is piloting a Life-Design informed version of the course along with a new grading model for 27X. Participation in this pilot is optional.
- **Office Hours:** As much as possible, faculty members should strive to offer office hours at the same time each week. For those who are unable to maintain consistent weekly hours (often owing to childcare), we recommend using this language in their syllabus: “Instead of set office hours, I will work around your schedules. Email me when you have a question or issue, and we will set up a meeting as soon as possible.” We also recommend using a tool like Calendly to help set up time ranges for appointments that students can schedule. All faculty members are expected to offer at least two office hours per week.
- **Instructor Feedback:** For those teaching PWR courses using the 4-paper model, when the research paper is the third-formal assignment, instructors may make instructor feedback on the fourth formal assignment optional, in keeping with the WSAP instructor guide. In keeping with WSAP policy, some form of feedback is required (e.g., through peer response, an in-class revision workshop, or working with external readers, such as Writing Center tutors or a specialist reader related to the paper’s subject matter). Importantly, revision for this assignment should still occur, and instructors should still make it clear that any student still has the option to seek input and feedback from their instructor for this short final paper. We also recommend that the instructor use this as an opportunity to teach for transfer, that is, to prepare students for future academic and professional writing.
- **Instructor Feedback:** For those teaching PWR courses using the 3-paper model, instructors may choose to drop one round of instructor feedback for the formal assignment that is neither the first formal assignment nor the research paper. This round

of instructor feedback may be replaced with an in-class workshop or may be made optional. All formal papers in this model should still include at least one round of instructor feedback.

- **Class Deadlines:** If needed, instructors may create more flexible deadlines for students outside of class dates. Instructors should avoid weekends and holidays and maintain WSAP principles around the required time for revision (one week to revise).
- **Returning Feedback:** If needed, instructors may take more than one week to return feedback and/or grades on student work, but must maintain the WSAP principle of giving students one week to revise between the receipt of feedback and the submission of the next formal assignment draft.
- **Course Load/Full-time status:** Instructors whose teaching loads are not sustainable under these circumstances may speak with the Executive Director of the WSAP about the possibility of course reductions or temporary part-time status.

While these policies have been developed with the immediate goal of making the burden of teaching while parenting and caregiving more manageable, we hope that they will be useful for all members of the program. While we may be physically separated this year, we are still united in our mission to build a strong community of undergraduate and graduate writers, speakers, and researchers, while fostering a culture of open, honest, and critical communication.

Sincerely,

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