

New Communications Course

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As of Fall 2018, Seneca will be implementing a new communications course, **COM101: Communicating across Contexts**, for students enrolled in certificate, diploma, and advanced diploma programs. The new course will replace the EAC150 course. The course was designed by the Communications Working Group, comprising faculty and administrators from the English and Liberal Studies (ELS) schools serving all campuses and programs. The course focuses on a skills-based approach to writing emphasizing transferability (e.g., [Tinberg, 2017](#); [Yancy, Robertson & Taczak, 2012](#)). The group received input and feedback from the ELS faculty and the program areas, and this has informed the development of the course.

Why a new course? There are many factors contributing to the review and renewal of the course. As many of you are aware, the current EAC150 has hundreds of sections that are offered across Seneca, and greater consistency of the course content is needed. This review and renewal process also provides the opportunity to use current research to inform the design of a new course that will help students become better communicators.

What does the research show? Numerous studies have shown that if we want students to carry writing skills beyond the one-semester boundary of our courses, we need to explicitly teach for transfer. Three approaches have been found to facilitate this transfer of skills:

- helping students develop meta-cognition around writing and language (for example, knowing which questions to ask when they are faced with a new writing task and being able to reflect on their own writing choices) ([Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010](#); [Clark & Hernandez, 2012](#); [Devitt, 2014](#); [WPA 2011](#))
- providing better revision opportunities ([Anson, 2014](#); [Sommers & Saltz, 2004](#))
- engaging students in more authentic forms of writing (for example, giving them the chance to practice a range of writing strategies, rather than just analyzing how other writers use those strategies) ([Fleming, 2014](#); [Graff, 2010](#); [Jackson, 2010](#))

As of Fall 2018, all first-semester students enrolled in certificate, diploma, and advanced diploma programs who meet the threshold score in the post-admissions skills assessment test will be enrolled into COM101. A reading bank, assessment bank, and faculty guide are being developed for all faculty who will be teaching the course. The Communications Working Group will continue to meet and consult with faculty and program chairs as the criteria for the course is finalized. The main communications of the development process are posted on the [ELS site](#) (you must be signed into My.Seneca to access the site).

View the [June 2018 issue of the Academic Newsletter](#).

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