



Mason 4-VA OER Grant Proposal



Cover Sheet

Course Name: English 302 Advanced Composition

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Approval Signatures

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Local Unit/Department Approval

Date

College/School/Unit Approval

3-3-16

Date

STATEMENT

We propose to compile, create, and curate a range of OER that provide innovative and accessible instructional material for English 302, Advanced Composition, a Mason Core course that nearly every student at the university must take. This OER collection will not only reduce student spending on course materials, it will also help faculty share new approaches to meeting the multiple learning outcomes of English 302, and make it easier for new or occasional English 302 faculty to design their courses.

Many two- and four-year institutions have developed OER for their first-year composition courses. Community colleges, most notably the [Northern Virginia Community College](#) system, have led the way in this regard. But these OER collections meet the needs of first-year students *only*; they do not meet the needs of Mason's Core advanced composition course, English 302.

ENGLISH 302: High Demand, High Impact

English 302, the keystone of Mason's [award-winning](#) Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program, fulfills the upper-level written communication requirement of the Mason Core. English 302 is offered in five versions – business, humanities, multidisciplinary, natural science/technology, and social sciences – and in three instructional delivery platforms – face-to-face, hybrid, and fully online. Despite these differences, all sections share a common set of [course learning goals](#) and [Students as Scholars \(SAS\) learning outcomes](#) at the Discovery and Inquiry Level. The breadth and reach of the course, combined with its dedication to a core set of learning outcomes, contributes to its distinctiveness and makes it well-suited for a curated collection of OER.

Because very few universities require this sort of discipline-aware Core composition course at the 300 level, few students can earn transfer credit for it. The rigor of the course and its increased emphasis on undergraduate research make it difficult for students to place out of it through the portfolio and exam exemption process. Last year, just 25 students earned that exemption.

Thus, student enrollment in English 302 is substantial and growing. In the fall of 2014, 47 faculty taught 2,420 students in 110 sections of the course. By spring of 2016, 59 instructors taught approximately 2,882 students in 131 sections, a 20% increase in students and sections taught, and a 25% increase in faculty to teach it.

In the spring of 2016, 80% of English 302 sections required students to purchase at least one textbook.

PARTICIPANTS: A Team of Experienced English 302 Instructors

English 302 is taught by instructors of varying rank and experience, including advanced Ph.D. candidates and adjunct, term, and tenure-line faculty members. Some instructors – particularly adjunct and term faculty – teach many sections of the class over many years, acquiring considerable expertise along the way. Others – particularly new adjunct faculty and some tenure-line faculty – find themselves teaching the course on short notice or at irregular intervals, with minimal time to choose course materials and create a course syllabus and limited opportunity to build expertise specific to the course. Each academic year, 15-20% of English 302 faculty teach the course for the first time.

Participants in the present OER project team (see list on cover sheet) are all adjunct or term faculty who will have at least one full year's (8 sections') worth of experience teaching English 302 when

the project begins; most team members have much more experience (10-25 years in the case of several senior term faculty; 30 years in the case of one adjunct).

Faculty members in English 302 already share course materials and instructional approaches in various formal and informal ways; one of the key purposes of the English 302 OER collection is to support and regularize this process, making our collective expertise more available to each other and to new or occasional English 302 instructors.

PROJECT SUMMARY: Creating an English 302 OER Collection

We envision a collection of resources contained within a Blackboard organization that would be accessible to all faculty teaching English 302. Faculty can easily copy course resources from the organization site to their own Blackboard course shells. Resources available on the site will include a combination of preexisting or revised/remixed Creative Commons-licensed material and instructional and contextual material – including syllabi, assignments, exercises, handouts, and lesson plans – created by project team members.

We expect to continue building the collection over time, and plan to seek additional funding, inside and outside the university, to support that process. We will use funds from the present grant to set up a structure and submission/review process for the collection, to build a core set of urgently-needed resources, and to assess the effectiveness of these initial procedures and materials. Because of the scope of the project and the number of team members involved, we are requesting the maximum 4-VA OER Grant amount of \$5,000.

During the summer of 2016, we will set up the organization site, design and test submission/review procedures, and populate the collection with critically-needed resources (see timeline for details).

Beginning in August 2016 (in time to prepare for the fall 2016 semester), we will open up the collection to other English 302 instructors, and will encourage their use of and feedback on individual items in the collection.

We will assess our desired outcomes for this project at the end of the fall 2016 and spring 2017 semesters through data analysis of textbook adoption rates and costs, focus group studies with faculty, and faculty assessment of randomly selected samples of student writing (see detailed outcomes and assessment plan below). During this time, we will also continue to refine the site design, inclusion criteria, and submission/review procedures as necessary.

While individual English 302 instructors will retain the freedom to choose their own course materials, we believe that the availability of a carefully curated and contextualized collection of OER for English 302 will significantly reduce the use of commercial textbooks in the course over time. To speed that process, members of the project team commit to teaching at least one all-OER (zero material cost to students) section of English 302 in spring 2017. Most of us expect to teach multiple all-OER sections in spring 2017, and to draw on resources from the collection to transition to an entirely all-OER approach within the next year.

OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

We have three desired outcomes for creating a curated collection of OER for English 302: reduce student spending on textbooks in a high impact course, enhance teaching outcomes for faculty using OER, and support the development of student writing and research proficiency to at least the same level as in sections using traditional textbooks.

Our faculty have assessment experience through their four-year participation in the ongoing biannual assessment of Students as Scholars learning outcomes for English 302. Our assessment of OER use in the course will build on that experience: We know how to design and conduct a focus group study, compile and collect random samples of faculty and student work, conduct norming sessions, and assess student writing according to specific learning outcomes.

Desired Outcomes	Criteria for Success	Means of Assessment
<p>Reduce student spending on textbooks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in number and cost of textbooks assigned in English 302. 	<p>Compile data regarding textbook adoption and total textbook cost for 302 sections in 2013-2016 semesters and compare that data to data for fall 2016 and spring 2017 semesters.</p>
<p>Enhance teaching outcomes for faculty using OER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how using OER or textbooks in English 302 affects teaching outcomes (how faculty design all elements of their courses). • Make it easier for new faculty to design their courses. • Make it possible for 302 instructors, experienced and new, to offer 302 sections featuring low or no instructional material costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English 302 faculty using OER in designing all elements of the course experience success equal to faculty using a textbook. • Existing practices of sharing instructional materials among English 302 faculty of varying ranks (GTA, adjunct, term, and tenure) and expertise in varying instructional platforms (face-to-face, hybrid, online) are strengthened and formalized. • Course materials are more accessible to students, from both a practical and economic perspective. 	<p>In fall 2016 and spring 2017, conduct focus group studies with English 302 faculty who use OER and those who assign a textbook.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare faculty experiences in all elements of course design and instructional delivery using OER and textbooks in English 302. • Gather qualitative data from experienced and new 302 faculty about ease of sharing OER. • Gather qualitative data from new faculty about impact of OER in teaching 302 for the first time.
<p>Measure impact of OER on student learning outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student levels of writing and research proficiency in OER sections of English 302 are equal to or greater than those of students in sections that use traditional textbooks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of randomly selected samples of student writing to determine how OER use affects students' ability to meet English 302 learning goals.

TIMELINE

SUMMER 2016	
May/June	Identifying needs and resources; setting up structures, templates, and procedures: Group members will identify most-needed instructional materials based on course goals; set up an organizational structure for the collection based on those goals; and create a template and process for submissions to the collection. We will also agree on preliminary criteria for what kinds of materials may be included in or linked from the collection.
June/July	Creating OER/contextual material pairings: Each member of the group will create an OER/contextual material pairing that addresses one or more areas of need, and will submit it using the template and process the group has created.
July/August	Reviewing and revising submissions and the submission process: Each member will review two other members' submissions, and will provide feedback on how well the template and submission process worked, and how well the site structure is working. Members will revise their individual submissions as necessary based on peer feedback, with the goal of making the collection available to all English 302 instructors by early-mid August. Members will also revise the site structure, template, submission process, and inclusion criteria as necessary (this last set of activities will continue into fall 2016).
FALL 2016	
Full Semester	<p>Pilot of OER resources: Team members will test the materials they developed during the summer in at least one of their English 302 sections, and will further revise their submissions as necessary. They will also be available to provide support to, and receive feedback from, other English 302 instructors who make use of the collection.</p> <p>Revision of site structure, submission and review procedures, and inclusion criteria: Team members will continue to revise the site structure and collection procedures as necessary.</p>
September	Collect data for textbook adoption rates and costs
December	Faculty focus group assessment (see details in "outcomes and assessment," above)
December	Assessment of student writing (see "outcomes and assessment")
SPRING 2017	
Full Semester	Pilot of fully-OER sections: Team members commit to teaching at least one English 302 section in fully-OER (zero cost to students) format (most of us will teach multiple fully-OER sections). We will also continue to be available to provide support to, and receive feedback from, other English 302 instructors who make use of the collection.
February	Collect data for textbook adoption rates and costs
May	Faculty focus group assessment (see "outcomes and assessment")
May	Assessment of student writing (see "outcomes and assessment")