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APPLYING COMPETENCIES ACROSS DISCIPLINES TO ENHANCE COMPUTATIONAL THINKING AND PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	This study examines strategies to support the need to enhance computational thinking and professional performance across disciplines through the integration of writing across the curriculum (WAC) in graduate and doctoral programs
Background	This study explores how combining rhetorical theory and computational thinking can improve students' communication skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities, preparing them for real world application and the complexities of modern global challenges
Methodology	Qualitative research was used to gather the lived experiences of higher education instructors
Contribution	This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how WAC can be effectively integrated into graduate and doctoral programs, enhancing scholarly communication and professional performance.
Findings	Discipline-specific writing skills, critical thinking, information literacy, and proficiency in writing assist with student success in various industry sectors.
Recommendations for Practitioners	Integrate WAC strategies across disciplines in graduate and doctoral programs. Focus on developing discipline-specific writing skills tailored to real world application.

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Recommendations for Researchers	Conduct further studies on the specific application of WAC within graduate and doctoral programs in additional fields. Explore innovative methods for assessing and evaluating writing skills across disciplines.
Impact on Society	By improving the quality of scholarly communication and professional performance, this approach can lead to more effective transdisciplinary collaborations, better-prepared graduates, and ultimately contribute to addressing complex global challenges
Future Research	Longitudinal studies tracking the impact of WAC integration on career outcomes. Comparative analyses of WAC implementation across different cultural and educational contexts. Exploring the role of emerging technologies in enhancing WAC strategies and computational thinking skills.
Keywords	transdisciplinary collaboration, writing across curriculum, computational thinking, higher education writing, rhetorical theory

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations' global goals for sustainable development include quality education (United Nations, n.d.). Those who work in higher education prepare students' readiness for the labor markets by helping students develop employability skills (Hasan et al., 2024). Teaching writing across the curriculum enhances students' communication skills and critical and computational thinking, which in turn improves their professional performance. Nykyporets et al. (2024) argue that fostering critical thinking in higher education is essential to prepare students for the complexities of modern global challenges, including economic shifts, technological advancements, and cultural diversity. The integration of writing across the curriculum (WAC) within graduate and doctoral programs often remains underemphasized (Gogan et al., 2023). While academic programs prioritize specialized knowledge and skills, the ability to effectively communicate ideas through writing is equally essential for academic and professional success. This study investigates strategies to implement Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) in business, higher education, and healthcare, using real-world applications to enhance graduate students' ability to articulate complex ideas, analyze data, and produce high-quality written work.

PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

The problem was the need to investigate strategies for implementing WAC within the professional disciplines of business, higher education, and healthcare, leveraging real-world business applications. The purpose of this research was to combine scholarly expertise and professional experience in business, higher education, and healthcare in developing writing content to gain insight on strategies to support skills for writing across curriculum. The following research questions were developed to help guide the focus of the research:

Research Question 1: What practices for writing across the curriculum can be extended by a review of writing documents and materials?

Research Question 2: What understanding can be gained through reflection on previous implementation of instructional writing strategies?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Integrating cross-disciplinary learning experiences into the curriculum is essential for preparing students across various professions. Transdisciplinary approaches to writing in higher education can assist with academic innovation and application (Budwig & Alexander, 2020). Integrating cross-disciplinary learning experiences into the curriculum is essential for preparing students across various professions. Writing across professions and disciplines enhances proficiency in areas of expertise by

introducing new ways to practice within the transdisciplinary collaborations and actions, which affect students' education and training in their respective fields (Hobbs, 2005). Transdisciplinary collaboration refers to a collaborative approach to addressing complex challenges or innovation endeavors that span disciplines, involving varied types of disciplinary experts (Mejía et al., 2023). This framework integrates rhetorical theory and computational thinking to enhance writing skills across disciplines. Rhetorical theory informs the art of persuasive and effective communication, emphasizing audience, purpose, and context. Computational thinking provides a structured approach to problem-solving, enabling clear and logical articulation of complex ideas. By combining these theories, students can develop comprehensive communication strategies that are both persuasive and logically sound, essential for professional success in various fields.

RHETORICAL THEORY

Rhetorical theory can help produce and incorporate writing across the curriculum. Rhetorical theory covers the importance of audience, purpose, and context in effective communication (Bialostosky, 2004; Herrick, 2018; Tiscione, 2011). Writing in higher education can adapt rhetorical principles to address disciplinary differences while fostering cross-disciplinary discourse. Rhetorical theory highlights the importance of crafting messages that resonate with diverse audiences, a critical skill in transdisciplinary work where stakeholders from varied fields and backgrounds must collaborate. Incorporating rhetorical principles helps bridge disciplinary divides. Writing enables participants in transdisciplinary projects to share insights, translate complex ideas into actionable knowledge, and foster dialogue among academic and non-academic collaborators. Incorporating rhetorical principles helps bridge disciplinary divides. Writing enables participants in transdisciplinary projects to share insights, translate complex ideas into actionable knowledge, and foster dialogue among academic and non-academic collaborators. This study reviews the works of Aristotle and Kenneth Burke. Aristotle (ca. 350 B. C. E./2007) identifies three rhetorical appeals: ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic), emphasizing the importance of tailoring arguments to the audience's values and beliefs. Burke's concept of the pentad (act, agent, agency, scene, and purpose) provides a framework for analyzing and crafting effective discourse (Burke, 1969). The combination of Aristotle's emphasis on audience engagement with Burke's pentadic framework could help students create rhetorically effective texts that resonate with diverse audiences (Foss, 2018; Warnick & Kline, 1992). Building on this framework, the next section will explore computational thinking.

COMPUTATIONAL THINKING

Our digital society provides educators and learners with technology to communicate, teach, and write more effectively. Digital literacy and computational thinking are 21st-century skills (Wu et al., 2024). Computational thinking involves formulating problems so that solutions can be presented in a sequential order. The organization of written text can support the conceptualization of new knowledge for broader application, attributing meaning to language. Akin and MurrellJones (2018) emphasized the need for further enhancement of instructional practices to support student writing. The cyclical process of learning, conceptualizing, and organizing through writing serves as a model for transdisciplinary collaboration to develop global communication and performance skills for professionals. Computational rhetoric, a fusion of rhetorical theory and computational thinking, can help analyze how persuasive communication functions within structured computational processes. It involves defining a descriptive form, choosing to use that form, and implementing its definition to carry out its intended use (Grasso, 2002).

SUMMARY OF EXISTING LITERATURE

The existing literature highlights the importance of writing across the curriculum (WAC) in higher education, the role of computational thinking, and rhetorical theory. This section organizes the literature under these subheadings to provide a clearer understanding of how these concepts interact.

WAC IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A growing body of research has highlighted the importance of WAC in higher education and the positive impact of WAC on students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills (Harper & Vered, 2017; Southworth et al., 2023). By integrating writing into coursework across disciplines, students can develop a deeper understanding of complex concepts and improve their ability to articulate ideas clearly and concisely. While existing research acknowledges the individual benefits of WAC, computational thinking, and rhetorical theory, a significant gap exists in understanding how these elements can be integrated within transdisciplinary graduate business programs to enhance professional writing skills. There is limited empirical evidence demonstrating the combined impact of these approaches on student outcomes such as improved writing quality, increased publication rates, and enhanced career prospects. The existing literature primarily focuses on Western pedagogical models, neglecting the potential contributions of non-Western perspectives on writing and communication. This paper addresses these gaps by exploring the synergistic effects of WAC, computational thinking, and rhetorical theory in a transdisciplinary context, while also considering the influence of diverse cultural approaches to writing and communication.

COMPUTATIONAL THINKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Computational thinking involves formulating problems so that solutions can be presented in a sequential order. The organization of written text can support the conceptualization of new knowledge for a broader application that attributes meaning to language. The cyclical model of learning, conceptualizing, and organizing written language is a model for transdisciplinary collaboration to develop global communication and performance skills for professionals. Writing in higher education can adapt rhetorical principles to address disciplinary differences while fostering cross-disciplinary discourse.

RHETORICAL THINKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Rhetorical theory highlights the importance of crafting messages that resonate with diverse audiences, a critical skill in transdisciplinary work where stakeholders from varied fields and backgrounds must collaborate. When different professions and disciplines engage in transdisciplinary efforts and work, such collaborations can be fruitful and important to all participants, and especially critical to meeting the needs of patients, clients, students, and others who are being served (Jebaseelan & Fonceca, 2021). Frequently it is necessary for the communication(s) between and among those involved to experience various means of exploring key and multiple factors involved in the transdisciplinary team's outlook, efforts, and actions.

Academic writing and professional communication norms often reflect Western rhetorical traditions, emphasizing directness, clarity, and explicit argumentation. Non-Western communication approaches often prioritize indirectness, harmony, and context. Japanese and Chinese cultures emphasize unspoken cues and social harmony, favoring subtle expression over confrontation. Collectivist cultures tend to value collaborative knowledge and tradition, contrasting with Western focus on individual achievement. Rhetorical styles may be circular or narrative rather than linear. Incorporating these diverse perspectives into Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) is essential for inclusivity and preparing students for global communication. Future research should explore these cultural differences to develop culturally responsive pedagogical approaches to writing instruction.

METHODOLOGY

Conducting a qualitative methodology and implementing a content analysis research design is appropriate for this study. Krippendorff (2003) argued that content analysis offers the researcher the opportunity to explore a phenomenon beyond independent observations to multiple perceptions of the topic. Content analysis has evolved from counting words to interpreting the meaning of words. Content analysis can offer valuable insights for developing writing skills in higher education students. A

review of literature and analysis of documents and experiences can help identify effective skills and strategies to enhance writing proficiency.

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The research began with the collection and sharing of writing documents and instructional experiences. A reflection of individual experiences in implementing writing strategies, writing instruction, and the development of real-world learning activities demonstrating competencies led to the development of the three key elements for writing within the three specific disciplines. Convenience sampling offers researchers an effortless option (Golzar et al., 2022). Convenience sampling was employed to review documents and materials for analysis.

DATA COLLECTION

Discussion of professional experience in instruction and outcomes were discussed and reduced. Professional experiences included course development, professional development, and curricula mapping. Teaching and learning experiences also included serving as instructor, facilitator, and mentor. The lived experiences and authored documents were collected for reflection (see Table 1).

Table 1. Data collection of scholarly and professional experiences that support student writing.

Professions	Instruction	Products
Business	Course Developer	Reports, Memos, Infographics, Presentations
Healthcare	Instructor	Webinars, Pamphlets, Apps
Higher Education/Research	Facilitator	Essays, Proposals, Dissertation

APPLICATION

There is a diverse range of writing skills required for graduate and doctoral students in career-related fields. To succeed professionally technical writing, creative writing, and critical writing are essential. Technical writing is crucial for producing clear and concise reports, proposals, and analyses. Technical writing involves the ability to present complex information straightforwardly, adhering to specific formatting and style guidelines. To succeed professionally, technical writing, creative writing, and critical writing are essential. Technical writing is crucial for producing clear and concise medical reports, clinical documentation, and healthcare analyses (Berg et al., 2021). Technical writing in education includes research reports with data analysis, curriculum proposals detailing instructional plans, and policy documents outlining educational guidelines.

Critical writing is fundamental for analyzing complex data, evaluating evidence, and formulating original arguments. Critical writing is essential for conducting research, writing scholarly articles, and producing insightful reports. Critical thinking and information literacy are essential for effective research at the graduate and doctoral levels (Dwyer, 2023). Critical thinking enables students to evaluate information, identify biases, and make informed judgments. It aids in formulating focused research questions, assessing the credibility of sources, and analyzing information objectively. By breaking down complex clinical data, recognizing key points in medical theories, and synthesizing diverse perspectives on patient care, students can develop coherent arguments and avoid misinformation in their field (Woodward & Hirsch, 2023).

Information literacy complements critical thinking by teaching students how to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively (Morgan et al., 2022). Key skills include identifying credible sources, using

effective search strategies, and managing information systematically. Evaluating factors such as the author's expertise, publication reputation, and source purpose ensures reliability. Students must also assess the accuracy, relevance, and objectivity of information while remaining alert to biases. Proficiency in using databases, search engines, and library catalogs is vital for efficient information retrieval. Additionally, organizing, citing, and referencing sources accurately strengthens academic integrity. By mastering critical thinking and information literacy, students can conduct rigorous research, produce high-quality work, and make meaningful contributions to their academic disciplines. These skills are foundational to navigating the complexities of scholarly research and achieving success in advanced studies. Creating written documents is a crucial skill across various fields, including business, education, and healthcare.

BUSINESS SECTOR APPLICATION

In the business sector, industry employees develop diverse documents such as business reports, which summarize data and findings using visual aids to inform decisions, track progress, or present research results. Proposals outline project plans with objectives, methods, timelines, and budgets for funding or collaboration. Policy and procedure documents establish organizational guidelines while marketing documents use persuasive writing to promote products or services through ads, brochures, and social media posts. Presentations combine visual aids and narratives to explain analytics or persuade audiences, and analytical reports examine trends and metrics to guide strategy with clear recommendations. Proficiency in these documents enhances communication, fosters alignment, and drives strategic goals.

EDUCATION SECTOR APPLICATION

Educational reports summarize research findings to inform policy or track learning outcomes. Curriculum proposals detail plans for courses or programs with objectives, methods, timelines, and resources. Policy and procedure documents establish teaching and learning guidelines, while instructional materials engage learners through lesson plans, handouts, and websites with tailored language and objectives. Presentations explain theories or advocate educational approaches using visuals, and analytical reports assess trends in learning outcomes to guide strategy with clear recommendations. Mastery of these documents strengthens communication and drives educational success.

HEALTHCARE SECTOR APPLICATION

In the healthcare sector, employees develop documents such as medical reports, which summarize clinical data to inform patient care or research outcomes. Treatment protocols are used to outline patient care plans with procedures, timelines, and resources. Policy and procedure documents define safety and care guidelines in medical settings, while patient education materials provide clear instructions via brochures or websites to support health management. Presentations explain medical concepts or advocate treatment approaches using visuals, and analytical reports analyze patient outcomes and trends to guide strategy with actionable insights. Proficiency in healthcare documentation improves communication effectiveness and aligns medical knowledge with patient care. Effective writing fosters critical thinking and strategic communication, essential for professional success. WAC initiatives ensure graduates meet their field's communication demands.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

When different professions and disciplines engage in transdisciplinary teams and work, such collaborations can be fruitful and important to all participants, and especially critical to meeting the needs of patients, clients, students, and others being served (Jebaseelan & Fonceca, 2021). The significance of this research lies in its potential to continuously elevate the quality of scholarly communication and professional performance. By fostering a culture of writing across the curriculum, graduate and doctoral programs can collaboratively equip students with the necessary skills to succeed in diverse academic and professional contexts (see Table 2). This research will contribute to a deeper

understanding of how WAC can be integrated into graduate and doctoral programs, particularly in fields with strong business and research applications.

Table 2. Student writing products to demonstrate mastery, for business, higher education/research, and health care.

Business	Higher Education /Research	Healthcare
Budgets	Annotated bibliography	Digital tools (Apps)
Business Plans	Literature Reviews	Health Literacy Materials
Data Analysis	Proposal	Prevalence Report
Stakeholder Reports	Research Plan	Webinars

To maintain professional competency and adaptability, curricula must integrate evolving practices, driven by new research, methods, and societal shifts (see Figure 1).

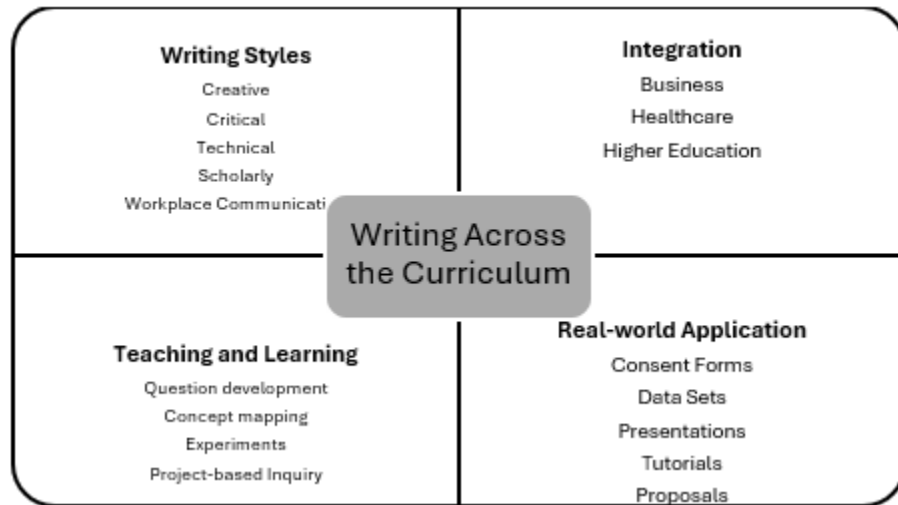


Figure 1. Integrating writing across the curriculum for real-world applications.

WAC strategies can manifest in several ways: technical professionals could write user manuals or white papers to explain complex products or processes; project managers could create detailed project proposals or status reports; marketing teams could develop comprehensive marketing strategies and marketing analytics reports; and executives could craft persuasive presentations for stakeholders. These practical applications demonstrate how WAC can be translated into actionable skills that enhance both academic and professional performance. Integrating discipline-specific writing into graduate curricula ensures students are prepared to communicate effectively in their chosen fields, bridging the gap between theory and real-world application.

CONCLUSION

Students need to develop transferable skills that apply to various professional settings and contribute to their career growth. (Kain et al., 2024). Preparing students for employment and enhancing their work performance is an international goal. Working and writing across professions and disciplines by implementing transdisciplinary collaboration and teams is especially critical in international professions as culturally specific contexts and content must be included in all training and education. Crawley (2003) and Kociatkiewicz and Kostera (2023) highlight the importance of inclusion and the consideration of culture and differences in the development of writing standards. Essential skills include critical thinking, analysis, and information literacy. Academics and educators who incorporate

transdisciplinary writing and case studies into their curriculum can better prepare students for evolving professional demands.

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AUTHORS



Dr. Imani Akin earned an MS in Special Education, an EdD in Educational Leadership, and an MBA in Data Analytics. She is deeply committed to fostering collaboration that effectively addresses the academic and social-emotional needs of all learners. As an educational leader, Dr. Akin has designed and led impactful professional development sessions, empowering educators to enhance their capacity for implementing response to intervention strategies in both K-12 and higher education environments. Dr. Akin is a faculty member of the doctoral research department and serves as a dissertation chair. Recognized for her passion for research, Dr. Akin was awarded a grant to lead a research team focused on

exploring the needs of doctoral graduates as they seek to launch and expand their scholarly activity. This research was later published and evolved into a model for identifying and engaging in research to build new knowledge. Dr. Akin continues this work and still serves as a Research Fellow to support research activities. A strong advocate for the power of collegiate dialogue, Dr. Akin consistently seeks out opportunities to collaborate, present, and publish research, furthering the ongoing growth and innovation within the educational community.



Dr. Matasha MurrellJones earned a Doctorate in Organizational Leadership and an MBA in International Business. She also earned graduate certificates in Data Analytics and Project Management. She is an accomplished and results-oriented Director of Learning with a proven track record in designing and implementing successful educational programs. Dr. MurrellJones is focused on the creation of innovative learning strategies to promote inclusion and educational support in higher education. Matasha's leadership extends to her role as Lead Faculty, where she oversees program strategy, faculty management, and academic excellence. Her dedication to advancing knowledge is evident in her global publications and

presentations, where she explores topics such as strategic partnering for dissertation development, cultural diversity in multinational teams, supporting scholarship for graduates, and bridging the gap between theory and application in academic writing. Dr. MurrellJones has attained a research fellowship where she studied best practices for mentors when partnering with doctoral candidates for the successful completion of the doctoral project. Dr. MurrellJones continues to seek opportunities to learn, engage in research and presentations to support the student learning experience.



Ramona Burress, PharmD, is a healthcare leader with extensive experience in patient engagement and health equity. As the former Head of Patient Engagement and Insights at Takeda Pharmaceuticals, she played a pivotal role in driving global health equity initiatives. Ramona has also held leadership positions at Janssen Pharmaceuticals of Johnson & Johnson, where she focused on increasing diversity in clinical trials. A licensed clinical pharmacist with expertise in infectious diseases and oncology, Ramona serves on the boards of Susan G. Komen Chicago and the University of Chicago's Women's Board. A supporter of educational enrichment, Ramona was elected and served two terms on the local school council and continues to serve as the Chair of Friends of Kenwood Acad-

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