

The QEP – A Brief History

QEP stands for Quality Enhancement Plan. Having a QEP and successfully implementing and assessing it is a crucial component of the university's reaccreditation process through [SACS \(Southern Association of Colleges and Schools\)](#). You can read the full plan [here](#).

The QEP is a five year plan designed to enhance student learning. It must involve “the wider academic community” and be “based upon a comprehensive and thorough analysis of the effectiveness of the learning environment for supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution” ([SACS, 2011, p. 16](#)). Institutions have great discretion in deciding what they will focus on for their QEP. LMU has chosen for its focus [information literacy](#). Information literacy is research and library skills for the 21st century. It involves knowing how to navigate the increasingly complex information landscape of our highly technologically mediated environment.

In 2006, when the university was considering QEP proposals, the topic of information literacy was almost unanimously chosen. Preliminary research, involving analysis of SEWS papers up to that time, showed a decided lack of information literacy skills even in graduating seniors. It was felt by the university community that information literacy was both important enough and lacking enough to be a suitable topic for the QEP. It is something which all students must confront at some point in their programs and something for which better instruction and knowledge were sorely needed. The QEP addresses all programs at LMU, from the J. Frank White Academy through the undergraduate to all the graduate programs. The main focus and core, however, is on the traditional undergraduate programs. The curriculum model outlined in the plan calls for progressive integration of information literacy into strategic points of the student's program. This is where integration with the SEWS program comes in.

The SEWS program was a writing assessment program already in place, but somewhat languishing when the QEP began (see the SEWS history document). At each level (100-400) one class is selected as the SEWS class. The first two are in the general education English courses, ENG110 and ENG210. The 300 and 400 level SEWS classes are in the majors. Our information literacy program basically integrates with the SEWS courses. The QEP is a five year plan that began in 2009. Each year we advance and integrate into another level.

2009 – ENG110 Integration

2010 – ENG210 Integration

2011 – Junior SEWS

2012 –Senior SEWS and graduate programs

Another major component of the QEP is assessment. We are using multiple assessment measures to track our progress and hopefully see improvement. We use two standardized information literacy assessment tools, SAILS and ILT. Another major assessment measure is the SEWS rubric.

SEWS – A Brief History

Lincoln Memorial's Sequenced Enhancement of Writing Skills (SEWS) program was begun in the early 1990s (1992-1995) by a disciplinarily diverse committee who were building on an earlier unsuccessful effort from the late 1980s to institute a writing across the curriculum program at the university. The SEWS program, though, simply required that students write papers in each of the four years of their undergraduate tenure with the last two papers being written in courses in the students' major discipline.

While the program obviously focuses on writing, the English Department never claimed or sought ownership of the program; the program did require a director, though, whose primary role was only the collection and maintenance of papers, and this role has traditionally been filled by English faculty. The development of detailed standards and policies was left to the departments. This structure led to the program's having few common university-wide standards or policies and no real centralized authority. From the late 1990s to the early 2000s, the SEWS program was affiliated with the General Studies Committee – the SEWS director being a member of the committee – and this collaboration led to an assessment of SEWS papers and a SACS-approved report. In 2002, though, the General Studies Committee was dissolved, and the formal mechanism for assessing the SEWS writing was lost.

In 2005-2006, the General Studies Committee was re-established with oversight of SEWS assessment in its purview. Also in 2006, a list of recommendations for revisions to the SEWS program was created. As of yet, these revisions have not been fully considered. Furthermore, the SEWS program has now been tied to the university's QEP in information literacy. This means that all SEWS papers are now required to be source based and written in an appropriate style for the discipline (such as APA, MLA, or Chicago). The number and use of sources may vary depending on the instructor and topic but the SEWS paper must involve some use of the scholarly literature in the discipline. All SEWS papers will be assessed using the SEWS rubric.