

The College Writing Curriculum and The Progress of Writers from Novice to Expert

In *Professional Academic Writing in the Humanities and Social Sciences* (SIU Press, 1994), Susan Peck MacDonald asks us to conceive of at least four stages or levels along a continuum that novices move through in gaining access to expert, insider discourse and status:

1. Nonacademic writing: a generalized prose that has little connection to any particular disciplinary ways of communicating;
2. Generalized academic writing concerning with stating claims, offering evidence, respecting other's opinions, and learning how to write with authority;
3. Novice approximations of particular disciplinary ways of making knowledge;
4. Expert, insider discourse.

First-Year (Freshman) Composition coursework can move students from Level 1 through Level 2, with a possibility of *approaching* Level 3.

Intermediate and Advanced Composition coursework functions to deepen students' understanding in Level 2 (notably with regards to research methods and processes, synthesis of source material and data, and integration of source material and data into discourse). And it may allow the student to enter Level 3, although audiences tend to remain more or less generalized.

Writing-Intensive (WI) courses within specific disciplines, then, function to fully introduce students to Level 3 and move them toward Level 4. Level 4 may be broached though, perhaps, not entirely achieved in one WI course.