Writing Fellows Handbook (2018-2019)

*GSU Writing Fellows are committed to working alongside peers, faculty, and students across disciplines in order to foster effective writing practices in the classroom. We hope to improve the understanding of writing as a continual learning process and a developed skill. Fellows are dedicated to fostering an environment of open communication between students and faculty in order that the process of becoming better writers becomes a collaborative effort. Fellows are dedicated to providing support, guidance, and encouragement to students and faculty in writing intensive courses by developing classroom- and discipline-specific programs such as writing workshops, peer revisions, and individual tutoring sessions.*

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Overview of Writing Fellows Program

Our goal is to provide teachers of writing intensive courses support in working with student writers. We know that students learn to write only when they are writing in many courses at all levels of the curriculum. We also know that writing supports learning. Writers learn best by understanding the process of writing, by having multiple readers and audiences, and by revising their work.

Our fellows are chosen based on their writing ability, recommendation from a teacher for whom they have written, and on their interest in working with fellow students on their writing. They will be both undergraduates and graduates and will be required to attend a weekly training session throughout the semester in which they work, in addition to a half-day workshop before their work begins.

Fellows will work 10 hours per week, including meetings with teachers, students, and the director, responding to writing, and planning.

When possible, we will pair teachers with fellows familiar with course material. However, fellows will not work with students on the content of the course.

Director of WAC will:

• Prepare fellows to facilitate student writing using knowledge from the discipline of composition in a three-credit course

• Be available to teachers for consultation about integrating writing into their courses, designing assignments and creating helpful writing instructions for students

• Support fellows as they work with a variety of students on their writing through regular meetings and conferences

• Coordinate the program and respond to challenges and questions

• Conduct bi-weekly training sessions and to review Fellows’ work

Teachers will:

• Include in their course a written project that requires revision and allows time for students to work with Fellows on the revision. The project must be a significant part of the final grade. Written projects include presentations (PowerPoint), reports, case studies, critical analyses, literature reviews, researched-writing, and extensive reflective pieces.

• Provide instructions for writings assignments in writing, will detail the WF program process, will clearly state objectives of the assignment, and will include a grading rubric or guide. Writing Fellows and/or the WAC Director are available to consult with teachers on creating these instruction/guides

• Meet with Fellows at least three times: before the semester begins or during the first week of the semester and after writing assignments have been turned in. We encourage you to meet frequently enough with your Fellow/s to facilitate their role in the course.

• Be entirely responsible for grading

• Set aside for the Fellows to be introduced to the class and for discussion of writing assignments.

Writing Fellows will:

• Provide support to teachers in preparing students for written projects, including organizing writing groups, peer review sessions, one-to-one conferences and mini workshops.

• Provide early feedback to students in writing and face-to-face conferences

• May work with students on some of the following, depending on the teacher’s needs: strategies for writing the paper, locating and evaluating sources, understanding assignments, writing and revising

the paper.

• Will work closely with professors both to understand the requirements of assignments, but also to effectively support the writing tasks that professors are assigning.

• Will not grade or project grades on assignments

• Will meet regularly with the Director of WAC and other Fellows in the program

• Will attend bi-weekly workshops

• Will be available to attend class when teachers discuss writing

Section 1: Meet Your Sponsoring Professor

Getting to know your sponsoring professor and building a good relationship is vital to your role as a Fellow. Although, it may be intimidating or nerve-wracking, establishing open lines of communication with the professor as early as possible will help you succeed as a Fellow.

**Tips for Getting to Know the Professor**

-Set up a meeting before the course begins or before attending class for the first time--it is helpful to have a clear understanding of the intended role expected of the Fellow within the class.

-Bring a list of questions to your initial meeting; remember, the more information you have the better off you will be.

**Questions for a successful first meeting with your sponsoring professor.**

Get to know the class:  
- What is the class?  
- What level is it?  
- Is it normally writing intensive?  
- Is this an elective or a required course for the major?  
- What style of writing does this class use?  
- What are the goals of this class?

Get to know the syllabus:  
- What are the main assignments that you would like me to assist with?

-Do you have copies of the assignment descriptions or rubrics?

-Does the professor have examples of the assignments?   
- How is revision built into the syllabus? Suggest ways Fellows can fit into this revision process.

-How much time is given for revision?

-Where can you fit your student meetings in the class calendar? (This might mean things need to be shifted!)

Get to know the students:  
- Are these students who are new to this field!  
- Do these students do a lot of writing in their field?  
- Are there students in the class who will have scheduling challenges/ other challenges that I will need to assist?

Get to know the professor:  
- What do you view as the greatest area of opportunity for your students' writing?  
- What are your goals for the semester?

Get to know the policies:  
- Will it be required to meet with me?

-if not, what incentives will be provided to meet with me? (E.g. extra credit, extended deadline, etc.)

- How often would you like us to meet? (E.g. once a week, after major assignments, twice a semester, etc.)  
-Would you like detailed logs of my interactions with students?

-When I'm in class, would you like me to participate?

Once the semester is under way, do not hesitate to reach back out to your sponsoring professor with any questions, concerns, and/or feedback you may have. Trust me, the professor will appreciate your insight.

Section 2: Student Conferences

There are many variables that come into play when conducting a meeting or conference with a student. Below are some tips for conducting first conferences with students, as well as conferences following your first meeting with a student.

For all meetings, it is important to remind oneself that the goal is not to proofread and tear apart a student’s writing. The goal is to tutor them in their growth as a writer. Excessive proofreading and over-critical reading will produce the opposite result. As a writing tutor, your job is not to do the work for the student. Adequate tutoring in writing requires you to find the happy medium between doing the work for them and leaving them with minimal support. The goal is to make them feel empowered and know that no matter what level writing they are at, there will always be room for growth.

# First Meetings:

When you're first meeting with a student, be sure to spend the beginning of the conference getting to know each other. Creating a rapport with the student not only makes them feel at ease, but it helps you feel more comfortable.

Once the conversation gets going, it is important to see what kind of writer the student feels they are. Meaning, do they feel they are a strong writer, weak writer, procrastinating writer, etc.? Attached is a form to use as a tool to gage your student’s confidence as a writer. It is a great jumping off point and can be useful for any Writing Fellow Meeting.

It is important to note that some first meetings, sometimes even second and third meetings, occur before the student has actually begun their writing process. Many professors will require students to meet with Fellows, so meetings may occur long before the paper’s due date. Although the student may not have any writing for you to look over, this time is still valuable! Discuss what the student wants to write about or ask if they have any ideas they’d like to bounce off you. Brainstorming out loud can produce some seriously amazing ideas and bring thoughts to the surface that otherwise would have laid dormant!

# Following Meetings:

It is a great idea to start with asking how the student feels in that moment about their paper, its progress, or the writing they are about to share with you.

The amount and type of criticism you provide a student should reflect their abilities as a writer. Students who struggle across the board will not benefit from sentence level analysis, they need help organizing their thoughts and flow of the paper first. Students who are capable of producing higher quality writing can benefit from sentence level tips, as they have already mastered larger scale writing skills.

# End of All Meetings:

It is prudent that the student you’re tutoring walks away feeling they can come back to you for further support. Ending the meeting on a high note, leaves the student with a positive feeling. I always like to end my tutoring sessions with letting the student know what part I like best in their paper, how impressed I am with their growth, what point of their support feels strongest or most interesting, etc. No matter what kind of writer the student is, there is always something positive to be taken away from their work or efforts. If the student is meeting with you, it means they care. Whether it be their grade in their class or development as a writer, they are meeting with you because some part of them, big or small, cares. As a writing tutor, I think it is important they know you care too.

10 Ways to Encourage Students to Meet with You

1. **Introduce Yourself on the First Day of Class (or *Your* First Day of the Class).**  Students will feel much more comfortable meeting with you if they know who you are and how to contact you! Speak with the professor prior to the start of class and let them know you would like to introduce yourself. Tell the class your name, that you are a Writing Fellow, and briefly explain your role in the class. If possible, write your name and student email address on the board, as well. Some students may write down your contact information, and some may not. However, hearing your name in addition to being able to look up and see your name will help them remember who you are-- and it is always more comfortable to talk to someone when you remember their name!
2. **Pass Around Sign-Up Sheets.**  At the start of class, let students know you will be passing around a sign-up sheet for conferences that week. Include your name, student email address, and where the conferences will take place, along with dates and times, on the sheet. Even if students do not sign up to meet with you right away, this lets them know when and where you will be available, reiterates your name and contact information, and further reminds them you are there to help!
3. **Understand the Assignments.**  When you meet with or email your professor, make sure you understand exactly what is expected for each assignment. (It can also be extremely helpful to ask for an example of an exemplary assignment, too!) By understanding each assignment in detail and understanding exactly what the professor is looking for, you will be able to give even more detailed feedback that will be extra beneficial. When your feedback helps in these specific ways, it shows students you are reliable and helpful, which will encourage them to meet with you even more!
4. **Get to Know Students in the First Conference.**  Reintroduce yourself, ask how the class is going for them, ask their major, ask about their specific writing goals, or goals for this assignment. This will help put both of you at ease, and make them feel more comfortable meeting with you. At the end of the conference, thank them for meeting with you, and remind them they can email you if they think of any more questions or concerns before next class.
5. **Use Compliment Sandwiches.**  Many students you will meet with may struggle with their writing because they feel self-conscious about their abilities. In fact, many will be quick to tell you exactly what they think they are doing wrong, while having no idea about all of the things they are doing right. Our goal is not just to improve writing on a particular assignment, but to improve writers, and a big part of that will be helping to build, or rebuild, their confidence in their writing skills. Always begin by telling them something you loved about their paper, and try to sandwich any critiques between positive remarks. Knowing you believe in them and their abilities can not only make them feel more comfortable talking to you, it can also help instill the confidence it takes to succeed in future projects, as well!
6. **Send Reminder and Follow-Up Emails.** Prior to a conference, send a reminder email about your meeting to the students. If a student brings up something you are unsure of during a conference, let them know you will look into it and send them an email, and then do so right away! It can also be helpful to reach out to students to check on progress during certain assignments. A simple email asking how an assignment is going, and reminding them you are available if they have any questions, can go a long way!
7. **Have a Presence in Class.**  Although this should always be discussed with your professor, most will be happy to have you participate. Taking part in class discussions, asking questions, and taking notes during class will not only help you understand the material even better, it will also help students see you as another student who is just like them.
8. **Make Yourself Accessible.** Let students know you are there to help and support them. Respond to emails promptly, and, if you are comfortable, offer to Skype/FaceTime or Gchat with students if they are unable to meet in person. Gchat is an especially good alternative as it keeps a log of the conversation, allowing both of you to go back and review later.
9. **Be Friendly!**  Arrive to class early and greet students as they arrive. Smile, ask how assignments are going, or ask about their weekend. Remember little details they may have brought up and ask about those, too! Compliment them on an insightful comment in class, ask what they thought of the reading, or bring up something you were reminded of. If a student brings up something you are also interested in during a discussion, let them know! It is easy to bond over a shared love of a poem, sports team, or television show, and when you do, it will make them all the more inclined to not only meet with you, but look forward to doing so!
10. **Be Prepared.** Because writing is deeply personal, and because you are such a kind and intuitive Fellow, you may find some students opening up to you about various things during meetings. It is always good to be prepared with resources if students open up to you about struggles with mental or physical health, housing issues, or lack of access to food. GSU has many wonderful resources that can help, many of which students are unaware of. I recommend carrying cards with contact information to pertinent resources, and, if you are able, walking students to these resources. This will hopefully help students, will help them feel more comfortable talking to you, and will help improve their long-term writing, as well. When students are able to meet their health and housing needs, they are able to focus even further on academic pursuits.

Section 3: How do I...

Quick answers to difficult questions. You’ll explore these more in the Writing Fellow meetings!

1. **How do I see results?**

**Results will always be varied, but often after working closely with a class and students you will start to wonder about what your impact has been. The important concept to remember when self evaluating is that Writing Fellows look to create better writers, not necessarily better papers. So if you do not see a drastic improvement in the papers of students you are working with don't worry! You're making a larger effect than you realize!**

* **Have students been coming to you for assistance regularly? Do you have repeat students? These students are seeing value in your help! This is a result in and of itself.**
* **Has a writing community been created in the class? Do you see students discussing writing with other students in the class? Do you see groups of them in the cafeteria? Creating this community is quintessential to success!**

1. **How do I know what's too little in terms of helping students with papers, and when I'm helping too much?**

**The Oxford Guide tells a cautionary tale of over helping students, with the fears of ghost writing or co-writing papers. Sometimes it can be difficult to disconnect from a student's work, but it's important not to do the writing for them as this is not only cheating but ruins the opportunity for the student to learn. As a rule of thumb, do not write or dictate anything for the students to scribe. As soon as you begin to write on their papers you cross into the territory of co-writing. Use questions to guide them through problems.**

**If you feel as though you aren't helping them enough, or your guiding questions are not helping them see solutions return to basics. Instead of asking the student "How do you think this paper could be better organized to help your audience understand your argument?" Ask them instead to write an outline of their organization and explain why it is organized as such. Returning to the early stages of the writing process can assist students in their critical thinking and finding where the loopholes are.**

1. **How do I know how much I should participate in the class?**

**The easiest solution is to ask the professor. Often professors would like you to participate and this exercise helps you connect with students as a fellow learner in their environment. This being said, you do not have to partake in homework assignments (unless you would like to!) nor do you have to consistently participate in discussions. You are not expected to leave the class with an A!**

1. **How do I work with a professor/student that I am uncomfortable with?**

**Discomfort of any kind needs to be reported to the head of the Writing Fellows at once. You are not expected to continue meeting with students or professors you do not feel safe with. Meetings should always happen in public places, and if at any point during the meeting you no longer feel comfortable you may excuse yourself. GSU provides shuttle services to your car.**

**If discomfort stems from a personality clash, remember the relationship you have with students and professors is to be a professional one. Keep relations civil, and focus on the work at hand.**

1. **How do I address disability, mental health, hunger, homelessness, etc.?**

**GSU offers services to students with any needs. The disability office has ample resources to assist students, but they must be registered. If they are not put them in contact with to see what is available to them.**

**Counseling also offers free services to students. Their offices are...**

**It often helps to not just give the students the information but to walk them to the office or begin the email conversation and cc the person they need to speak to in it.**

**Often these conversations are difficult to start. If they mention issues they are having you may speak to them, but do not begin conversations on issues that they have not mentioned. (EX: Do not tell a student that conseuling is available to them if they have not mentioned that they are struggling.)**

Section 4: APA Guides

One of the bigger challenges for Writing Fellows coming into the WAC program, particularly for English Majors, can be the prospect of tutoring students in APA formatting. You might think: “I’ve never written a paper using APA, how can I teach someone else how to use it?”

There are both obvious and subtle differences between an MLA styled paper and one written in APA. While all the nuances of APA may not seem clear at first, the good news is that there are some easy principles to follow that will increase your own understanding of APA, and allow you guide others as well.

1. APA values facts over style.

In an MLA paper, our own unique written voice is highly valued, and we are encouraged to focus on the way we express an argument. In APA, the creative style of expression is not as important as the actual information being presented in a paper. APA papers should be focused on presenting detailed information in a clear, straightforward way.

2. Always paraphrase, rarely quote, cite everything.

Direct quotation is vital to MLA style writing. Using textual evidence and exact phrasing is how an MLA writer establishes the credibility of their arguments. In APA, however, credibility is established by the writer proving that they understand and can effectively communicate the information being stated in their paper thorough paraphrasing. An APA paper that is full of direct quotes suggests that the author does not understand the information well enough to restate it in their own words.

Remember that paraphrasing still requires an in-text citation!

3. Abide by the rules of formatting.

When an English professor instructs us to use MLA style it often registers as an afterthought, secondary to the actual writing of the paper. APA formatting is a bit more of an involved process, and therefore it is important to stress adherence to the formatting guidelines right from the beginning of the writing process. Using a correctly formatted sample paper can be extremely beneficial as a resource to show students exactly how to structure their papers.

4. Timeliness is key.

In MLA, we have never heard of a teacher imposing a restriction on secondary sources based on their date of publication. In some cases, the older a scholarly article is may even make it more valuable in our paper. In APA, because so much of the scholarly research is coming from scientific data, statistics, etc., which can become irrelevant over time, it’s always important that the students use the most recent data that they can find. Often teachers in APA will impose a specific limit on an assignment such as “no research older than ten years” or “no research from before the year 2005”.

The importance of timeliness is also apparent in the way that APA requires an author’s name and the date of publication for in-text citations of references (as opposed to MLA, which uses the author’s name and the page number of a quote).

Section 5: How to Teach APA

**Best practices for APA Workshop**

* The Purdue Owl has an annotated sample paper:   
  owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/18  
  Review this example with students for examples of in-text citations and reference page, as well as a strong example of academic tone.
* Review short quotations, long quotations and paraphrase: owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/
* Invite students to paraphrase and cite a section of their own textbook, using APA citations
* Also refer students to The Writing Center APA template, linked here and also available in the wiki: www.govst.edu/Academics/Services\_and\_Resources/Writing\_Center/Documentation\_Styles\_(APA,\_MLA,\_etc-)
* Emphasize that **use of quotations is minimal** in APA. APA values facts more than specific phrasings.
* Ask students about their own methods for integrating quotations. If there are no takers, introduce the concept of the "quotation sandwich" from "They Say, I Say"
* Explain the reasons that APA is annotated the way it is. Remind students that APA is time-bound, because it refers to recent scientific findings, therefore date is emphasized. Explain that because science values collaboration, the documentation of choice for the Sciences does not give full names, but rather last names and first initials.
* Compare APA to MLA:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MLA | APA |
| *Values time minimally:* considers ancient texts and scholarship done upon them to be timeless. | *Values time considerably:* How current the source is matters, so emphasizes the date. |
| *Highly privileges a traditional model of authorship:* Is concerned with “recognizing and eradicating plagiarism, and maintaining fidelity to the original text and its meaning. Both of these assert the rights of the original text and its author to be absolute and unchanging over time.  The author’s first name is spelled out in the works cited list | *Minimally values a traditional model of authorship:* Includes relatively few pages on plagiarism. Mueller suggests that “because social sciences build on others’ work, the relationship between documents is seen as more collaborative than it is under MLA.    The author’s first name is represented by initials in the reference list. Research (not just authors) can be in. Discourages first person. |
| *Two user categories, professional and student:* There are separate handbooks for undergraduate students and for professional scholars. | *Directed at professionals with minimal attention to students:*One handbook, “directed at social science researchers writing articles for publication in journals,” although the latest edition recognizes student users. |
| *Limited focus:* primarily focuses on documenting sources. Moderately concerned with formatting. | *Broad focus:* Concerned with much more than documentation, including style, format, headers, sections. |

* Explain that the in-text citations should lead easily into the alphabetical reference page, in case the reader wants to conduct further research on the studies referenced
* Ask students what methods they usually use to create their reference page. Students will sometimes have access to useful new technologies, such as the Microsoft Word reference page generator.

Below is the link for an APA powerpoint that has been created by multiple fellows over the years. This is a living, breathing document that we encourage you share your feedback on!

<http://prezi.com/ubuxlp0ceufu/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy>

Writing Process Workshop/How to start—for Social science courses.

How to fellow for an online course—skype

What a fellow does

Optional Cover Sheet

Marko

Section 6: Overcoming Imposter Syndrome

Here are some words from a previous Writing Fellow on Imposter Syndrome

*When I first became a Writing Fellow, one of my biggest initial struggles was dealing with impostor syndrome. I found myself wondering if I had any right to comment on the writing produced by other students, and whether my input would even be valuable. Though I still struggle with self-doubt from time to time-- as many of us do!-- I have found that reminding myself of one simple fact has, oftentimes, allowed me to set aside my feelings of doubt in my abilities as a fellow. Simply put, we are all always striving to improve, and able to improve, as writers.*

*A major aspect of my own feelings of inadequacy arose from the thought that I somehow needed to have all of the answers when it came to academic writing; that I needed a mental catalogue of every rule in MLA, APA, and even Chicago Style; that one mistake would somehow undermine my credibility. However, I have come to realize this is completely untrue. Just like the students I have worked with, I am also an undergraduate student who still has a great deal to learn about writing. Yet even if I dedicate the next twenty years of my life to writing-- as I hope to do-- I will still have a great deal to learn. And that is okay! In fact, it is better than okay: it's fantastic. Realizing I always have more to learn, and can always strive for more, not only removes some of the pressure associated with the need to be "perfect," it also infuses writing with a fresh sense of excitement. Not knowing everything doesn't make someone an impostor, it makes them a writer who is open to learning, and, therefore, a writer who will always be able to improve.*

*As previously stated, feelings of self-doubt and various anxieties still creep into my mind occasionally. However, when this happens, reminding myself of the aforementioned concept has always seemed to help. Additionally, it is worth noting that not having an exact answer on the tip of your tongue will not completely dismantle your credibility with students-- as long as you follow up with detailed, correct answers to questions as soon as possible, you will remain as credible and helpful as ever in their eyes.*

*If you, as a new Writing Fellow, find yourself feeling like an impostor, I hope these words will help assuage some of your concerns. No one has all of the answers all of the time-- and no one expects you to, either! As writers, we are always able to learn, grow, and improve. Reminding yourself of this not only helps when it comes to your work as a Fellow, but can be a great help when it comes to your own future writing projects, as well.*

*Furthermore, you are a Writing Fellow for a reason. You have the skills to not only produce thoughtful, insightful pieces of writing yourself, but also to assist others in doing the same. As you grow as a writer, you will likewise be able to help the students you work with grow.*