

FMCFWAMA

Consultant Guide

*A Handbook on Peer Consulting with GVSU
Student Authors*



Frederik Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors

Grand Valley State University

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Welcome to the FMCWAMA

Congratulations and welcome to the Frederik Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors (FMCWAMA) family! As peer Writing Consultants, our goal is to help writers here at GVSU with any stage of the writing process from brainstorming to grammar and citations.

Our many locations types of consultations can vary, and seem overwhelming; thus, we have created a resource to help you through your first semester of being a Peer Writing Consultant. This handbook will contain information from the logistics of how the Writing Center functions, the types of consultations you may be performing, debunking misconceptions of being a consultant, and tips from current and past consultants here at the Writing Center.

We hope you enjoy your first semester here at FMCWAMA and we look forward to working with you!

Section 1

Our Role in the Writing Center

What Does it Mean to be a Writing Consultant?

Congratulations! You've officially received the title, but what exactly is the job you will be doing? Before jumping into the technical details and explanations of types of consultations, our first step is to define what it means to be a Writing Consultant here at GVSU's Frederik Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors.

Our Mission Statement

When hearing "Writing Consultant", you may immediately think of our job as one falling along the lines of tutoring. The Writing Center does fall along the lines of a tutoring service, however there is a reason we call ourselves "Consultants" and not "Tutors". Our mission statement at the FMCWAMA is, ***"Through peer mentorship, the Fred Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors provides a safe space for analytical dialogue, wherein writers develop strategies and skills for building awareness of and confidence in their own writing process"***.

Essentially, we help make better writers, not better papers. We are definitely not an editing service, but we can help students with methods to edit papers. Our job is to make our job obsolete. We can help student authors with concepts and brainstorming, but we make sure the decisions fall along their lines, and on their own. We are not tutors, because we are not solely teaching, and not teaching one correct method. We can help in understanding concepts and relating them back to the student, but we do not make them adhere to one method or another. Each choice is chosen by the writer, on their terms.

If we were to help in specifically choosing ways to change the manner of a paper, that could fall back to us as consultants and the Writing Center as a whole. This could happen if the student comes back with a "bad" grade on a paper, and points back to the Consultant and says, "But they told me to!" This is also why we do not give evaluative statements, or offer grades for papers. This falls into the professor's realm, not ours.

Our Vision Statement

The Fred Meijer Center for Writing and MIchigan Authors is founded on the principle that writing is a social act and that a writer's peers -- weather undergraduate, graduate, or

faculty/staff -- can, with proper training and support, provide a writer with valuable writing assistance. Therefore, we value:

- Process
- Dignity
- Curiosity
- Inclusiveness
- Community
- Empowerment
- Adaptability

You can read more about these specific values as well as further context for them at gvsu.edu/wc

Dialectical Inclusiveness and Language Diversity

The Fred Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors...

- Aims to actively promote not only the acquisition and mastery of discipline-specific styles in writing, but also the acknowledgement, development, and mastery of one's home language or dialect.
- Does not acknowledge any inherent linguistic hierarchy among the many varieties of English.
- Aligns itself with the GVSU community in stressing the importance of students becoming versed in the language of social and cultural power: Standard Edited Written English (SEWE).
- Recognizes that it is theoretically and pedagogically proven that empowerment and mastery of one's home language provides a better opportunity for mastery of another language or language variety.
- Believes it is through the empowerment of one's home language that writers and speakers from any background feel valued and more confident about learning new knowledge and skills.
- Trains writing consultants to respect all language varieties, believing that when individuals feel respected, they are more likely to succeed.

You can read more about the foundation for the policy at gvsu.edu/wc

Our Role as Consultants

In the Center

We as consultants can be seen as a peer-to-peer resource. Students may not feel comfortable going to their professor, or have simple questions, or want another student's perspective on their paper, so they come to us.

Our emphasis is on the **peer-to-peer** relationship in consultations. We aim not to be seen as an equal ranking to a professor, but as just another student, helping a student. This can help in students being more comfortable in talking about their paper, or brainstorming ideas. We are there as another resource to run ideas and papers by, but through the lens of another student. This can be a comfort to students in knowing that we are not there to be evaluative.

We are not needed to know every aspect of the English language; thus, we can lean on each other and the resources in the center to get those questions answered. This also serves as another opportunity to research concepts and topics with the student, and finding out the answer as a team.

Emotional Support

With our definition as being a peer, sometimes consultations can end up not being focused on writing. You may have a situation where the student you are having a consultation with is emotionally distressed, or is having another personal experience that is difficult to handle. In this case, you are also a peer, but maybe you are a shoulder to lean on, and a person to listen. It is okay to set aside time in your consultation if you feel that the student needs it to relax, and to take a few minutes for themselves. We are there to help with their writing, but we are also there as support for the student, whether it be a rant about homework, a break-up, or the writing assignment itself.

Directive Versus Non-directive

In the preceding paragraphs, there has been a hint at this idea of directive and non-directive methods to use in consultations. This will further be emphasized in the fall training.

Directive Approach — This method is similar to tutoring. If a concept is unknown to the student, such as what a reverse outline is, the Writing Consultant can explain this method, and then implement it if chosen to. Not all concepts and ideas can be pulled from the student author's prior knowledge, so in some instances you may need to explain the method. Another approach to being directive, is to point out points in the paper and offer suggestions, rather than ask for the interpretation of the student, and go about finding a solution in a more roundabout way. It is okay to be directive, but be careful not to always be directive in your consultations.

Non-directive Approach — This method uses the prior knowledge of students to aid them in coming up with ideas. It is similar to posing questions to the student, and having them answer in a way that answers the question they've asked you. For example, a student may ask if the last sentence of the paragraph ties in with the rest. Instead of saying yes, you could say, "I noticed the last sentence focused on an idea in the first paragraph. Is that what you intended?" From here, the student can see from your interpretation of the topic the answer to their question. This approach is very important in having students make decisions in their papers, and can be seen as an alternative approach to "teaching" writing, which is what we try to stray away from.

Author Ownership

Tying back to the peer-to-peer relationship, one important thing to know as a Writing Consultant, is that the student author owns their paper. We are not able to force them to make decisions on how to alter their assignment, but we can offer feedback on those potential changes, and how you view them **as another student**.

This allows student authors to have the power in how they want their assignment to represent their thinking, and their manner of presentation on a topic.

Section 2

Starting Out

Procedures, Policies, and Logistics

Under this first section, you will find procedures and responsibilities, clarifications on UltraTime, how Green Sheets work (and what they are), the year-by-year pay rate for Consultants, hours, locations and other technical details.

Policies, Procedures, and Expectations

Staff Responsibilities

The following lists of duties establish guidelines for each Center staff position.

As an Undergraduate or Graduate Writing Consultants, you are responsible for:

- Keeping all scheduled commitments, and if unable to keep a commitment, contacting the office coordinator or the director in time for a substitute to be arranged. If you arrange for a substitute yourself, you will let the director know (See “Writer’s Pad” on page 22)
- Filling outlay period paperwork correctly and before the deadline
- Generating post-session reports at the end of consultations
- Participating in self-evaluation as assigned by the director. This can include observing a consultation or being observed by another consultant
- Attending and contributing to orientation, mentor group meetings, ongoing education seminars, staff meetings, and WRT 306
- Maintaining positive communication with faculty regarding consultations in the classroom (098/150)
- Behaving professionally and appropriately when representing the Center
- Generating handouts, consulting tips, and other documents as needed by the Center

Consultants may be asked to carry out other duties. This can include serving on special committees, staffing special projects, doing presentations, helping with scheduling, visiting classes, etc.

THE WRITING CENTER DIRECTOR is responsible for all services and programming offered by the Center, as well as hiring, supervising, and training staff. The Director maintains communication with faculty across campus and devises record

keeping and reporting systems for the Center. Patrick Johnson, Director, can be reached in person at LOH 119, by phone at 331-8077 or by email at johpatri@gvsu.edu.

THE WRITING CENTER COORDINATOR is responsible for the mentoring and professional development of the consulting staff. Also, supervising, training, and evaluating consultants, organizing on or off location projects, developing new outreach opportunities, and facilitating relationships between the Writing Center and other departments. Melanie Rabine, Writing Center Coordinator, can be reached in person at LOH 113 by phone at 331-8493 or by email at rabineme@gvsu.edu.

THE OFFICE COORDINATOR is responsible for daily operations in the Center, such as scheduling appointments, maintaining resources and promotional materials, and all filing and record keeping for the Center. Lisa Gullo, 331-2922, is the Writing Center's Office Coordinator. She can also be reached by email at gullol@gvsu.edu.

LEAD CONSULTANTS act as peer leaders for GVSU writing consultants and are responsible for meeting with their group members on request, participating in the evaluation of the consultants on their teams, and notifying Pat Johnson, the Writing Center Director, of any issues that may arise. See leads and their contact information on page 13.

GRADUATE CONSULTANTS are students obtaining their graduate degree, while also working at the Writing Center. These students can work both on the Allendale and Pew campus; however, they often are stationed downtown. These consultants are able to work with students at any level, and at any part of the writing process.

Staff Education and Communication

Mentor Group Meetings: Mentor groups are a mandatory aspect of employment. All new consultants are assigned to a mentor group, and must regularly attend meetings and participate in the discussions and activities within those groups. This continuous aspect of training is a time for consultants to share problems, techniques and successes. Everyone's input is needed to make this time valuable. Mentor Groups meet every other week of the Fall semester.

Returner Group Meetings: Returner Group Meetings start in the Winter semester of the school year. These meetings are similar in discussion of activities and experiences in the Writing Center, but consist of larger groups of consultants. Returner Groups meet three times in the semester. At this point, there are no "new" consultants, and all are considered returners.

Writing 306: If you are an undergraduate consultant and new to the FMCWAMA, you will be required to fully participate in WRT 306 during your first semester. Writing 306 can be taken as a one-credit course, or a credit/no credit course, which is specifically geared towards first semester writing consultants. You will meet once per week, focusing on assigned readings and assignments to further discuss the role writing consultants and Writing Centers play in helping peer writers. You will also have the opportunity to conduct a research project, focusing on one aspect of your choosing pertaining to the Writing Center. This course will also be another atmosphere to discuss experiences and techniques you have encountered, and brainstorm ways to define your own style of consulting.

Professional Development Hours: All consultants, new and returning, are required to attend up to 2 hours of professional development each semester. You will be paid for the time spent in the workshops, which are meant to help you develop more complex tutoring skills or to inform you more deeply about issues affecting your work than we have time to address in orientation or mentor group meetings. Early each semester, the writing center administrators will send out a list of professional development workshops you can attend; you must sign up to attend the seminars of your choice. You may continue to attend as many seminars as you would like, however you will only be paid for the required two hours.

Staff Meetings: Because we're such a large staff, getting together is near impossible. However, we will hold one full-staff meeting at the start of the Winter semester for which attendance is mandatory. At this meeting, we'll discuss the work we did during the fall semester and upcoming events and changes in policies/procedures during the winter term. Typically, Winter staff meetings are held on the Allendale campus on the Sunday after the first week of classes in January, sometime in the late afternoon/early evening, — the exact time and location will be announced to you before the end of the fall semester.

E-mail: Consultants keep in touch through Writer's Pad, a listserv that you'll access through your campus email account. This is a way for us to discuss issues more rapidly and in more depth than we can otherwise. Writer's Pad can be used to update you on when paperwork is due, shifts need to be picked up, or if there is any new information regarding the Writing Center as a whole. You will need to sign your posts so that everyone knows who is writing. This is a way to get feedback quickly — especially if you can't find a Lead, Lisa, Pat, or Melanie.

Lisa will subscribe you to writers-pad by the end of the first week of classes in August. She will remove you from the list when you no longer work for the Center. See page 22 for more information on how and when to use Writer's Pad.

Procedures for Consultant Evaluation

Staff members are employees of Grand Valley State University; you are expected to fulfill your work responsibilities as you would for any other job. Failure to uphold these responsibilities may result in disciplinary action or dismissal.

In addition to performing job duties as outline in the Staff Positions section, the Center's staff members must follow these rules:

- Consultants will be allowed one absence from mentor group meetings per semester.
- Consultants should never miss drop-in hours, workshops, or WRT 098/150 classroom hours without finding a sub. Should an unexpected absence be unavoidable, the consultant must contact the Writing Center at 331-2922.
- Consultants may not discuss grades with student writers at any time.
- Consultants may not second-guess, undermine, or insult faculty members — in person or behind their backs.
- Consultants may not cheat on time cards. This is grounds for immediate dismissal.

If a consultant fails to perform required duties, demonstrates chronic tardiness or absenteeism, or violates a specific Center policy, disciplinary actions will be taken in the following order:

- A verbal warning will be issued.
- If the problem is not subsequently corrected, a written warning will be issued. At this point, the consultant must discuss the problem in a meeting with Pat.
- If the problem persists, the consultant will be dismissed.

Absences

Absences should be rare; unplanned absences should be rarer, and limited to genuine emergencies and illnesses. No matter the reason for your absence, please send a note to Lisa about the hours you work. That way, she can keep the information organized for payroll purposes to ensure timecard accuracy. This is an important element in keeping your job. If you cover for someone else, you should also notify Lisa of the additional hour(s).

When you know ahead of time you have a conflict:

- Clear the absence with Pat ahead of time.
- If you must miss WRT 098 or WRT 150 class, speak with the professor ahead of time to find out if he or she would like a replacement. If so, put a note on Writer's Pad the clearly listed the **day/date, time, and location** of the class for which you would like a replacement.
- If you must miss drop-in hours, put a note on Writer's Pad that clearly lists the **day/date and time** of the hours you will miss.
- If someone takes your hours, confirm the date and time with that person and send a copy of the information to Lisa. If no one volunteers, follow the procedure outlined below "When you're sick or suddenly can't make it..."

When you're sick or suddenly can't make it on the day of scheduled hours...

- You do not need to call into the Writing Center or check for approval, but you can send out an email on Writer's Pad as soon as you know you won't make your shift.
- You must let us know exactly what hours you will be missing. For 098 and 150 classes, we will get in touch with the Writing Department. Be clear about whose class you are in at what time. As soon as possible, you should also email the professor directly to explain and apologize for your absence; be sure to CC Pat on the email to the professor.
- **You must send out a sub request as soon as you know you won't be able to work your scheduled hours. It is not acceptable for you to call at 3:30 pm and say you can't work at 4 pm because you've been sick all day. We need as much notice as possible on the day you won't be working so that we can find a sub.**

Disciplinary Action and Absences:

- Two unexpected absences is considered a problem, and you'll be issued a verbal warning. The terms of the warning will be discussed with the consultant on a situation-by-situation basis.
- Missing work hours and not calling the Center ahead of time will result in an immediate written warning. A second unannounced absence will result in the consultant being released from employment.

Student Absences

If a student fails to show up for a standing, weekly appointment...

1. Let Lisa know, so that the student can be contacted.
2. After two missed appointments, notify Lisa of the two absences; Lisa will check to see if the student is still in the class, and contact the student.

3. After 3 missed appointments Lisa will permanently cancel the appointment from the writing center's schedule.

Important Contact Information

Phone Numbers

Fred Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors/Lisa Gullo (Allendale).....	331-2922
Patrick Johnson.....	331-8077
Melanie Rabine.....	331-8493
Lindsay Ellis.....	331-2994
Writing Department.....	331-3411
Library Service Desk.....	331-3500

Email Addresses

Lisa Gullo.....	(gullol@gvsu.edu)
Patrick Johnson.....	(johpatri@gvsu.edu)
Melanie Rabine.....	(rabineme@gvsu.edu)
Writer's Pad.....	(writers-pad@news.gvsu.edu)

Email Addresses for Lead Consultants

Christine Kovacs.....	(kovacsc@mail.gvsu.edu)
Chiara Licari	(licaric@mail.gvsu.edu)
Connor McDonald.....	(mcdonaco@mail.gvsu.edu)
Gwen Pearson.....	(pearsong@mail.gvsu.edu)
Meredith Szerlag.....	(szerlagm@mail.gvsu.edu)
Danielle Zukowski.....	(daniellenzukowski@gmail.com)

Locations and Hours

Writing Consultants can work in many locations with students coming in as either a drop-in or appointment. Below is a list of locations where Consultants can be found, and the range of times that location is open for consultants to work and students to come in. The hours and locations can also be found on the Writing Center's homepage.

[Allendale Locations](#)

- Lake Ontario Hall 120 - Allendale
 - Sunday: 2pm - 6pm
 - Monday — Thursday: 9am - 6pm
 - Friday: 9am - 3pm
- Knowledge Market: Mary Idema Pew Library
 - Sunday — Thursday: 6pm - 11pm

[Pew Campus Downdown Locations](#)

- Steelcase Library Knowledge Market - Downtown
 - Monday — Thursday: 11am - 6pm
- CHS 100: Student Academic Success Center
 - Monday and Thursday: 11am - 2pm

[Online Assistance via Google Docs](#)

- Monday — Wednesday: 8pm - 12am

Locations Explained

Allendale

The Allendale locations of the writing center primary serve to undergraduate students, but you may also see some graduate-level students too. Students both on appointments and drop-ins can be busy or slow, depending on the time in the school year.

Lake Ontario Hall 120

- LOH 120, or the “Mothership”, is the hub of the Writing Center.
- Pat's and Lisa's offices are located here, as well as Melanie's office which is down the hall.

- The reference wall is located here, with handouts on general writing issues, style guides, and citation manuals.
- The mailboxes for consultants are also located here, where important information such as schedules and announcements can be found.
- You can pick up your weekly appointment folder here (see page 26 for more information on weekly appointments)
- LOH 120 is where you can also pick up and return green sheets.



Mary Idema Pew Knowledge Market

- The MIP Knowledge Market is located on the first floor of the library, across from the main desk, and next to Argo Tea. The knowledge market is seen as a more casual setting, where students can still do a drop-in or make an appointment, but there is the added presence of other consultants. In addition to the Writing Consultants, there are Research Consultants, and Speech Consultants.
- When referencing students to any of the other services, use **#ref** in the session notes, symbolizing the reference.
- There are reference manuals by the front desk, but no other handouts are printed and available.
- You will need to check out a computer at the front desk with your student ID before you start your shift. This acts as your gateway to ScheduleIt and being able to check students out, as well as be a resource to use when looking up information, concepts, or terms.
- You can pick up a key card from the Knowledge Market front desk to access the break room, where you can put your personal belongings.



- Sometimes you may have a consultation, but no table to work with the student at. You have the choice to either ask students not working with consultations at the reserved tables to move to another, or you may go to another spot in the library to have your consultation.

Downtown

Downtown locations are different, in that there is often a lot of downtime. Consultants on appointments may be busy, while consultants on drop-ins may have a slower pace. Students coming in as a drop-in can bring a variety of writing pieces, while students creating appointments are often graduate students (undergrad around midterms), and MLW students (see page 27).

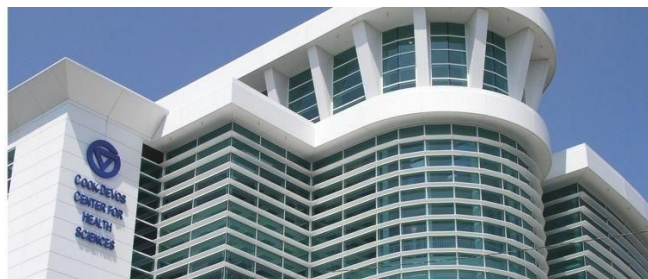
Steelcase Library Knowledge Market

- The Writing Center presence in the Steelcase KM is represented by a kiosk in the Knowledge Market area of DeVos C.
- There is a cart to set up the Writing Center area, and there is a sign-out book for computers ten and eleven.
- There is no break room where you can place your personal belongings, so you must keep them on hand.
- There is one student at a hightop to help in checking students in. You will have to decide who sits at the front desk, as well as if that person will assign drop-ins, or if you will assign yourself to the student.
- You need to check inventory and let Lisa know if anything needs to be restocked.



College of Health Sciences 100: Student Academic Success Center

- The CHS location usually houses one consultant, and is a location specified for students within the health sciences discipline.
- CHS 100 is seen as a knowledge market location, where there are speech and research consultants in addition to writing consultants.



- The one consultant working is responsible for setting up the station, keeping track of resources, setting up the computer, and checking in students.
- There may be times where you need to multitask and take a break from working with one student to check in another.
- At the CHS location, students can only do drop-in sessions, and there is a stronger presence of APA formatting and scientific/medical writing.

Bad Weather Policy

- If GVSU closes and classes are canceled **at all campuses**, the Writing Center is also closed.
- When the weather turns bad and/or temperatures go below zero, keep checking the GVSU website, radio, and television, to see if GVSU has canceled all classes and is closed.
- If GVSU closes at some point during the day, the Writing Center also closes.
- Text alerts can also be sent to your phone, through signing up with RAVE Alerts

Text Alert Sign-up

- Go to www.gvsu.edu/emergencycontact
- use your Blackboard user ID and password
- Enter your email address and phone number

ScheduleIt

What is ScheduleIt?

ScheduleIt is the online scheduling system we use at the writing center for students to make appointments, and for writing consultants and writing center desk workers to keep track of students coming in, and what hours consultants are working.

We, as consultants, use ScheduleIt to check whether we are on drop-ins or appointments, and use it to pick up/sign in students, as well as complete session notes.

Through ScheduleIt, Pat can see how long consultations are running, as well as have access to the session notes, and the survey provided for the student to fill out at the end of the session.

It may seem a little confusing at first, but you will get the hang of it!

How do I know if I'm on Drop-ins or Appointments?

- You can check your schedule by signing into ScheduleIt on your own computer through the Writing Center home page on the GVSU website, or once you are in your location, you can clarify by looking at the “Full Schedule” button
- If you have an appointment, a half hour block will be colored gray with a student's name
- If you are on drop-ins, the half hour block will be colored yellow, and display the shift you are working
- Often, if you are still not sure, you can check your schedule given to you at the beginning of the semester, or it will be posted on the master list in the Writing Center
- There are also semester-long work schedules, displayed as a calendar denoting who is on drop-ins and appointments. Consultants who are on drop-ins are in black, appointments are in green, graduate students are in red

What do I do if I'm on Drop-ins?

If you are on drop-ins, you are essentially waiting for a student who doesn't have an appointment to come into the center. The student will sign into ScheduleIt on their own, and will show up on the drop-in queue via ScheduleIt on the computer behind the desk.

It is your responsibility to check the queue and see if any students are waiting.

1. If there is a student, you will click “Make an Appointment” next to their name, and then scroll down to find your name.
2. Then, you will click “Make Appointment” and then your session will start.
3. From there, you will continue the session, and at the end of the half hour, you will bring the student back to a computer where they had signed in, and complete session notes.
 1. It is helpful to leave yourself a few minutes at the end of the session to account for the notes, so that you do not go over the half hour scheduled timeframe.
4. Students will have to sign back in with their Blackboard ID and Password, and then click “End Session” and “Complete Session Notes”. You can fill these out with the student, but make sure you are typing out the responses near the end of the notes.
5. From there, the student can be left to fill out the anonymous survey, and you can move on to the next student in the queue. The survey is anonymous to you as a

consultant, however Pat will be able to see the name of the student and their responses

What do I do if I'm on Appointments?

If you are on appointments, you can check your appointment schedule via the “Full Schedule” button on the ScheduleIt page.

1. When it is close to your appointment time, the writing center desk worker may let you know if your appointment has arrived, or you may need to call out the last name of the student.
 - **If it is past five minutes and your appointment has not arrived, you can pick up a student on the drop-in queue.**
2. From there, the student will log into ScheduleIt with their Blackboard ID and password, and you will click “Log into a Session”.
3. After logging in, your session has started, and you can begin working with the student for their half hour session.
4. From there, you will continue the session, and at the end of the half hour, you will bring the student back to a computer where they had signed in, and complete session notes.
 1. It is helpful to leave yourself a few minutes at the end of the session to account for the notes, so that you do not go over the half hour scheduled timeframe.
5. Students will have to sign back in with their Blackboard ID and Password, and then click “End Session” and “Complete Session Notes”. You can fill these out with the student, but make sure you are typing out the responses near the end of the notes.
6. The student can then be left to fill out the anonymous survey, and you can move onto your next appointment, or drop-in student.

How do I do Session Notes?

Session notes are very important to students, professors, and the Writing Center. Session notes allow the students to recap what they have done in the consultation, lets professors know how their assignment was discussed and approached in the session, and aids the Writing Center in understanding common topics being spoken about and what the student's concerns may be via the survey. It is vital to be descriptive in the notes, and do your best to accurately describe what you have covered with the student in the session. Students can still access these notes if they log into their ScheduleIt account, and click on past appointments. They will see the notes you had filled out, and the topics that were

covered in the consultation. See page 32 for tips on session notes, and page 33 for example reports.

1. The student will log into ScheduleIt with their Blackboard ID and password
2. Then, click “End Session” and the bottom button, “Check Out of a Session”
3. You will then click the boxes next to the possibilities provided regarding what you covered in the consultation
 1. If you click “other”, be sure to state what that “other” is under the portion of the session notes where you describe what was covered in the consultation
4. Be sure to fill out the session notes with the student, especially the text boxes of “What did you and the student cover in the consultation?”, and “What are the student’s plans for revision?”
 1. Make sure **you** are typing out these sections, and **be detailed!**
5. Ask if the student would like the notes to be sent to the professor or themselves
6. Click “Next” and leave the student to fill out the survey anonymously
 1. This survey allows quick feedback to the Writing Center director, and also serves as a form of feedback for you as a consultant. You will see this feedback at the beginning of the next semester (for example, if the consultation was in the Fall semester, you will see it at the beginning of the Winter semester).

Writing Consultant Pay Rate

Below is a table focusing on the hourly wage increase by year of undergraduate consultants. New Graduate consultants begin at \$12.35 an hour, and all consultants are paid every two weeks.

Undergraduate Consulting (Years)	Pay Per Hour
First Year	\$10.45
Second Year	\$10.70
Third Year	\$10.95
Fourth/Fifth Year	\$11.20

UltraTime

What is UltraTime?

UltraTime is the system used to keep track of the hours you have worked, and is sent to the Payroll office so you can receive your check. Essentially, UltraTime generates your pay check, because it is linked to the payroll. Green Sheets (discussed later) are tied to UltraTime, in that they're both due the Friday before the pay period ends, which is every two weeks. You can check when the pay period ends on UltraTime itself, or through the student jobs website.

How do I get to UltraTime?

You can get to the UltraTime log-in by following these steps:

1. Go to www.gvsu.edu.
2. Type "UltraTime" in the search box.
3. Click on the link (comes up with the Payroll office)
4. Log in with your G-number and password (last 4 digits of social security number)
5. Enter the hours you have worked

Grand Valley's Student Jobs website also has step-by-step directions of how to get to UltraTime, as well as a calendar of pay periods and pay dates.

How do I enter my hours into UltraTime?

When you enter your hours, it is important to include "a" and "p" after.

- For example, If you had worked from 2pm to 5pm in LOH 120, you would enter that in as "2p" and "5p".
- Once you hit enter, then UltraTime will recognize that you had worked three hours in the afternoon.

Similarly, working from 8:30am to 10am would be put in as "8:30a" and "10a" showing 1.5 hours of work.

Noon would be classified as "12p", while midnight would be classified as "12a"

It is very important that the total in UltraTime matches up with the total on your Green Sheet before you finalize your hours for the pay period.

Green Sheets

What are Green Sheets?

Green sheets are green half sheets of paper that you use to write down the hours you have worked for that pay period. The sheet is broken down into drop-in hours, appointment hours, the location you were at, any 098 and 150 labs or workshops, weekly appointments, and any professional development/training workshops you have attended.

Why are Green Sheets important?

While UltraTime is for the Payroll office, Green Sheets are for the Writing Center for budgetary reasons. They allow the Center to see how many hours per pay period or semester are used for different locations and events.

Where are the Green Sheets Located?

Green Sheets are located in the black filing tray by the Writing Center Desk workers. You will also return your filled out sheet back to a similar location in the Writing Center before the end of the pay period.

Writer's Pad

Writer's Pad is one of the only ways that you can get in touch with the entire consulting staff. Whenever you need a sub request (and have followed the aforementioned steps), you can send your request through this email to see if anyone is available.

If you have more than one email address, you must post from the email you have on file in the Center when putting something on writers-pad. For example, if you gave your Yahoo email to the Center, use that email to send out an email to Writer's Pad, **not** your GVSU email address.

Throughout the semester, we communicate via Writer's Pad when needing to contact the entire staff about something, so it is important to check your email at least once a day. Many sub requests and important information from Pat, Lisa, or Melanie will come through via Writer's Pad.

The email for Writer's Pad can be found on page 13, or at the bottom of your contact sheet.

Additional Opportunities

In addition to being able to work with student authors at many locations, you also have the option to take on more roles and opportunities to contribute to the Writing Center.

Becoming a Lead Consultant

After consulting for a full year, you have the opportunity to apply and become a lead consultant. Although there is no raise in pay, you do have more responsibilities. A lead helps in planning and facilitating orientation, running and creating professional development workshops, and is another form of communication between Pat and Melanie and the staff of the Writing Center. Leads also run mentor groups, can create resources for the Writing Center, be a source to discuss ideas with, and act as a form of support for consultants.

To apply, look for an email in the Winter semester of the academic year. You will need to write a formal letter explaining why you are interested and what you would bring to the Writing Center as a lead consultant. You will then need to participate in an interview with Melanie and Pat.

Attending Conferences

While working at the Writing Center, you have the opportunity to attend and present at conferences such as MWCA (Midwest Writing Centers Association), ECWCA (East Central Writing Centers Association), and NCPTW (National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing). Deadlines for presenting vary for each conference, however you can present singularly, or with other consultants. Each conference announces a theme, and you have the ability to generate ideas or find a way to frame your ideas into the conference theme by talking to Pat, Melanie, or a lead consultant.

Conferences are a great way to share and discuss ideas that form in every Writing Center. These events offer a way to open up that discussion, share new innovations, and bring back ideas to potentially implement in GVSU's Writing Center.

Professional Development Workshop Facilitation

Both consultants and lead consultants are able to create and run professional development workshops. If you have an idea or topic you feel could benefit the Writing Center, you are able to form those ideas into a presentation to share and discuss with your peers.

Some examples of workshops done in the past are: Working with ESL Students, Citation Styles, Working with Lab Reports, Self Care, and Using Metaphors in Consultations.

You can talk to Melanie about potential workshop ideas or workshops that have been done in the past.

Creation of Resources

Aside from Conferences and professional development workshops, you have the ability to create resources for the Writing Center. These can range from worksheets, handouts, or even a new way to organize information in the center.

Some examples of resources created/implemented are: cartoons on the back of handouts, the Knowledge Market Newsletter, event fliers, the Legacy Book, video tutorials, and even this Handbook.

You are able to discuss your ideas with Pat, Melanie, or a lead, and can take on that resource as a personal project.

Section 3

Situations and Facilitation

Workshops, Labs, and Tips to Get the Conversation Started

Now that all the logistics have been given, what will you be actually doing? Under this second section, the types of work situations, lab groups, workshops, and tips on consulting within those situations will help aid the idea of what we do as writing consultants.

One-to-One Consultations

One-to-one consultations are essentially when you as a consultant are with one student for the duration of a thirty minute appointment. You can also individually talk to students in a group, but this section will primarily focus on appointments/drop-ins at the various locations on GVSU's campus.

With one-to-one consultations, essentially you will have the student sign in (or you pick up the student if he/she is a drop-in), then you will have thirty minutes to work with that student on their concerns. Don't be afraid to use outside resources or another consultant if you aren't sure of an answer. Being a writing consultant doesn't mean that everyone expects you to know everything about the English language.

When working with students, it's important to not use any evaluative statements, or constantly tell students what to do. Using a non-directive strategy often helps students access their own ideas to implement in their writing. Sometimes directional tutoring may be necessary — just do not implement it for the entirety of the consultation.

Group Consultations

Group consultations can often be held in the same manner as a workshop group. Occasionally you may receive a few students working on one paper, and thus have to perform a group consultation.

You can handle this in a similar manner to a one-to-one consultation, or you can have them work off of each other as in workshop groups. Ultimately, it is up to your consulting style and what you think will work best for that group of students with their particular assignment.

Writing 098 Groups

Writing 098 is a credit/no credit course focusing on students who may feel that they are not quite ready for Writing 150. With these groups, you may receive 5-6 students (depends on the class and professor) and you will work with them throughout the semester. The professor may describe the assignment they are working on, and potentially offer goals for you to hit with the group, such as discussing thesis statements, outlining, etc. It is important to come a few minutes early to discuss that day's goals with the professor.

You can start out with using some key questions to facilitate group discussion (see page 30), but often through your own consulting style you can implement a strategy to have the group work together to reach the goals set by the professor.

Writing 150 Labs

Writing 150, a Grand Valley required course, focuses on strategies of writing at the college level, and is graded by a three-essay portfolio at the end of the course.

In a lab setting, the professor may have you help students in a specific manner, or leave you to help students in your own way. For example, one professor may ask you to simply walk around and help students, or you may have your name up on the board and student can sign up to work with you. You may not know how the lab will run until you speak to the professor during your first classroom session.

Don't be afraid to talk to the professor if you have an idea of how to work with the students, or if you feel something needs to be brought to their attention.

Writing 150 Workshops

Writing 150 workshops meet three times in the semester, and usually end before midterms. They are similar to 098 groups in that you may be working with 5 or 6 students, but the facilitation for the groups can be different.

Professors often meet outside of the room with their consultants before the workshop and explain the assignment they are working on. They may suggest a few things for you to work on with them, but you also may be on your own as to what to cover. See "Questions to Get Group Discussion (098 and 150) Going" (page 29) for some examples of what to cover with your fellow writers.

Weekly Appointments

Aside from workshops, labs, and one-to one consultations, you are able to take student authors on as a weekly appointment. In this format, you may be notified of a student seeking a weekly appointment by Lisa via email. You can indicate your interest, and if you are matched up, you will meet with the student every week for one hour. Students desiring weekly appointments can range from MLW students (see below), to WRT 150 students, to students in other disciplines. Weekly appointments are a great way to build relationships with student authors, and offer the experience of working consistently with one student, and offering support on a weekly basis. See the student absence policy if you appointment does not show up (page 12).

ESL and MLW Consultations

ESL or MLW students are writers that are using English in their courses, however it may not be their mother tongue. MLW students can come into the Writing Center or Knowledge Market as a drop-in, or schedule an hour appointment at any location. Many of these students are familiar with the grammatical concepts of the English Language, but come in for clarification and to make sure that these principles are in practice. There is one section of MLW students for Writing 098.

Graduate Student Consultations

In addition to working with undergraduate students, you will have the opportunity to work with graduate or masters students. As a drop-in, you will be able to work with the student for half an hour, whereas you will have either the half hour, or one hour for a scheduled appointment (they have an option to choose a timeframe). When working with graduate students, it's okay to feel that you may not understand the content. These students may be asking the same questions as undergraduate students, and are simply looking for another opinion on their work. Often, you may be working with graduate or masters students in the downtown locations, but you may have the opportunity to work with them in the Allendale locations as well.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Student Consultations

TEN TIPS ON CONSULTING

With d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing Peers

1 NOISE LEVEL

Be mindful of the noise level of the workplace prior to selecting a location.

2 VISIBILITY

Make sure the student can see your face easily and clearly.

3 EYE CONTACT

Look at the student when speaking to them. Talking with your back turned away or even facing the side can reduce what is heard.

4 SPEAK NORMALLY

Over pronouncing words or yelling is ineffective. Speak normally to the student to yield the most comprehension. Only speak up if you are normally very quiet.

5 SLOW DOWN

Although it is important to speak normally, be aware of your rate of speech. Talking too fast can make it difficult to distinguish between words.

6 "NEVERMIND"

Do not, do not, do not say, "nevermind" when a student did not hear something. Even though you may decide your words were not important, it can be considered quite dismissive to use this phrase.

7 REPETITION

If a student did not hear you, first repeat exactly what you said. Do not rephrase until you have repeated. Rephrase if it is clear there was a misunderstanding.

8 CHECK IN

Make sure the student really is hearing and understanding your suggestions. Avoid yes or no questions and instead assure genuine comprehension.

9 PATIENCE

Do not worry about rushing through a paper. In order to get the most out of a consultation with any student, it's important to remember that becoming a better writer takes time.

10 WRITE

During the consultation, jot down notes with the student about what you discussed. The notes will help supplement what was not heard and the student may benefit from a visual representation.

Script for One-to-One Sessions (Drop-ins, ESL and DSS Appointments)

Steps 3-8 work well when you're giving one-to-one help to a student in a WRT 098 or WRT 150 lab setting, too!

1. Greet the student.
2. Ask if the student has visited the writing center before
3. Begin building peer-to-peer rapport
2. Help student log into ScheduleIt.
3. Find out about the assignment the student is working on—look at the assignment sheet to ensure you (and the student) understand what is expected of the assignment. It is also important to ask when the paper is due.
4. Ask the student what he or she wants help with, specifically.
5. Based on information collected, determine the best approach to assist the student: Have the student read their paper aloud, read the paper silently, or just talk without focusing on what has been written.
6. Respond to the student's concerns first.
7. Raise additional issues *after* you have addressed the student's main concerns. Do not feel shy about pointing out specific areas for improvement.
8. End the session by recapping the main points the student will work on next. Be sure the student leaves with a plan to revise his or her work!
9. Offer the student the option of checking out a laptop to work further on the paper in the Center, and then encourage them to seek out more feedback from you or another consultant.
10. Ask the student if his or her instructor should be notified of the visit. If so, with the student, fill out the section in ScheduleIt that will email the professor a notification of the student's visit.
11. Help the student log out of ScheduleIt.
 1. If at a Knowledge Market location, use **#ref** when referencing another consulting service
12. Thank the student for stopping by and invite him or her to come back.

Reminders When Consulting In and Out of the Center

- Make sure the student has the power! Give the student your pen and, when appropriate, prompt him or her to write down ideas/reminders in the margins.
- Sessions stay focused and are more effective if you and the student work on only a few areas of the paper.
- Sessions of 30 minutes are about right; longer than that, and the student (and you) can lose focus; shorter than that, and you may not address the student's needs in a comprehensive manner.
- Offer the student handouts or show him or her websites (see www.gvsu.edu/wc) as necessary.
- Do not evaluate the student, their writing, or their instructor. **Never** discuss grades.
- Feel free to be yourself! Being a peer is an advantage.
- STUDENTS MUST LOG INTO ScheduleIt!

Questions to Get Group Discussion (098 and 150) Going

Questions for Writers:

- What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of this paper?
- What do you want to achieve with this paper? What is your purpose in writing it?
- What are your pain concerns about the paper at this point?
- *If the paper isn't yet finished:* Describe a bit about where the paper is going. Now describe the section you've written — how does it fit into that big picture?
- What do you want us readers to think about as you read the paper aloud to us? What exactly are you wanting us to pay attention to?

Questions for Readers:

For any sort of paper:

- What seems to be the point/argument of this paper? What does the writer want people to think/feel/believe/understand?
- How does the writer help readers to think/feel/believe/understand that point?
- Was there a point in the paper that you felt was particularly strong? What was that section, and what made it so strong?
- Was there a point in then paper that you felt was particularly weak — the writer lost credibility, or you didn't follow the writer's argument, or you couldn't picture what was happening?

- What was your favorite part of the paper? Why?
- How does the writer appeal to an academic audience in this paper? (What is an academic audience? What techniques are appropriate to reaching that audience?)
- Is the paper well-organized? How would you describe the progression of ideas throughout the paper?
- Do there seem to be good transitions between paragraphs? Point out a few places where the transitions are particularly strong (or weak).

For research-based papers:

- Where do you think the writer needs more sources?
- Where does the paper seem too source-heavy?
- Does the writer manage to retain his or her own voice in the paper? If so, how does the writer do that? If not, what might the writer do to remedy this problem?
- Does the writer consistently document sources correctly? Where might the writer need to work on integrating quotations more smoothly or documenting sources more accurately?

For personal narrative papers:

- Is the paper descriptive enough? Can you see/hear the action?
- What do you think of the dialogue? Should there be more? Less? Does it sound realistic?
- What seems to be the message the writer is getting across to readers?
- Are there any clichés in the writing? How might they be eliminated? Where is the writing particularly fresh?

Tried and True Strategies for Facilitating a Good Group Discussion

- Consciously use wait time
- Assign roles: one student is a timekeeper; another evaluates how well the introduction works with the rest of the paper; another evaluates how effective the conclusion closes the paper; another thinks about counter-arguments that might need to be addressed, etc.
- Have students, before the discussion begins, write out three questions about their draft. They should read the questions aloud before reading the group their drafts and getting feedback. (You can even assign one question per student in the group to answer for the writer).

- Alternately, ask student which sections of their paper they want the most help with. Direct the other students to pay particular attention to those areas, and begin giving the writer feedback on them.
- Talk about the content of the paper generally before actually asking the student to read the draft. That way, the group is “primed” to pay attention to the topic under discussion — and you can ask students to share what came up in discussion that wasn’t in the draft, or how the writer might use the pre-feedback discussion to make revisions to the draft.
- If you are brainstorming topics, give students something to write before the discussion begins. “Jot down a list of everything you know about the death penalty.” “Make a list of the arguments for building another parking lot on campus; then, make a list of all the reasons GVSU shouldn’t build one.”
- Have students outline their papers and then share the flow of information with each other. Does the organizational structure make sense? (This leads to an in-depth discussion on one issue. You could have similar focused discussions about students’ introductions, conclusions, or the part of the essay they are most struggling with).
- Ask students what they’re doing well. Celebrate those achievements and that sense of self-confidence. Then, move on to asking why they’re concerned about. Tackle those problems — as a group — before beginning feedback to individuals’ drafts. (Be careful not to do this every week, though, or students will come to think they don’t need to have drafts prepared!).
- Do a “practice” workshop session with a sample WRT 150 paper (See Pat for some). This might warm up the group to workshopping — and make them less afraid to share criticism with each other in the future.
- As a student reads a paper aloud, have the others keep two lists: three things the writer has done well, and three areas for improvement. In the subsequent discussion, be sure to get students to explain WHY those parts of the paper were good or needed work.
- Ask each member of the group to jot down writers’ thesis. Ask everyone to share what they wrote — and then find out from the writer who got it right. Then as a group, talk about how the writer could revise the draft (or the thesis!) to make the focus and purpose of the writing more clear.
- Be sure to ask the quiet (or distracted, or uncertain) student directly for his or her input, too. Don’t simply allow the “talkers” of the group to do all the work. Students could be missing out on great feedback from that one person who doesn’t say much!
- Make connections among students’ papers. As long as it’s appropriate, mention what the group has already discussed, and ask students how they’d apply that concept to the next paper. Example: “Marcy, we just talked about the way you worked quotations into your essay. What do you think about how Stan has incorporated quotations into his?”

- Encourage your group members to look at each other (not at you!) when they give each other feedback about the papers. Stress to them that you're not the writer of the papers; you're just asking questions to prompt discussion. They should address each other so that the group's work functions as a real discussion.
- If discussion is slow, ask students to pretend that the paper being workshopped is their own and discuss their writing process and what each student's next step would be in the writing process. Or, ask them "if this were your paper, what would you do next?"
- Sounds simple: but encourage students to jot notes as their peers read. That way, they won't forget any points they might want to make in the discussion. Don't be surprised if you have to be very directive, requesting that students get their pens and paper out. Even wait while they do this, so that everyone is ready to listen productively to their peers' papers.
- Encourage writers to listen to each person's feedback before responding. That way, the group has adequate opportunity to give the writer feedback without interruption. It can be a very educational experience for the writer to just sit back and listen to what others have to say about the draft!
- Do everything you can to break the ice early in the semester. Get students talking to each other about anything — and then, once the ice has been broken, segue into a discussion of the paper.
- Try a six degrees of separation game with a student's topic (in a brainstorming session). Begin with the student's topic, and then get group members to elaborate, expand, or move the topic into a new direction. After six tries, see what the topic has developed.

Session Notes

Session notes finish out a thirty minute consultation when working in the Center, the Knowledge Market, or downtown. These notes are anonymous to the consultant (not Pat, Lisa, or Melanie), and are a way to summarize the session of what you covered or worked on with the student, and provides an opportunity for the professor of the student to receive a notification that the student came in for help.

If the student chooses to have the professor notified, it first goes to Pat or Melanie to be proofread, and then to the professor. It is important to be detailed in these session notes, for it provides a log of what was focused on in the consultation for the student, the professor, and the Writing Center.

Do not use the student name or your name when typing up session notes at the end of a consultation. Just use "we", "the student", "the consultant", "they", "he", and "she".

After session notes are filled out, there is a survey for the student to take which is also anonymous; thus, the session notes should be anonymous as well to protect the student's identity.

In the winter semester, you will receive a printout of your consultations, which will include session notes and surveys, and it is important that student names do not appear in the printout you receive.

Tips for Writing Good Session Reports

- Keep in mind that there are various audiences and purposes for these reports: writers use them to remember the revision plans generated in sessions; faculty use them to follow up on students' writing; the writing center uses them for assessment/research purposes.
- Given these audiences and purposes, you should ensure your session notes are specific and detailed.
- Be sure to proofread!
- You should type the note, with input from the writer (of course). This will ensure a level of detail and correctness that will be most useful to all audiences — and give a good impression of the writing center!

Example Reports

Excellent

The student plans to re-read her article so that she has a better understanding of the main concepts. She's then going to make an outline using the rough outline we worked on in the Writing Center to get a first draft started. The student is going to try to come back to the WC before she turns in her paper.

- Very specific about the writer's revision plans.
 - For these reports to be useful to faculty, details are necessary so they know how to intervene in the writer's process upon reading the next draft.
 - For these reports to be useful to students, details are necessary so that they can remember the revision plans you devised during the session.
 - For these reports to be useful to the writing center, we need to know what kinds of things you worked on — just in case the writer or professor follow up with Pat, Lisa, or Melanie, and also because we read groups of these reports to get a sense of how we help writers in the center.

- “Make an outline using the rough outline we worked on in the Writing Center” — demonstrates exactly how the student is going to get going on a revision
- It’s well-written, clear, and doesn’t include grammar errors.
- Would be helpful to mention the assignment — just in case the professor has assigned several and will wonder to which this paper pertains.

Good

The student came in with concerns that her persuasive essay topic would not be suitable for such a paper. We brainstormed ways that the student could generate more supporting evidence for the paper and turn it into an interesting and informative piece.

- Well-written, overall.
- Could be a touch more specific: what was the problematic persuasive essay topic?
- Overall, this note will be useful to writer, professor, and writing center. However, the professor may wonder what topic the writer was worried about. It could be useful for the professor to have that info so he/she could follow up with the writer.

Okay, but Not Acceptable

At this point, number one revision plan is to expand on the ideas. Several specific places throughout the piece could use more details, etc. A few places where writer could eliminate less important details in order to develop the focus of the paper.

- Pretty detailed — gives the professor a good sense of what the writer worked on, and serves the writer, too, as a good reminder of the session. In other words, the content is fine.
- The sentence fragments make this harder to read and doesn’t give off a good impression of the writing center. Remember: a primary audience for these session reports is faculty — we want to impress them with our writing abilities.
- Because this has some stylistic problems, Pat would end up rewriting some of the session note.

Unacceptable

The student and I worked on the organization of content. Student will mk changes.

- For what essay/assignment? Sometimes, professors have assigned multiple projects at once.
- What did you do in the session to work on organizing content?

- What sort of organizational pattern (or strategy) did the writer settle on? (Letting professors know this is actually great PR for the writing center — you all have good consulting skills; might as well show them off a bit!)
- How will the student reorganize the content? That is, what's the specific plan for revision?
- What are these mysterious changes that will be made?
- Please be sure to spell correctly. We know you can be busy and feel pressured to get to the next student in line — and we don't mind cleaning up mistakes in session notes here and there. But do make an effort to be careful, and make use of the spellchecker built into ScheduleIt.
- Please avoid text-speak.

Section 4

Voices of the Writing Center

Advice from Consultants Past

In this fourth section, past and current consultants turn over their advice to you, with some suggestions and ideas to keep in mind as you continue through your first semester here at the FMCWAMA. These range from types of consultations, to information these consultants wish they had known when they were first starting as a writing consultant.

Advice for 098 and 150 Workshop Groups

“Don’t treat them like children — they may be difficult or reluctant, but they are still adults who need respect in order to grow.”

“Before starting the workshop, take the first few minutes to get to know the group members. Even something as small as this can help make a good impression.”

One-to-one Consultations

“Write everything down. Everything. The student has a great idea but isn’t writing it down? Write it for them. The student does not know how they want to organize their paper? Talk them through the organization and be their scribe. You spent the whole consultation about three comma rules? Write them down before the student leaves (with examples!). When the student leaves with six pages of notes, I know they are not going to forget what we talked about. They feel relief that they are not responsible for remembering exactly everything we talked about in the consultation, and when they write the paper, they will have all the reference materials they need to complete it. Write. Write. Write. Your students will thank you for it.”

“Be genuine! Getting to know another student is very rewarding and you can better help them through this approach.”

“When appropriate, it may be beneficial to chat with the student before the consultation. This can help put the student at ease and also reinforces the peer-to-peer relationship.”

“Be genuine. Have a conversation with your student. Learning occurs only when you let it, so work to create a relaxing and stimulating environment for your student to grow. Maybe what you have to say can change that person’s life.”

“When working with a student on brainstorming ideas or how to word a certain sentence, write every idea the student has down. That way, when the student wants to write what

he said down but forgot his wording, you have it already written on your notepad for him to use.”

“Come up with analogies for different concepts. Thesis statements especially.”

“Really get to know the student —> small talk first and don’t be afraid to connect.”

“It’s okay to not to know everything. This is a learning opportunity for you as well, and so if you don’t know why a sentence sounds funny, write it down for yourself and ask a fellow consultant. If you don’t know why something is considered a comma splice, or a dangling modifier, ask for clarification. No one in this space entered knowing everything there ever was to know about writing. Ask questions, and be honest with the student that maybe you don’t know what this needs to look like, but you two will figure it out together. It not only builds rapport with the student, but it also shows that you are a student too, learning along side them.”

ESL/MLW Consultations

“It helps to be more direct and focus on content in order to encourage them to learn to express themselves more in English that way you can actually get through the paper instead of only focusing on grammatical errors sentence by sentence but of course if these errors are interfering with comprehension significantly they’re important to discuss.”

All Consultations

“Have regular conversations with the students in your 150 class, your 098 class, and your one on one consultations! You don’t always have to be talking about a paper or an assignment. If you have regular conversations with the students then they’ll feel more comfortable talking to you about papers or assignments. And probably you’ll find that you are also more comfortable.”

What We Wish We Had Known

“It’s not your fault if a student fails; you can’t make them care. All you can do is help them as much as they will let you.”

“That little notepad on the table is yours. There’s another one if the student wants it. When I first began consulting, I used the notepad exclusively for writing down notes while the student read their paper to me. This worked well because it kept me from writing on their papers (and I also was required to develop a shorthand for identifying locations in the paper). However, there’s so much more that can be done with your notepad. Draw pictures and diagrams! Many students are visual learners, or at least enjoy

having a visual layout to remember ideas by. I know I do. It always helps me. So draw and write on your notepad! Students love it, and so will you.”

“I wish I had known that I didn’t really have any reason to be nervous. Bad experiences at the writing center are few and far between.”

“Take a strength about yourself, and emphasize it. This will help you discover your distinctive consulting style. Do not be afraid to experiment.”

“You will have a way higher number of great consultations and almost no horrible ones.”

“That it’s okay to have my own consulting style. I was much more worried trying to fit into someone else’s style, when it wasn’t working. Be Yourself!”

“I wish that I would have known that it's okay to not know everything, and it's okay to be nervous. While there is no need to be nervous (we were trained very well for our jobs), it can still be scary to work with a graduate student for the first time, or an ESL student for the first time. And that's okay! Just make sure that you push yourself, and constantly strive to use better consulting practices.”