Plan for Assessment of Student Learning: Writing Center

Revised 3/5/2013

Writing Center Mission Statement

The mission of the University Writing Center is to serve as a resource on writing for the university community. We help people as they seek to improve their writing by offering positive, constructive responses to their work in any genre or discipline and at any stage of the writing process. We believe that the development of writing abilities is a life-long process, and that writing is a skill and art that enables people to create and communicate ideas.

Student Learning Goals

UND students experience the Writing Center as writers, consultants, or both. Both experiences present unique opportunities for student learning.

Goals for Student Writers

At the end of a writing center session,

1. Writers will be able to explain what they plan to do next in the writing process.
2. Writers will demonstrate positive self-efficacy regarding a specific writing task and/or writing generally.

Goals for Student Writing Consultants

While employed at the Writing Center, student writing consultants will continuously practice each of the UND Essential Studies goals. After completing employment at the Writing Center, writing consultants will be able to apply their writing center experience in each goal area to their professional and/or personal activities.

1. Thinking and Reasoning: Consultants should be able to use a variety of thinking and reasoning skills, apply these skills as appropriate in various situations, and move among them depending on purpose.
   a. What this looks like in the Writing Center: In the course of their work, consultants must think critically about contexts, writers, and texts. Consultants must analyze the rhetorical situation in which the writer is working (including assignment handouts, application/proposal/publisher guidelines, and other information about the situation shared by the writer). Consultants also gather information about the writer’s stage of the writing process and affective state regarding the project. Consultants analyze writers’ drafts and their own readerly reactions to it. Consultants synthesize all of this information and create a plan for assisting the writer. They continually monitor the effectiveness of the plan and modify it accordingly. Consultants also engage in reflective practice by talking about their
sessions with other consultants, assessing the effectiveness of the sessions and generating ideas for improvement.

2. Communication: Consultants should be able to write and speak in civic, academic, and professional settings with a sense of purpose and audience.
   a. What this looks like in the Writing Center: Consultants present information and express ideas to writers during sessions, choosing appropriate ways to do this by considering what they know about the writer and their purpose as writing consultants. Through repeated practice with the critical thinking described under the “Thinking and Reasoning” goal, consultants continue to develop their analysis, synthesis, and evaluation skills and improve their own abilities to create effective written or oral presentations. Consultants also must develop and maintain their knowledge of different disciplinary standards for presenting research, citing sources, and formatting documents in order to assist writers with these tasks.

3. Information Literacy: Consultants should be able to access and evaluate information for effective, efficient, and ethical use in a variety of contexts.
   a. What this looks like in the Writing Center: Consultants share their readerly responses to ways in which writers have used information in drafts, often discussing the credibility of information and ethical ways to incorporate information into the draft. Consultants help writers determine how to access needed information, including referring writers to librarians. In the course of their professional development, consultants evaluate writing center research and use it to inform their practice.

4. Diversity: Consultants should be able to demonstrate understanding of social-cultural diversity and use that understanding to address issues, solve problems, and shape civic, personal, and professional behavior.
   a. What this looks like in the Writing Center: Writing consultants work with writers from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds. Because language use both reveals and creates social and cultural identities, discussions of writing must be informed by knowledge of culture, difference, and diversity. Furthermore, consultants must draw on this knowledge to effectively interact with writers. Professional development activities aim to leverage consultants’ experience working in a diverse environment. Reflecting on the experience helps consultants further develop their understanding of their own diversity in relationship to the larger society, their understanding of and respect for the social-cultural diversity of others, and their ability to analyze and apply knowledge about diversity to their writing center work.

 Additional Goals for Graduate Student Writing Consultants

In addition to meeting the goals above, after completing an assistantship in the Writing Center, graduate student writing consultants will be able to

1. Apply their Writing Center experience to their teaching
   and/or
2. Apply their Writing Center experience to their writing

Learning Experiences

*Student writers* meet with a writing consultant to discuss a writing project in progress. Sessions are scheduled for 30-60 minutes, and writers may make multiple appointments each semester.

Through discussion of the project, opportunities naturally arise for consultants to explain and/or model applicable writing process knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, genre knowledge, and discourse community knowledge. The consultant may also ask questions that prompt the writer to express his or her subject matter knowledge, reinforcing and clarifying what the writer knows about the subject of the writing project. The mutual sharing of knowledge in the conversation enables the writer to make an informed decision about his or her next action towards completion of the project, increasing the writer’s self-efficacy regarding the writing task and/or writing in general.

*Student writing consultants* meet with writers to discuss writing projects in progress. Each consultant is scheduled to work 8 hours/week during the academic year. In addition, consultants participate in professional development activities for one hour each week. Undergraduate writing consultants typically work in the writing center for 2-4 semesters. Writing Center GTAs typically work in the writing center for two semesters.

Because undergraduate and graduate student writing consultants work side-by-side, they establish a community of practice in which the undergraduates are exposed to the thinking and reasoning skills, communication skills, information literacy practices, and diversity knowledge of the graduate students, and in which the graduate students have an opportunity to mentor the undergraduates.

Assessment Methods

**Goals for Student Writers**

*Indirect assessment*: Data related to the goals for student writers will be gathered each spring through a survey (see Appendix A), which will also gather user satisfaction data. For one week mid-semester, every writer who has a writing center session will be invited to complete a survey which will target information about the goals for student writers.

*Direct assessment*: Peer observation of writing center sessions will also be used to gather data regarding the goals for student writers. All consultants will be taught to use an observation guide (see Appendix B) in order to consistently evaluate whether or not the goals for student writers were met during a session. Each consultant will observe at least one session and use the guide and their professional judgment to determine if the goals for student writers were met. They will record the evidence they saw of the goal, if present.

**Goals for Student Writing Consultants**

*Indirect assessment*: Once every three years a survey (currently under development—will be modeled on the Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project) will be sent to writing consultant alumni who completed employment at the writing center within the past three
years. The survey will elicit information about if and how consultants are applying their writing center experience to their current professional and/or personal activities.

Direct assessment: Peer observation of writing center sessions will also be used to gather data regarding the goals for writing consultants. All consultants will be taught to use an observation guide (see Appendix B) in order to consistently evaluate whether or not the goals for writing consultants were met during a session. Each consultant will observe at least one session and use the guide and their professional judgment to determine if the goals for writing consultants were met. They will record the evidence they saw of each goal, if present. The peer observer and consultant will meet after the session to discuss strengths, weaknesses, and ways to improve.

Use of Results and Process for Decision Making

Results will be reviewed annually by the Writing Center coordinator and consultants, who will collectively identify ways to improve the program. The coordinator will be responsible for articulating and implementing any changes to policies, procedures, or staff development.
## Writing Center Feedback

Thank you for visiting the Writing Center. Please fill out our anonymous feedback form below and help us to improve! Questions marked with an * are required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After your session, how did you feel?</td>
<td>-- please select --</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- please select --</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More confident than before the session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>less confident than before the session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What will you/do you do next with your paper?</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will return to the Writing Center:</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will recommend the Writing Center:</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments or Suggestions:</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mission of the Writing Center is to serve as a resource on writing for the university community. We help people as they seek to improve their writing by offering positive, constructive responses to their work in any genre or discipline and at any stage of the writing process. We believe that the development of writing abilities is a life-long process, and that writing is a skill and art that enables people to create and communicate ideas.
## Writing Center Session Observation Guide

Consultant __________________________

Observed by __________________________

Date ________________________________

*Writer Registration Information*

- Standing __________________________
- Major ____________________________
- First or Home Language ____________

1. Consultant gathered sufficient information about the assignment/guidelines/audience, etc.
   - Yes  No  Qualified Y/N  NA

2. Consultant gathered sufficient information about the writer’s comfort level, experience, etc.
   - Yes  No  Qualified Y/N  NA

3. Consultant gathered sufficient information about the text and offered a readerly response.
   - Yes  No  Qualified Y/N  NA

4. Consultant communicated and implemented a session plan and modified it if needed.
   - Yes  No  Qualified Y/N  NA

5. Consultant communicated appropriately for this particular writer.
   - Yes  No  Qualified Y/N  NA

6. Consultant communicated appropriately for the purpose of writing consulting.
   - Yes  No  Qualified Y/N  NA

7. Consultant addressed the use of information in the writing: credibility of sources/plagiarism/citation, etc.
   - Yes  No  Qualified Y/N  NA

8. Consultant used an understanding of social-cultural diversity to effectively assist the writer.
   - Yes  No  Qualified Y/N  NA

9. Writer explained what he/she plans to do next in the writing process.
   - Yes  No  Qualified Y/N  NA

10. Writer demonstrated positive self-efficacy regarding a specific writing task and/or writing generally.
    - Yes  No  Qualified Y/N  NA
Plan for Assessment of Student Learning: Writing Center

Writing Center Mission Statement

The mission of the University Writing Center is to serve as a resource on writing for the university community. We help people as they seek to improve their writing by offering positive, constructive responses to their work in any genre or discipline and at any stage of the writing process. We believe that the development of writing abilities is a life-long process, and that writing is a skill and art that enables people to create and communicate ideas.

Student Learning Goals

UND students experience the Writing Center as writers, consultants, or both. Both experiences present unique opportunities for student learning.

Goals for Student Writers

W1. Increased confidence for writing: Writers will demonstrate a positive perception of self-efficacy regarding a specific writing task and/or writing generally.
W2. Increased strategies for writing: Writers will articulate and/or perform one or more new strategies for writing.

Goals for Student Writing Consultants

C1. Increased strategies for writing: Consultants demonstrate a variety of writing strategies.
C2. Increased analytical skills: Consultants can effectively analyze texts and their contexts.
C3. Increased listening skills: Consultants can actively listen and accurately reflect what they hear.
C4. Increased cross-cultural skills: Consultants can work effectively in a diverse environment.

Learning Experiences

Student writers meet with a writing consultant to discuss a writing project in progress. Sessions are scheduled for 30-60 minutes, and student writers may make multiple appointments each semester.

Student writing consultants meet with writers to offer feedback on writing projects in progress. Each consultant is scheduled to work 8 hours/week during the academic year. In addition, consultants participate in professional development activities for one hour each week.

Assessment Methods

Indirect assessment: Student writers’ perceptions of their writing center experience and learning are gathered each spring through an online survey. For one week mid-semester, the survey is sent to every writer who has a writing center session. Consultants’ perceptions of their performance and their learning are gathered each spring through a self-assessment survey.

Direct assessment: Observations of writing center sessions are conducted each fall and as needed in the spring. Observation notes will be analyzed for evidence of learning related to each of the six learning goals.
Use of Results and Process for Decision Making

Results will be reviewed annually by the Writing Center coordinator and consultants, who will collectively identify ways to improve the program. The coordinator will be responsible for articulating and implementing any changes to policies, procedures, or staff development.