

Your Guide to the Peer Tutoring Internship at the Writing Center

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Introduction

Welcome to the Peer Tutoring Internship program.

This term is designed to follow up on the theory and practice you studied in the Tutoring Peer Writers class. When you took that class, you had the opportunity to visit the Writing Center several times in order to interview consultants, observe tutorials, and to be tutored yourself. This term, you will tutor other students while you work closely with one of our faculty consultants on your tutoring and on a research project that you will define soon.

This guide will help you to understand your obligations as a peer intern and will help you plan and carry out your research. You can also expect to have group meetings during the term with the peer tutor coordinator, Angie Farkas.

General Guidelines for Peer Interns

Here are your guidelines as a peer intern:

- Give the student the pencil or pen; ask questions; don't lecture.
- Do not make stuff up. If you don't know, look it up or ask someone.
- We expect that you will keep your scheduled hours and that you will show up on time.
- If you have to cancel for legitimate reasons, we expect that you will do so as early as possible so that your students can re-schedule with someone else.
- We expect that you will behave professionally with students, other consultants, and faculty.
- We expect that you will respect the confidentiality of the students who visit the Writing Center.
- We expect that you will attend all staff meetings and peer tutor meetings. If you have a legitimate reason for missing a meeting, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and touch base with the director. We understand that there may be a term when you have a class that conflicts with the meeting schedule. If so, confer with the director. Peer interns must attend meetings—if they have a class conflict they should complete the internship at another time. Peer tutors cannot miss meetings because of conflicts for two terms in a row.
- We expect that you will write in the blog as assigned.
- We expect that you will complete all tutoring reports online the day the sessions occur.
- We expect that you will work on improving your tutoring and increasing your knowledge about writing, editing, tutoring, and teaching. If you don't know something, look it up or ask someone; don't fake it.

- You may miss five hours this term without making up the time. Beyond that five hours, we expect you to make up any time you miss. Speak with Sandy about how to make up the time.
- We expect that you will meet with your mentors each week to work on your research and to discuss tutoring. You are scheduled with some overlapping hours with your mentors so that you may observe your mentors and your mentors may observe you.

If you have questions or concerns about these guidelines or about something that happens in your tutoring, speak with the director or associate director of the Writing Center. Angie Farkas will contact you about meetings and other issues. You can reach her at angela.farkas@pitt.edu.

Your Support Structure: Your Mentors and Peer Tutor Coordinator

You have a faculty mentor and a peer tutor mentor.

Your mentors have been selected because you have some overlapping hours. You have been assigned a standing half-hour appointment with each of your mentors every week of the term starting by the end of week two. It is important that you keep these appointments.

Your overlapping hours will enable you to observe your mentors' tutorials and will allow you to observe theirs. You should also discuss your research project. If you need to, you are welcome to make additional appointments with your mentors during their regularly scheduled hours in the Writing Center.

Your faculty mentor should read your drafts of your project at several stages of the process. Your FM can help you to steer clear of overly simplistic or too ambitious projects and can give you advice about sources and what makes for an effective project and presentation. Your faculty mentor has listened to many presentations at our Writing Center, at conferences, and elsewhere, so don't be shy about asking for advice and feedback.

Your peer tutor mentor can tell you how she decided what to work on when she was working on her project, how she developed the project into a conference paper, what things didn't work, and so on. Ask questions! If you find you have nothing to talk about, at least go over to the library and look at resources. What you can't use this time for is homework for other classes, texting your friends, checking FB unless you're working on FB posts for the Writing Center. The purpose of meeting with experienced peer tutors is to learn from them, so use the time wisely and well.

Angie Farkas will schedule meetings regularly in which peer tutors and interns can

get together to discuss specific topics or simply talk about what is going on in their tutoring. If you have other concerns or issues, Angie is a resource for you. You may also contact the director or associate director.

Committees and Other Opportunities

The Writing Center has a number of ongoing initiatives, and you are welcome to participate in them by joining a committee or telling the leaders of that initiative that you would like to be involved. For example, we have a social media committee (led by Sarah Leavens), an ESL workshop called International Café (led by Sam Pittman); Writers' Café (led by Barbara Edelman), and ongoing outreach activities (led by Beth Newborg).

Your Work This Term

This term, you will be available to students for four hours a week; meet with your mentors for a half hour each per week; write a blog entry or respond to a blog entry weekly; attend meetings regularly; and define, propose, carry out, and present a research project. Details about these different types of work appear below. At the end of this booklet, you will find a checklist for tracking your completion of these tasks. Your mentor may ask to see this list when you meet and may keep a copy for his or her files.

You will start your tutoring hours in week two of the term. You will start meeting with your mentor during week one (week two if the term starts on a Wednesday). If you would like to come to the Writing Center to observe tutorials or co-tutor during weeks one through three, you are welcome to. Talk to Sandy Foster to let her know that you want to do this.

About the blog: this is a private blog and in order to see it and contribute to it, you need to sign up for a Wordpress account so that Geeta can invite you to the blog. You only need to post two entries (300–400 words) during the term, but we expect you to respond every week that you don't post. The responses don't have to be elaborate. You can book a half hour of your schedule when you write an entry.

Life in the Writing Center

Ask Sandy Foster if you have questions about resources in the Writing Center, how to use the online scheduler to file reports, or other day-to-day issues that have to do with tutoring.

Final Project for Peer Interns

You'll have several choices for your final project: you can write an article for a publication; you can write a paper for a presentation at a conference; or you can co-author an article for publication.

Final word count for these projects depends on the requirements of the publication, so make sure you read their guidelines. However, you should plan on a minimum word count of 1500-2000 words for your project. Use (correct!) MLA format throughout all phases of this project.

If you are planning to propose a conference paper, you are welcome to organize a panel with two or three of your fellow peer interns. Just keep Angie posted about these plans so that we can arrange to have you present as a panel at the end of the term.

You're aiming for a project that you will want to continue working on next year (in the case of a conference), if you like, or submit for publication by the end of term.

Near the end of this booklet, there are some possible publication and conference venues for you to consider.

While we want to encourage you to think about this project as a contribution to the ongoing professional conversation about writing center theory and practice, you are not required to actually publish your project this term.

See the last page of this document for project due dates.

Defining Your Project: The Proposal

This should be done during week 4 of the term. Your proposal should be at least 750 words long, and it should tell your readers what you plan to do, why you want to do it and how you plan to do it (what resources you plan to use, what your timeline will be like, and so on). Be sure that your mentor has approved your proposal before you submit it.

Regardless of your topic, you will need to have some research to contextualize what you are arguing. This means that you cannot simply offer up non-contextualized thoughts or survey findings for your project. What professional conversation does your project enter? Your proposal should show how you plan to carry out this aspect of the research.

Also be clear about what you will be studying. We have found that the most effective way to conduct research in the Writing Center is through interviews and observation; surveys tend to be forgotten, and the results are often not meaningful because so few people respond. Or they tend to be too ambitious, requiring IRB

approval (not possible for a one-term project) and a lot more time than any peer intern has to put into it. Don't let the research take over the project; you want to leave yourself enough time to write your paper and prepare your presentation and if you're shuffling papers and looking at half-baked results in the week 12, you're setting yourself up for a lot of last minute writing.

This project must be focused on writing center theory and practice. No projects focused on Writing Center public relations are allowed.

The following is an example of a proposal:

The Incorporation of the Deaf Community into the Writing Center: A Study on How Our Ability to Hear Has a Lot to Do with Our Ability to Write

For my final project, I plan to research how best to accommodate deaf students into the writing center. I am basing my research off of the idea that so much of our ability to write comes from our ability to hear, and deaf people find themselves at a disadvantage by lacking this ability. There tends to be a misconception that having the ability to read would translate into the ability to write, but there is actually a huge discrepancy in some deaf people's writing. American Sign Language (ASL) is, and should be, considered a separate language from English. Once that is accepted, those who use ASL as their primary language should be considered ESL students, and should be discussed in the training class prior to Writing Center consultant's employment.

I am interested in the topic because my cousin Rachel Rabenn — a writing center consultant at RIT (Rochester Institute of Technology), where the deaf and hard-of-hearing student population consists of over 1,200 students — shared with me her struggles of acting as a consultant. One of her biggest issues comes from the fact that ASL omits a lot of words that we would use in spoken conversation. ASL uses a physical grammar system, so a word-order grammar is not part of their primary language experience. An example of this would be a deaf student writing, "Oh is that why it possible not working server?" when they really mean, "Oh, is that why the server is possibly not working?" In this example, the student omitted the use of an adverb by writing "possible" in stead of "possibly." In ASL, that adverb would have been expressed by holding out the L-Y hand just above the shoulder, palm out at an angle and bent elbow at the side, and moving the hand down while wiggling the fingers. For example, to sign happily, sign happy followed quickly and smoothly by the adverbial marker described above.

Through my research I hope to answer these questions:

- What are the main differences between ASL and spoken English that cause the biggest problems for deaf students in their writing?
- How can we, as writing center consultants, begin to create an environment appropriate for these students?

- Are there any special programs that are used in deaf and hard-of-hearing writing centers?
- What are effective methods already in existence to work with deaf students on their writing? What new ideas are currently being discussed to help this cause?
- What is “voice” to a deaf person?

I plan to conduct my research by first talking to the Disability Resources and Services Director, Leigh Culley, and their Deaf Services Specialist, Nancy Kriek. I want to examine their background in working with the writing center, or if Pitt even has a specialized center that works with deaf and hard-of-hearing students. I hope they will lead me to more specialists around the area. Next, I also plan to work with Professor Katie Booth, who is currently working on a book surrounding the affect Thomas Edison has had on the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. I also plan to work with Ellen Smith, who is an English Department professor with a hearing impairment.

I also would like to make a trip to RIT and observe firsthand how their deaf and hard-of-hearing writing center operates. Rachel has already ensured contact with their director as well as other people who have significant backgrounds on the topic. I plan on conducting interviews with writing center consultants while I am there, and possibly some students as well. With my research, I also hope to discuss the idea that those who use ASL as their primary form of communication should be treated as ESL students. I will need to do research on the difficulties of translating one spoken language to another vs translating a signed language to a spoken language on paper.

The biggest problem I assume I will have in conducting my research is my inability to use ASL. Because my background in it is so slim, it will be harder for me to translate my findings and fully appreciate the difficulties. However, I recently discovered an app created by Pitt software-engineering students that translates sign language into text. Hopefully, I will be able to use this app. More than 1.1 million Americans are considered deaf. This study is important for not only writing center consultants, but teachers of any discipline. I hope this research leads to revelatory findings, and I could potentially continue this project after the term.

The Annotated Bibliography and Outline

Please complete an annotated bibliography and outline for your project during or before week 6.

For the annotated bibliography, identify at least 6 sources that you could use for your project and briefly say what each source offers your research.

The outline does not have to be in any specific format, but it should demonstrate that your project is taking shape. Readers of your outline should have a good sense of what your project is about, even if you have not thought through all your conclusions and findings.

You can read about annotated bibliographies here:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/>

And you can see some examples here:

<http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill28.htm>

Presenting Your Research to the Writing Center Staff

Whether you are going on to graduate school or a professional life, you should know how to talk about your work in front of a group of people. It is a highly desirable skill to develop.

During the last three weeks of the term, you will present your research to the Writing Center staff. Unless there is a compelling reason for doing it otherwise (some of you are presenting a panel, for example), we will go in alphabetical order by last name, with about one third of the students presenting in each of the last three weeks of the term. (All presentations will be complete before finals week.)

You will have 8 minutes for your presentation. Practice to make sure that you can make your presentation in that time. Nobody likes to listen to someone read quickly in a soft monotone, so practice speaking loudly at a reasonable pace, modulating your tone, making eye contact, and so on. Think about presentation methods that would best serve your project—what will help your audience understand **what is at stake in your research** and **what you have learned**? Is there a story that would capture the audience's interest in a way that will also illuminate what is at stake in your research? If so, this is the time to share it.

The Writing Center staff members are friendly and interested—the best kind of audience to present to. They will have questions. If everyone keeps to the allotted time, we should have some time for discussion.

If you wish, you are welcome to make a podcast of your presentation instead of presenting it live. Podcasts will be made available to the entire staff and others via our website. We will still discuss the project live.

Completing and Submitting Your Research Essay

After you present your research to the staff, you will have about a week to polish your essay, edit it, proofread it, and submit it to the director of the Writing Center.

Technology Support for Blogging and Crafting Podcasts: Links for Wordpress and Audacity

You have access to Lynda.com tutorials courtesy of the University. Log in by going to the portal and clicking on the Lynda link in the right-hand column. Log in with your Pitt username and password.

Lynda offers a variety of tutorials on using WordPress and Audacity.

[Download and install](#) Audacity on your computer.

“Reading Aloud,” by [the other] Stephen King
<http://theotherstephenkingonwriting.blogspot.com/2011/08/reading-aloud.html>

[“To Write Like a Human, Read Your Work Out Loud”](#) [PDF]

What’s Next with Your Project? Journals and Conferences

Here is a (growing) list of publishing and paper-presenting opportunities for peer interns. Note that these sites are useful not only to identify places to submit papers, but also to read papers being published now by undergrads and others in the world of writing center theory; these may prove useful both as models for your own work and as sources to use in your work.

Please add to this list if you come across any other publishing or presenting information by emailing Jean Grace at jgrace@pitt.edu.

Journals

Praxis: A Writing Center Journal

<http://www.praxisuwc.com>

Twice a year *Praxis* publishes articles on writing center news, opinions, consulting, and training. The *Praxis* editorial board invites article submissions and article proposals from writing center consultants and administrators. We especially encourage writers to submit articles related to an upcoming issue’s theme. Responses to the previous issues’ articles are also welcome. In addition, we welcome book reviews on subjects pertinent to writing center work. Since *Praxis* represents the collaboration of writing center practitioners across the country and the globe, consultants and administrators are also invited to suggest future issue themes and article ideas.

Undergraduate Research in Writing and Rhetoric

<http://arc.lib.montana.edu/ojs/index.php/Young-Scholars-In-Writing/index>

This is a refereed journal dedicated to publishing research articles written by undergraduates in a wide variety of disciplines associated with rhetoric and writing. It is guided by these central beliefs: (1) that research can and should be a crucial component of rhetorical education and (2) that undergraduates engaged in research about writing and rhetoric should have opportunities to share their work with a broader audience of students, scholars, and teachers through national publication. Young Scholars in Writing is intended to be a resource for students engaged in undergraduate research and for scholars who are interested in new advances or theories relating to language, composition, rhetoric, and related fields.

The Dangling Modifier

<https://sites.psu.edu/thedanglingmodifier/>

The Dangling Modifier welcomes your article submissions pertaining to peer tutoring, writing, and national and international conferences! We request that the manuscripts be approximately 500–1000 words but encourage you to submit longer or shorter pieces. You may also submit articles that have been published in other publications, as long as those publications permit you to do so.

The Writing Center Journal

<http://writingcenterjournal.org>

The Writing Center Journal's primary purpose is to publish original research of interest to writing center professionals and to those forging connections between writing centers and the wider arenas of rhetoric and composition studies. As a forum for peer-reviewed scholarship, WCJ publishes theoretical and empirical research on a range of practices, pedagogies, and administration associated with writing center work. WCJ aims to reflect the diversity of writing center contexts through its content and, in so doing, encourages submissions focused not only on writing centers in colleges and universities but also high schools, middle schools, and other environments. In addition, WCJ welcomes book reviews, announcements of interest, and letters responding to WCJ articles.

PeerCentered

<http://www.peercentered.org/>

This is a space for peer writing tutors/consultants or anyone interested in collaborative learning in writing centers to blog with their colleagues from around the world. Bloggers here will share their ideas, experiences, or insight. PeerCentered also features a podcast. If you work in a writing center and want to join the blog, contact Clint Gardner at Clint.Gardner@slcc.edu.

First-Year Honors Composition

<http://www.fyhc.info>

This site publishes professional scholars and undergraduates writing about/in honors composition courses.

Xchanges

<http://www.xchanges.org>

This journal alternates graduate student and undergraduate issues featuring scholarship in rhetoric, writing, and technical communication. Both send student-submitted works through a peer review process. CFPs for each can be found on their respective websites.

Perspectives on Undergraduate Research and Mentoring

www.elon.edu/purm

PURM, a venue to discuss the process rather than the products of undergraduate research, is currently soliciting articles.

Conferences

The National Conference on Peer Tutoring

<http://www.pugetsound.edu/academics/academic-resources/cwlt/ncptw-2016/call-for-proposals/>

The East Central Writing Centers Association <http://ecwca.org>. ECWCA, an affiliate of the International Writing Centers Association, is the oldest Writing Center organization in the world. There are over 475 writing centers represented within our region; we serve writing centers in high schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, and specialized centers throughout Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, as well as other regions nearby. Members of ECWCA include tutors, directors, and faculty interested in writing center work. We are a scholarly and professional organization, as well as a network and resource for people involved in writing center work.

The Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association <http://www.mawca.org> is a regional affiliate association of the International Writing Centers Association. Each spring, MAWCA hosts a regional conference. Attendees from throughout the mid-Atlantic region, as well as nationally, attend. The conference provides a forum for the sharing of ideas and professional development for peer tutors, professional tutors, writing center directors, and many others committed to writing center scholarship.

Graduating, Becoming a Peer Tutor, or Moving On

So the term is over, your project has been presented, you turned in the written portion of your project, what is next for you?

You may be graduating at the end of this term. If so, please write a brief self-evaluation of your time in the Writing Center and email it to the director and associate director of the Writing Center before the end of finals week. We are glad that you were able to work with us this term, and we wish you well. Unfortunately, outside the undergraduate peer-tutoring program, we can only hire teachers who have at least a master's degree in a relevant field.

If you are still an undergraduate at Pitt, you completed your internship in a satisfactory way, and you were a good member of the Writing Center team who has gotten satisfactory student reviews, **you can be a peer tutor in the Writing Center.** You will be paid \$10/hour for up to ten hours a week and you will be paid for meetings. Make sure that the director, associate director, and receptionist know that you want to be a peer tutor. About a month and a half or so before the beginning of the term, we will ask you to tell us your schedule preferences.

To get on payroll, you will need to complete an online application and show your Social Security card or current passport to the English budget administrator, Anna Murphy, in 526 CL. She will need to know if you have ever worked anywhere else on campus so that she can find your employment record. If you have work-study funding available, let Anna know. You will start tutoring during your regularly scheduled times as soon as Human Resources says that you can start. Jean will let you know when you need to start this process.

On the other hand, some students complete the internship and decide that tutoring is not for them or that their schedules are too full to be consistently available for Writing Center work. These students **move on to other experiences, internships, and opportunities.** We understand. Just let us know.

Timeline and Checklist

Below are the due dates for stages in your project. By each date, you must have met with your mentor to review that document and if necessary arrange for your mentor to see a revision. Send your revised documents to Geeta Kothari at mano@pitt.edu on or before the due date.

___ By the end of week 2—meet with faculty mentor with either your project idea or with 2 or 3 ideas that you are considering.

___ By the end of week 4—students must have a proposal for what they intend to do. When your faculty mentor has signed off on it (and you have carefully edited it) email it to Geeta Kothari at mano@pitt.edu.

___ By the end of week 6—annotated bibliography and brief outline emailed to Geeta Kothari at mano@pitt.edu.

___ By the end of week 10—draft of project to your faculty mentor (Mentors, you are welcome to reserve time in WOnline to read the draft and provide feedback.)

___ Week 13, 14, or 15—presentation to the Writing Center staff: You will have 8 minutes for your presentation, so you should distill your research into its most compelling points and practice before your presentation day. Remember to talk about what is at stake in your research and what you learned from your research. Alternatively, you can create a podcast that you send to Geeta at mano@pitt.edu during week 13.

___ Finals week: papers are due via email to Geeta Kothari at mano@pitt.edu by the Wednesday of finals week.