Your Guide to the Peer Tutoring Internship at the Writing Center

January 2020

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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. You will attend group meetings during the term with the Peer Tutor Coordinator, Tim Maddocks, and the Social Media Faculty Coordinator, Sarah Leavens. You will also meet weekly with an experienced peer tutor and a faculty mentor. You can find more information on your responsibilities in the “Your Work” section of the handbook.

This guide will help you to understand your obligations as a peer intern and will help you plan and carry out your research.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

The Writing Center is committed to equality of opportunity, and is nondiscriminatory relative to race, religion, color, national origin, social class, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, disability, or status as a protected veteran.

We hope you will help us provide a positive work and learning environment where everyone is treated fairly and with respect. If you have any suggestions, questions, or concerns, we encourage you to contact Geeta Kothari, Writing Center Director. If you need accommodations because of a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Resources and Services: 140 William Pitt Union, Monday–Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm (412-648-7890).

**Note: Upon hire, all peer tutors undergo Title IX training and become mandated reporters**
Directory

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General Guidelines for Peer Interns

1. In your sessions with clients:
   - We expect you to behave professionally with students, other consultants, and faculty.
   - We expect you to respect the confidentiality of the students who visit the Writing Center.
   - 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.
   - If you are unsure about something during a tutorial, feel free to ask one of your fellow colleagues who are working at the same time as you (with the permission of your student and when your coworker is not busy with another student).
• Do not engage in or encourage criticism of a student’s teacher; rather, encourage the student to visit the teacher during office hours and talk to them.

• Do not discuss grades with students or give them your impression of what grade you think they should receive.

• Save yourself a few minutes at the end of the session to wrap things up and fill in your client report.

• We expect that you will complete all tutoring reports online the day the sessions occur.

2. More generally:

• We expect that you will keep your scheduled hours; that you will show up on time and stay until the end of your shift, even if you have no scheduled appointments.

• 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 those hours.

• Please give yourself enough time to get to class when you create your schedule; you may not end your session early to attend class 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 reschedule with someone else.

• 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. You must file a report in the online scheduler following each meeting between you and your faculty and/or peer mentor.

• We expect that you will seek out co-tutoring experience with faculty or peer tutors on a weekly basis when you have unscheduled time at 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 Geeta or Tim.

• We understand that there may be a term when you have a class that conflicts
with the meeting schedule. If so, confer with Geeta or Tim. Peer interns must attend meetings—if you have a major class conflict you 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 newsletter as assigned.
- We expect you to use Slack to coordinate and report on your projects throughout the semester, as well as to stay informed about work in the Writing Center.
- We expect that you will work on improving your tutoring and increasing your knowledge about writing, editing, tutoring, and teaching.

If you have questions or concerns about these expectations, or issues that arise in your tutoring, speak with Geeta or Angie. Tim will contact you about meetings and other issues via email and/or on Slack.

**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 them to observe yours. 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.

**Faculty Mentors:** Your faculty mentor should read the stages of your project over the course of the semester. 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.

**Peer Tutors:** Your peer tutor mentor can tell you how they decided what to work on when they were working on their project, how they 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 may not use this time for: homework for other classes, texting your friends, or checking Instagram or TikTok, unless you’re working on social media 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.

Tim 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. These meetings are also used for interns to ask questions and get advice for their internship final projects. If you have other concerns or issues, Tim is a resource for you. You may also contact Geeta or Angie.

**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. All of our peer tutors participate in the social media committee (led by Sarah Leavens), but you can also work on any of the other committees as well: an ESL workshop called International Café (led by Sam Pittman); Writers’ Café (led by Barbara Edelman and Sarah Leavens), and ongoing outreach activities (led by Beth Newborg-Bateman).

**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 per mentor each week; attend meetings regularly, and define, propose, develop, 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 their 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 depending on what day of the week the semester starts). Call Sandy if you are unsure. 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 newsletter: this is an emailed-out resource created for Writing Center staff and visiting students alike. The Writing Center newsletter features helpful tips (general and creative), tutor profiles, and other content that changes week-to-week. Newsletter main stories will be written by a different peer tutor each week, while other elements, such as Creativity Corner and Tutor Profiles, will be led by designated peer tutors. Other tutors may be responsible for editing newsletter
drafts week-to-week.

About social media: As part of professional development, you will contribute to the Writing Center’s social media presence. You will either create some type of social media content which can be used for future Writing Center posts, or develop analytics for Writing Center outreach on a platform (or design your own project, should you have a different idea). If you elect to do the first option, you will choose a platform for which to make content (ex: Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, etc.) or select a beat to explore across multiple platforms (ex: professional writing, dissertation writing, etc.). Your social media contribution can be whatever you want it to be, so long as it is approved. The faculty tutor in charge of social media is Sarah Leavens; she will be in contact with you during peer tutor meetings to explain the importance and objectives of social media outreach. Sarah is available for appointments and on Slack to help you develop your ideas and to help guide your process.

**Life in the Writing Center**

Ask Sandy 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. If Sandy is busy, feel free to ask anyone else!

Feel free to use the microwave, refrigerator, coffee pot and water dispenser. Help yourself to any food that has been placed on the counter for shared consumption. Please wash out any mugs you use before returning them, and clean up crumbs.

**Some Advice on Dress**

Here are some general thoughts on dress (keeping all genders in mind) that we developed in consult with Writing Center faculty:

The Writing Center is a unique and exciting space in which faculty and students work together as colleagues. It is also unique in the way that our tutoring sessions bring us into close contact with clients of different ages, different cultures, and different levels of academic experience, ranging from first-year students to adults who are working on PhDs and/or returning to college.

With such a diverse clientele in mind, we want to represent the Writing Center as a casual-yet-professional space. We invite you to dress in a way that feels comfortable to you, but that also would be appropriate for any internship or workplace, while remaining sensitive to the diverse population we serve.

In the category of comfortable-yet-still professional, we would include: jeans, leggings, t-shirts and sweatshirts. In terms of t-shirts and sweatshirts, please be
sure they do not carry messages or display graphics or symbols that demean people or cultures.

We understand that any attempt to delineate a dress code risks discrimination and offense; however, in a space that is also concerned with cultivating professionalism, we feel remiss not sharing and making visible some expectations of dress, especially for people who are new to the Writing Center and may appreciate some guidance in this area.

If you have any concerns or questions about issues of dress, feel free to reach out to Tim or Geeta.

**Final Project for Peer Interns**

Your final project will be an IGNITE presentation, a five-minute talk with 20 slides. Each slide will be programmed to span 15 seconds and to move-on to the next one automatically. Your slides must only include key images or phrases. In addition to your presentation, you create a handout for your audience.

If you are planning to propose a conference paper (with Geeta’s approval if you will be requesting funding), you are welcome to organize a panel around your presentations with two or three of your fellow peer interns. Just keep Tim posted about these plans so that we can arrange to have you present as a panel at the end of the term. If you choose this option, be aware that each panel member must speak for 5 minutes, making your overall presentation 5 mins. X the number of people in your group. Ex: 5 mins. X 3 panelers = 15 mins.

Your project should allow you to do some substantive research and draw on Writing Center or Composition Studies scholarship, recent and past. 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 and Bibliography**

This should be done by the end of February 17, 2020 (week 7 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, either because so few people respond or because they tend to be too ambitious in terms of scope and time required. Don’t let the research take over the project; you want to leave yourself enough time to write your script and prepare your slides and practice presenting.

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

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” instead 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 Script

Please complete a rough script or outline by the end of Week 8 and send it to Geeta. Don’t wait to hear back from her before proceeding!

The outline should consist of twenty moments. You can use this guide to help you: https://speakingaboutpresenting.com/content/fast-ignite-presentation/

By March 6 (end of Week 9)—share a more polished draft of the script and your slides with your mentors. This is the week before Spring Break.

Make time to practice and refine over the next three weeks. You should distill your research into its most compelling points so that your presentation stays engaging while fitting within 5 minutes. Ask your mentors to record your practice presentations and share them with you so that you can see them.

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 (April 1, 8 and 15) you will present your research to the Writing Center staff, about one third of the students presenting during each meeting. Tim will pass around a sign-up sheet. Please note: all presentations will be complete before Finals Week.

Practice speaking loudly at a reasonable pace, modulating your tone, making eye contact, and so on. For the slides, think about images 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 is 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 plenty of time for discussion.

Assessing Your Presentations

Everyone in the Writing Center will have a chance to fill out a brief response to your presentation. Geeta will collect them and read them over and then you’ll be able to
pick them up after the end of term.

**Using Slack**

As a peer intern, you will use the Slack channel on a regular basis. Slack is a workplace organization app, and at the start of your internship you will be provided with a link to join the Writing Center workspace. Contact Tim Maddocks, the Peer Intern Coordinator, if you’re not sure how to get access to the Slack, or if you’re not sure how to log back in.

Slack can be accessed as a webpage on any computer with a desktop, or as an app on mobile. You are not required to use Slack in any specific format, but you will be expected to stay notified of anything message on Slack that has been directed to you.

By default, Slack will notify you of messages directed to you or a group you are a part of. You can configure notifications under “settings” in the upper left menu on mobile, or with the bell icon next to the workspace name in the upper right on desktop (see left).

On the left side of your Slack, you will see a menu that is purple by default (you will be able to change this color from “Customize Slack”). This will list all of the channels you are in. Each channel is for a different project; by default, everyone will be in the “general” channel, and you will join more as you are assigned to more projects People will not be able to see messages in channels they have not joined. To see whether someone is in a channel, click on the silhouette and number below the channel’s name (see right).

To join a channel, click on the word “Channels” for a full list of channels and select the one you want to join (see left). Do not click the “+” button next to it, since that will create a new channel.
Below the list of channels, there will be a list of a few of the other people in the workspace - not everyone, just a random selection - with the heading "Direct Messages". Direct Messages will only be seen by you and the recipient. To open a Direct Message, click on their name, or use the “+” button (see right) to find someone not in your menu.

To message a channel, type the message into the text box at the bottom (see left). Expanding the box will allow you to format the text of your message, attach files, and embed links to shared projects or webpages. Slack is responsive and will work with most apps that are used to share files, like Google Drive and Box.

When you’re writing a message you can make sure that someone in the channel is notified, by writing @ (their name). If they are on the Slack but not in the channel, you can invite them (see right).

**Technology Support for WordPress, Audacity and IGNITE**

You will work on your project over the course of the semester. It will not be presented until the end of the semester, but the University offers access to, and support for, programs that will assist you in creating and presenting your project.

*WordPress* is a free blogging service. If your project involves tracking elements of the Writing Center week-to week, Wordpress can be a valuable resource in organizing and presenting your data. *Audacity* is a free program that allows you to record, edit and play back sound files. You can use Audacity to record yourself practicing your presentations.
Tutorials for using WordPress and Audacity can be accessed through LinkedIn Learning, a service that provides technology learning resources for students. You can access LinkedIn Learning from your student portal by clicking on its labelled link in the right-hand column (see right), and logging in with your Pitt username and password.

IGNITE itself is not a program in its own right — your presentation can be built on Google Slides, Microsoft PowerPoint or any other presentation program. You will send your presentation to the IGNITE server which will run your slides with an automatic twenty-second-per-slide timer. If you want to practice actually using IGNITE to present, contact Sarah, Tim or your faculty/peer mentor.

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 Angie.

Journals

Praxis: A Writing Center Journal
http://www.praxisuw.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/](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](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**

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](http://www.fyhc.info)

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

**Xchanges**
[http://www.xchanges.org](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](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](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 Geeta and Angie 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 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 follow the onboarding steps which Human Resources (HR) will email you. You will be made aware when you need to start this process. It is to be done prior to beginning work as an official peer tutor, as students cannot begin working at the Writing Center until all steps are finished. It is recommended that incoming peer tutors complete the onboarding process as soon as possible. At a certain point in the process, you will need to bring (an) identification material(s) to a specified location, such as Panther Central in Towers lobby, to have them logged. Please note that your identification material(s) must be unexpired.

Reference this document to learn what kinds of identification materials are acceptable, as well as what “List” they fall under: https://www.hr.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/Form%20I-9%20Required%20Documents.pdf

Once the semester begins, you will start tutoring during your regularly scheduled times as soon as HR says that you can start. Typically, peer tutors begin working during Week 2 of the semester.

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, which will consist of 20 slides, an annotated bibliography, and a handout. By each date, you must have met with your mentors to review your document and if necessary arrange for your mentors to see a revision. Send your revised documents to Geeta on or before the due date.

___ By the end of Week 3—meet with mentors with either your project idea or with
2 or 3 ideas that you are considering. Send your idea to Geeta by the end of week 4.

___ By the end of Week 7—students must have a proposal and bibliography 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. Keep working!

___ By the end of Week 8, send a rough script or outline to Geeta. Keep working! Don’t wait for Geeta’s feedback.

___ By the end of Week 10—send a draft of the script and your slides to your mentors (mentors, you are welcome to reserve time in WCOnline to read the draft and provide feedback). Make time to practice over the next three weeks. Ask your mentors to record your practice presentation and share it with you so that you can see it.

___ Weeks 13, 14, or 15—presentation to the Writing Center staff. You will have 5 minutes for your presentation and then answer questions from the audience briefly afterwards. We will give you immediate feedback so that you can revise the handout and bibliography by the end of term.

___ Finals Week: handouts and bibliographies are due via email to Geeta by the Wednesday of Finals Week.

**Frequently Asked Questions (Please Read!)**

Starting as a tutor can be an exciting but nerve-wracking experience. Many tutors experience some uncertainty before their first tutorial, so here are some recommendations to help guide you through any questions you may have:

**A student asked me a grammar/syntax/formatting question that I don’t know the answer to. What do I do?**
We have plenty of resources available if you ever run into a question you’re not sure how to answer. The Writing Center has a library of books on grammar issues, citation styles, and styles of writing that are at your disposal and there to support you in your tutorials. Also, use your fellow tutors as a resource! If you ever run into a question you’re not sure how to answer, don’t be afraid to ask a peer or faculty tutor.

**My student and I are sitting in silence! What should I do?**
Sometimes silence can be helpful for a tutorial. It can give the student a moment to consider what you’ve said and to contemplate their writing. Don’t be afraid of the
occasional lapse in conversation; not every moment of the tutorial needs to be filled with talking.

If you encounter a silence where you feel you’ve run out of what to say, try asking the student questions about their paper. Why did they make this particular choice in their piece? What did they mean when they wrote this sentence? By asking questions, this can help you get the tutorial back on track, give the student more control over the course of the tutorial, and possibly uncover more about their writing.

**My student didn’t like a suggestion I made/didn’t take my advice. Is this a problem?**
No! If a student rejects a suggestion, that is in their control and doesn’t reflect poorly on you as a tutor. The paper is ultimately the students and it is their decision what goes into it. Students may disagree with their tutors and this is perfectly okay.

**A student asked me to proofread/edit/correct their paper for them. Can I do this?**
The short answer is no. You job is not to edit a student’s paper for them; it’s to help make them a better writer. If a student asks you to proofread their grammar, offer to go over repeated grammar issues they might have and help them learn how to identify and correct them. Explain your role as a tutor to the student--that you’re here to help them learn. Most students are very receptive to this and willing to proceed with the tutorial this way.

**A student offered to pay me to read their paper outside of Writing Center hours. Can I meet with them?**
No. The Writing Center is a free service to students and tutors are not permitted to work on student’s papers outside of their designated working hours.

**A student told me that they’ve come to the Writing Center for credit/extra credit. How should I handle this?**
The Writing Center does not assist in the assignment of credit/extra credit and our policy is not to report back to teachers’ about whether or not their students have visited us, as this is policing of students. If a student has been instructed to go to the Writing Center for credit, please let Geeta or Sandy know immediately, so they can contact the teacher to stop this practice. Also, make your student aware that you’ll be notifying senior Writing Center staff, and let them know that, while you will not include their name in your report, you will need to include their professor’s name.
A student is writing a paper that has beliefs I oppose or that may be racist/sexist/homophobic/etc. How should I handle this?
As frustrating as it may be, the best option is to proceed with the tutorial as normal. If a student wants to write a paper with positions that you disagree with (no matter how wrong they might be), that is their choice. Papers that take racist/sexist/homophobic positions usually do not follow strong logic and easily fall apart, so go back to the foundations of strong argument and ask the student questions about their argument. Often times, this will show the weaknesses in these positions and in the paper, and may lead to them to adjust their writing.

If the student is using offensive terms in their writing, tutors can point out and discourage sexist/offensive language in a paper.

I’m concerned about my student’s mental health. What can I do?
If you are concerned about your student, write down their name and class and get this info to Sandy, Geeta, or Angie. As a tutor, we do not expect you to make any judgment calls in regards to mental health. You can read more about how to help students here:
If you are concerned that a student may pose immediate harm to themself or to others, tell Sandy or Geeta immediately (or the nearest faculty tutor)..