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Write Place Consultant Handbook



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Mission

The Mission of the Write Place is one of **service**: writing consultants appreciate the uniqueness of individual learners and work with all students in their efforts to become better writers. Write Place consultants encourage, guide, and support student writers on any writing assignment and at any stage of the writing process. To this end, we do not proofread papers; we help students improve their writing processes.

**For Your Reflection:
Why did you choose to come to UD?**

Marianist Identity and Mission: How Does it Relate to Us?

UD has this to say about the school as it relates to the Marianist identity:

*Founded in the Marianist tradition, the University is committed to a vision of a distinctive educational community. Inspired by the Marianist philosopher, the University focuses on **educating the whole person in and***

through a community that **supports and challenges** all who become a part of it. The University forms an educational community thriving on **collaboration** by people from diverse backgrounds with different skills who come together for common purposes. The University, as Marianist, challenges all its members to become **servant-leaders** who connect scholarship and learning with leadership and service.

(http://www.udayton.edu/documents/34697_TheUniversityofDaytonMission.pdf, emphases added)

This statement is a powerful one, and distinctly Marianist. How does this influence our understanding of our roles as writing consultants?

1. “[E]ducating the whole person [...]” – At the Write Place, our aim is not exclusively focused on the paper the student brings in. Instead, we see each assignment as a *model* of the student’s writing skill; we use these insights to supplement, hone, and correct this skill. Despite the name, one’s writing skill encompasses a slew of abilities that transcend writing, such as critical thinking and the expression of ideas. Thus, the consultation’s multidisciplinary approach **seeks to educate the whole person, rather than merely seeing them as a student with a paper.**
2. “[T]hrough a community [...]” – Write Place Consultants are a part of the University community: they are all students. Their experiences, both good and bad, are shared by the student body as a whole. Their role as leaders does not diminish their role as students; rather, it **increases the passion and commitment with which they serve their fellow students.**

3. “[...] *that supports and challenges[.]*” – As the previous two facets imply, a consultant’s role is tied into their solidarity with their fellow student. Part of this role involves encouragement: a consultant is likely to recognize a trajectory beneficial for both the student and the community. **Neither a community nor an individual is built upon complacency**; however, a consultant’s additional responsibility is to cast a discerning eye upon the community and their fellow students to constructively challenge them to aid both in reaching fulfillment and achievement.
4. “[*This community thrives on*] *collaboration [...]*” – **A thriving school depends on the diversity of its students** and the recognition of their unique insights and talents. The Write Place aims to accurately represent various groups around campus to strengthen its support of the individual.
5. “[*All*] *members [are challenged to become] servant-leaders[.]*” – Servant-leadership is a universally Christian idea that underpins Marianist teaching and mission. Modeled on the example of Jesus Christ, all Christians are called to **lead through humility rather than pride**. A servant-leader empathizes with suffering instead of removing him or herself from it; a servant-leader seeks to achieve solidarity rather than merely providing aid; a servant-leader lives out examples rather than merely providing them.

At the Write Place, we are called to be servant-leaders by recognizing that our identity is the same as those students whom we serve: we do not belittle, but guide; we do not admonish, but gently correct; we do not distance ourselves, but involve ourselves wholly.

For Your Reflection:

What descriptive words come to mind when you consider your role as servant-leader?

What is the Write Place?

Common misconceptions about our service:

- Proofreading service: Proofreading merely fixes errors at the sentence-level; Write Place workers aim to first address problems at the level of ideas.
- Only for English class: Papers from all disciplines are welcome.
- Only for academic essays: All writing is welcome, from creative writing to personal statements.
- A “paper-fixing service”: A writing consultant is not a car mechanic; the paper is not something that leaves the hand of the student-writer in order to be processed by the consultant.
- “I will get an ‘A’ on my paper now.”: The goal of a consultation is to strengthen the student-writer, using the paper as a representation of the student’s writing.
- “I don’t have to do anything during a consultation.”: In all consultations, the person with the most active role is the student. The consultant facilitates and guides the student to critically think about their own paper its strengths and weaknesses.

The many hats a consultant wears:

- The ally: As fellow students, we understand fully the stresses and responsibilities faced by all student-writers and can use these experiences to help the student more completely.
- The coach: We encourage and strengthen the student-writer in their quest to become a better writer.
- The commentator: In many ways, the consultant is an observer whose comments and questions encourage the student-writer to think about the writing process in a different way.
- The collaborator: In the journey to strengthen the student-writer's abilities, sometimes the best role is that of a fellow traveler, working alongside one another rather than top-down.
- The writing "expert": Ostensibly, the writing consultant is well-versed in the abilities and techniques necessary to write well.
- The counselor: Some writers are merely insecure or worried about various factors in their writing – or there are circumstances that hinder their ability to write. A writing consultant can lend a sympathetic ear in order to help the student-writer as a person.
- The task master: Part of the skill of being a consultant is the ability to stay focused and organized; these skills are invaluable for all consultations, especially the more difficult ones.

For Your Reflection:
What roles can you easily identify with and why?

Consultant Responsibilities (General)

Shifts

- Show up to your shifts on-time, if not slightly before – some people have to leave slightly early due to their class schedule!
- Don't refuse a client because you know you will be ending your shift soon. Occasionally, sessions are brief, focusing in on a quick question. Additionally, it is acceptable to simply transition the client to another consultant when it is time for you to go.

Busy time

- Take people in the order that they arrive.
- Have people fill out a report if you are unable to immediately work with them.

- Focus your consultation if there is a line waiting – aim for a 20-30 minute consultation.
- Greet new people as they come in, even if you're working with someone.

Down time

- You are allowed to work on homework if there are no clients, but remember that you are there primarily to serve the clients, so please be attentive and watch for incoming students.
- Please do not wear headphones while on shift.

Reporting

- Fill out the report as completely as possible, including the comment box. Be sure an email notification is sent to the professor, per the student writer's request.

The purpose of the comment box:

- Explains what you and the client accomplished during the consultation.
- Elaborates on the points you circled.
- Informs the professor on the nature of the consultation—what was explained to the student, what parts she/he struggled with or had confidence in
 - Remember: The comment section is the only correspondence between the consultants and the professor—what we worked on, what needed improvement, what questions arose during the consultation.

The comment box is not for:

- Anything regarding the quality of the paper (“This was good/bad...”)

- Anything regarding the assignment (“This was an unclear assignment...”)
- Anything regarding a student’s personality (“This student was great to work with...”)
- Anything that doesn’t help us determine how the consultation went

Trainings/Meetings

- Show up for meetings! They are mandatory.
- You get compensated for your presence at these meetings.
- These meetings give you the opportunity to become more familiar with the other staff as well as to learn further about issues or problems in the Write Place.

Timecards and Payroll

- Count your hours!
- Be sure to use TutorTrac to log in and out when you are on shift.
- Timecards can be accessed online through Porches. Generally, timecards are due on the 15th and 30th of each month. This is the system used by payroll to process your checks. **You must enter time in both Porches and TutorTrac.**

Sick policy and process

- If you are unable to show up to your shift, please send out an e-mail to the rest of the staff in order to get a substitute
- If you are unable to get a substitute, please notify Christina Klimo and your shift-mates.
- Use discretion concerning any illness you may have – keep yourself healthy!

For Your Reflection:

Who on campus do you consider to be a peer leader? Why? What qualities does this person exhibit to help him or her stand out as a peer leader?

Incidents

- Report any and all incidents to the WP Coordinator so that they might be dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Also inform the other workers so that they can be aware of how to deal with the situation if they also encounter it.

What Does it Mean to Be a Peer Leader?

A peer leader is an individual who is able to set an example for his or her classmates. They differ from a teacher in their

method: in a classroom, the teacher's authority and position creates a top-down approach to learning that is economic and efficient but occasionally distancing. A peer leader, however, creates a more balanced approach, emphasizing the common identity. On the other hand, peer leaders are more than just regular students: they must take the initiative in setting an example. Their responses to challenges and problems are visual demonstrations to their peers – their attitudes and actions set examples to be emulated.

Professionalism

Toward Student-Client

- Be pleasant and have a courteous attitude.
- Have welcoming body language, even when tired or stressed.
- Avoid tactless or discourteous language when discussing the student's writing.
- Honor confidentiality – don't talk about student-writers, either to other consultants or student-writers.
- Avoid use of cell phones or other devices during sessions.

Toward Other Consultants

- Be punctual to your shifts.
- Try to cover for sick or absent consultants.
- If possible, balance the number of consultations evenly among shift workers, or come to an agreement on-shift about the distribution of consultations.
- Complete consultation reports thoroughly.

- Maintain a tidy work environment.
- Try not to be too noisy, although the current work area does not expect absolute silence.

Toward Faculty/Staff

- Never write any part of a student's essay.
- Avoid negative conversations about faculty or the school.
- Never suggest a grade value for a paper.
- Never criticize the grade or comments from a professor.

A General List of Best Practices

In order to create a similar experience for writers and to deliver on our mission, please follow these best practices.

- Greet the student with a warm and welcoming attitude.
- Sit next to the student writer.
- Give the student control of the paper. Do not hold a pen or pencil in your hand.
- Invite the student to read the paper aloud.
- Do not write on a student's paper ever, even if he or she asks you to! (Do not touch a student's laptop.)
- Ask questions of the writer to help engage him or her in conversation. **Do not tell the student what to write.**
- Be certain the student writer is doing most of the talking.
- Provide direction for the student writer by suggesting 2-3 concrete actions he/she can take upon completion of the session to improve the paper.

Thinking Ahead:

What are examples of global concerns?

What are examples of local concerns?

- Document the visit.

Hierarchy of Concerns:

- Consider what is prohibiting the “readability” of the student-client’s essay.
- Recognize that, as the consultant, you represent the “general academic” community.
- Do your best to view these in relation to one another:
 - -Content
 - -Organization
 - -Mechanics
- Focus on global versus local concerns. (These are more easily applied elsewhere by the student writer in the future!)
- Provide the student-client “tangible” actions to take when he/she leaves the session.

For Your Reflection:

Why is it important to follow the hierarchy of concerns? Is it ever OK to skip over an element in this hierarchy?

Questions to Consider Throughout the Session

Content

1. Does the paper lack substance?
2. Does the paper address the assignment?
3. Does the paper have too much information?
4. Does the paper have a thesis?
5. Is the topic/thesis too broad?
6. Is the topic/thesis too narrow?
7. Is there adequate evidence to support the thesis?

Organization

1. Is the paper organized effectively?
2. Do the main points relate to the thesis?
3. Are there topic sentences in each paragraph?
4. Do paragraphs have supporting sentences?
5. Is there an introduction?
6. Is there a conclusion?

Mechanics

1. Do mechanical concerns “slow down” the readability of a paper?
2. Is the paper plagued by issues such as misspellings, punctuation misuse, sentence fragments, etc?
3. Is the paper documented correctly?
4. What resources can the student use when Working independently to help with mechanics?

Starting the Consultation

- Welcome the student! Small talk comes in handy-- you help them feel at ease and (perhaps more importantly) assert your common identity as a student.
 - Always maintain your professionalism. Avoid disparaging talk about the teacher, the class, or even the University – you are an employee of the University and are expected to act in that capacity during your shift.
- Get the paperwork out of the way. **This year we are fortunate to have Customer Service Assistants to help with this process!**
 - The paperwork is for both our records and those of the teacher.
 - Give them some space and some silence. Don't try to rush them, or give the appearance of such, even if there's a line.
 - After they finish the form, take a cursory glance at it, making sure that all the parts of the form are filled out. Once again, this is for both our sake and theirs; our demographic information is important for our future development and assures they get "credit" for coming.
- Sit next to – as opposed to across from – the student writer. You are there as a sort of guidance counselor, not a teacher. This is a further reflection of the peer-to-peer model. It is also easier to read the paper along with the student.

Before the Paper is Read

- Ask whether they have an assignment sheet; if they do not, see whether they have a rough idea about what the teacher wants for that particular assignment.

- Never assume anything about the assignment unless you are forced to make a judgment call as a consultant.
- This reinforces the idea that the professor is the final arbiter. You are not there to judge, give grades, or know all the answers.
 - **EXCURSUS:** What do I do if the student has no assignment sheet?
- Ask where the student is in the writing process.
 - Your own approach will differ depending on their answer.
 - **EXCURSUS:** What are my possible approaches? How do they tie into where they are in the writing process?
- Chat about the goals for the session. You are able to prioritize for the session a little bit better; it also gives something as a tangible endpoint for the consultation.
 - A lack of goals should not kill the session. Use your expertise as a writer to discern weak points in the writing (something you should ideally do as a consultant anyway).
 - This can also help with time constraints since long consultations can be tiring for both the student and the consultant. Having distinct goals for the session allows you to streamline the process without shortchanging the student.

General Consultation Strategies

- Have the student read the paper aloud.
 - There are several reasons for this:
 - Oftentimes, what sounds “right” mentally actually is problematic once read aloud. Pointing out which parts the student stutters or pauses help you, the consultant, to navigate the client toward rough sentences.
 - Reading aloud also tends to force the student to make corrections on the fly, often unconsciously. Pay attention to disparities between what they say and what is actually written. Their corrected phrasing is usually better than what is written.
 - You, the consultant, have a greater chance of catching errors if you both see the paper and hear it at the same time.
 - One thing to avoid – barring special circumstances – is for you to read the paper to the student.
 - This distracts you from doing your job properly: just like the student writer, you will also make unconscious changes. It also distracts you from properly evaluating the paper.
 - **EXCURSUS**: When is it okay to read the paper for the student?
- As the student reads the paper, ask guiding questions.
 - All of the work should be the student’s; you are there to lead them to conclusions, but not to blatantly provide conclusions.
 - Act as the ideal reader. If the paper seems like it is drawing a particular conclusion, try to follow the chain of reasoning. If there seems

to be a link missing, ask the writer to explain his/her rationale.

- If a piece of information seems misplaced, ask the writer why they placed it there as opposed to another place.
- The same logic applies to the paragraphs: if the argument seems jumbled, ask the student why he or she chose a particular flow.

For Your Reflection:

What are some strategies that you use as a writer when you begin a writing assignment? What could you share with your client?

- At the mechanical level, your role is both easier and harder.
 - Easier, because many times mechanics are far more clear-cut – a comma splice won't ever be correct, for example.
 - Harder, because it is very easy to lapse into the role of editor/proofreader.
 - Try to go for a balance:
 - Catch errors – such as comma usage – early in the paper. In correcting the student,

provide the general rule, explaining it through example if need be.

- When the error happens again, remind the student the error occurred before.
 - From then on, provide hints – eventually, the student should catch on and begin to correct the error on his own.
 - If the student is uncooperative or unresponsive, then do not be afraid to be firm with the student.
- **EXCURSUS:** How much silence is enough? How much is too much?
 - **EXCURSUS: The Socratic Method** – what is it?
 - Never hold the pen/pencil in your hand while giving the consultation, but urge the student to take notes on needed corrections.
 - The paper stays in the writer's control, since it is his/her voice.
 - Let the student have the paper in front of them to further encourage their control over the paper.

For Your Reflection:

Jotting down notes can be a good technique in a writing consultation session. How can you do this without taking over control of the paper?

- **EXCURSUS:** Consultations without a hard copy.
 - It is not up to you to catch every little mistake or to discuss everything in the consultation.
 - Keep a mental tab of particular problems; these can be saved until the end, to give “homework” to the student. This stresses the idea that the writing consultation is not just confined to the session itself, but rather can be applied using the student’s knowledge.
 - To go over every sentence is both exhausting and also possibly too controlling.
 - Try not to smother the writer’s “voice” in the paper. This is sometimes the first casualty of a consultation. As a gifted writer, there are certainly words or phrases that you automatically avoid, or certain words you automatically replace. Think carefully before suggesting the same for the student. A good clue is if your rationale for a particular change is “...because it would be more descriptive.” Our work should be at the level of communicating ideas; look for clarity of thought rather than the writer’s style.
- **EXCURSUS:** What type of changes can be justified, and which ones are possibly too close to mere proofreading?
 - Be aware of citations.
 - There are books to use that talk about citation. Reference those!
- **EXCURSUS:** Modeling behavior. Be sure to ask the student (or consult the assignment sheet) about the teacher’s citation guidelines.

Parts of the Paper

- Opening paragraph
 - Pay attention to the thesis statement.
 - Does the teacher want a closed or open thesis?
 - Ask the student whether you understand the main ideas of the paper from the thesis statement.

Helpful Hint!

Consider that strong thesis statements identify the topic, convey the writer's attitude toward the topic and provide some sort of direction for the reader. This is often the best place to start a session.

- In a closed thesis statement, see whether the parts correspond to the ideas in the paper.
- A thesis statement is not always just one sentence.
- Many students tend to start with overly broad ideas; help them narrow it down!
- Others fail to tell the reader what they plan on talking about, or place too much information in this paragraph.
- See if you can “predict” what the student will be talking about for the paper. If you are wrong, this may indicate a problem with the paragraph.

- Body paragraphs
 - Topic sentences: make sure that they accurately guide the paragraph. Once again, ask, don't tell; it helps to say something like "so you're going to talk about [x] in this paragraph?"
 - Information
 - Students tend to repeat information. Try to identify this repetition.
 - Another problem is the "infodump", which is merely the statement of facts without any sort of flow. Help talk them through the relevant information.
 - "Dud" paragraphs can be cannibalized for later use!
 - If a paragraph is too long or short, try to phrase your correction in terms of ideas: "I see that you have a couple of thoughts going on here – do you think you could separate them?" or "I don't think that you really explained that idea enough for me to understand it. "Are there any resources you can get more information from?"
 - Closing sentences: see if the student properly summarized the paragraph AND provided a proper lead-in to the following paragraph.
 - Try to break writers of the five-paragraph essay format. This is a common format for freshmen, since it is so prominent throughout high school. Explain why in terms of ideas. (Try to help the writer think of paragraphs as ideas to be fully explained! If she has five ideas, she can have five paragraphs or maybe more if one idea needs more than one paragraph for the explanation.)

- Closing paragraph
 - Make sure the writer doesn't just repeat the first paragraph. The writer can incorporate more specific ideas from the paper into the final paragraph, to remind the reader specifically what he or she read.
 - This should, of course, tie everything together in the paper.
 - "Restating the thesis" does not mean to merely re-present the thesis verbatim from the opening paragraph. This is a common mistake.
 - It is also helpful to leave the reader with something to think about. Remind the writer that this is their last chance to explain to their audience why this piece is important or how each point connects.

Ending the Consultation

Review what was accomplished in the consultation.

- Things at the beginning of the paper may have slipped the writer's mind.
- As previously mentioned, the idea is to give the writer something to accomplish independently – reinforce rules and general concepts so that they might be applied throughout the paper with a little help on the part of the student writer.
- Invite the student-writer back for another consultation
 - There is no such thing as a perfect paper.
 - A consultant's job is not to produce a sparkling paper but to produce a better student-writer.
- Request feedback, either immediately or anonymously.
 - We have evaluation forms for a reason.
 - You can ask the writer whether all the goals for the session were realized; anything pressing will likely

be revealed, even if small things might go unmentioned.

Helpful Hint!

To close a session, it is helpful to summarize for the client the 2-3 key actions that he or she should take to get the paper moving in a positive direction. Most sessions will end, and there will still be work to be done on the paper. Invite the student back! The writer can use the Write Place more than once for an assignment.

Occasionally, there will be consultations that require more discretion or specialized approaches. These still fall under the responsibility of the writing consultant, though, so you need to be prepared.

Email or Online Consultations

The difference

Situations like these can seem to violate the peer-to-peer model, seeing as there is no way to truly gain a face-to-face question and answer format. It also appears to place the paper in the hands of the consultant at the expense of writer control.

Potential pitfalls of the session

These consultations, if unchecked, can turn into proofreading; many of us have likely done the same thing on a friend's paper. It can be easy to focus on making the paper better rather than revising to make the student writer better.

Strategies

- Keep a solid grasp on the idea of a consultation. This will guide your overall vision.
- If something must be grammatically corrected, you can utilize the clarity of the written word to your advantage:
 - Provide the rule behind your change so that it might be applied to other areas.
 - Refer back to comments you have already previously made; this allows you to “wean” them off of your comments, forcing them to apply the same rule in a different situation, ending with the ability to spot these errors without input from you.
- Some strategies can be directly applied from a “normal” consultation:
- Ask questions; this will force them to answer it.
- Whenever you ask a question, provide a rationale: “I’m not too sure what you mean here because you haven’t told me what this word actually means.” Stopping with just the first part is too vague (they can’t change it if they don’t know why), but the second part would turn into a directive (“[X] word means [Y]. You should add that in”). Again, use your best judgment.

- Your comments should maintain a friendly tone. Since you are lacking verbal and physical cues, your phrasing becomes much more important – think hard about how your comments could be taken by the client

For Your Reflection:

What concerns do you have about responding to students via email? What are the benefits of this type of consultation session?

ELL (English Language Learner) Students

The difference

Unlike the other groups you will see at the Write Place, ELL students do not natively speak English. Though many of the students have gone through UD's own Intensive English Program (IEP), their knowledge of the language will vary, which can present a challenge for writing consultants.

Potential pitfalls of the session

There are two primary dangers of the ELL consultation. The first is the tendency to focus on nitpicky grammar rules to the exclusion of the broader picture. Understandably, that is what many ELL students would like to fix! The second danger

involves underestimating the student's ability to communicate – clumsy phrasing can mask a unique thought process or idea, and too often this is not the focus of the consultation.

Strategies

- As with online consultations, always keep in mind the mission of the Write Place: improving clarity of thought, not just the mechanics.
 - One common mistake involves articles, especially “a/an” and “the.” Problems such as these are not unimportant, but must be seen in context. For example, in some cases, it is unclear whether they are talking about a general concept or a specific one because of the article use. As always, **ask questions** about their intended meaning, using their explanation as a springboard for discussion.
- Act as a cultural exchange: use your experience as an American student.
 - The traditional essay format – opening with a thesis, body paragraphs, conclusion – is not always an intuitive format, but it is the most common in American schools, and it is likely the format all of us raised in the American school system learned. ELL students have to relearn writing, not only in a different language but also for a different audience with different expectations.
 - On the other hand, there are some formats that you, the writing consultant, have not encountered that could still work relatively well. Use your knowledge of the professor's expectations to ascertain whether it still does its job adequately.

- Idioms and turns of phrase are difficult to grasp; explain these.
- Knowledge that is considered “common knowledge” may differ from student to student and country to country.
- Talk a little bit more to them: ask them questions about their culture and their worldview! It may help in the paper, and you just may learn something new.

Graduate Students

The difference

The major difference between graduate students and undergraduates is the length and intensity of the papers. While the average undergraduate paper may be three to five pages, graduate students may be working on much longer papers, sometimes twenty or more pages in length.

Potential pitfalls of the session

As an undergraduate consultant, there may be a feeling of being overwhelmed by the scope and size of the paper, especially if it is in a subject area with which the consultant may be unfamiliar.

Strategies

- Don't panic! As a writing consultant, you know what writing should be. Sustaining an argument over thirty pages may take more steps, but it looks similar to an argument sustained over three.

- Your unfamiliarity with the content may actually be a good thing, since it gives you the opportunity to focus on structure. Also, you can ask questions about the content – if you are attempting to understand the concept and the paper isn't clarifying things, that may point to a weakness in the argument or explanation.

Students with Disabilities

The difference

These students often have difficulties with traditional methods of writing and learning. Certainly, you can invite them to seek out additional support at the LTC Office of Learning Resources.

Potential pitfalls

The biggest problem would be to underestimate their ability to learn; they are too easily (and unfairly) labeled “slow” or “stupid,” making a consultation a frustrating experience.

Strategies

- Try all sorts of approaches. People learn in different ways: visually, kinesthetically, and aurally. There are a number of resources at your disposal while at the Write Place.
- Keep your attitude in check. Don't be rude or assume that the student cannot understand a particular concept: keep trying until you've exhausted all your options! The success may be minimal, or you may not

get through the entire paper, but whatever you can accomplish is acceptable.

English Intercultural Sections

The difference

Instead of working with one isolated student, you gain the opportunity to work with an entire class of students, working closely with the teacher.

Potential pitfalls of the session

The tendency is to treat students in isolation, as in a normal writing consultation.

Strategies

- Ascertain what the teacher desires for the assignment! Instead of telling the student to ask their professor, you are able to speak much more authoritatively about the assignment and its requirements. Use those insights.
- Track the long-term progression of the students: you see their work from beginning to end. Identify the weaknesses and strengths of the writers individually and tailor your consultation to those.

Athletes

The difference

In order to these students to not jeopardize their playing eligibility, it is so important to avoid touching the athlete's laptop, provide any "extra" help, or write for the athlete. While we should avoid these situations with all students, it is even more crucial for athletes.

Potential pitfalls

Treating an athlete as fundamentally different from a normal student.

Strategies

- Always keep in mind that the athlete is a regular student writer. Use the same consultation strategies during your consultation with them!
- Be sure the writer does not forget to log in and out of TutorTrac. The Office of Academic Support for Athletes will use this software to track the writer's study time.

Excursus Defined

How do I avoid talking about the University in a negative fashion?

While it does seem to be the quickest way to bond with a student, and while there are legitimate concerns and problems that can be raised, such problems have no place in a professional setting. You, as a consultant, are balancing your dual identity both as a University employee and as a student. While it is essential to project the role of a student in order to ease the mind of an a student writer, you must also maintain a professional appearance, firmly redirecting the student's problems with a quick smile but a rerouting question back toward the paper itself.

What do I do if the student has no assignment sheet?

Such an occurrence is common, unfortunately. The best that you can do is to use your general knowledge of the assignment – or as best as you understand it – and work from there. Tell the student when you are pulling from your own experience; this can actually help them realize that you are a student just like them. When the student is relaxed, they may remember more about the assignment that they had forgotten!

What are my possible approaches? How do they tie into where they are in the writing process?

At the Write Place, we help anyone at any stage of the writing process. Depending on where they are, your approach will vary. If they have nothing, help them

brainstorm; if they have a rough outline, focus on the structure; if they have a rough draft, focus on the areas where they might expand; if they have what they believe to be a final draft, utilize your normal consultation methods. At no point should you sacrifice the hierarchy of concerns, but let its flexibility work to your advantage.

When is it okay to read the paper for the student?

While normally reading aloud is the task of the student writer, there are a number of circumstances where you, the consultant, can read the paper out loud. Some students with disabilities have troubles reading aloud; other times, non-native speakers do not feel confident enough in their English skills.

How much silence is enough? How much is too much?

The rule of thumb is the purpose of the silence. Some students will wait for you to answer the question for them, in which case it would be more fruitful to prompt them with another question. Others, however, merely need to mull the question. As with most situations, you should always use your judgment – there is rarely a hard-and-fast rule.

The Socratic Method – what is it?

This is merely the process by which one draws answers or statements out of an individual through the use of questions. The key is the use of questions that move the conversation forward. Thus, simple yes or no questions are more obstructive than helpful.

Consultations without a hard copy.

Working from a computer screen can be more tiring than a usual hard-copy consultation. That said, utilize the technology! Copy and paste can allow you to move (rather than eliminate) information.

Conclusion

Your role on campus is a unique one! Consider that every opportunity for writers to converse about what is “good” writing is a valuable experience. Also know that you are part of a team. Talk to your shift-mates, ask questions, and discuss situations. This is an opportunity for you to also grow as a writer. Enjoy your role as a Peer Leader!