

## Using the Writing Center: FAQ for Faculty

### *What does the Writing Center do?*

The Writing Center strives to support any writer on campus in reaching short- and long-term goals. Our mission is to empower students to invest in themselves as academic writers and, ultimately, apply skills and strategies they practice with a tutor to their own work.

### *Who can use the Writing Center?*

Any current undergraduate or graduate student at Lake Forest College can use the Writing Center.

### *What kinds of papers can my students take to the Writing Center?*

Peer Tutors are trained to work on analytical, argumentative academic essays, so your students can bring any kind of academic writing assignment, including summary, response, reaction, critique, analysis, argumentative, and research papers. Tutors can teach students ways to edit application essays and creative works (stories, plays, etc.) for grammatical clarity, but they cannot advise on structure and content.

### *Can tutors help my students with citation and bibliography format?*

Tutors can show students the mechanics of in-text citation, but they are trained to direct students to librarians for [help in using specific bibliographic styles](#).

### *Do tutors work on take-home essay exams?*

Tutors trust clients to tell them if the professor has given permission to work on the essay exam. If you do not want take-home essay exams to be reviewed with a tutor, please tell your class and write this on the assignment sheet.

### *How can I familiarize my students with Writing Center services?*

- Show them the [Writing Center website](#) and how to use the [online scheduler](#)
- Visit the Writing Center in Hotchkiss (lower level) with your class
- Invite the Director of Writing Programs ([mccabe@lakeforest.edu](mailto:mccabe@lakeforest.edu)) or Writing Center Coordinator to your classroom
- Include a Writing Center note in your syllabus and/or distribute a Writing Center flyer (see last page)

### *How can my students make appointments?*

- Use the [online scheduler](#) link on the [Writing Center homepage](#)
- Call or email the Coordinator at [oakley@lakeforest.edu](mailto:oakley@lakeforest.edu)
- Note: Walk-in appointments cannot be reserved; they are first come, first served.

### *What is the difference between a standing, regular, and walk-in appointment?*

- A standing appointment is a weekly appointment on the same day, at the same time, with the same tutor. In a standing appointment, professors and students identify long-

term writing goals, and tutors help students develop skills to reach these goals using reading or writing assignments throughout the semester.

- A regular appointment is one, forty-five-minute session that targets issues in one draft from one course. A regular appointment should take place after the student has a working understanding of the assignment and a topic provided or approved by the professor.
- A walk-in appointment is a brief, twenty-minute session in which specific questions are answered and small sentence-level or broad writing process-related skills, such as skeletal outlines or how to write conclusions, and so on are quickly addressed.

*How can I recommend students for standing appointments?*

- Contact the Writing Center Coordinator ([oakley@lakeforest.edu](mailto:oakley@lakeforest.edu))
- Invite your student to fill out the online [self-assessment form](#)

*What happens if my student's standing appointment is canceled due to poor attendance?*

- The student should use the online scheduler to make their own appointments before major due dates for the rest of the semester.
- If you or your student wants to reinstate the standing appointment, conference with your student about specific writing goals and then contact the Coordinator to see if there is room for your student.

*Can I require students to attend Writing Center appointments?*

- In the past, some professors have required all students within a course to attend appointments for certain papers, but we need to move away from this practice. Consider these alternatives:
- Require everyone in a course to visit once during a semester during the drafting and revision stage for any writing assignment you give. Add a reminder to schedule a Writing Center appointment to the syllabus two weeks before paper deadlines; include this visit in your grading calculation under class participation.
- Offer a student the chance to re-submit a draft after revising for a specific grammatical or stylistic issue with a tutor before giving a final grade.
- Use individual feedback to direct some students to walk-ins for small issues and some students to regular appointments for argument-based issues.
- Contact the Director of Writing Programs and the Writing Center Coordinator for other ideas.

*When should I encourage a student to visit the Writing Center?*

- After you have checked their comprehension of assignment expectations
- After you have reviewed the student's work and given specific, concrete feedback
- After you have conferenced with the student about a problematic structural, grammatical, or process-related pattern you have seen in their work

*How much writing does a student have to finish before an appointment?*

- A student does not need to have a draft, but they should have a working understanding of the assignment, ideas they need help articulating, and a specific topic you have assigned or approved.
- For example, a student who brings an annotated assignment sheet, an annotated text, evidence ideas, and/or a skeletal outline will have a more effective appointment.
- Students should not arrive with an assignment sheet they do not understand; if they do, tutors will recommend that they contact you.

*What can I do to prepare my student for a Writing Center appointment?*

- Ensure students have a working understanding of the assignment expectations—including your purpose for the assignment, the central question(s) of the assignment, and the academic skill(s) being practiced
- Give them time to have read required material or completed preliminary research before meeting with a tutor
- Meet with them during office hours to clarify thesis statement expectations, approve research topics, brainstorm approaches or avenues of inquiry, or verbally explain your written feedback on a draft

*What can I do to prepare tutors to work with my students?*

- Tutors are best at revisions of structure and argumentation—not analyzing assignment sheets and brainstorming, so sending students with your feedback regarding concrete plans and/or your detailed expectations will help them help your students.
- Send the Coordinator your assignment sheet and your goals so they can educate tutors about 1) what to prioritize with your students and 2) when to send your students back to you with major questions.
- Send a model paper or several model thesis statements illustrating conventions in your discipline that tutors can study.

*Can I ask tutors to help my students with specific skills or essay elements?*

- Send special directions to the Coordinator; she will instruct the tutor as needed
- Send written comments on a draft or via email with your student; then, tell the Coordinator to ensure the tutor asks to see professor feedback

*Will I know if students visit or how often they visit the Writing Center?*

- Students can choose whether or not to tell you they visited.
- After every session, the tutor writes a Session Report; this report is sent by default, but if a student asks us not to send the report, we will not send it to you.
- Contact the Coordinator regarding any attendance questions or for standing appointment attendance reports.

*How will I know what my students accomplish with their tutors?*

- A Session Report written by the tutor will be emailed to you

- The report will summarize what your student brought, what the tutor helped them develop, and what written work your student accomplished during the session.
- The Coordinator can check for more details with the tutor if you have further questions

*What kinds of strategies and skills will tutors teach my students?*

Tutors aim to answer your students' immediate questions while still incorporating writing process skills that can be applied to any academic paper. They might show your students ways to:

- better introduce evidence
- evaluate the order of their ideas
- transition between ideas
- outline an introduction, a body paragraph, or a conclusion

*What should I expect to see in drafts a tutor has worked on with my student?*

- Tutors are trained to prioritize a major global issue and then target a local issue as time allows. Thus, you should expect to see improved argument structure or idea flow, not overall clarity or clean copy.
- You might see a strong paragraph developed with a tutor followed by a weaker paragraph the student developed or revised independently; you might see inconsistent improvements in grammar and style.

*What do tutors say to students about grades?*

- Tutors listen sympathetically to grade concerns, but they are trained to never comment on or guess a paper's grade.
- They are trained to discuss students' writing in terms of clarity from an outside reader's perspective: "As a reader, I wondered/was unsure/did not realize X" or "Readers might question/wonder/not know X."

*What resources can the Writing Center provide for my class?*

- We have handouts for students on our [Student Resources](#) webpage; we have links to award-winning model essays on our [Writing at Lake Forest](#) webpage.
- Contact the Director of Writing Programs and Coordinator for specific needs.
- Contact the Director of Writing Programs for help developing and leading in-class writing workshops that focus on a particular skill or stage of the writing process.
- The general [Faculty Resources](#) page contains many tips and hand-outs you can use to help your students.

*How often can a student use the Writing Center?*

- Students can visit the Writing Center two-three times a week as long as they are working independently between sessions. In other words, they cannot use tutors to complete every step of the paper without trying to do the next step on their own.
- They cannot schedule a two-hour appointment for the same paper.

- They cannot use the online scheduler to reserve the same time on the same day with the same tutor; if they want a weekly appointment, they must contact the Writing Center Coordinator ([oakley@lakeforest.edu](mailto:oakley@lakeforest.edu)).

*Can I send pairs or small groups to work with a tutor?*

- Yes—however, please let the Coordinator know this may be happening and why.
- For example, should tutors prepare to help a pair revise an introduction they wrote together? Or should tutors prepare to review comma splices and then help two students proofread their own work for comma splices?

*How can I support non-native speakers and writers developing fluency?*

- Review the “Supporting International and Bilingual Students” section at the bottom of our [Faculty Resources](#) webpage—particularly the “Helpful Practices for Working with International/Bilingual Students and Their Tutors” document
- Correlate your feedback on drafts to the Detailed Menu at the back of the Hacker manual
- Ask the Coordinator to review a piece of the student’s writing so she can better recommend particular strategies, resources, or ways to use the Center
- Contact the Coordinator for student resource ideas including online grammar checkers and vocabulary websites
- Contact the Director of Writing Programs and the Coordinator for questions regarding workshops specifically for writers developing fluency

See next page for a flyer you can print and distribute to students.

The Writing Center Coordinator is Kate Oakley at [oakley@lakeforest.edu](mailto:oakley@lakeforest.edu)

The Director of the Center for Academic Success, which houses the Writing Center and the Quantitative Resources Center, is Dawn Abt-Perkins at [abtperki@lakeforest.edu](mailto:abtperki@lakeforest.edu)

The Director of Writing Programs, your liaison to the Center, is Tracy McCabe at [mccabe@lakeforest.edu](mailto:mccabe@lakeforest.edu). Tracy is available for consultation about teaching writing and she oversees the College Writing 100 course.

## A Quick Introduction to the Writing Center (Hotchkiss Hall, lower level)

What kind of appointment is right for you?

<i>I NEED HELP WITH...</i>	<i>STANDING</i>	<i>REGULAR</i>	<i>WALK-IN</i>
Improving my writing skills in general	✓		
Starting big research papers/projects	✓		
One specific paper		✓	
Just some quick revisions, editing			✓

- **Standing Appointments:**
  - If you want to develop your writing skills or your professor recommends one, request a Standing Appointment. It's a great opportunity for you to show initiative to your professors, improve at all levels, and become the best writer you can be. Apply for a standing appointment by completing a [Self-Assessment Form](#) on the Writing Center homepage.
- **Regular Appointments:**
  - Regular appointments usually last around 45 minutes. Prepping for the session by making sure you understand your assignment and bringing all relevant materials is a *must!* Make an appointment using the [online scheduler](#) link on the Writing Center homepage.
- **Walk-In Hours:**
  - Here is the schedule for Walk-In Hours:  
\*\*Sunday-Thursday, 7-9pm and Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.\*\*
  - If a tutor is available, he or she will help you for up to twenty minutes. You cannot reserve walk-in appointments--they are first come, first served.
- **Who can I contact about the Writing Center?**
  - If you have any other questions, feel free to contact Kate Oakley ([oakley@mx.lakeforest.edu](mailto:oakley@mx.lakeforest.edu))