Welcome
Thanks for participating in the Writing Fellows program. Since the program began in 2004 we’ve learned a few lessons. This handbook is a result of what we have learned. It outlines program details and helps explain how to effectively use Writing Fellows in your course. You will learn our philosophy, goals, some solutions to common concerns, and logistical details to help you plan for your Fellow.
If you have any questions about the program, please feel free to contact Jennifer Follett at any time during the semester at Jennifer.follett@temple.edu, or 215-204-0703.

Thanks again. We look forward to working with you.

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Philosophy

The Writing Fellows program is designed to link writing support to classes that require substantial amounts of writing. (We’re working with classes that are designated “writing intensive” as well as courses that simply require lots of writing). The program is based on the belief that by viewing writing as a process, writers at any level can improve on their writing by sharing it and making revisions based on critique during this process. We also believe that one way this works well is through collaboration with other writers.

By pairing students to Writing Fellow tutors, this program creates relationships to help students improve their writing. Though not instructors in the course, tutors with a strong understanding of the writing process and how to constructively critique student writing are able to help students better understand writing assignments, brainstorm ideas, and revise drafts to help students successfully present their thoughts and ideas. In doing so, Writing Fellows ultimately work to make students stronger, more confident writers.

Who can be a Writing Fellow?

Writing Fellows are experienced Writing Center tutors. Anyone who has come through the Writing Center hiring process and who has tutored for at least one semester in the Center is eligible to serve as a Writing Fellow. Fellows may be graduate students or undergraduates. We try to match fellows with courses for which they have some disciplinary knowledge. For example, we try to match a tutor majoring in political science with a course in political science, or a related social-science field. However, disciplinary matches are not always possible.

Fellows are assigned to courses just prior to the start of the semester. We try to match fellows with courses for which they have some disciplinary knowledge. For example, we try to match a tutor majoring in political science with a course in political science, or a related social-science field. However, disciplinary matches are not always possible. We also take into account any faculty preferences for a fellow. If you have more than one Fellow assigned to your course, we attempt to match veteran Fellows with new Fellows to allow for Fellows to mentor one another.

What do Writing Fellows do?

Writing Fellows work with 10-15 students per semester, typically meeting with them individually to help them revise two papers. Depending on the size of your course, you will be assigned one or two Fellows. All students who participate in a course with a Writing Fellow must submit drafts of their paper to their assigned Fellow. Fellows carefully read students’ papers making notes for what to discuss during individual conferences. Fellows then meet with students to discuss the draft and talk about strengths and weaknesses in areas such as organization, clarity, argument, analysis and style. This allows students the chance to revise their draft before turning it in to their instructor. In addition to offering individual support to students during the writing process, Fellows can assist with writing in the course in other ways. If you incorporate peer response into your course, Writing Fellows can help prepare students for and help facilitate in-class peer response. A Writing Fellow might also prepare and present a lesson for your class on a particular writing-related topic, if you and your Fellow are interested in this. Each Writing Fellow placement can be individualized to best suit your needs, the Fellow’s interests, and the class’s needs.
What things may Writing Fellows NOT do?

Although Writing Fellows are tutors with extensive knowledge of writing, they are NOT teaching assistants. Because of this, Fellows are not here to grade papers or make sure students understand course content. Although they may discuss with you how you structure your course and assignments, they don’t create writing assignments or quizzes, and they don’t serve as substitute teachers.

Writing Fellows are also not there to “fix” students papers. Their goal is to make students better writers. They do this by focusing on helping students understand higher level concerns having to do with argument and organization. Though they might identify grammatical pattern errors and may even discuss these errors with students, as well as how to avoid them, they are not proofreaders. This is the responsibility of the student.

How may the Program affect your course?

This program is designed to assist you in teaching writing in your course. It is not designed to change the focus of the course. It should not affect your course goals, but it may affect some course logistics. This is most important in our belief that each student meet with their Writing Fellow and that this meeting (and paper draft) become a valuable requirement to the course. Because of this, you may need to shift due dates, or make turning in paper drafts to Fellows a percentage of the course grade.

How do you benefit from having a Writing Fellow?

Faculty receive a number of benefits from having Writing Fellows involved in their courses. First and foremost, you (and your students) get extensive support for writing. Students will have expert guidance as they work through a careful revision of their writing. Because Fellows require drafts of papers much earlier than many classes without Fellows, students have time to make thoughtful, substantive revisions to their work.

Integrating a Writing Fellow into your course allows faculty the chance to really examine and clarify course goals and expectations for writing in the course. Discussing your students’ writing with your Writing Fellow may help you learn new strategies for assigning, supporting and responding to student writing.

Some instructors also feel that having a Writing Fellow allows for less time grading because they can concentrate on issues of course content, since the Fellow has already worked with the student on organization and structure. Keep in mind, though, that having a Writing Fellow does require a time commitment from you, as you are asked to meet three times with your Fellows.

What are your responsibilities to your Writing Fellow?

The rest of this handbook outlines how the Fellows program works. In a nutshell, your responsibilities to your Fellows include:

- Meeting with your Fellow and a Writing Center administrator before, or at the very beginning of, the semester to discuss the Fellow’s role in your class;
- Preparing your Fellow to respond to your students’ drafts by sharing your expectations for your students’ writing;
- Meeting with your Fellow during each round of response to drafts to discuss your students’ writing;
- Checking in via email with your Fellow to discuss the course, when needed;
- Staying consistent and considerate in allowing ample time for your Fellow to meet with your students;
- Offering evaluative feedback on the program so we can continue to improve it.
HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Overview

Writing Fellows typically work with 10-15 students a semester, typically meeting with them individually to help them revise two papers. Depending on the size of your course, you will be assigned one or two Fellows. Students will turn in two drafts of papers to their Fellows at least two weeks before the final draft is due. (These drafts should be required assignments that are needed to fulfill the course.) Fellows read drafts, comment on them, and meet with students one week before the final drafts are due, giving students time for meaningful revisions. Students will turn in both paper drafts together for their final grade. Because Fellows have other tutoring responsibilities throughout the semester, Fellows work with each student for no more than 2 hours, or an hour for each paper (For papers up to 10 pages).

Fellows use their time in this way: (times are approximate)
- Reading a student’s draft: 25 minutes
- Discussing the draft with the student: 30 minutes
- Documenting the session in the writing center database: 5-10 minutes

Because Fellows also meet with instructors and keep them informed of what is going on with their students, visit the class (at least once), and may be involved with the course in further ways (detailed below), they are also allowed approximately 10-12 additional hours for each class to which they are assigned. This gives Fellows a total of 30-42 hours a semester to work with their students. Because not every class has the same requirements, we feel it is important that you understand different ways you might use a Writing Fellow in your class, as well as the time commitment it takes for different assignments.

There are additional activities your Fellow could do in addition to the above, or instead of one of the more traditional response draft cycles:

- If you have a longer final assignment (10-20 pages) that may take your Fellows longer to read, you may choose for your students to have required brainstorming sessions in lieu of the required first draft. Students could be required to attend a brainstorming conference with the Fellows and then write up what they learned during the conference and how they will use it to work on their paper.

- You may want Fellows to present a workshop on specific aspects of the writing process; maybe they come to class to discuss pre-writing techniques, crafting a thesis, overcoming writer’s block, or incorporating sources. If you ask your Fellow to present a lesson in class, calculate the Fellow’s time spent on this as 2-3 hours of prep time and 1 hour of in-class time.

- If you incorporate peer response into your course, your Writing Fellow could help prepare students for this (the time spent on this would look similar to the time spend preparing and delivering a lesson). And/or the Fellow could help facilitate peer response during class while your students are meeting in response groups.

- Students could have group conferences with Fellows to help prepare for an essay exam, or other informal writing.

- Your Writing Fellows could sit-in on class any number of times you would like for them to (as long as it doesn’t exceed the 30-42 hours per semester total). This might be especially helpful on days when you
are assigning significant writing projects. Fellows could take part in class discussions, or could help facilitate small group discussion.

- Your Fellow could meet with you, in addition to your regular check-in meetings, to help you design writing assignments. Or, your Fellow could offer feedback on assignments via email.

At the initial meeting between you, your Fellow, and a Writing Center Administrator, you will decide together what combination of the above activities (or others, if you have special requests) will best suit your needs, your students’ needs, and the Fellow’s interests and experience. We will draw up a plan for the semester together, scheduling the Fellow’s time commitment to your course in as much detail as we can. Keep in mind that our Fellows are also students themselves, so planning their activities for your course as far in advance as possible will help them manage their own academic work.

**Meeting with Your Fellows**

In order to make this program work smoothly and effectively, it is important that you meet with your Fellows a number of times throughout the semester. Some of these meetings will be formal; others can occur over email or phone if it is easier. This is up to you and your Fellows.

**Meet with your Fellows the first week of classes (or earlier, if possible).** At this meeting, you, your Fellow(s) and a Writing Center administrator will plan activities for your course. You should come to the meeting prepared to:

- share the goals and writing assignments for the class with your Fellows;
- choose which activities, in addition to responding to student drafts, you would like your Fellows to do;
- schedule a time for your Fellows to come and introduce themselves to your class;
- set draft due dates with your Fellows;
- divide students amongst Fellows.

**Fellows meet with your class during the first two weeks of classes.** Fellows should come in and briefly introduce themselves to your class, explain their roles, and answer any questions. This meeting could take no more than 10-15 minutes, though if you and your Fellows would like to make this a day in which the Fellows sit-in on the class, this is fine.

**Meet before each paper cycle the Fellows will be involved with.** Use this time to clarify your expectations for the assignment and what you would like your Fellows to focus on as they read through the drafts. You may want to share this with your students as well.
Check-in while they are reading the papers. During the first round of papers, it may be important to be in contact with your Fellows about any confusion and concerns. You can review some of their comments and make sure that you are all on the same page. This may help with apprehension on both ends as to goals and expectations. This usually can be handled via phone or email, but a quick chat is helpful, sometimes.

Meet or check-in after you’ve graded the papers. This will allow you to point out what was helpful and any other areas you would like Fellows to concentrate on in the next round.

Writing Assignments
In order to make the Fellows program effective for your students and the Fellows, please these guidelines with paper assignments.

• Design specific assignments. Writing Fellows should read formal papers that will be graded. Informal papers are usually not revised and so they do not benefit as much from the drafting process.

• Create assignments with clear, well-defined goals. It is easier for Fellows (and students) to work with assignments with clear goals. Open-ended assignments and expectations may be difficult to interpret and cause confusing during the Fellows process. If you like, your Fellow could work with you on clarifying assignments as part of his or her contributions to your class.

• Make sure you include required due dates for each paper draft in your syllabus.

• Make it clear to students that the paper drafts, meeting with Fellows, and draft revisions are all mandatory. Emphasize the importance of a rough draft as well as how all students can benefit from meeting with Fellows. Also, make this draft (that includes the Fellows comments) a condition of the acceptance of the final draft.

• Allow two weeks between drafts and the final revisions. This allows Fellows a week to read and comment on papers and meet with your students and a week for students to complete revisions.

• Have students hand their papers in to you, not the Fellows. Please skim through these drafts before passing them onto Fellows, make sure your students have put time into the drafts and identify any students that may need extra help. Fellows have much less authority in enforcing your course requirements; by looking through the drafts and determining concerns, you have the chance to address these issues yourself.

Collecting Papers
For each paper cycle, the following should occur:

• You meet with your Fellows before drafts are due to clarify goals and expectations of the assignment.
• Students submit drafts to you TWO weeks prior to the final due date.
• Students sign up for conferences with Fellows.
• Fellows read papers, and return them to students during conferences.
• Students submit their final drafts to you along with first drafts and their Fellow’s comments.

Please make sure you have a policy for late papers. Writing Fellows do not have the authority to grant extensions. You must make it clear to both Fellows and students what this policy is and how it will be enforced.
If you choose to collect late papers, please let your Fellow know in advance, in case this affects when your students choose to meet with the Fellow.

Evaluating the Program
We ask that both you and your students evaluate the Fellows program. These evaluations that we provide are important as we work to make this program stronger and to work with more faculty and students. Thank you for your help and cooperation in distributing and collecting these during class. We appreciate any feedback from you or your students.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS
Most of the time the program works smoothly; in order to make sure that remains the norm, here are some problems we have either seen previously or anticipate as potentially occurring.

- **Students submit late papers.** Because Fellows depend on papers arriving at their scheduled time in order to read and comment on them, having mandatory due dates is the best way to make this transition a smooth one. Since it helps no one if students attempt to avoid revision by submitting late papers, it is important that you and your Fellows come up with a clear policy around late papers. Some Fellows and instructors have suggested that by making on-time drafts a significant percentage of students’ final paper grade, this problem is easily avoided.

- **Students turn in a final paper without the first draft and the Fellow’s comments.** For the Fellows Program to be effective, students must conference with a Fellow and revise their paper. Because of this, we ask that any papers without the first draft and Fellow’s feedback are NOT accepted. Remind the student that these are required. If a student has lost the comments, ask the Fellow for feedback on the paper and a summary of his or her conference notes. This will give you an idea of what occurred during the conference.

- **A student says she does not need the Writing Center.** Please do not excuse any student from the program. Instead, try to be as upfront and as explicit as possible with your students (both in class and on the syllabus) as to why you have chosen to work with the program. The Writing Center is not a remedial service; strong writers know that seeking feedback throughout the Writing process is helpful. If students express serious discomfort with sharing their work in progress, you might discuss with your student and your Fellow how to make this feel more comfortable.

- **Some students object to working with Writing Fellows who are not familiar with course content.** Try to remind students that Fellows respond as educated and informed readers. Since Writing Fellows comment on strengths and weaknesses in areas such as organization and clarity, they don’t need to be experts in a specific discipline to help students improve their writing.

- **A student complains about the Writing Fellow.** This is something that happens rarely (if at all). Try to meet with the student and Fellow (together or separately) to figure out how to solve this problem. Please contact the Writing Fellows Program Coordinator if this is a problem you feel needs immediate attention.

- **You strongly disagree with a Writing Fellows’ comments.** Please try to discuss this with the Writing Fellow directly. In an extreme case, contact the Coordinator of the Writing Fellows Program, Jennifer Follett.