

Helping Your Students Make Effective Use of the Writing Center

Students need some guidance in how to make effective use of the variety of services offered on LCC's campus, including those offered in the Writing Center. As an instructor, you can play a vital role in this process by helping students better understand our services as they prepare for an appointment. Following is some advice you can share with your students.

Preparation counts. Encourage students to bring their written assignments and notes about any additional instructions you have given during class. Also encourage them to bring any relevant course materials, including textbooks and writing handbooks that you have required them to purchase. Our staff routinely help students with documentation and other mechanics issues by demonstrating how to look up appropriate examples in their course textbooks.

Visit early. Many students think they must bring a written draft of a paper to the Writing Center, but this is not true. On the contrary, we encourage them to visit during the prewriting stage to discuss the assignment requirements, brainstorm topic ideas and develop a plan or outline.

Visit often. Writing assistance is especially helpful for students who visit the Writing Center multiple times at various stages during the writing process. A single visit often does not allow sufficient time to address everything.

It's *your* writing. Encourage your students to take ownership of their Writing Center appointments and subsequent revisions. We begin our appointments by asking students what they would like to work on and by customizing our approaches to cater to their requests. We also emphasize that students are not obligated to use every suggestion we make. The Writing Center has no control over post-visit revisions the writer chooses to make. Our goal is to help students make good decisions about their own work and to become confident, independent writers.

Meet the staff. We know that just as instructors have different personalities and teaching styles, so do our staff. Sometimes students need to work with a variety of people before they find an optimal fit.

"I think my teacher said . . ." When students visit the Writing Center for assistance with revision, encourage them to bring any written feedback they have received from you. It is very helpful for us to see exactly what you have commented on so we can assist the student with interpretation and application of the feedback.

"What was that?" Feedback from both instructors and the Writing Center is open to interpretation. What we suggest and what the student hears and internalizes might not

always align. Please encourage students to take notes during their appointment to minimize confusion and produce a tangible point of reference.

Back to you. We are familiar with the general requirements for some courses but not necessarily with instructor-specific requirements or preferences. We therefore rely on students' understanding of these requirements and might need to refer the student back to you with specific questions.

Misguided expectations. If students tell you they visited the Writing Center for an appointment and did not find their session helpful, it might be useful to ask about their expectations. Sometimes, well-intentioned students ask us to edit a paper or predict a grade, which our staff are not permitted to do. If the student does not fully understand why these requests cannot be fulfilled, a follow-up conversation with you can provide further clarification.

Talk to us. We encourage feedback—both positive and critical—from students and faculty. If a student approaches you with a complaint, please encourage them to come talk to us. If you would rather bring the concern to our attention on behalf of the student, please try to get as many details as you can about the student's visit, who they worked with, and what happened.

Requiring visits. If you have required that your students visit the Writing Center, please specify for them whether you have a preference for a specific medium for assistance (i.e. a WebEx session vs. an in-person appointment) or with a specific type of staff member (a Peer Writing Assistant vs. a Professional Writing Assistant). If you are requiring your whole class to schedule appointments, please give them as much advanced notice as possible, as availability is limited. Please also remind them that appointments can be scheduled up to two weeks in advance.

Prove it. If you are requiring students to provide evidence that they visited the Writing Center, please remind them to record essential details about their visit. We recommend that, at minimum, you ask them for the date and time of their appointment, the first name of the staff member who assisted them, and a brief description of the feedback they received. Instructors can contact the Writing Center for verification of a student visit if confirmation is needed. Staff members are not permitted to sign their names to student papers.