

University of Arizona
Writing Skills Improvement Program
Graduate Writing Institute

The Graduate Writing Institute was first offered by the Writing Skills Improvement Program (WSIP) at the University of Arizona (UA) in 1996. The Institute was designed and proposed to the UA Graduate College by Dr. Roseann Gonzalez, then Director of WSIP; Dr. Donna Rabuck, then Assistant Director of WSIP; and Dr. Maria Teresa Velez, then Associate Dean of the Graduate College. They had noticed that a significant number of graduate students were struggling with writing and research, even after finishing their coursework, and thus had many unanswered questions about how to complete grant and research proposals, articles for publication, masters' theses, and doctoral dissertations.

The Institute was designed as a three-week intensive summer program, delivered in June, when most graduate students are finished with coursework for the academic year. The student population is a blend of native English and ESL/EFL learners, both domestic and international. Other than having to be UA-registered graduate students who will not have graduated before June, students may apply for the program at any stage of their graduate work. This being said, however, students are encouraged to apply for the program after completing at least one year of graduate school. The Institute is competitive, and participants must be working on a serious writing project (article, grant or research proposal, thesis, or dissertation).

Underlying this program is the belief that highly effective writing is a collaborative process rather than an activity done in complete isolation. To this end, students participate in large-group presentations and writing labs, smaller graduate writing groups, and individual tutoring with the WSIP's professional instructional specialists. Presentation topics include but are not limited to brainstorming strategies, revision techniques, steps to researching and writing a literature review, library research methods, and grammar and style. Writing activities blend individual and small-group practice, brainstorming and revision, and non-evaluative feedback techniques to give participants a variety of perspectives on their drafts while encouraging them to maintain ownership of their work.

The anticipated outcomes of the Graduate Writing Institute are that participants complete the program with 1) confidence in themselves as writers, scholars, and researchers; 2) the knowledge that they are part of a larger community of practice; and 3) the start of a network of supportive and engaging partnerships with other graduate students (i.e., writing groups that continue after the Institute).

If you have any questions about the Graduate Writing Institute, please feel free to email Dr. Leslie Dupont, the GWI Coordinator, at Ldupont@email.arizona.edu and/or read more about the program on the WSIP website at <http://wsip.arizona.edu/graduate-writing-institute>.

**University of Arizona
Writing Skills Improvement Program
University of Arizona**

**Old Curriculum
2014 and Earlier Graduate Writing Institutes**

The following curriculum or a similar version was used for 2014 and earlier.

Pre-Institute Staff Meeting:

- 2 hours, approximately 2 weeks prior to Institute
- 2014 Exception: 2.5 hour instructor training session 5 days prior to Institute

MWF

- 9:00am – 10:00/10:30am: large-group presentations (9 total); topics included
 - Brainstorming Strategies
 - Revision
 - Style and Grammar (with greater emphasis on clarity)
 - Organizing and Writing a Literature Review
 - Grant-Writing
 - Writing a Curriculum Vitae
 - Note: On Friday of 3rd week, cake and coffee reception between shorter presentation and final small-group session
- 10:15/10:45am – 11:45am: Small-Group Peer Feedback Sessions (10 students and 1 facilitator)
- 12:00pm – 4:00pm: Individual Tutoring (2 sessions/student/week)

TTh

- 9:00am – 10:00am: Optional Workshops; topics included
 - Library Research and Using Refworks
 - Grant-Writing Basics
 - Reviewing a Journal Article
 - Grammar Refresher
 - Punctuation Refresher
- 10:00am – 4:00pm: Individual Tutoring

University of Arizona
Writing Skills Improvement Program
Revised Curriculum
2015 Graduate Writing Institute

The following curriculum will be piloted in June 2015. It is based on professional instructor observation and student feedback as well as recognition of the changing UA student population, which includes an increasingly high number of international and multilingual students.

The curriculum suggestions address a call for increased writing opportunities in addition to smaller, more discipline-focused writing groups. Course materials will be updated, revised, and/or created as needed.

Friday, May 29, 2015

- 9:00am – 12:00pm: Pre-Institute Training for New Instructors
- 12:00pm – 1:00pm: Lunch
- 1:00pm – 3:00pm: Pre-Institute Review and General Meeting for All Instructors

MW

- 9:00am – 9:50am: large-group presentations (6 total), topics to include
 - Brainstorming Strategies
 - Revision
 - Style and Grammar (with greater emphasis on clarity)
 - Organizing and Writing a Literature Review
 - Grant-Writing
 - Library Research and Using Refworks
- 10:00am – 10:45am: Writing workshop (can blend presentation-based writing and individual-project writing)
- 11:00am – 12:00pm: Lunch
- 12:00pm – 3:00pm: Individual Tutoring (1 session/student/week)

TTh

- Facilitated Writing Groups (2-4 students + 1 facilitator; non-evaluative feedback approach; each student participates during *one* of the following times on *either* Tuesday *or* Thursday):
 - 8:00am – 9:50am
 - 10:00am – 11:50am
 - 1:00pm – 2:50pm
- 12:00pm – 1:00pm: Lunch

F

- 9:00am – 1:00pm: Individual Tutoring
- (Fridays, June 5th and 12th) 1:00pm – 3:00pm: Staff Lunch-Meeting
- (Friday, June 19th, only) 1:30pm – 3:00pm: Closing Ceremony

**University of Arizona
Writing Skills Improvement Program
Graduate Writing Institute**

**Non-Evaluative Response Techniques
for Small-Group Peer-Response Activities**

What Is the Non-Evaluative Response* Process?

We use non-evaluative response techniques to respond to others' writing in ways that don't judge the quality of that writing. Our goal is to make note of how ideas and concepts are conveyed through writing and to share these impressions with the writer. These techniques ask listeners to focus their responses on specific words and phrases to help the writer become aware of his or her audience and of the patterns in his or her writing. They can be adapted to all forms of writing.

*To learn more about non-evaluative response techniques, refer to the book *Sharing and Responding* by Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff (New York: Random House, 1989).

Techniques:

Pointing

When we point, we actively listen while a writer reads his or her written text aloud. As listeners, we write words and phrases that stand out to us without questioning why they stand out. When the reader is finished, each listener will read back his or her list. *There should be no other commentary or discussion* in this activity.

The purpose of this approach is three-fold: 1) to get you comfortable with sharing your writing in progress, 2) to help you identify what is standing out to your listeners (and whether it's what you want standing out to your listeners), and 3) to encourage you to respond to others' writing without judgment.

One way to begin a "pointing" response is with the statement, "I heard the words. . . ."

Centering

During centering, we either actively listen while a writer reads his or her written text aloud for a second time or develop a discussion from the "pointing" lists we have already written. Each listener notes concepts, themes, and patterns in the writing. For instance, you might notice how a writer provides detailed analysis, how terms or procedures are clearly explained and contextualized, or how a specific theme or topic recurs. When the writer is finished reading aloud, each listener shares the information that he or she noticed. You want to avoid starting

with evaluative statements like “I like the way,” “I didn’t like,” or “I thought it was really good when.” Comments like these don’t offer writers concrete information that can help them strengthen their writing.

A more effective way to center is with a statement like, “I noticed the way you use specific terminology” or “I noticed how the topic of ----- came up several times.” You may want to begin centering with the statement, “I noticed the way you use. . . .”

Centering can lead to more involved discussions that involve sharing ideas for how to organize, develop, express, or otherwise strengthen a piece of writing; however, they always respect the writer’s ownership of his or her writing. For example, if you notice a gap in the writer’s methods or analysis, one or more unclear phrases, or redundancy (ineffective repetition of words, phrases, or ideas), centering allows you to ask questions for clarification without being prescriptive.

University of Arizona
Writing Skills Improvement Program
Graduate Writing Institute

Guide to Building a Successful Writing Group

*"Writing is an extreme privilege but it's also a gift.
It's a gift to yourself and it's a gift of giving a story to someone."
~ Amy Tan*

Writing groups offer participants the opportunity to forge partnerships with other writers. These partnerships may yield support, encouragement, critique, and resources that prove invaluable during the writing process. Writing groups can also be an essential component of the support network that is vital to surviving graduate school.

A few key points should be considered when developing a writing group:

Purpose: The purpose of the group should be clear to all members:

- Will the group meet to share their writing and provide feedback?
- Will it meet to provide a safe space for members to write independently?
- Will it focus on academic writing? Specific genres of academic writing (e.g., thesis, dissertation, articles for publication)?

Structure: The structure of the group should be designed to fit the needs of the group members. Some examples include small groups that meet in person, online chat rooms/groups, and hybrids that allow one or members to join in remotely (via Skype, Google Hangout, etc.).

Size: Determine how many members the group will accept. A group of three to five members may make it easier to arrange meetings, to assure that the work of all members can be reviewed, and to maintain organization.

Organization: Whether meeting in person or online, group meeting times and locations should be comfortable for all members and provide a supportive environment.

Format and Method: The format for discussion and review needs to be clear to all group members. Below is a list of important questions to consider:

- Will each member sign up to present his/her work?
- Will the presenting writer email copies to group members or provide hard copies?
- How far in advance of the meeting will the writer provide group members with his/her piece?
- What method will be used to review writing (i.e., Pointing and Centering, digital and/or handwritten feedback, etc.)?
- What are the members' expectations of the review process?