January 28, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

The Writers’ Block encourages you to invite us to visit your class, to run a workshop, or to provide mandatory or recommended individual tutoring sessions.

When you require individual Writers’ Block tutoring, there are some simple steps that can ensure a successful process. *These are just suggestions, not requirements.* I've bolded the most important steps. I don't mean to overwhelm you with details, but to prepare you and your students for a successful experience if you plan to require Writers' Block sessions.

- Post the links to the [Writers' Block webpage](#) or the Online Tutor Request Form in Moodle.
- Invite the Writers' Block to visit your class for a 5-20' orientation to our services or a full-class workshop using breakout rooms. (The workshop allows students to meet tutors and review the assignment prior to booking their session. In a meeting with tutors and me to preview the workshop, you can also clarify your assignment goals for the tutors.)
- **Design your course calendar and Writers' Block requirement so that students have two-three weeks to complete the session -- or require it in a shorter window around weeks 3-6, when our schedule of sessions is lighter.** If other courses are requiring sessions at the same time, students could have trouble booking within a narrow window from midterm onward. We haven’t had that problem yet, but I’m just trying to prevent it.
- **Urge students to book their session in advance.** (You could also require them to provide you with a copy of their email confirmation of their booked session.)
- **Inform me that you are requiring your students to book sessions and when.** As their requests come in, I can put them with a small group of tutors who will become familiar with the assignment. Consider sharing your assignment with me (see below.)
- Clarify that tutors will not edit the work for students. The tutoring session is not intended primarily to be a last-minute proofreading stop, although it can work that way. The tutors will focus on helping the student to assess whether they're meeting the main goals of the assignment and to improve organization, support, and clarity in their writing.

Other suggestions:

- Consider sharing your assignment details with me well in advance. I can post them in our Writers' Block Teams space and prepare the tutors to understand the requirements. This saves time and avoids miscommunication during the precious time allocated for the session. (In our online tutoring mode, tutors will normally ask the students to share your assignment or a draft in advance. If you prefer, you can require your students to do so on their own.)
- Require students to write a brief report/reflection about their session.
Consider pairing the Writers' Block session with an in-class Writers’ Block workshop and small-group or individual conferences with you. The highest compliance rate seemed to occur when students experienced an in-class workshop, then completed an individual conference with the instructor around the same time they met with a tutor. During individual conferences, the teacher could chat with the student about their Writers' Block experience or their plan to meet with a tutor soon after that conference.

Consider assigning this video by our tutors about first-year writing or some of our "Getting Started" tutorials to reinforce your other materials and to help your students see the value of peer assistance with writing.

Finally, some faculty have found ways to require Writers' Block sessions of specific students.

- "I reserve the right to require Writers' Block sessions if I am concerned about your writing."
- Require some students to do Writers' Block sessions in place of another assignment.
- Students may revise for a higher grade if they complete at least one Writers' Block session on the revision. (In my own classes, I've put a limit on the new grade.)

Sincerely,
Dr. Jennifer Mitchell
Writers’ Block Director