

The letters 'WJL' are rendered in a white, hand-drawn style with a distressed, splattered texture. They are set against a vibrant green background that has a fine, pebbled texture, similar to paper or canvas. The 'W' is on the left, the 'J' is in the middle, and the 'L' is on the right. The letters have a slightly irregular, artistic feel.

A JOURNAL OF WRITING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP

ZIMMERMAN & MOGHABGHAB | MCMURRAY  
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## Table of Contents

- 1 **Editor's Note**  
Muriel Harris
- 2 **Making Assignment Prompts More Effective: Can Writing Center Tutors Help?**  
Erin Zimmerman & Emma Moghabghab
- 10 **How Do Graduate Writing Specialists and Graduate Tutors Serve Graduate Writers' Needs Differently? A Qualitative Study of Writing Support in a Writing Center**  
Claire R. McMurray
- 18 **Gibbs' Reflective Cycle for Writing Center Training**  
Bonnie Devet
- 26 **Tutors' Column: "Helping Students See Themselves as Writers: Creative Writing Exercises in the Writing Center"**  
Annesley Anderson
- 30 **Announcements & Updates**
- 32 **Conference Calendar**

## Editor's Note

Muriel Harris

As writing center people who are used to—and skilled in—dealing with constantly changing realities, you are, I hope, coping with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. At some point, life will return to normal (whatever that is), and you'll be back on campus and looking for new challenges to take on. So this issue invites you to spend time now, considering the following solutions to some perennial concerns:



- *Can writing center tutors help instructors write effective assignments?* Erin Zimmerman and Emma Moghabghab looked into two ways to assist instructors with crafting writing assignments: 1) holding a workshop for instructors on designing assignments, and 2) assigning tutors to classes to help instructors with their assignments. Both approaches were studied, and results suggest ways that, with training and guidelines, tutors can effectively assist instructors with the difficult task of writing effective assignments (a genre that clearly needs attention).
- *For graduate student writers, is there a difference between being supported by graduate tutors or by graduate writing specialists?* Claire McMurray, a graduate writing specialist, offers the results of her survey along with a summary of the types of assistance graduate students think a graduate writing specialist can offer.
- *Are there more effective ways to help tutors reflect on their tutorials?* Bonnie Devet introduces us to the six steps in Gibbs' Reflective Cycle and describes her use of this approach with her tutors.
- *Might short, creative writing exercises be a tutorial strategy to help students see themselves as writers?* Annesley Anderson offers fellow tutors some informal exercises related to the assignment the student is working on, to help them gain confidence in themselves.

This issue wraps up volume 44 of *WLN*, but we'll continue through the summer to respond to queries, receive submissions, include notices of writing center conferences you send us, and discuss potential guest editor work on special issues. Wishing us all a summer in which life begins to return to normal and all the delight of being "normal" again.

# Making Assignment Prompts More Effective: Can Writing Center Tutors Help?

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At the American University of Beirut (AUB), our writing center seeks to support the entire AUB community by inviting all students, faculty, and staff to schedule tutoring appointments for writing support. Though few instructors take us up on that invitation, our tutors spend significant time in sessions helping writers understand assignment prompts, meet prompt expectations, and consider what questions to ask instructors to get clarification on those expectations. That students misunderstand assignment prompts “with astonishing regularity,” according to Muriel Harris, indicates that prompts are not as straightforward a genre to read as instructors might want to believe (39). As such, we wondered whether to offer faculty opportunities to help them refine their prompts, and by doing so, attempt to improve their students’ experiences as writers.



In line with numerous writing center handbooks, websites, and scholarly publications that find value in presenting strategies to help tutors read and comprehend assignment prompts, assignment prompt analysis is a key component of our tutor training. This act of interpretation is needed for any kind of assignment and is central to students’ successful completion of it. Researchers observe three ways students misunderstand assignment prompts: they lack the ability to correctly read them, they interpret directions differently than the instructors intended, or they experience difficulty in interpreting poorly written prompts (Harris; Reid; Kroll and Reid). Whatever the reason, students can feel confused and overwhelmed, unsure of what to do, which can lead to instructors being frustrated by students asking the same questions across course sections or incorrectly completing assignments. In light of this situation we asked, “Could tutors offer feedback to instructors on writing assignment prompts? And if so, how?” Providing feedback on assignment prompts would emphasize our tutors’ abilities to work with writers at all levels. This feedback could offer instructors the perspectives of peer tutors who possess critical reading expertise and are capable of identifying possible

points of misinterpretation or ambiguity within prompts.

## **BACKGROUND**

The American University of Beirut is an English language, liberal arts institution that serves over 9,000 Lebanese and international students. The writing program, housed within the English Department, comprises approximately forty full-time and part-time instructors who teach one or more of five writing courses offered every semester. Instructors are primarily Lebanese, with Arabic, English, and/or French language backgrounds, though several instructors are international, from countries including the United States and Poland. The writing center, founded in 2004, is currently staffed by a director, assistant director, senior tutor, and approximately sixteen undergraduate, graduate, and volunteer tutors, most of whom are multilingual like the writers they serve. The writing center holds approximately ten workshops and 1,700 consultations each year.

Our writing center is not among the first to consider expanding their repertoire to have tutors work with instructors. The University of Wyoming Writing Center tutors, all of whom are faculty members themselves, work with instructors on a variety of writing projects, including assignment prompts (Garner). Other writing centers provide course-specific or course-embedded tutor programs, but such offerings typically focus more on the students' writing in the courses than on supporting the instructors' writing of prompts. An exception is a project at University of Michigan-Flint and Ursinus College where undergraduate writing center tutors and writing fellows meet individually with instructors to review writing prompts. Through these activities, Jacob Blumner, Francis Fritz, and Sarah Wice found that the instructors regarded tutors' feedback as useful for designing and revising curricula and increasing the instructors' use of tutors (7). With these experiences in mind, our research questions comprised the following: Would AUB instructors find student tutors' feedback helpful in revising assignment prompts? Would contexts beyond one-to-one tutoring be effective spaces for this work? And what components of tutor education are needed to provide effective support?

## **OUR PROJECT**

To address these questions, we ran an IRB-approved research project during fall 2018 in which we piloted two opportunities: a two-hour, stand-alone workshop for tutors and instructors and a semester-long, course-specific tutoring collaboration. Because composition instructors are trained to be reflective about written texts using terminologies similar to those of writing center tutors, we invited this group to receive feedback from tutors on their assignment prompts.

## **TUTOR EDUCATION**

Tutors are encouraged to enroll in Tutoring Writing, a course on writing center scholarship and practice, and are required to participate in a three-day training retreat prior to each semester, which prepares tutors to work with all writers on any type of writing. In preparation for working with instructors, we dedicated a portion of the retreat to training tutors on how to provide constructive feedback on prompts: tutors read several handouts on understanding writing assignments that divide the process into theoretical understandings of prompts, practical steps for interacting with instructors, and focused activities with questions targeting instructors and their students. Using those readings and the guidelines created by the directors and senior tutor, the tutors were then provided sample prompts to critique in terms of audience, purpose, tone, completeness of information, and student perspective. Tutors understood that their goal for the upcoming activities would be to explain how students might misinterpret instructions or to point out something unclear about, unnecessary to, or missing from a prompt, thereby helping instructors avoid repetitive student questions or poorly completed student papers.

## **ASSIGNMENT REVISION WORKSHOP**

Four weeks into the semester, we invited composition instructors to a workshop to which they brought a writing prompt they were creating or revising in order for them to critique it themselves and receive tutor feedback. To prepare for the workshop, tutors were given guidance on how to conduct assignment reviews with faculty while accounting for their own apprehensions and concerns. In discussion groups, they practiced crafting questions such as “What is the purpose of the assignment?,” “What are the important keywords, and what do they mean?,” “What are the genre, style, and technical details of the assignment, and why are those aspects important?” This group work, with input from the directors, helped build tutors’ confidence and skills for analyzing assignment prompts.

During the event, we partnered eight participating instructors with their own tutor. While the director reviewed best practices for writing assignment prompts with instructors, each tutor separately reviewed their instructor’s prompt. The assistant director supervised the tutors, responding to questions and concerns. After thirty minutes of these independent activities, tutors joined their instructor to provide feedback on the prompt. To collect feedback on the usefulness of this event, we anonymously surveyed the instructors and tutors at the start and end of the workshop to glean their perceptions and preparedness for the session as well as the helpfulness of the tutoring interaction. Seven tutors and all eight

instructors gave consent to participate. At the end of the semester, we sent a follow-up survey to instructors asking whether and how they used the tutors' feedback and if they found the revisions to be helpful or noticed anything about their students' work based on their revised prompt.

### **COURSE-SPECIFIC TUTORING**

Five new instructors were required by the composition program director to partner with a course-specific tutor. They were given a document detailing the guidelines and expectations for the roles a tutor would play with them and their students. During the semester, the tutor and instructor met in person once to review and discuss one or more assignment prompts. Unlike the tutors who participated in the workshop, course-specific tutors also visited each instructor's class to introduce themselves and to encourage students to schedule writing center appointments.

The five assigned course-specific tutors were provided individualized support by the assistant director throughout the semester: she facilitated the tutors' contact with instructors by giving feedback on tutors' introductory emails to the instructors and by building tutors' confidence when interacting with instructors outside the writing center. Tutors used the retreat handouts to evaluate the instructors' prompts and created questions and comments. The assistant director met with each tutor to discuss and approve their review of the prompt and their feedback to make recommendations and ensure it conformed to the goals of providing suggestions on format, presentation, and clarity. The course-specific tutors reported twice after the meeting with the instructor, which served as a chance for the assistant director to manage concerns and suggest alternate approaches. At the end of the semester, instructors received an anonymous qualitative survey with questions that asked them to reflect on their experiences working with the course-specific tutor on their assignment prompt(s), their thoughts on whether and how they found the feedback and revisions to be helpful, and their perceptions of students' work based on those revisions. We also collected the tutors' reports that detailed their points of view on the work. Three instructors and all five tutors participated.

### **WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID**

By offering two types of assignment prompt tutoring, our goal was to ascertain which tutoring experience more effectively balanced positive outcomes with input of resources. Our results are organized by event in order to best present comparisons.

### **ASSIGNMENT REVISION WORKSHOP**

Seven tutors completed the pre- and post-workshop surveys. Of those, only two felt either very prepared or moderately prepared before they began their work with instructors. They stated that

their nervousness arose from the idea of engaging with experts in writing who occupied a superior position in the institution. Yet their perceptions changed after the workshop: four felt very prepared and three moderately prepared. They described this preparedness as stemming from applying their knowledge of general tutoring frameworks to this session as well as employing tutoring strategies such as reverse outlining, audience examination, and keyword revision. They directly referred to specific aspects of their training, such as active listening, asking questions, and conversational dynamics, in addition to relying on each other in the writing center spirit of community as key elements that prepared them for working in the sessions.

All eight instructors completed pre-and post-workshop surveys, and none of those initially expected the tutors' feedback to be very helpful; yet, after the workshop, seven of them stated that the workshop was very helpful, and all eight claimed to be leaving with clear steps to improve/revise their assignments. They also all described the tutors as having been "very prepared" to work with them on their prompts. By the end of the workshop, four of the eight expressed interest in working with tutors on prompts in the future and five said they would recommend the service to others. Instructors emphasized the tutors' unique perspective on their prompts and that the feedback was constructive, well-framed, and thought-provoking.

In the five responses to the end-of-semester survey, three instructors reported using tutor feedback to revise their prompts. Perhaps more importantly for long-term impact of the workshop, however, when asked how the workshop impacted revisions/improvements to the assignment prompt, two of those three extended their answer to note that the feedback motivated them to be more mindful of clarity and comprehension when designing other assignments throughout the semester.

### **COURSE-SPECIFIC TUTORING**

All five of the course-specific tutors generally reported positive interaction with the instructors and that they perceived their training to be of great assistance. They felt the instructors positively received their feedback as coming from a student whose perspective was enhanced by training and found the instructors willing to modify their prompts based on feedback. However, tutors found it difficult to complete full reviews of the assignment prompts because the instructors often redirected attention away from the prompts and onto concerns about students' writing abilities. The tutors also noted that they sought out direct support from the assistant director, senior tutor, and other tutors.

All three of the instructors who responded to the end-of-

semester survey found their course-specific tutors to be helpful and cooperative. Instructors specifically found value in discussing writing pedagogy with a tutor, and all said they would recommend the service to other instructors. However, though all tutors believed the instructors willing to apply feedback, two of them did not revise their prompts and were uncertain they would request a course-specific tutor for help with future assignments. The instructors appeared inclined to consider the tutor a resource for their students rather than for themselves, which made us question the impact of the tutors' work with them, and by extension made us recognize the need to offer the instructors mentoring on how to work with tutors.

### **A FEASIBLE OPPORTUNITY**

Comments about the success of tutors' feedback on assignment prompts differed based on the type of support given. Seven of the eight instructors who participated in the workshop and all three of those with course-specific tutors found the tutors to be helpful; meanwhile, in the end-of-semester surveys three of the five instructors from the workshop made revisions to their prompts based on tutor feedback, and only one of the three instructors who had course-specific tutors did so. We observed that the differences in the meeting contexts, instructors' views of the tutor's audience, and the amount of guidance provided to tutors and instructors impacted the success of the two projects.

For our purposes, the workshop yielded some more positive results relative to the amount of time and energy spent by the directors and tutors. First, the controlled workshop environment helped tutors feel more confident than the course-specific tutors because the writing center directors were present to give clear instructions and guidance on instructor-tutor interactions during the workshop. The tutors were on their own in course-specific tutoring meetings, with only written guidelines to inform instructors on procedures and expectations. Second, the course-specific tutoring was mandatory for the five new instructors, possibly causing them to be less invested than those who opted to join the workshop. Third, the instructors accepted/understood their role as the tutors' intended audience in the workshop; whereas, marketing course-specific tutoring as support for both instructors and their students led instructors to focus on how tutors could primarily help their students and not them.

We believe the workshop to be a feasible opportunity for our writing center to continue to offer to instructors, but because the course-specific tutoring requires more time from the directors, we find it is currently not worthwhile for our center. The key features that made the workshop successful were explicit training of tutors

to work with instructors on prompts, clarifying instructors' and tutors' roles during the session, allowing the tutors to review the prompts under the supervision of the assistant director, and asking the instructors to first review their prompts to ensure they include the most important elements of strong writing prompts. We would recommend others considering such an activity to include the same components. Additionally, in the future we would ensure that instructors bring in a prompt they have not yet given to students; two of the workshop participants did not revise their prompts, which had already been distributed to their classes.

Meanwhile, for our writing center to encourage instructors to see the value in course-specific tutors' feedback on prompts, the directors would need to meet with instructors multiple times to clarify goals and maintain procedures. However, for writing centers with existing writing fellow or other course-specific tutoring programs, short tutor training exercises on comprehending assignment prompts, frequent meetings with tutors and instructors, tutor reflections, and consistent reporting and feedback cycles, in addition to working with strong writers, could prepare tutors to give feedback on writing prompts.

It should be noted that our research has several limitations. Our survey methods do not yield highly specific responses as to the relationship between feedback and improvement, but the responses do demonstrate participants' positive attitudes about the workshop events and their perceptions of increased awareness when crafting assignment prompts. We also only worked with composition instructors who are already trained to value writing processes and feedback but who each have diverse experiences with and views of our writing center. However, as the goal of our project was to determine the efficacy of tutors working with instructors on assignment prompts, we believe that the survey responses do give us a baseline assessment to continue to adapt our tutor training and support offerings.

One unexpected benefit that resulted from this project was that we, as writing center administrators and writing instructors, became more conscious about prompts as real genres of writing through hosting these events. More importantly, we found that after the workshop our tutors recognized that the training they received prepared them to work in seemingly difficult contexts with individuals they perceived as being strong writers and as having more power: they were surprised and invigorated by being able to provide useful feedback to an instructor and welcomed the opportunity to be challenged again in such a way. Even those tutors who mentioned struggling to give feedback to instructors on assignment prompts recognized that they do have the ability to contribute to instructors' composing of clear and meaningful

assignment prompts. In this light, we consider it our duty as administrators to continue encouraging and supporting such interactions while researching best methods to do so.



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# How Do Graduate Writing Specialists and Graduate Tutors Serve Graduate Writers' Needs Differently? A Qualitative Study of Writing Support in a Writing Center

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CLAIRE R. MCMURRAY

As more Graduate Writing Specialist (GWS) positions appear in writing centers, more research about this position and how it serves writers appears necessary. Because I am a GWS, I decided to add to this area of inquiry. I explored graduate writers' perceptions in my writing center by asking 1) Why do graduate students choose to meet with a GWS instead of a graduate tutor? 2) What qualifications, experience, and expertise do they feel a person in this role should have? 3) How do they feel the role of a GWS compares with that of a graduate tutor?

First, a little about me and my role. I have a doctorate and work half-time at a large research university. I meet individually with graduate writers in my private office to discuss research papers, journal articles, and job/funding applications or to provide thesis/dissertation coaching. As our website advertises, my services are for students "whose needs go beyond the Writing Center's traditional graduate writing consultations." In addition, I manage graduate writing groups, dissertation boot camps, and graduate research/write-ins. I am encouraged by our director to present at conferences, perform research, publish in journals, and apply for grants.

In addition to me, we have a Director, Associate Director, and Assistant Director, as well as undergraduate and graduate tutors. Our graduate tutors offer individual hour-long graduate writing consultations in our public consulting space. Graduate writers may choose to work with these tutors or with me. To make this decision, writers may visit our GWS webpage, which lists my areas of expertise: graduate-level writing, writer's block, publishing, funding/job applications, and thesis/dissertation coaching.

By studying my role and that of the graduate tutors in my center, I explore one way in which graduate writers receive supplementary support for their writing. Many of us in the writing center field are

already familiar with the struggles graduate writers can face: the need to produce “great quantities of writing of different kinds” (Aitchison 907); cognitive, social, and emotional blocks (Ahern and Manathunga 238); the expectation of a more “authoritative” writing stance; and a new identity as a scholar, researcher, and professional (Curry 87, 80). Many of us also know that not all writers receive help with these issues from their own departments or advisors. Research has already shown how well supplementary communication support systems, like those provided by writing centers, can help fill these gaps and “improve graduate student success” (Simpson 5), but there is still more left to investigate in this area.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

I recruited participants from the thirty-five graduate writers who met with me individually during my office hours in fall 2018 and spring 2019. I typically met with these writers only once or twice in total. Some brought drafts, but many did not. Eighteen took a survey, and five were interviewed. Participants were masters-level and doctoral-level students from a wide range of academic departments, ranging from first-year to sixth-year. Nine survey participants and five interviewees had previously met with a graduate tutor.

## **METHODOLOGY**

After receiving IRB approval, I used a qualitative approach that employed open-ended questions, gathering data from graduate writers, first through online surveys distributed immediately after each consultation and then later through one-to-one structured interviews. I also used grounded theory methodology, collecting my data and then looking for repeating concepts to which I assigned particular codes. Some questions in the survey were replicated in the interviews. To illustrate the similarities and differences, identical questions are italicized in Table 1.

## **CODING**

In the first round of coding I generated a list of 106 initial codes from the surveys and interviews. A second round of coding revealed that these codes fit into three larger conceptual categories. **Graduate Writing Struggles** was comprised of new genres writers were encountering, new writing skills that needed to be built, writing-related emotions being battled, and gaps in writing instruction that needed to be filled. The **Ways to Help** category included ways our professional/graduate staff could help, i.e., by discussing the writing process, drawing on previous experiences, pointing to resources, and helping to process emotions. The **Writing Center Staff** category covered codes related to participants’ perceptions of our graduate

**TABLE 1: QUESTIONS ASKED IN SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS**

SURVEYS	INTERVIEWS
1. <i>Year of Study</i>	1. <i>Year of Study</i>
2. <i>Field of Study</i>	2. <i>Field of Study</i>
3. <i>What types of struggles do graduate students face?</i>	3. <i>What types of struggles do graduate students face?</i>
	4. What are the best ways to help with these struggles?
	5. How do these struggles differ from those of undergraduate students?
4. What was the reason for your appointment with the GWS?	6. Why did you choose to meet with the GWS instead of a graduate consultant?
5. <i>How do you view the role of a GWS?</i>	7. <i>How do you view the role of a GWS?</i>
6. <i>What types of qualifications, experience, and/or expertise should a GWS have?</i>	8. <i>What types of qualifications, experience, and/or expertise should a GWS have?</i>
	9. At what point(s) in a graduate student’s career is it most helpful to meet with a GWS?
	10. What is the most helpful structure for students to receive help from a GWS?
7. <i>Have you ever attended a graduate consultation?</i>	11. <i>Have you ever attended a graduate consultation?</i>
8. If yes, how was your appointment with the GWS different from your graduate consultation(s)?	(If so, explain your experience).
	12. How do you think a consultation with a graduate consultant would be different from a consultation with a GWS?
9. Are there types of writing support that graduate consultants cannot give?	13. How do you think a graduate consultant is different or similar to a GWS?
10. If yes, what types?	
11. <i>Are there types of writing support that a GWS can provide that graduate writing consultants cannot?</i>	14. <i>Are there types of writing support that a GWS can provide that graduate writing consultants cannot?</i>
12. If yes, what types?	
13. <i>Related comments or concerns</i>	15. <i>Related comments or concerns</i>

consulting staff and GWS. During a third round of coding I looked for codes in each of these three larger categories that could be grouped together. I ended up with thirteen process codes (codes

describing actions with gerunds). For the purposes of this article I have chosen to focus on six: 1) “zooming out,” 2) “processing emotions,” 3) “navigating the thesis/dissertation process,” 4) “publishing,” 5) “applying for funding,” and 6) “hunting for jobs.” These were selected because they highlighted the perceived differences between support provided by graduate tutors and by a GWS. Each is defined in the following section.

## **RESULTS**

The process codes indicated several areas of support our writers believe are particularly suited to a GWS. I also found that participants drew several distinctions between the roles of a GWS and a peer tutor. A GWS was likened to a “guide,” “mentor,” or “coach” twenty-two times in the surveys. Interview participants used similar vocabulary, such as “mentor,” “guide,” “specialist,” and “professional staff person.” The participants who had experience working with peer tutors described these tutors differently—as “readers,” “sets of eyes,” and “in-between people.” These writers pointed to the fact that tutors provide an outside perspective on a piece of writing as well as a peer-to-peer relationship. It appeared that when these writers needed help from a peer, another set of eyes on their writing, or help with a specific draft, they might choose to work with a graduate tutor. On the other hand, they might decide to meet with a GWS if they wanted an experienced mentor to guide them through a writing-related process or to discuss issues that reached beyond a particular draft.

### **ZOOMING OUT**

“Zooming out” is a term I use to describe graduate writers’ need to talk about the writing process itself. This proved to be the most popular reason to meet with a GWS. Nine of the eighteen survey participants listed “discuss the writing process itself” as the basis for their appointment, and “expertise in the writing process (time management, writing goals, outlining, etc.)” was the most popular qualification they chose for a GWS. This same theme emerged in several of the interviews. Participant 2 mentioned the usefulness of “some of the conversations that we had about the process,” giving the example of creating a writing calendar. Participant 3 mentioned helpful strategies for “organizing information, taking notes, prewriting, outlining” and “having an outside perspective on the process and frustrations that I was having.” Several other study participants also contrasted the two types of consultations, using more abstract vocabulary when describing the differences. One survey respondent described their consultation with me as different because it was “more abstract, creating structure and concept.” Other words like “higher-level,” “concepts,” “design,”

“planning,” “larger vision,” and “process” cropped up throughout the interviews. Though this may be specific to my institution, undoubtedly many participants felt that one difference between graduate tutor and GWS consultations lay in a focus on specific drafts versus a focus on the process of writing. Because of my advertised expertise in helping writers combat writer’s block and adjust to graduate-level writing, these writers may have felt more comfortable coming to me for help with process.

### **PROCESSING EMOTIONS**

“Processing emotions” included advisor/advisee issues, writer’s block, imposter syndrome, and lack of confidence and/or motivation related to writing. This theme surfaced often when participants were asked about writing struggles graduate students face. Seven survey participants felt that an important qualification for a GWS was the “ability to discuss emotional issues related to writing,” four survey participants listed “experience with the advisor/advisee relationship” as necessary, and interview Participant 5 mentioned “listening skills” as an important qualification. Emotional issues also accounted for some of the perceived differences between graduate tutors and a GWS. Two participants wanted a “private space” (which my office could provide), and two felt that “insight into the advisor/advisee relationship” (i.e., discussing how to improve lines of communication) made our meeting different from a peer consultation. Participant 4 felt strongly about emotion-based writing issues. He mentioned writing at the graduate level as “very stressful—it’s a very emotional type of thing” and likened his meeting with the GWS to writing-related “therapy.” Though those of us in writing centers know how much emotional labor our tutors do, my study participants still clearly felt that discussions about the emotions related to their writing were something that set graduate tutor and GWS consultations apart.

### **NAVIGATING THE THESIS/DISSERTATION PROCESS**

My study participants singled out thesis/dissertation writing from other graduate-level writing and saw it as an entire process to navigate. They wanted someone to preview and offer advice about the steps involved in it. There was overwhelming agreement that this help should come from someone who has already completed a graduate degree. Eleven of the eighteen survey participants listed “completed dissertation” as a desired GWS qualification, and nine listed “a Ph.D.” as one. Others listed “expertise in dissertation writing, completion, defense,” “advanced degree and experience,” and “speaking from experience.” All five interviewees mentioned experience with the process, a completed degree, or the Ph.D. as a necessary GWS qualification. Participant 1 mentioned how helpful

it was to work with someone who has “achieved that milestone” and who can provide “that almost life-stage perspective on it.” Participant 5 said, “the steps of a doctoral program, [...] [the discussion] really is made better by having somebody who’s gone through that process guide students.”

### **Publishing**

Several study participants wanted help with publishing journal articles, understanding the peer review process, and transforming course papers into articles. This was an area of interest for the majority of the writers. Though only four survey participants listed “publishing” as their primary reason for consulting with me, eleven listed “expertise in publishing” as a qualification for a GWS. Two also listed “experience/expertise in publishing articles” as a way that a GWS could provide support beyond a peer-to-peer consultation. Participant 2 felt this was particularly important and said, “It’s that level of professionalism, reliability, and then knowing about conferences and things and knowing about publishing. That’s also something that some [graduate tutors] would know about and some wouldn’t.” For many participants, meeting with a GWS who had already published academic articles was preferable to discussing a manuscript or the publishing process with a graduate tutor who may or may not have had that experience.

### **APPLYING FOR FUNDING**

Students who came to the GWS for help with grants and/or fellowship/scholarship applications felt that this staff member was best situated to provide support. Eight survey participants listed “experience with grants/fellowships” as a qualification for a GWS, and one mentioned “expertise in personal essays and scholarship essays” as a way that a GWS could support writers beyond a graduate consultation. Participant 1, who came to me to work on a National Science Foundation application, mentioned “funding writing” as a graduate writing struggle and “experience with funding writing and grant applications” as an important qualification for a GWS. She went even further, expecting this person to have “done that kind of writing successfully,” meaning that “they’ve written a grant that’s been approved.” Though we did not discuss the particular grants I had been awarded, she still seemed reassured by the fact that, like her, I had also been through the funding application process.

### **HUNTING FOR JOBS**

Another important concern for participants was the job hunt, though, interestingly, none distinguished between academic and non-academic jobs. Like the thesis/dissertation, this is a high-stakes type of writing that involves both specific documents (cover letters, resumes, teaching/research statements) and a process to navigate.

On the survey, eight participants listed “experience with job materials” as a qualification for a GWS, and five mentioned “insight into the job hunt, job applications, and cover letters” as a way that a GWS could provide support beyond a peer consultation. Participant 3 mentioned “applying for jobs, cover letters, sort of best practices for professional sort of writing standards” as writing support that a GWS could give. Participant 4 mentioned the job process in a different context. He saw that the GWS held a professional position as “proof” of credibility. Ultimately, job application materials and the job process provided an important reason that graduate writers might seek help from a GWS, rather than from a graduate tutor.

## **DISCUSSION**

Writers believe the experience and expertise of a GWS to be useful. These writers feel that they benefit from working with someone who has already gone through the thesis/dissertation process and who has experience hunting for jobs, applying for grants, and publishing. On the other hand, graduate writers feel that they benefit from working with a graduate tutor differently. Writers can gain perspective from a reader outside of their field, get another set of eyes on their work, and receive support with specific drafts of their documents. Because of these differences in perception, websites and promotional materials should distinguish between GWS and graduate tutor services. Student staff should also be trained on the different types of services offered by a GWS and when and how to refer writers to this staff member.

It is important to recognize the limitations of my small, preliminary study, which was not designed to draw overarching conclusions about graduate-level writing support. Future projects on a GWS could include a larger sample size, triangulation of data, and open-ended questions that do not force writers to find and state differences between a GWS and a tutor. Additionally, research should include the many GWSs who hold a master’s degree rather than a doctorate. Lastly, in the daily work of our centers, many tutors also perform roles similar to a guide, a mentor, or a coach and are very well placed to discuss the writing process with clients. Further research may help us ascertain whether graduate writers beyond my study associate these roles and skills more with a GWS than with a tutor and, if so, why.

## **CONCLUSION**

Clearly, a graduate tutor and a GWS both fill important roles in a writing center. The peer-to-peer perspective provided by tutors can build rapport and trust with clients because these staff are encountering many of the same writing-related expectations, issues, and emotions as the writers they are working with. A GWS,

on the other hand, adds value by acting as a mentor, rather than a peer, and by drawing upon a wide array of previous experiences. I recognize that it might not be practical or financially feasible to employ a GWS in many centers; however, my study suggests that this position offers different services to clients. A GWS-graduate tutor partnership can work to ensure that graduate writers receive the robust and holistic writing support they need to truly succeed in their programs.



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# Gibbs' Reflective Cycle for Writing Center Training

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College of Charleston



After conducting a difficult writing center session, consultants often talk among themselves about a frustrating client, like the one who just shrugs and says nothing during a consultation, or the recalcitrant student who refuses advice by telling the consultant, “My paper already makes sense to me.” Consultants, however, need to go beyond merely the “swapping of anecdotes” (Gibbs 54) about difficult clients. Directors can help consultants convert problem consultations into learning experiences.

The key to such conversion is reflection. Mike Mattison sums up the golden power derived from reflection: “This is a tool for learning, for growth, for coming to an understanding of theories and practices, for relating theory to practice” (38).

Well-known, widely used training techniques for reflection, such as keeping journals (Mattison), writing blogs (Hall), or producing a log (Yancey), prove valuable because consultants are writing down what happened during a difficult session. Nonetheless, these approaches—being mostly free-form—are not structured enough to ensure staff development. Instead, consultants need a systematic, step-by-step method that guides their reflections and engages them in learning from their experiences. Since 1988, Gibbs' Reflective Cycle has been in use, a framework that encourages health care professionals and teachers in the United Kingdom to reflect on their work.<sup>1</sup> By engaging in this methodical framework, consultants learn from uncomfortable sessions, preparing them to better handle future consultations.

## BACKGROUND ON GIBBS' CYCLE

Graham Gibbs, a professor leading the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development at the UK's Oxford Brookes University, argues that those who help others need to “take into account . . . feelings surrounding an experience” (Sewall) so that they can see links “between the doing and the thinking” (Gibbs 4). Unfortunately, when teachers, for instance, reflect on their experiences, they are

not certain which part to discuss, and they often provide only “superficial descriptions” and “premature conclusions,” not always moving beyond their feelings about an event in order to take action (Gibbs 49). Gibbs believes that to learn from experience, teachers should engage in a self-assessment that will “ideally lead into planning for the next experience, in the form ‘next time I will . . .’” (51).

To encourage such self-assessment, Gibbs emphasizes learners must be mindful and reflective. Here “mindfulness” means being in “a generalized state of alertness to the activities one is engaged in” (Perkins and Salomon), that is, being aware of “immediate, real-time experience” (Featherstone et al.). Psychologist Ryan M. Niemiec provides a more specific definition of *mindfulness*: “self-regulation of attention with an attitude of curiosity, openness, and acceptance (“3 Definitions”). During tough sessions, consultants “self-regulate” by “tak[ing] control of [their] attention” (Niemiec), like focusing on a client’s attitude, gestures, or voice; mindfulness also arises when consultants are “open” to whatever they focus on during the moment and when they are “curious” as to what the moment implies. Being “focused, open, and curious” (Niemiec) are prime ingredients for achieving mindfulness, a key principle on which Gibbs’ cycle is based.

Being mindful, though, is not enough. Gibbs also stresses learners must *reflect* on their experiences. Gibbs argues, “It is from the feelings and thoughts emerging from this reflection that generalizations or concepts can be generated” (14). This reflection is also central for developing consultants, as Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood explain: “The know-how of good tutors comes from a willingness to *reflect* on their efforts and to keep learning. Such tutors are eager both to confirm what they do well and to question any practices that impede productive interactions with students” (9, my emphasis). Mindfulness and reflection—the foundations of Gibbs’ Cycle—are vital to writing center staff education.

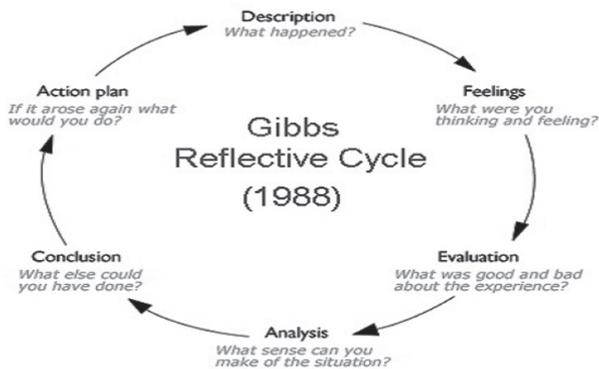
### **GIBBS’ REFLECTIVE CYCLE**

The steps of the Cycle break down the process of mindfulness and reflection into a systematic, controlled approach. By applying these six steps to difficult consultations, consultants gain knowledge from their experience:

- *describing* what happened, perhaps providing background information (“Gibbs’ Reflective”);
- *telling* what you were *feeling* and *thinking* about the experience as you felt it and afterwards as well as how you related to the situation (Gibbs 49);

- *evaluating* what was good and bad about the experience; also, how it was resolved afterwards (“Gibbs’ Reflective”);
- *analyzing* the experience by telling why you think it happened and by seeing how it is like experiences you have had before (Gibbs 54); also, “what might have helped or hindered the event” (“Gibbs’ Reflective”);
- *drawing conclusions*, such as what else you could have done or how you could have avoided a negative experience (Gibbs 54);
- *formulating an action plan* for what you will do if the experience arises again. (Gibbs 53-54). (See figure 1.)

**FIGURE 1: GIBBS’ REFLECTIVE CYCLE**



Source: [www.brookes.ac.uk/students/upgrade/study-skills/reflective-writing-gibbs](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/upgrade/study-skills/reflective-writing-gibbs) [search “images + gibbs reflective cycle”]

Asking consultants to proceed through Gibbs’ methodical steps means they go beyond merely venting about tough sessions. They act as learners, glean information from one consultation and applying it to another; in other words, they engage in “reflective transfer” or the “process by which a single tutoring event and/or several tutoring events are reviewed and understood as a part of practice *theorized*” (Yancey 191).

### **EXAMINING THE STEPS OF GIBBS’ REFLECTIVE CYCLE**

Although the Cycle appears to echo Benjamin Bloom’s well-known taxonomy, his taxonomy and the Cycle differ. Bloom’s is a taxonomy of cognition; Gibbs’ Cycle, however, is a set of ordered, sequential steps through which learners progress and end with insight about what to do the next time a situation arises. It should also be noted that while most of the Cycle’s steps are fairly self-explanatory, like *describe* the tough session and tell how it made you *feel*, the steps *evaluation* and *analysis*—key components of the Cycle—need to be

distinguished.

For the Cycle, learners *evaluate* by answering the question “What is good and bad about the experience?” (“Gibbs’ Reflective”). This definition of *evaluation* means learners should be objective, seeing the situation from both positive and negative angles. Consider, for example, “One of my students kept me sitting with him the entire session, helping with each MLA entry on his Works Cited page even though I had two other clients waiting. I wanted to leave him the Center’s handout, but he kept saying he needed my help.” This session is “good” in that the student realizes he needs help and has taken initiative to seek assistance. What is “less good” is how the client, lacking confidence, monopolizes the consultant’s time and fails to develop self-confidence.

*Analysis* may also pose problems. Gibbs’ definition does more than ask learners to break a topic into parts (the usual definition of *analysis*); it also has learners pull back, “extracting meaning” from the details by asking, “Why did things go well or didn’t? What knowledge of my own or academic literature [scholarship] can help explain the situation?” (“Reflection Toolkit”). For the MLA session, the consultant remembers how she, as a student, has also been frustrated when working with unfamiliar citation systems, so she understands how the client needs to acquire confidence when handling the demands posed by MLA. Gibbs’ approach to *analysis* helps learners remain detached and unemotional about a situation.

After describing the experience, telling one’s feelings, and evaluating and analyzing the situation, learners are ready for the fifth step: *drawing a conclusion*, that is, telling what else could have been done so that learners begin to think of options. Instead of assisting with each MLA citation, the consultant could have given the student a handout or a handbook to look up citations, modeling the process first for the student. Then, in the last step—the *action plan*—learners tell what they would do if the situation arose again, so that for the MLA student, the consultant could leave the student to use the resources but promise to return in a few minutes to help.

## **USING THE CYCLE FOR TRAINING**

So that my consultants could engage in systematic reflection, I organized a group training session using Gibbs’ Cycle. About a week before the training meeting, each consultant received a notecard on which they were asked to *describe* a difficult session they had recently conducted, providing enough details so their fellow consultants could understand what had occurred.<sup>2</sup> Consultants wrote the cards anonymously. Then, at the training meeting, with the cards dramatically fanned out like a deck at a Las Vegas

casino, one card was drawn and read aloud. Filling out the cards accomplished step one: describing the situation. For example, a card *described*, “The client insisted every grammatical issue was a stylistic choice, e.g. ‘I know that sentence is a run-on, but that’s kinda what I was going for.’” The consultant who wrote the card volunteered that when the client ignored her advice about avoiding run-on sentences, the consultant felt “positively insulted” (*feelings*).

Then, I guided the group to *evaluate* the situation, telling what was good about it (the client possessed a sense of her own style) and what was bad (the client was not open to seeing her work through others’ eyes). Next, for *analysis*, the group tried to explain why the client was so determined to keep her sentence structure (the client may have been defensive because former teachers had criticized her, or she had previously received poor advice so she was reluctant to take it now). As part of *analysis*, they also linked the experience to what the consultants themselves had encountered before (a consultant who is a creative writer relates the client’s actions to what the consultant knows, stating the client is probably just “stuck in the fiction mode” so the client needs to adjust her editing for different types of writing). In fact, as the consultants analyzed the consultation, they decided the client was probably not aware of how academic writing worked, and she did not want to admit she was wrong.

To lead the discussion to the *conclusion* step, I asked, “What else could be done for the client?” Consultants said they would tell the client that run-ons may confuse readers and create too informal a tone for academic writing. For the *action plan*, consultants said, in the future, they would explain grammatical concerns by referring to the paper’s audience and to the demands of various genres. Only after we had worked our way through the six steps did I reveal the consultants had been methodically engaging in Gibbs’ Cycle and showed them the “critical lens” (Hall 117) or rationale behind the reflection so that they would understand the process. Then, we pulled another card and repeated the six steps.

### **ADVANTAGES OF GIBBS’ CYCLE**

The original aim for the Cycle was to provide a “debriefing sequence” (Gibbs 46) so learners could explore their thoughts and feelings. Thus, the Cycle is ideal for helping to sort out the situations consultants encounter. The Cycle provides another advantage. Handling it as a group taps into “communities of practice” (Lave and Wenger 199) so prevalent in centers, where consultants teach one another how to be consultants. Using Gibbs’ cycle means reflection becomes “a public [endeavor] in order to enhance learning among tutors” (Hall 112-13). A consultant agrees: “The other consultants

were helpful in providing their unique perspectives on the questions. It was very reassuring to know the other consultants struggled with the same issues.” Proceeding through the structured sequence also shows that working in a center is not just a list of how-to’s (Hall 122). Rather, as one consultant comments, it is a matter of being “adaptable as consultants, and we want to showcase that adaptability in any way we can.”

### **DISADVANTAGES OF GIBBS’ CYCLE**

Reflection itself poses dangers. “[R]eflective work is like a sharp knife. You wouldn’t try working in a kitchen without one, but you would also take care when handling it” (Mattison 47). One such danger is that reflection may make consultants believe there is an “ideal” consultation so that they upbraid themselves for supposedly falling short of perfection, and, as a result, they may lose “flexibility” (Mattison 43) when conducting sessions. However, Gibbs’ Cycle helps to discourage this misconception. There is no one right way to handle consultations, as demonstrated by the many pieces of advice the steps generate. As one consultant remarked about the Cycle, “Using reflection is a helpful tactic to become a better consultant. It was useful to be reminded that there are multiple angles with which to approach consultations.”

Carrying out the steps with a full cohort of consultants may also produce a procedural problem. Given their agile minds, consultants are likely to skip a step, such as going from *analysis* straight to *plan of action*, especially if the consultants are experienced. Conducting the session with the Cycle means directors must deliberately lead the group through the sequence, perhaps listing the steps on the board or stating, “We’ve spent some time on the feelings involved in this experience. Let’s move on to evaluating those experiences” (Gibbs 51) so that, at least for the first few cards, the group carries itself through the full sequence.

### **CONCLUSION**

While performing Gibbs’ Cycle as a group activity is advantageous, directors can also offer consultants ways to use it individually, such as writing out responses to the steps in consultants’ journals. It could also be valuable as part of a professional review process for full-time consultants. During a consultation, Gibbs’ Cycle may even help clients engage in self-reflection about their own writing. Whether used in a group or by individual consultants, Gibbs’ cycle provides a series of steps so consultants can cultivate meta-level cognizance about their work. Then, they can transfer tutorial knowledge from one session to another (Devet). As one consultant says, “Sometimes it is hard to know how to react in certain situations, so this session [with Gibbs’ Cycle] will help me better aid clients.”

## NOTES

1. I thank Mary Deane, Senior Lecturer in Education Development, Oxford Brookes University, UK, for introducing me to Gibbs' Reflective Cycle.

2. This notecard work received IRB approval.



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## NEW FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF

*Theories and Methods of Writing Center Studies*, edited by Jo Mackiewicz and Rebecca Day Babcock, Routledge, 2019.

The book includes chapters by writing center researchers discussing theories and methods used in their work, including genre theory, second-language acquisition theory, transfer theory, and disability theory, and methods of using ethnography, corpus analysis, and mixed-methods research.

*Internationalizing the Writing Center: A Guide for Developing a Multilingual Writing Center*, by Noreen Groover Lape. Parlor P, 2020.

The book provides a rationale, pedagogical plan, and administrative method for developing a multilingual writing center. The book incorporates work from writing center studies as well as second language acquisition studies, including English as a second language, English as a foreign language, second language writing, and foreign language writing.

*Writing Centers at the Center of Change*, edited by Joe Essid and Brian McTague. Routledge, 2019.

This collection includes chapters about eleven writing centers that adapted to change at their institutions during a decade of decreasing resources. Each author discusses the origins, appropriate responses, and new programs formed under changing circumstances.

# Tutors' Column: "Helping Students See Themselves as Writers: Creative Writing Exercises in the Writing Center"

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Boston College



How can writing tutors help students, in the brief time that we have, gain the confidence to see themselves as writers and engage with the texts they read and create? Charles Moran, as well as Melissa Bugdal and Ricky Holtz, propose one reason students might lack confidence or control over their writing: the highly structured processes of writing and thinking internalized throughout their academic life can damage students' ability to write creatively and to their full ability. In my experience, many students who come to the writing center feel limited by a rigid understanding of the writing process, lack a sense of control or agency, and/or just feel stuck. So, inspired by Moran and Bugdal and Holtz to find a fresh response to this problem, I have developed some exercises that use creative writing as a tool to disrupt students' preconceived ideas about the writing process and to boost writerly agency.

For many, academic writing and creative writing seem like separate spheres in my opinion, to the detriment of writing center pedagogy. Like academic writing, writing centers may tend toward formal language, the rules of paragraph organization, the need to follow certain steps, etc. Though the writing process is acknowledged to be messy, there remains the desire for an end result that looks neat and follows prescriptions. This focus on rules and guidelines is obviously necessary, and for some students, works well. But there is also room—and for the types of students just mentioned, I believe, a need—for a looser, more playful approach.

In "Teaching Writing/Teaching Literature," Charles Moran, a literature professor, demonstrates what a more playful approach might look like. He "asked students to be writers" once a week, giving the class a creative prompt mimicking the style of a writer they were about to read (23). These prompts gave the students a new arena in which to practice their skills—an arena not already partitioned off with rules internalized throughout their education—and consequently the students became better readers,

analysts, and writers. He and the students loved it. It helped the class better understand the writer's audience and context, and most importantly, it allowed them to see themselves as writers and thinkers, alongside the literary giants they studied. Moran claims the exercises enriched his students' academic writing "by altering the perceived context of the student prose.... and by liberating the student writers" from previous instruction (27, 28).

Much like Moran, Bugdal and Holtz's Writing Fellows noticed that many first-year writing students lacked "agency and full control" over their thinking. Because the students were not engaging confidently with texts, the Fellows found that students could write neither effectively nor interestingly. The Fellows tackled this problem by presenting complex philosophical thought experiments<sup>1</sup> for discussion, seemingly unrelated to the course—allowing them to think outside the context of grades and correct answers. Then, during discussion, the Fellows "pivoted": they asked students to apply the thought experiments to the positions held in their own work. Because of these thought experiments, Bugdal and Holtz explain, "students had a theoretical point of reference over which they had control," and therefore, "a willingness to take risks in their writing." Their pedagogy, like Moran's, attempts to free students from the constraints of formal thinking and writing and to give them confidence to enter the conversation.

Exploring these successes led me to wonder: How might we, in the writing center, offer writers the types of opportunities presented by Moran and Bugdal and Holtz? It seems a daunting question, as tutors will never have the same kind of time or extended contact that professors or Fellows do, but I believe a reworking of similar principles for use in a tutoring session is not only possible but would prove a lively addition to pedagogy.

I propose—based on my own experiments with this strategy—that tutors start small, providing concise, creative exercises relevant to the writer's assignment and answerable within the span of a single tutoring session. For writers who feel that they do not qualify as real writers because of the strict guidelines of academic writing, these creative exercises allow a different, less overwhelming space to write and develop a sense of agency.

What do these exercises look like? Mine vary based on assignment, stage of the writing process, and style and form, but they often look something like this:

**Student:** I'm having trouble starting this paper.

**Exercise:** Write a brief, one paragraph journal entry about the topic or a short letter to a friend.

**Student:** I'm struggling to cohere my ideas.

**Exercise:** Write your thesis as a tweet (140 characters).

**Student:** I need ideas for a literature paper.

**Exercise:** Write a paragraph from the character's perspective, or a short conversation between characters (realistic or silly).

**Student:** I need to begin a research paper.

**Exercise:** Write a brief email to an old teacher or a blog post, explaining your current views on and questions about the topic.

These exercises are suggestions, not prescriptions, because the approach will surely vary based on the student and the challenges of the particular assignment. However, when designing the exercises, I keep a few things in mind. They have to be accomplishable within a tutoring session—which is why mine never ask for more than a paragraph. The form should be something the students recognize and feel comfortable with; the less rigid, the better. The writer's audience shifts to someone unthreatening, like a friend or a family member. And finally, it should require a little creativity.

I try to gauge at the beginning of the conference whether the student would benefit from the exercise: do they seem to be preoccupied with the rules of academic writing, possibly lacking a sense of control or agency or feeling stuck? And because this activity does take a substantial chunk of time, I also need to determine if I have enough time to engage in this activity with a writer. If the conditions are favorable, I usually find it worthwhile to spend time on this activity, even at the expense of other writing because it so often helps them start writing more freely.

Not all conferences will be appropriate for the exercise. Students are often in a hurry, have a specific question, or only want a brief edit. Some might resent being given what they see as another "assignment." Ideally the exercises are short, simple, and enjoyable enough to avoid this last response, but it does happen. Because a student may resist engaging in a creative writing exercise, I find it crucial to talk with the student first and fully explain: "What would you think of taking this out of the academic world for now? I've found it helps students to write creatively about a topic." If they show reluctance, I move on to something else. But if they like the idea, I come up with an exercise for them, make sure they like it, and step away to give them space to write. Once they have something, I return and we discuss. Hopefully the activity helped to surface some new ideas or bring some old ones together. Like Bugdal and Holtz suggest, it is necessary to reconnect these thoughts to the

original assignment. Did this type of writing feel different? In what ways? What ideas have you drawn up here that seem relevant to your assignment? Such questions can help students move between the creative process and the academic writing at hand.

Moran claims his creative prompts helped his students “throw off destructive inhibitions. It created in them a sense of themselves as writers, and allowed them to write the expository prose of which they were capable” (29). The composing done in centers can have a natural tendency to reinforce overly structured processes of academic writing by focusing (necessarily) on the rules (though the intimidating blank page of the ‘free write’ may err in the opposite direction). But the writing center should also be a space to experiment, to play. And I believe that recovering the kinship between creative and expository writing has the potential not only to liven up writing centers, but also to breathe some fresh air into academic writing as a whole.

## NOTES

1. Bugdal and Holtz describe thought experiments as “a sort of mental sandbox” that enabled writers to think about an abstract problem that lacks a clear solution but could be productively applied to students’ writing.



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## Announcements & Updates

### International Writing Centers Association

**October 14-17, 2020**

Vancouver, BC, Canada

“Local Mission, Global Vision”

For information, contact the conference chair, Lucie Moussu: [moussu@ualberta.ca](mailto:moussu@ualberta.ca); conference website: [writingcenters.org/annual-conference-2/](http://writingcenters.org/annual-conference-2/).

### National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing

**Oct. 29-31, 2020**

Pittsburgh, PA

“Writing Centers at the Confluence of Diversity and Democracy”

For more information about proposals, volunteering, and registration, see the website: [pittsburgh2020.thencptw.org/](http://pittsburgh2020.thencptw.org/) or contact: [ncptwboard@gmail.com](mailto:ncptwboard@gmail.com).



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**Interested in contributing news, announcements, or accounts of work in your writing center to the Blog (photos welcomed)?** Contact Anna Sophia Habib ([ahabib@gmu.edu](mailto:ahabib@gmu.edu)).

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**Interested in writing an article or Tutors' Column to submit to *WLN*?** Check the guidelines on the website: ([wlnjournal.org/submit.php](http://wlnjournal.org/submit.php)).

## Conference Calendar

**July 8-11, 2020: [European Writing Centers Association](#), in Graz, Austria**

Contact: Doris Pany: [schreibzentrum@uni-graz.at](mailto:schreibzentrum@uni-graz.at); conference website: [europeanwritingcenters.eu/conference.html](http://europeanwritingcenters.eu/conference.html).

**October 29-31, 2020: [National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing](#), in Pittsburgh, PA**

Contact: [ncptwboard@gmail.com](mailto:ncptwboard@gmail.com); conference website: [pittsburgh2020.thencptw.org](http://pittsburgh2020.thencptw.org).

**October 14-17, 2020: [International Writing Centers Association](#), in Vancouver, BC, Canada**

Contact: Lucie Moussu: [moussu@ualberta.ca](mailto:moussu@ualberta.ca); conference website: [writingcenters.org/2020/01/30/2020-annual-conference-in-vancouver-bc/](http://writingcenters.org/2020/01/30/2020-annual-conference-in-vancouver-bc/).



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