

University Writing Center

Consultant Roadmap

Mission

The University Writing Center empowers students, faculty, and staff to develop writing and critical thinking skills by providing personalized consultations, resources, and programs that strengthen writing across campus.

Vision

To be a leader for the JMU community and the writing centers discipline as they use writing to engage with ideas and audiences.

Values

- Personalized Learning – We consider the variety of learning styles and collaborative teaching methods in working with writers.
- Inclusivity – We strive to be a safe, comfortable place where people of all backgrounds and groups are treated with respect and kindness.
- Mindfulness – We strive to be focused and nonjudgmental in our work by cultivating awareness of mental activity, managing stress, and reducing distraction.
- Critical Thinking – We inspire and practice careful analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and expression of ideas.
- Connection – We strive to build relationships through understanding, authenticity, and compassion.

Consulting Excellence

- Balance the client's requests and priorities with attention to global concerns (i.e., purpose, audience, thesis, and organization).
- Foster the client's autonomy, voice, confidence, and ownership of the project
- Explain clearly the rationale for changes.
- Avoid making assumptions about a client's intentions, knowledge, or effort.
- Manage time effectively to meet the session's goals.
- Select appropriate strategies and exhibit flexibility according to the client's needs.
- Fade out in order to grant the client autonomy and empower him/her/them.
- Focus on future application, transferable skills, and writing terminology/concepts.
- Challenge clients to demonstrate and apply their learning.
- Capitalize on physical and/or online resources.

Elements in an Effective UWC Session

Establish rapport

- Be welcoming, friendly, and interested. Lean in.

Diagnose

- Consider the intake form, past session reports, the assignment prompt, the client's concerns, and the client's answers to broad questions.
- Collaboratively set the agenda for the session.

Apply consulting techniques

- Ask questions that help the client recognize any issues with idea development, organization, source integration, etc.
- Ask for a "tour" of the project.
- Suggest that the client reverse outline the project.
- Suggest that the client take notes and/or volunteer to take notes.
- Ask if the client is willing to read out loud, or to alternate reading paragraphs out loud, or to hear you read out loud:
 - Reading out loud generally works best with shorter pieces (or slices of a project) and is most helpful when focusing on later order concerns.
 - Try for a "point-predict" approach, in which readers “pause every time they come across something they think is a main point. They summarize this point in their own words and then predict what they expect will come next” ([Block, 2016, p. 36](#)).
- Use and then identify ways to access handbooks, style manuals, and online resources.
- Ask colleagues for help.
- Try fading out and using cognitive and motivational scaffolding.

Prompt a demonstration of learning

- Self-correction
- Substantive revision
- Articulation of changes or the need for change
- Use of metalanguage and new writing terminology

Assess and check in

- Is this helping you? How do you feel about the paper now?
- Do you want to continue or focus on something else?

Close and look ahead

- Summarize the session/ask the client to summarize the session, and ask “What now?”
- Identify clear next steps, perhaps helping the client to create a to-do list.
- Identify useful online resources (e.g., writing guides, citation sites, examples).
- Suggest that the client return to the UWC for another appointment after revising.
- Reaffirm rapport and offer encouragement.
- When appropriate, refer the client to other JMU resources (e.g., [English language support](#), the [Office of Disability Services](#), the [Counseling Center](#), the [University Career Center](#), or JMU Libraries and a discipline- or major-specific [Liaison Librarian](#)).