



# UMBC Writing Center Guide for Faculty

## Where is the Writing Center?

The Writing Center is located on the first floor of the AOK Library.

## What are the Writing Center's hours?

The Writing Center is open from 10am-9pm Monday, 10am-7pm Tuesday-Thursday, and 10-2pm Friday. The Writing Center closes on the last day of classes each semester or term.

## What does the Writing Center do?

The Writing Center offers writing assistance for students enrolled in any undergraduate course at UMBC. Students can visit the Writing Center at any stage of the writing process, from pre-writing to final polishing. While we recommend that students visit the Career Services Center first for help with job-related items like resumes, the Writing Center is also available to help students with cover letters, application essays, and self-sponsored writing projects. While tutors may alert students to types of grammatical, mechanical, or citation-related errors made in a piece, tutors will not identify and fix every mistake. Additionally, tutors will not re-write portions of a student's paper, nor will they provide content material. We consider such actions plagiarism, and we want to assure faculty that tutors are held to the highest academic integrity standards.

## Who are the Writing Center tutors?

Writing Center tutors are undergraduate students from a variety of disciplines. All tutors have been recommended by professors and have undergone a rigorous screening, interview, and training process. Tutors must maintain at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA in order to be hired by the Learning Resources Center.

## What training have tutors received?

Writing tutors are trained, first and foremost, to be responsive peer readers. Every prospective Writing Center tutor must take English 321, a four-credit class that meets for three hours a week and requires students to complete 25 hours of internship time in the Writing Center. Students are trained primarily in non-directive tutoring techniques, and the course also offers tutors information about how to work with non-traditional students, English language learners, and students with disabilities. At the successful completion of the course, students become College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) certified Level 1 tutors. Some students go on to complete additional coursework to become Level 2 tutors, and some highly motivated tutors even take on independent research projects in order to reach Level 3 status.

## When should I send a student to the Writing Center?

Any time! The Writing Center should not be viewed as a remedial skills center—rather, it's a place where even strong writers can refine and enhance their skills. We kindly ask that you *never* send students to the Writing Center as a punitive measure. Students who come only because they are required often begin a session with an attitude that is counter-productive to having an open conversation about the writing and revising process. Additionally, please do not make a visit to the Writing Center a portion of a student's paper grade. Students should not feel that the Writing Center is directly responsible in any way for the grade they receive on a paper. If you want to encourage your students to use the Writing Center, we recommend offering extra credit for a visit, or offering participation credit rather than credit towards a paper.

## Is there a limit on the number of students in one class who can come?

No, there is no limit on the number of students from one class who can come to the Writing Center. However, if you anticipate sending a large number of students (more than 10) from one class during a particular week, please notify the director ([efick1@umbc.edu](mailto:efick1@umbc.edu)) so that our staff can better accommodate your students' needs. Also, please encourage your students to make appointments and visit the Writing Center *at least* two or three days before their paper is due.

**How can students make appointments?**

The Writing Center offers both walk-in tutoring and tutoring by appointment. Students who come for a walk-in session will be seen on a first-come, first-served basis. Students are encouraged to make an appointment by registering their email address with our online scheduling system, available at <http://umbc.mywconline.com>.

**Does the Writing Center offer online tutoring?**

Yes, the Writing Center offers asynchronous online tutoring Sunday-Friday evenings from 7-9. Students attach a paper when they make their appointment, and the tutor sends the paper back to them when the scheduled appointment time is over. For example, if a student makes an online appointment from 7-8pm on Monday evening, the tutor should have the reviewed paper back to the student by 8pm.

**What should students bring to the Writing Center?**

Students should bring their paper prompt and any associated rubrics, sample papers, or supplemental materials. Students should also bring any writing they have drafted before the session. (Students in the pre-writing stage should bring note-taking materials.)

**What does a typical session look like?**

A student should expect to spend between thirty minutes to an hour at the Writing Center. A tutor will first ask the student what he or she wants to work on, so the student is expected to take an active role and set the initial focus for the session. The student is often then asked to read his or her paper aloud and mark any areas of concern. While the student is reading, the tutor may take notes. Tutors then work to address higher-order concerns like refining thesis statements, addressing organizational issues, and crafting introductions and conclusions. Lower-order concerns, like mechanics and citation conventions, are addressed later, if time allows. (We recognize that sometimes mechanics and grammatical errors may actually impede readers' comprehension of the text—in those cases, a tutor is more likely to help a student with such issues early in the session.) At the end of a session, the student generally leaves with recommendations for revision; however, it is the student's responsibility to actually implement the changes that have been suggested.

**How will I know if a student visited the Writing Center?**

Memos are emailed--at the student's request--to professors post-appointment. Memos list a student's name, the time the student spent at the Writing Center, and what (broadly) was discussed in the session. We will not provide specific information about how many pages of a draft a student brought to the Writing Center. Also, please remember that memos do not indicate whether or not a student actually made any revisions *after* the session. If you do not receive a memo and have a question about a particular student, you may email the Writing Center director at [efick1@umbc.edu](mailto:efick1@umbc.edu) for confirmation, but please allow at least two days from the time the student said he or she visited for memos to be sent.

**What resources are there for graduate students?**

All tutors at the Writing Center are undergraduates, so graduate students may receive more appropriate feedback from the Graduate Student Writing Advisor, sponsored by the Graduate Student Association. Visit <http://gsa.umbc.edu/writing-advisor> for more information about this resource. Graduate students whose first language is a language other than English may be eligible for tutoring through UMBC's English Language Institute in the University Center.

**What other resources might be helpful?**

The AOK library staff offers fantastic workshops on a variety of subjects and will sometimes create workshops or presentations upon request. We also recommend that students familiarize themselves with online resources such as the OWL at Purdue, and online source managers like Zotero and Easybib. Students who are English language learners are welcome to visit the Writing Center, but they may also benefit from the English Language Institute's services, such as its conversation partner program.

*Please remember that writing is a skill that takes years to learn and refine. One session at the Writing Center is very unlikely to result in a perfect paper or to substantively change what students have learned (or not learned) during their lengthy educational careers. However, one session can help students learn to become better readers of and reflectors on their own and others' writing. Finally, please keep in mind that the Writing Center is a peer tutoring center—our undergraduate tutors do their very best, but they still have much to learn themselves, and they cannot be expected to master every discipline's writing style and conventions. Students will get more from their time at the Writing Center when professors actively teach students how to plan, research, and revise the kind of writing done in their own disciplines.*