

# getting the most from student writing support as a graduate student

## Why graduate writers benefit from Student Writing Support

Writers don't have to be alone to be productive. Although completing a graduate seminar paper, thesis, or dissertation requires focused, sustained individual work, the writing process is emphatically not a solitary one. Because much of what they write has a life outside the narrow confines of the degree program, graduate writers need feedback from multiple readers in order to make informed decisions about how they can best communicate their ideas in writing. Student Writing Support is a safe, responsive environment in which graduate writers can develop and test their ideas with non-specialist but highly trained and interested readers.

## Our consultants

Our consultants come from departments across the University, and all of them continually engage in professional development activities as part of their work at the Center. We have consultants who specialize in working with multilingual writers (look for "Multilingual Learner Specialists" on our website) and consultants who have experience with writing in specific genres and disciplines. To learn more about all of our consultants, visit [writing.umn.edu/sws](http://writing.umn.edu/sws), and click on "consultant bios."

## What we offer

As experienced readers of dissertations and seminar papers, writing consultants can help you become more confident and energized about your writing, or smooth your return to writing after time away from academia. As nonevaluative readers and responders, our consultants will not proofread your text for you, substitute for your advisor, tell you what your advisor wants, evaluate your work, or guarantee a particular grade or outcome for your writing.

As a graduate student, you might work with a writing consultant to...

- Hear how another reader understands what you've written, and determine what might need more framing or explanation
- Figure out what you want to say, or how to put in writing what you already know you want to say
- Organize your many thoughts and ideas
- Build timelines, goals, and accountability into your long writing projects
- Make decisions about revision in light of your advisor's (or advisors') comments, and develop questions for your readers
- Interpret what an assignment is asking
- Imagine a conference audience
- Learn how to proofread your own work
- Connect with research and writing resources

## Using face-to-face consultations

You can meet with a consultant face-to-face at Nicholson or Appleby Hall; while almost all of our consultants work in both spaces, which location you choose depends on your goals. At Appleby Hall, consultants hold face-to-face sessions on a first-come, first-served basis, which can be especially useful when you have an isolated question, idea, or task. Graduate students find our Nicholson location, which operates primarily by appointment, especially useful when they wish to develop ongoing working relationships with one or more consultants.

You can see a consultant on a walk-in basis in 9 Appleby Hall, and you can check the availability of particular consultants in Appleby at [writing.umn.edu/mySWS](http://writing.umn.edu/mySWS) (click "view walk-in schedules" at the top of that page). You can make an appointment for a face-to-face writing consultation at 15 Nicholson Hall by stopping by in person, by calling 612.625.1893, or by using our secure website, [writing.umn.edu/mySWS](http://writing.umn.edu/mySWS).

## Using online consultations (SWS.online)

Our SWS.online consultations, which involve an asynchronous consultant response followed by a synchronous online chat, are especially productive for graduate students. During the initial submission of their document, they must use writing to contextualize their ideas and explain how the excerpt they are submitting fits into their larger project—both strategies that all graduate-level writers must employ with their many audiences. Later, in the chat itself, they often find that they write their way into an understanding of what they really want to say or how they want to say it. That thought process (and the outcome) are preserved in a written transcript available to them online at any time.

To learn more and to make an appointment, please visit [writing.umn.edu/sws/visit/online](http://writing.umn.edu/sws/visit/online).

### What graduate students are saying about SWS

- ★ I was really stuck before I got to the Center. On my bus ride home, I was writing furiously on scrap paper—one page then two pages then three before I got to my stop. This session really got the juices flowing again. Thanks.
- ★ I am so grateful for my writing consultant's enthusiasm, insight, motivational support, interest in my thesis project, and constant optimism. She has helped me sort out critical aspects of my planning.
- ★ What a great opportunity to work through these ideas. New insights came to me. My consultant is helping me to connect the tissue and give some coherence to this mess. She is interested and responsive, which really helps a dissertation writer who struggles to imagine his audience.
- ★ I was amazed at the suggestions I received from my consultant. She was able to look past my obtuse engineering subject matter and communicate when I was being clear or unclear. She could then describe the reasons why some things were either clear or unclear. I feel that I gained tremendously by the contrasts she drew in my writing.
- ★ My consultant made my dissertation seem exciting and even worth pouring my soul into. She helped me to build, organize, and feel good about my ideas. I left with a cool map to follow during my next week of writing.
- ★ Thank you for being willing to help graduate students. Writing a dissertation has been a lonely and confusing process. I was so grateful to be able to talk to someone about my work and get help with it.

The above statements come from anonymous student surveys.

## Other resources

- For workshops, online resources, and individual consultations on any aspect of teaching with writing, from syllabus design to grading, visit our **Teaching With Writing** program at [writing.umn.edu/tww](http://writing.umn.edu/tww).
- For information on organizing your courses for a flexible, interdisciplinary graduate minor and thereby becoming part of a community of scholars interested in issues of literacy and rhetoric, as well as becoming eligible for travel and research grants, visit our **Literacy and Rhetorical Studies Minor** program at [writing.umn.edu/lrs](http://writing.umn.edu/lrs).
- Please see our other publications, *getting the most from student writing support* and *getting the most from student writing support—appleby*, available at [writing.umn.edu/sws/visit/index.html](http://writing.umn.edu/sws/visit/index.html), for a full listing of Student Writing Support resources and policies.

Student Writing Support	Center for Writing	<a href="http://writing.umn.edu/sws">writing.umn.edu/sws</a>
15 Nicholson Hall by appointment; some walk-in available open Monday – Friday check website for current hours 612.625.1893	9 Appleby Hall walk-in only open Monday – Friday check website for current hours 612.626.1328	SWS.online by appointment only open days & evenings, Monday–Thursday; Friday daytime only <a href="http://writing.umn.edu/sws/visit/online">writing.umn.edu/sws/visit/online</a>