



CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOSTING A WRITING GROUP FOR STUDENTS IN YOUR DEPARTMENT

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Introduction: A common challenge experienced by instructors in higher education is navigating the variation of students' writing competencies while also trying to teach discipline-specific writing content. This leads to instructors feeling burdened by the need to focus on improving basic writing skills in addition to teaching students the structure and formatting techniques that are specific to psychological science (e.g., APA style). While many institutions offer support for student writing, such as tutoring or writing center services, these programs are not often able to help students address the nuances of writing for psychology. Developing a writing group is an avenue that has shown success in motivating students to write and feel more open to both giving and receiving constructive feedback on their writing.

Benefits to hosting a writing group

Hosting a departmental writing group for students creates a non-judgmental environment that allows students to

- 1) develop writing skills with low-stakes or high-stakes writing.
- 2) practice giving and receiving clear and actionable feedback.
- 3) evaluate their strengths and areas in need of improvement in their writing.
- 4) practice writing in a distributed and consistent fashion.

Smooth sailing

There are many factors to consider prior to developing a writing group in your department that will help the group succeed. These include:

- 1) Setting up expectations for student writing for different courses in the major.
- 2) Getting all faculty in the department to buy in.
- 3) Developing strategies for getting students to seek writing help in class and in the writing group.
- 4) Understanding successes and challenges in utilizing an undergraduate writing group in a psychology department.
- 5) Identifying feasibility, training and resources needed for maintaining a writing group in your department
- 6) Structuring consistent and planned writing group meetings.
- 7) Utilizing other writing resources on campus.

Questions to consider:

1. What are some challenges you face with student writing that could be ameliorated with a peer writing group?
2. Would setting up a peer writing group be feasible in your department?
3. How do we help students understand the importance of distributed writing?
 - a. How can we motivate students to consistently attend a peer writing group?
5. How could you get other faculty members in your department to buy-in on recommending a peer writing group to their students?
6. How do we guide students into being successful reviewers of their peers' work?
7. How do we measure the success of a writing group?

Suggested reading

- Aitchison, C. (2009). Writing groups for doctoral education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(8), 905-916.
- Aitchison, C., & Guerin, C. (2014). Writing groups, pedagogy, theory and practice: An introduction. In *Writing groups for doctoral education and beyond* (pp. 19-33). Routledge.
- Haas, S. (2014). Pick-n-Mix: A typology of writers' groups in use. In *Writing groups for doctoral education and beyond* (pp. 46-64). Routledge.