Required Writing Conferences

Writing conferences on early drafts benefit students in several ways: they begin assignments early; they discuss their ideas and receive feedback from experienced peer readers; and they write multiple drafts. To introduce students to the value of receiving feedback on early drafts, many Hamilton faculty require writing conferences. Studies show that students who participate in required writing conferences are three times as likely to voluntarily schedule conferences throughout their college years.

To ensure that your students’ conferences are as helpful as possible, follow these steps:

1. **Check** with the Writing Center Director (x4362) to make sure there is room in the schedule for your proposed dates.

2. To allow time for thoughtful revision, **set the conference deadline at least two days before** the assignment due date. Otherwise, students may schedule conferences as late as the night before the assignment is due. If you have more than twenty-five students, it will be helpful to consider staggering conference dates.

3. **Send** the Director a copy of the assignment to have available in the Writing Center.

**If you aren’t sure whether to suggest or require writing conferences:**

*Suggesting* writing conferences will result in a low rate of participation. *If you want all of your students to have a writing conference,* make it a requirement of the assignment.

**Put on the Syllabus and Discuss with the Class**

- **Writing a full first draft**
  A writing conference is more effective when the student has already thought and written about the assignment. Emphasize the importance of completing a full draft.

- **Active participation in the conference**
  Students who arrive at the conference knowing what they want to discuss and prepared to actively participate will get the most from the experience.

**Explain to Your Students**

- Why you require writing conferences (discuss the value of a multi-draft writing process)
- Students need to schedule appointments *four to five days in advance* to guarantee a spot
The Role of the Acknowledgement Form

At the close of the writing conference, students will complete an Acknowledgment Form and attach it to the final draft. This form is the student's description of the major points discussed in the conference.

There are two types of acknowledgment forms. One is for pre-writing conferences, when very little writing is brought to the conference; the other is for writing conferences, when students bring in completed or nearly-completed drafts. If you have required conferences on full drafts but receive a pre-writing acknowledgment form, you will know that the student brought little or no writing to the conference.

The writing tutor completes a separate report of the conference that is kept on file at the Writing Center. It describes the content of the draft, the topics discussed, the length of the conference, etc. You are welcome to call the Director for further information about any writing conference.

Please call or e-mail Jennifer Ambrose, Writing Center Director, if you would like to discuss anything related to writing in your classes: x4362, jmambros@hamilton.edu

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