WORKING WITH
GRADUATE STUDENT WRITERS

FACULTY GUIDE

Purdue
Writing Lab

2nd Edition

Developed with funding from the
Purdue University Graduate School.

Writing is the manifestation of the thought life of a discipline.

-Vicki K.

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to aid faculty across the university in supporting graduate students as writers. The Purdue University Graduate Council has established that "The advisory role of the major professor is arguably the most significant factor influencing quality of education, development of professional skills, and overall career success for Purdue graduate students" (Purdue University, 2017). Because scholarly writing is a required element for successful completion of the doctoral degree, it is one aspect of graduate education that warrants particular attention as part of that advisory role. Writing at the graduate level is a professional skill that requires much mentoring from faculty, including both those who act as a major professor and others with whom a graduate student might work in a classroom, laboratory, or office.

This guide is undergirded by the view that writing at the graduate level is not and should not be viewed as mysterious. As such, this guide does not recommend many methods faculty may have encountered during their own graduate tutelage. It will not recommend methods such as laborious editing for the writer by the faculty member, nor does this guide expect writers to learn through unguided trial and error. Rather, the guide identifies markers of an effective and supportive writing education: explicit attention to context and genre, familiarization with and reflection on a number of good (and bad) examples of the target document, and thoughtful guidance by faculty throughout the drafting and revising process. Sections of the guide expand on both the scholarship that underlies these markers and the practical options for implementing them with individual students.

Beyond the mechanics of writing, graduate students must learn how to be authoritative as scholars in and through their writing even though they are situated in the space between novice and expert (Kamler, 2008; Casanave, 2008). Writing is not just about words on the page, but rather it is a social activity that positions an emerging scholar within an intellectual community in a world of competition for ideas, resources, and jobs

(Casanave, 2008). As Li (2008) points out, this enculturation is further complicated for international graduate students who may be writing in a second or third language, and who must learn the cultural differences between the expectations for writing as a graduate student in North America versus another country. In Li's case, during her master's degree in China, she was expected to identify and write "as an apprentice of the trade," producing writing for assessment purposes only; however, during her doctoral studies in North America, she was expected to "write as an insider" at the level considered publishable quality in her field (p. 49). Support for graduate writers must address these professionalization aspects of the process in addition to such items as vocabulary, sentence structure, and content.

> ***When I started graduate school, I barely had any writing experience. . . . I was definitely not taught how to write regularly throughout college.***
>
> *-Jeffrey R.*

Although this guide may be read in its entirety, it is structured to allow readers to pick and choose sections that seem relevant to their needs for information and ideas. Each section will refer readers to other relevant sections of the guide as appropriate. Within sections, readers are offered both theoretical frameworks for understanding graduate writing support and practical materials to apply when working with their own graduate students.

The Context of Graduate Student Writing

Material in this faculty guide derives from a U.S. academic context. Writing for graduate students within this context tends to fall into four categories: academic writing, scholarly writing, professional writing, and writing for the job market. Graduate students, and the faculty who advise them, often find themselves in a double bind: Graduate students must know how to write to successfully navigate graduate school and what comes after, yet graduate students cannot be expected to know how to write particular genres that they have never written (*see The Development of Graduate Students as Scholarly Writers [page 13]*).

To compound the issue, many of these genres are emerging or rapidly changing, and there is not always consensus about what a particular genre looks like. One example is the professional bio(graphy) statement. In the last several years, there has been debate about whether it should be written in the first- or third-person. Other examples, this time of emerging genres, are the statement of diversity and the statement of community engagement that academic job candidates may need to write as part of their application materials. Even thesis and dissertation genre conventions vary by discipline and academic institution. Graduate students will need to learn to master various genres, often professional and technical in nature, early in their graduate student experience. With each new stage of the graduate journey, there will be new genres to learn and master. Feak (2018) has suggested that graduate students should be provided with comprehensive instruction in genres. The figure on the next page is an adaptation of her year-by-year list that we have recategorized by types of writing (*see Figure 1: Genres of Graduate Writing [page 4]*).

Figure 1: Genres of Graduate Writing

Academic

- Course papers
- Course handouts
- Syllabi Assignment sheets
- Rubrics Literature reviews
- Course presentations
- Writing to achieve degree for master's students (e.g., master's exams)
- Writing to achieve candidacy for doctoral students (e.g., qualitative exams, preliminary exams)
- Thesis and dissertation proposals
- Thesis and dissertation writing

Professional

- Bio statements
- Grant applications (small, medium, and large)
- Emails, especially the use of lists and listservs
- Webpages
- Blogs/Vlogs
- Professional social media
- Writing for non-expert audiences
- Letters of recommendation
- Award applications (e.g., teaching awards, teaching innovation prizes, research awards)

Scholarly

- Research posters
- Journal articles
- Book chapters
- Dictionary or encyclopedia entries
- Cover letters and responses to reviewers/editors for publication
- Conference proposals
- Conference presentations
- Manuscript reviews (as a peer reviewer for a journal)
- Titles and subtitles
- Footnotes and endnotes
- Image, figure, and chart descriptions
- Abstracts
- Acknowledgments

Job Market

- Research
- Interest statements
- Cover letters
- Internship applications
- Teaching statements/ philosophies
- Teaching portfolios
- Polished CVs
- Diversity statements
- Other statements of positionality (e.g., statement of faith, statement of community engagement)

Common Concerns about Graduate Students and Writing

Because learning to write well within a specific discipline can be a long process, both graduate students and the faculty who work with them may have concerns about various aspects such as expectations, process, and appropriate support. This section provides a brief look at common faculty concerns, common student concerns, and the special, progression-to-degree-hindering concern of procrastination.

Common Faculty Concerns

Why don't my graduate students know how to write?

The short answer is that graduate students do know how to write, just not for the particular audiences, purposes, and contexts that graduate school requires. Research writing is a social-based practice that requires explicit knowledge of audience, purpose, context, convention, and genre (Fairclough, 1992; Kamler & Thompson, 2014). Most undergraduate students are only briefly introduced to discipline-specific research writing in their advanced coursework, and they are not generally expected to write at the graduate level. Graduate writing is neither undergraduate writing nor faculty writing. It is a transitional period of literacy development and enculturation that is rarely learned by merely *doing it*. As an added complication, not only do graduate students not enter graduate school knowing how to write like a scholar, they also do not know how to think like a scholar (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000). For more information on this distinction, *see The Development of Graduate Students as Scholarly Writers [page 13].*

How do I get my graduate writers to actually improve their writing instead of giving me drafts with the same mistakes over and over?

Aitchison, Caterall, Ross, and Burgin (2012) found that advisors frequently expressed frustration and irritation about helping graduate students learn how to write. Writing was viewed differently by graduate students and their supervisors: For graduate students, writing was

personal; for supervisors, writing was functional. Both graduate students and supervisors indicated that feedback was the primary strategy for improving graduate student writing. The most useful type of feedback was "constructive, well-timed, and developmental" (Aitchison, Caterall, Ross, & Burgin, 2012, p. 442). Poor or ill-timed feedback left graduate students feeling frustrated, resentful, or humiliated about their writing and identity as a researcher. For best practices for giving feedback, *see Best Practices for Commenting on Graduate Student Writing [page 28].*

> ***The most helpful feedback is constructive and explanatory. I appreciate when feedback isolates the issue and offers an example or explanation on the issue. I also appreciate when the feedback teaches rather than corrects.***
>
> -Christine M.

What should my graduate writers be able to do on their own, and what will they need help with?

Every graduate student has had different educational and career backgrounds prior to entering graduate school, and thus their writing skills and concept of writing at the graduate level may be different. Faculty may expect that graduate students can read and write at a high undergraduate level at a minimum, although this may not be the case for some students. On the other hand, some graduate students, particularly at the doctoral level, may have already published in the field. Before working with students, it might be wise to have a frank conversation about their previous experiences and views of research and writing in the discipline, especially for publication. Asking students to complete a diagnostic writing assignment or a writing inventory early in the graduate education process can also be a helpful tool for faculty to gauge competence or deficiencies. For an example of a writing inventory, *see Scholarly Writing Inventory [page 49].* For more information about communicating with students about writing, *see Establishing a Writing Relationship with Students [page 23].*

How much, how often, and what kind of support should I be offering my graduate writers?

Writing support should be one aspect of the overall mentoring process that begins with matriculation and may continue after graduation; however, writing support goes beyond merely giving comments on drafts. As Hedgcock (2008) noted, interpersonal relationships and socialization foster academic and professional literacy. In other words, a range of interactions and activities create the conditions necessary for advancing graduate student writing, from faculty talking about their own writing process to thoughtfully critiquing recently published research in the field to making explicit the conventions about writing and research in the field. Writing is intimately entangled with learning how to think and act like a professional in a particular field of research. Simpson and Matsuda (2008), both graduate mentee and mentor themselves, said that for faculty-graduate student mentorships to work, "both the mentor and mentee need to see the relationship not just as a short-term bartering of services but as a long-term investment—both for themselves and for the field" (p. 102).

How do I bring my graduate students on as co-authors in a way that helps them learn the ropes of both research and writing about that research?

In fields where co-authorship is common, producing scholarship with graduate students can be fruitful for learning about research, writing, and professionalization and for creating a positive student-advisor relationship. In a study of co-authorship between graduate students and faculty in education and science, Kamler (2008) reported that graduate students gained confidence in their abilities as a writer and researcher, especially when advisors encouraged them to publish and worked with them through drafting and revising the manuscript. Co-authorship created a space for extended professionalization, and Kamler found that a "crucial" part of the process of co-authorship was that graduate students learned "how to stay with the process and not be mortally wounded, despite rejection" (p. 289). Co-authoring can be useful when it is viewed as an opportunity to show the ropes to graduate students through the entire process, from topic selection to drafting to revising to peer review and possible rejection and resubmission.

What should I do when I notice students need extra help with grammar, usage, and mechanics?

Two separate issues are at work here: Sentence-level editing involves more than applying a single correct fix, and every writer is different. First, correcting grammar and usage requires that the person doing the correcting has a clear understanding of the intended meaning. Any particular grammar error may be resolved in multiple ways; the *correct* way depends on what the writer meant. Second, writers vary in their skills and work habits. Some writers know and can refer to particular grammar terminology; some can identify mistakes but not fix them; others cannot identify their own mistakes but can fix those that have been pointed out by someone else; some writers can proofread through an entire document at once, while others do the work in stages. Neither of these two issues related to grammar and usage errors requires faculty to be grammar experts in order to help writers with editing. While being able to name certain grammatical mistakes will help, simply having a conversation about what sounds off and what the writer intended to communicate can help a writer reframe an error-laden sentence into clarity. For more about how to approach error correction, *see Cognitive Developmental Stages for Graduate Writers [page 18]*. For more about second-language-specific writing concerns, *see A Note about Working with Multilingual Writers [page 21]*.

> ***The most useful help for me is a grammar and ideas flow check.***
>
> *-Alejandro G.*

What other resources are available to help my graduate students with writing?

There are a variety of helpful books for both supervisors and graduate students. Purdue University's Graduate School offers various workshops related to the research process and data collection. The Purdue University Writing Lab provides workshops and one-on-one tutorials for writers at all levels, including graduate students. For further information on campus resources for supporting graduate writers, *see Resources [page 43]*.

Common Graduate Student Concerns

What should all these documents I'm supposed to write look like? What should they include? How should they be organized?

Graduate students need to learn how to write many different documents, and faculty may not always be around to help with every single one. Teaching graduate students how to engage in genre analysis and reverse outlining are important tools they will use for the rest of their writing lives. For more information about activities that can help writers with this concern, *see Writing Activities [page 35].*

I don't always know how to communicate with my committee about my writing. How do I figure that out without making them mad?

Asking for help or clarification can be intimidating for a number of reasons. Students sometimes think asking for help demonstrates weakness; sometimes students are afraid of offending their advisor by admitting they do not understand the advisor's instructions. Setting ground rules about the writing relationship can help both parties eliminate communication issues. For more information about communication between faculty and graduate writers, *see Establishing a Writing Relationship with Students [page 23].*

How much time should it take for me to write something?

Everyone takes different amounts of time to research and write. One graduate writer may be able to produce three to five medium-quality pages in an hour, whereas another might only be able to produce a polished paragraph. To help combat anxiety about time required for completion of writing tasks, graduate students should be encouraged to write early and often. Boice (1997) found that "Binge writers (a) accomplished far less writing overall, (b) got fewer editorial acceptances, (c) scored higher on the Beck Depression Inventory, and (d)

> ***I would like to suggest to advisors or faculty members to inform a student that revising and editing is time consuming and requires a good amount of time allocation.***
>
> *-Alejandro G.*

listed fewer creative ideas for writing" (para. 1) in contrast to writers who had calm, regular writing habits. Often, it is difficult for writers to establish a writing routine in the early years due to coursework and expanding research and teaching responsibilities. Faculty can provide structure for graduate students' writing timelines and writing tasks to dissuade them from binge writing.

I'm afraid my professors, committee members, and fellow graduate students will read my writing and realize I'm a fraud and don't know what I am actually doing! What should I do?

Because writing can be a high-stakes endeavor for many graduate students, writers often link feelings of adequacy and self-worth to the success of writing tasks. Feelings of being a fraud or an imposter are a real phenomenon, especially among graduate students. In a study of doctoral women, Clance and Imes (1978), who first identified imposter syndrome, found that "Women who experience the impostor phenomenon maintain a strong belief that they are not intelligent; in fact, they are convinced that they have fooled anyone who thinks otherwise" (p. 241). In email correspondences with graduate students experiencing this phenomenon, Cope-Watson and Smith Betts (2010) identified that, on the whole, graduate students had a sense of not knowing how to act as graduate students or how to approach faculty. Few, if any, graduate students have everything figured out in graduate school, and most graduate students disguise insecurity and feelings of incompetence and displacement with silence and pretense (Casanave, 2008). (For more recent information about the Imposter Phenomenon, see Sakulku & Alexander, 2011; or Parkman, 2016). Faculty members can help their graduate writers overcome the imposter syndrome by setting up a writing relationship with students and by providing appropriate and supportive feedback that separates writing tasks from feelings of adequacy and self-worth. For details on how to offer supportive and appropriate feedback through commenting and for information on how to set up a writing relationship, *see Methods for Supporting Graduate Writing Development [page 23].*

> ***There are some days where Imposter Syndrome is high and I doubt my abilities as a scholar or an academic writer.***
>
> *-Christine M.*

I'm not aware of the disciplinary conventions of a thesis/dissertation in my program. What should the structure look like? What goes where? How much detail do I need in each chapter/section?

Writers have a big task when it comes to a thesis or dissertation. Most are new to the process of writing a thesis/dissertation, so they are not really sure if there is a one-size-fits-all way of writing or if it depends on the discipline. Structuring the document is a daunting task, and specific resources are not always readily available for students to find these answers. Advisors can help students on this front. Consider providing examples from past students and coaching students on the do's and don'ts from past experience. In terms of document design, the Thesis and Dissertation Office in the Purdue Graduate School provides individualized assistance and workshops on formatting. For more information about difficulties with dissertation writing, *see Special Genres: Theses and Dissertations [page 40]*. For directions on how writers can identify the conventions of dissertations in their fields, *see Genre Analysis [page 36]*.

How much time should I spend on the different phases of my scholarly writing projects? I feel like the clock is always ticking!

Because scholarly writing projects often have a long timeline from initial research to final publication, students sometimes lack clarity about how much time they should spend on any one aspect of the project and what order they should follow. Students collecting data or participating in hands-on research have a different timeline than students who are producing a theoretical piece. Encourage students to start the Institutional Review Board process early if applicable. Establish methods and outside partnerships early. Have students write during their research phases even if it is informal and unorganized; this will save time in later stages.

A Special Concern: Procrastination

> ***The most difficult part of writing to me is to get started.***
>
> *-Somnath D.*

Procrastination, or the act of delaying a task or decision, is something most people have experienced. Many graduate students experience mild or severe procrastination during their graduate education. For some, procrastination is deeply tied to writing tasks. Previous research has found that procrastination for graduate students with regard to academic tasks and writing can be traced to two root causes: fear of failure and task averseness (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Boice, 1985; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2001). Faculty mentors who engage in supportive practices and lead graduate students through targeted exercises reduce the fear of failure and task averseness when it comes to writing at the graduate level.

The Development of Graduate Students as Scholarly Writers

In order to develop as scholarly writers, graduate students must progress both as scholars and as writers. They must attain expertise in the field of study (e.g., theories, research methodology) and in the communication of that field expertise with audiences who possess varying levels of familiarity with the topic. In addition, they must develop awareness of the types of challenges they are most prone to as writers and must learn how to overcome those challenges. This section clarifies the connection between field expertise and writing expertise and provides information about how graduate writers develop in these areas.

Field Expertise and Writing Expertise

In order for graduate students to become successful, independent scholars, they must have both field expertise and field-specific writing expertise. While scholars must know how to perform research in their field and know where their research fits in the current scholarly conversation, the primary mode of communicating research is through writing. An inability to communicate research and the importance of that research to others in the field translates to an inability to participate within the field as a researcher. To that end, faculty should consider field expertise and writing expertise to be irrevocably intertwined.

> ***Unfortunately, I do not enjoy scholarly writing. Said that, I do see the value of transmitting ideas through writing, especially for projects' reproducibility and teaching/learning.***
>
> *-Alejandro G.*

Beginning in graduate school, field expertise and writing expertise are learned concurrently as students are immersed within a particular discipline. Through research, writing, and thinking, writers learn to think like a member of their field (e.g., as an engineer, a sociologist, a biologist, a philosopher). The methods of research of the discipline and the expected

forms of writing within the discipline influence how the writer thinks. Every field has particular cognitive consequences when it comes to acting, thinking, or writing like a professional or scholar in that field (Bazerman, 2009, p. 289). In reading and writing particular documents, such as journal articles, grant applications, or email listserv correspondences, graduate students learn how to categorize, analyze, and report previous knowledge created by the field, and eventually through their own research projects, they learn how their research relates to previous knowledge and other scholars' work. Bazerman (2009) argued that through these taxonomic skills "one learns to think and act as a member of one's profession or discipline—internalizing a view of the world that pervades not only what one has learned and done in the field, but how one relates to others and the world" (p. 289). Such enculturation yields important implications for both writing and research: It is through writing that these taxonomic skills develop, and these are the skills that help researchers claim timeliness, originality, and importance of their current and future work. Through mastering writing skills, researchers gain needed resources, such as money in the form of grants or time in the form of reduced teaching loads. In order to be a successful researcher, one must be a successful writer.

> ***I think great writing evokes something emotional in readers, even if the subject is academic; for me, it's a way of sharing the joy I feel in the subject with my reader.***
>
> *-Eliza G.*

Consider the following anecdote from Zhu and Cheng (2008), a faculty advisor and a graduate student mentee. During the drafting process of the dissertation literature review, Zhu and Cheng were at odds. Cheng had learned how to write a literature review as part of formal coursework assignments and followed previous conventions with the understanding that literature reviews were, primarily, an avenue to display knowledge about current research in the field. Zhu, on the other hand, was puzzled by the focus of Cheng's literature review. Zhu saw knowledge display as a secondary purpose of the review, the primary purpose being to advance the main argument of the dissertation. Zhu reflected, "I believed that a successful dissertation literature review ought to contain an argument

developed through analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of theory and research relevant to the specific dissertation study, rather than be a thorough report of the research on the dissertation topic" (p. 137). In order to resolve the incongruity between their approaches to the purpose (and structure) of the dissertation literature review, Zhu and Cheng explicitly discussed their personal theories and "thus clarified [their] thinking about knowledge display in the context of the dissertation literature review" (p. 144). This sort of explicit discussion of how writing should function within a particular document shows the complicated but very real interconnectedness of research, writing, and thinking within disciplinary expectations.

Field-Specific Rhetorical Knowledge

In order to successfully write any document, writers must understand the rhetorical situation. The rhetorical situation is composed of the audience, the purpose, and the genre. Because these will vary by discipline, graduate writers will need to learn the specific expectations their field has about the rhetorical situation. Early in their graduate education, writers should be taught that rhetorical knowledge is always situationally dependent and field specific. Identifying the rhetorical situation for any piece of writing prior to starting (and revisiting it while writing and revising) should become second nature for writers as they progress through their degree program. These questions might prove helpful when thinking about the rhetorical situation for a piece of writing:

Genre: What kind of writing is this? Does it have a specified set of rules?

Audience: Who is the audience for this piece of writing? What do they already know or not know? What needs to be explained or defended? What does not need to be explained or defended?

Purpose: What is the primary function of this piece of writing? Is it to argue, explain, teach, share, prove knowledge has been acquired, or something else?

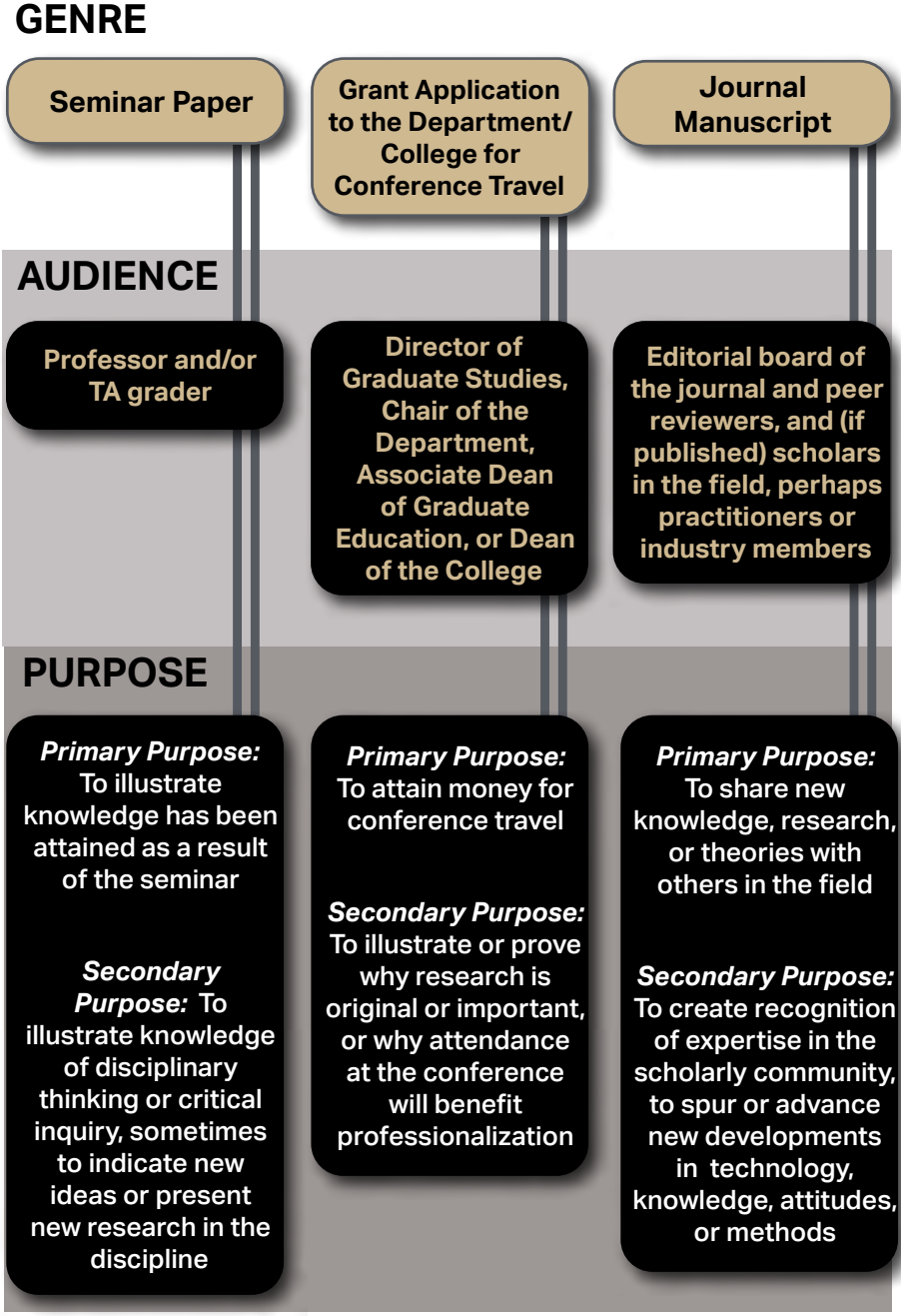
Other choices made during the writing process, like length, organization, pertinent information, vocabulary, and style, all follow from knowing those three basic rhetorical categories. Consider, for example, two top journals: *Nature* and *Journal of Finance*. *Nature* has an explicitly interdisciplinary readership; its purpose is to quickly disseminate original, ground-breaking research related to natural sciences generally; and its articles are limited to approximately 1,300 words and 50 sources. *Journal of Finance* has an academic, professional, and institutional readership; its purpose is to publish leading research related to finance; and its articles are limited to approximately 60 pages. It is clear from these contrasting examples that a journal article manuscript for a top-ranked journal may look and read very differently from field to field and even from journal to journal within the same discipline.

> ***The most difficult aspect of scholarly writing is remembering the specific audience for whom I am writing. . . . There is this whole social aspect that needs to be considered which can make a piece of writing look very different.***
>
> *-Jeffrey R.*

Because graduate writers come from different backgrounds and experiences, their rhetorical knowledge will also vary, even within the same cohort. For example, one graduate student may come from a different undergraduate major than their graduate program, while another comes from a cultural context in which writing has different rules. Even making the jump from an undergraduate to a graduate program comes with its own complications in terms of writing. Assumptions cannot be made about what individual writers know and do not know when it comes to writing as a graduate student and writing as a scholar. Regardless of their background experiences, writers need to know the basic rhetorical situation before beginning any particular writing task. Lack of explicit rhetorical knowledge before embarking on a writing task increases the risk of failure or delay in successfully completing that document.

Before asking graduate students to write, consider providing them with or making them aware of the rhetorical situation and any other available

Figure 2: Rhetorical Knowledge Applied to Various Documents



field-specific rhetorical knowledge. The figure on the previous page demonstrates how the three parts of the rhetorical situation might vary by document (*see Figure 2: Rhetorical Knowledge Applied to Various Documents [page 17]*). Importantly, faculty members often have implicit knowledge (the bits and pieces of what to do and what not to do when writing in a specific field), but graduate writers benefit from having this implicit knowledge explained in an explicit manner.

Cognitive Developmental Stages for Graduate Writers

Rhetorical knowledge alone will not result in excellent writing. When working with writers, it is important to understand that writing is developmental in nature; that is, writers cannot usually produce excellent writing simply by being told a rule once. They will likely need time and practice, as well as ongoing feedback, to improve their skills, and this improvement will take place over time. There are many models of cognitive and behavioral development for adult learners; however, there is a lack of research when it comes to understanding exactly how graduate writers learn to identify and overcome problems in their writing. Below, we propose a model of cognitive developmental writing stages for graduate writers based on years of experience as graduate writers and working with graduate writers.

The term *error* in our graduate writing model includes problems with global aspects of writing like indicating a research gap or stating hypotheses as well as sentence-level issues like comma splices or word choice. The question of error and accuracy comes into play whenever there is a generally-agreed-upon rule—either within the language or within the discipline—that is required for writing to be considered successful or effective within a particular field or context. For instance, graduate writing that lacks a statement of hypotheses when a field expects hypotheses to be stated will be less likely to be published because it is, in effect, breaking a rule and thus can be considered an error. Aspects of writing without a generally-agreed-upon rule are the realm of style or preference and thus fall outside the scope of this model.

Stage One: Unawareness

In this stage, writers cannot sense an error, and when it is pointed out to them, they have no idea why it is a problem or how to correct it.

Faculty Action: Faculty should concentrate energy on helping students learn to identify errors on their own and should explain why the error is an error.

Stage Two: Semi-awareness

In this stage, writers may sense there is an error, and they may be able to identify it when it is pointed out to them, but they have no idea how to correct it.

Faculty Action: Faculty should concentrate energy on helping students be able to consistently identify errors on their own and should provide solutions for fixing them.

Stage Three: Awareness

In this stage, writers can clearly identify an error, and they generally are able to understand it, label it, and/or correct it after the act of writing.

Faculty Action: Faculty should concentrate energy on illustrating various solutions for the error (e.g., how would someone in the field fix this error) and on encouraging writers to revise and edit for that particular error before turning in drafts for feedback.

Stage Four: Explicit Avoidance

In this stage, writers can clearly identify an error before it happens, and they explicitly or consciously avoid it or work around it during the act of writing.

Faculty Action: Faculty may not need to act in any particular way. If a student has progressed to Stage Four from previous stages, faculty may want to provide praise for the writer's development in relation to that error.

Stage Five: Implicit Avoidance

In this stage, writers have internalized the error and solution and have changed writing techniques to implicitly or tacitly avoid the error during writing.

Faculty Action: No action necessary.

Implications of this Model

- With respect to any one error, a graduate writer could be in any of these five stages. The goal of writing instruction and feedback, then, would be to progress graduate writers to *Stage Five: Implicit Avoidance* for as many errors as possible.
- If graduate writers are in *Stage One: Unawareness* or *Stage Two: Semi-Awareness*, faculty cannot expect the writers to be able to explicitly or implicitly avoid producing a particular error in their own writing.
- If graduate writers are in *Stage Two: Semi-Awareness*, faculty cannot expect the writers to know how to correct a particular error in their own writing. In this stage, it is important for faculty to point out errors and provide students with practice in finding those errors in their own writing.
- Graduate writers may have a different relationship to awareness and avoidance of errors in their own writing versus in another person's writings. For example, graduate writers may be able to find certain errors in someone else's writing and be able to identify solutions to fix them (*Stage Three: Awareness*), but they may not be able to consistently find those same errors in their own writing or know how to correct them (*Stage Two: Semi-Awareness*). Often, a precursor to development is being able to identify errors in someone else's writing before being able to see that same error in one's own writing.
- The most important action faculty members can take to help improve graduate student writing is to give feedback to graduate students on their writing early and often throughout the process. Additionally, faculty should try to give graduate students multiple experiences responding to other people's writing (at the undergraduate or graduate level) with thoughtful, detailed, and specific comments. Ideally, this procedure would be modeled by faculty members so that graduate students can understand the degree to which they need to provide feedback and the type of feedback that is helpful or not so helpful. For more information about modeling the commenting process, *see Modeling Appropriate and Useful Feedback [page 26]*.

A Note about Working with Multilingual Writers

According to the International Students & Scholars statistical report for Fall 2019, 40.7% of graduate students at Purdue are international (Office of International Students and Scholars, 2019), and many of them are multilingual. Given this large percentage, a word about multilingual writers is in order. Like their monolingual peers, multilingual writers may experience difficulty with organization, content, or appropriate handling of relevant literature. In addition, they may also need extra assistance with grammar, vocabulary, and cultural expectations about writing and writing-related interactions. For most documents, global concerns, such as organization, play a larger role in clarity than local concerns, such as a misuse of articles, and thus deserve more attention. The list below offers a few methods for mentoring multilingual graduate writers. For more detailed information about supporting multilingual writers, including the theoretical underpinnings of such work, *see the Writing Lab's Faculty Guide,* ***Working with Multilingual Student Writers***.

- **Avoid making assumptions about a writer's understanding of genre expectations or level of English ability.** Cultural and language barriers, as well as location and type of undergraduate education, play a role in a writer's familiarity with various genres, and being an international student does not automatically mean poor English grammar ability.

- **Communicate with multilingual writers about the type of sentence-level feedback they find most helpful.** Some writers prefer copious error correction; others find it more useful to focus on one or two error types at a time. Most writers prefer feedback that will help them learn how to successfully apply a particular point of grammar themselves.

- **Be aware that academic English is distinct from general English.** Multilingual writers may struggle with the basics of English, but they may also struggle with the specific ways the language is used within a particular discipline. In either case, attaining native-like fluency is an ongoing process and may take many years.

- **Think about grammar errors in two categories: treatable and untreatable.** Treatable errors are governed by rules that can be taught. For instance, subject-verb agreement follows rules that can be memorized and applied. Untreatable errors are not governed by a learnable rule or pattern. For instance, prepositions are tricky because many of them do not follow any discernible rule: We can fill *in* a form or fill *out* a form, and we can turn *in* homework, but we do not usually turn *out* homework. In comments, treatable errors should be addressed in the context of the rule, with writers being asked to apply the rule. Untreatable errors should be corrected, with writers asked to memorize the particular phrasing or usage for future application.

> ***Sometimes it is important to know the grammar rules. Sometimes it is also important to connect the ideas.***
>
> *-Somnath D.*

- **Provide clear and specific feedback.** Writers will most easily apply feedback when it is a format they recognize (e.g., avoid using abbreviations a writer may not have seen previously) and when it is very precise. For instance, labeling something *awkward* leaves open the possibility that the sentence structure is a problem, the vocabulary is not quite appropriate, or the location of the sentence within a paragraph fails to advance the argument of the paragraph. A writer will be left wondering how to resolve the issue because the nature of the problem as indicated in the comment is unclear.

- **Print feedback as much as possible.** Students who learn English as a foreign or second language may not have familiarity with cursive handwriting. The entirety of their language coursework may have used only printed text. Even for students who can read or produce cursive, reading cursive comments adds a layer of difficulty to the writing process because individual cursive styles are often more difficult to read than print.

Methods for Supporting Graduate Writing Development

Writing support for graduate students can take many different forms and may be customized to an individual or occur within a group setting. It may be ongoing or a one-time event. It may include lessons, feedback, or structured time to write. It may include writing courses within the academic discipline or one-on-one consultations with Writing Lab staff. Ideally, graduate students will have the opportunity to receive multiple kinds of writing support during their time in graduate school. This section opens with details about faculty-implemented support and then offers ideas for types of support that could occur within an academic unit or across disciplines. For information about other resources for supporting graduate writing, *see Resources [page 43].*

Establishing a Writing Relationship with Students

When a faculty member takes on a student, it is important to lay out ground rules about expectations and responsibilities for both parties. As early in the faculty-student relationship as possible, faculty members should clarify how often the faculty member expects to see document drafts from students, how quickly the draft will be reviewed, and what kinds of comments students can expect. Faculty members should also clearly indicate how they prefer to receive writing (e.g., a physical copy, a digital copy via email, or both), the expected program software that should be used for writing and commenting (e.g., Microsoft Word, Google Docs, LaTeX, or something else), and other preferences for methods of delivery. In addition, faculty members should understand that

> ***I wish I would have initiated a discussion with my advisor early on in my career to understand what they expect in students' writing. . . . Had I established clarity in my advisor's expectations from the beginning, it is possible I would have been more productive in my first semester.***
>
> *-Christine M.*

some students need both written and oral feedback on their writing, which may mean providing written comments and also scheduling an in-person meeting after the student has had enough time to read and consider faculty feedback. The follow-up meeting allows the student to ask questions and work through potential problems.

Students also have responsibilities in developing a writing relationship with faculty members. After students have been apprised of clear guidelines faculty members expect them to follow, the students might also consider additional responsibilities they have as learners and developing researchers. For example, students should give progress reports at regularly-agreed upon intervals, seek out needed support services, and read widely to help familiarize themselves with current journals, funding entities, and conferences to which they may be expected to submit proposals.

Creating a Writing Culture

While a mentor/mentee relationship is crucial when it comes to writing development, graduate writers benefit from the existence of a writing culture within their lab, cohort, or program. At its core, a writing culture means that the group values writing as a learnable, professional skill. It includes talking and thinking about writing in a positive and sustainable manner. A writing culture can be instrumental in helping graduate students see themselves as writers and see writing as part of their training and possible future profession. Graduate writers need to observe their peers, colleagues, and mentors exhibiting healthy attitudes and habits toward writing in order to cultivate those same healthy attitudes and habits for themselves. For some, writing can be associated with fear, frustration, and anxiety because of its close connection with individual identity and its potential for high-stakes risks and rewards. The existence of a writing culture within the group helps to allay those negative emotions at the same time graduate writers are learning skills to improve their work. Just as with any other professional skill, writing can be taught and valued, if not celebrated,

> ***I think my mentors have helped me most when they have shared not only their approaches to writing, but also what they were thinking while engaging in those strategies.***
>
> *-Jeffrey R.*

within the educational and professional spaces in which graduate students circulate.

A writing culture may be considered healthy when group members

- Consider writing as process-oriented, not necessarily product-oriented, especially for developing graduate writers.
- Value and promote protected space and time to write.
- Display a willingness to share writing at any stage knowing it will be charitably assessed, not torn apart.
- Understand that every writer has different capacities when it comes to production and quality.
- Consciously choose to think about writing as a necessary aspect of graduate student professionalization that may or may not be enjoyable, but should not be fearsome, daunting, or debilitating.
- Nurture a culture where seeking assistance and feedback is normal and aligns with best writing and mentoring practices.

In addition to these items, the development of a healthy writing culture requires that those in senior positions lead by example with actions that promote that culture. Faculty and senior graduate students in the program greatly affect new students' development as scholars and writers in the field by how they themselves discuss their own and each other's writing.

In order to have a successful writing culture, feedback should happen frequently, but it need not always come from faculty. Many graduate writers find the Purdue Writing Lab to be a helpful peer-to-peer resource for receiving confidential, nonjudgmental feedback on their writing at all stages of its development. Within the disciplinary program's writing culture, an iterative critiquing process can involve both peer review and faculty review on

> ***I learned to write in my discipline by example. . . . To understand how to write for my professor I read papers from the other students in my laboratory.***
>
> *-Alejandro J.*

subsequent drafts of the same document. Caffarella and Barnett (2000) set up a scholarly writing class that included both peer review and faculty review of documents. They found that "students perceived that the critiquing process [from both their peers and faculty] was one of the most influential elements of the scholarly writing process in terms of both learning about the process and improving their final product" (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000, p.50). In order for peer feedback to result in useful critique, however, graduate students may need to learn how to comment appropriately and helpfully on their peers' writing. The next section offers some specific methods faculty can use to help graduate writers learn about providing appropriate and useful feedback.

Modeling Appropriate and Useful Feedback

Comments a reader leaves on a draft can be read in two ways: as advice to be applied in revising the document and as a rhetorical situation to be examined in order to learn the genre of feedback. If writers focus on the latter, they can improve their own ability to provide useful feedback to others by noting not only what the commenter said, but also how the comment was phrased. Although writers may unconsciously learn the genre of commenting over time, specific instruction in how to provide appropriate and useful feedback—using the faculty member's own comments as example texts—can reduce the learning curve significantly.

One method for helping writers look at rhetorical aspects of comments is to code some sample comments in order to identify either the *style of feedback* or the *focus of feedback* (for detailed information about the following coding methods, see Kennell, Weirick, & Elliot, 2017). Coding the comments for *style* encourages the coder to consider the relationship between writer, text, and reviewer according to a four-item scale:

- **Corrective**—Reviewer makes corrections on the page; writer does little.
- **Directive**—Reviewer points out specific problems and offers specific suggestions for correcting but does not make the corrections personally; writer must apply the suggestions.

- **Interactive**—Reviewer talks to the writer about the text, offers commentary, asks questions, discusses areas of confusion and personal preferences for resolving them; writer does much, including deciding how to address areas of concern and then addressing them.
- **Evaluative**—Reviewer makes a judgement call and indicates that something in the text is good or bad; writer may learn from comments, may do much in order to address negative comments, or may ignore comments.

Coding the comments for *focus* of feedback encourages the coder to consider the topics or types of problems the reviewer noticed. This type of scale can be more comprehensive and will vary depending on disciplinary norms but might include any number of smaller categories within the following large categories (note that focus comments listed below may use any of the four styles mentioned above):

- **Direct Deletions or Insertions**—The reviewer adds or removes words, phrases, or punctuation, similar to the Corrective category above.
- **Discipline-Specific**—The reviewer comments on data handling, measures, use of literature and citations, content, coherence of argument, or causal language.
- **Organization**—The reviewer comments on paragraph, section, and whole document organizational patterns, transitions, and use of visual organizational cues such as headers.
- **Sentence Level**—The reviewer comments on grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and sentence clarity.

After writers have coded sample comments, a group discussion can clarify their thinking about how frequently the reviewer used the

The feedback I've received from other graduate students in my department, faculty members, and individuals in my writing group has also contributed to my development of writing within my discipline.

-Christine M.

various styles or foci, particular locations within the text where the various comments tended to be used, and stage of the writing process in which various comments might be most helpful to a writer. Following the coding of sample faculty comments, writers might be asked to code some of the comments they have given to their peers. They can then be asked to identify their own commenting tendencies and to consider how they might revise those tendencies in the future in order to provide more useful and appropriate feedback to other writers.

Best Practices for Commenting on Graduate Student Writing

Faculty have one of the most influential positions with regard to the development and success of graduate students. Students need support in a variety of areas, but they particularly need a mentor to help them through the often-difficult process of writing (Brooks-Gillies, Garcia, Kim, Manthey, & Smith, 2015). Mentorship allows faculty to offer advice to their graduate writers on a number of fronts, such as reminding students that writing is done throughout the entire research process and that multiple revisions will be necessary, encouraging students to start planning early, and helping writers gain an awareness of who they are as writers (e.g., strengths, weaknesses, amount of time it takes to write, and preferred writing times). For more information about aspects of this self-awareness, *see Scholarly Writing Inventory [page 49].*

> ***I want to be told if my writing is too convoluted or otherwise not enjoyable to read.***
>
> *-Eliza G.*

Consistently discussing writing projects and processes with writers, while it can pay large dividends in terms of productivity, needs to be done in a manner that helps writers feel comfortable talking about their writing without fearing overly harsh criticism or reprisal. One aspect of this feedback process that can be difficult to do well is to provide written comments on graduate writers' drafts of projects. Well-written comments can make the difference between a graduate writer applying advice and thus progressing with a project and a writer floundering with draft after draft that never seem to improve. Consistently-offered, carefully-formulated feedback may circumvent writers' tendencies to

procrastinate while also helping them develop healthy writing habits (see Bean, 2011, for more detailed information about how to structure feedback). Below is a list of best practices faculty are encouraged to apply when mentoring graduate students through the mechanism of written feedback.

- **With every draft, ask graduate students to provide a cover letter or email outlining what they think the draft is about, what they think went well, and what they are worried about or what they need help with.** If the graduate student writer and the faculty member have different personal theories of the context and purpose of the document, these preemptive steps will help to make those personal theories explicit to both parties (Zhu & Cheng, 2008).

- **Consider the stage of the writing, and distinguish between structural concerns and surface-level concerns.** Structural concerns are problems that will need extensive revision, such as an incoherent or incomplete argument, a misunderstanding of the genre conventions, or missing required sections or parts. Surface-level concerns are problems that will need some revision or editing, such as punctuation errors or lack of transitions in an otherwise-organized document, but they do not fundamentally change the nature of the document. Surface-level concerns are important, but they should not be prioritized over structural issues because surface-level errors will change as structural issues are addressed. In early drafting stages, surface-level concerns are of much less importance than structural concerns; in later drafting stages, structural problems should be mostly resolved, and the focus should, hopefully, be on surface-level concerns and polishing the document.

- **Offer feedback during the development of the document, not just at the very end.** As Aitchison, Catterall, Ross, and Burgin (2012) found, the most useful type of feedback for graduate writers was "constructive, well-timed, and developmental" (p. 442). In order to provide developmental feedback, faculty will need to ask for proposals, outlines, or early drafts of documents in order to head off any misconceptions about the writing task; answer questions that could affect the long-term success or viability of the writing or research; and help boost the confidence of the graduate writer through constructive (including positive) feedback. Graduate

faculty may also ask to see intermediate drafts of documents to ensure the writer stays on the right track or, for those who have issues with procrastination, that work is being completed on the document. Feedback at this stage should be concerned with structural issues, such as organization, argument, development, genre expectations, and some surface-level concerns if they impede the reader's understanding of the content.

- **Identify the specific issue and provide a question or suggestion for improvement.** For example, if the document's argument is unclear, it is not necessarily helpful to comment "This is unclear." The graduate writer will be left wondering: What about it is unclear? How should it be changed to make it clearer? Is the problem the sentence structure, word choice, or idea? Like everyone else, graduate writers are not mind readers, and feedback should be as specific and solution oriented as possible. Instead of "This is unclear," a helpful comment might read something like this: "I'm not sure exactly what the argument is here. Although the document starts off by arguing X, on p. 10, it begins to argue Y. Do you see X and Y connecting somehow? If so, that relationship should be made more explicit earlier on in the document. If X and Y are not related, then you may need to do some extensive revision to make sure that X or Y is the main argument throughout."

> ***One issue I've had is faculty not setting clear enough expectations about what they want from assignments.***
>
> *-Eliza G.*

- **Make sure to note where the research or writing is succeeding in addition to where it is failing.** Because graduate students often face insecurity and feelings of incompetence and displacement (Casanave, 2008), positive feedback (when appropriate) can help to build confidence and assure graduate writers of competence in particular writing tasks. It is also important to point out growth or improvement over the course of a number of drafts or writing tasks so that writers can understand that they are improving and headed in the right direction in the long term.

- **If the comment identifies an absolute (something has to be a certain way), make sure the graduate student understands this and also understands why.** Mentoring graduate students involves academic enculturation, or teaching graduate students the internalized worldview that governs the discipline (Bazerman, 2009). These internalized worldviews differ from discipline to discipline, and even from sub-discipline to sub-discipline, and graduate students count on faculty members to help make these rules of the road explicit and understandable. Many writing problems, especially of first- and second-year graduate students, tend to be associated with lack of enculturation into a discipline. Without that enculturation, graduate student writing might be playing by the rules of a different discipline, a made-up set of rules, or no rules at all.

- **For issues that are centered on style or citations, direct students to the most current resource available for the field and make sure they understand how to use it.** As undergraduates, many students learn citation styles in writing courses, but they may not be the citation styles used in their current graduate disciplines. Style guides often provide useful information beyond how to cite sources, such as information about verb tense, subheadings, format of tables and charts, and preferences about vocabulary usage. If graduate students know how to access the mandated or preferred style guide for their discipline, they will likely make fewer surface-level errors faculty will need to point out in documents, saving both parties time and effort.

- **Prioritize types and amounts of feedback.** It is not practical or useful for faculty members to comment on every grammatical error or global issue in a single draft. This takes too much time for faculty members, and it will leave the graduate student feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. Instead, it can be helpful to identify a pattern of errors or issues and allow the graduate student to continue working on resolving similar problems in subsequent drafts. Additionally, faculty should take into consideration the developmental stage of writers and their ability to make revisions in the time required. For more

information about developmental stages of writers, *see Cognitive Developmental Stages for Graduate Writers [page 18]*.

- **Consider using both summative comments and in-text comments.** A summative comment is placed at the very beginning or the very end of a document, and it summarizes the overall feedback from the reader. A summative comment can often take the form of a letter to the writer. It can help writers prioritize revisions and understand the feedback holistically. In-text comments are placed throughout the document to pinpoint specific issues in the exact sections, paragraphs, or sentences where they happen. Line editing (by hand or through the use of track changes) can be helpful for surface-level fixes, but it does not allow flexibility to engage with more extensive or abstract issues, like organization, argument coherence, or missing or incomplete content.

> ***I think a mixture of formative and summative feedback is most useful to me towards being successful. I thrive in mentor-mentee or apprenticeship-expert relationships in which my mentor works regularly with me throughout the writing process and provides insight into what I am doing well, what I can do better, what they would do in the same situation.***
>
> *-Jeffrey R.*

- **Use comments to not only give feedback to the particular writer but also to model the types of comments that graduate students should use to provide feedback to their peers.** Learning how to give appropriate and useful feedback is part of the enculturation and professionalization of graduate students in graduate education. To this end, faculty comments serve as a model for how graduate students should communicate about writing with their own undergraduate students, peers, and other scholars in the discipline. For helpful insights about how to explicitly teach and model good commenting practices, *see Modeling Appropriate and Useful Feedback [page 26]*.

Expanded Writing Support

Although faculty members offer the primary support for graduate writers, there are a number of other options available for writers. These options can include writers from a mix of disciplines, which may provide graduate students with a broader range of experience with writing and a wider variety of feedback on their own writing.

Writing Groups

Writing groups can provide necessary support systems for writers. Such groups can be formed out of cohorts within a program, or they can include writers from a mix of disciplines. The former offers participants a chance to interact with readers who are familiar with disciplinary conventions, can speak to the relevant literature, and who are themselves becoming scholars in that field. A mixed-discipline group allows writers to interact with and receive feedback from outsiders to their field. This broadens their understanding of scholarship and research, generally, and allows them to struggle with the need to explain their research clearly for an unfamiliar audience. Writing groups will be most successful when attendance is impelled by writers' felt needs and when writers are committed to attending. They will be less successful when they are mandated by faculty members. For information on helping students set up writing groups, contact the Writing Lab.

> ***What I enjoy most about scholarly writing is being able to communicate what I did, why I did it, and what happened.***
>
> *-Jeffrey R.*

Writing Workshops

Writing workshops offer mini-lessons with a hands-on component. Writers learn something about writing and then apply it immediately to a document of their own. Potential topics include the full range of writing-related concerns, from the logic of the argument to the clarity of the sentences. The Writing Lab regularly offers workshops to the whole campus, but faculty can also request Writing Lab assistance in developing workshops they can present to their own graduate students.

Writers' Rooms

Writers' Rooms are a version of *sit-down-and-write* events. A dedicated space and time (often a two-hour block) is made available to graduate writers to spend on specific writing projects. Often, writing consultants will be present to discuss writing concerns that might arise during the writing time. The idea of Writers' Rooms is to help graduate writers prioritize writing time in busy schedules in order to make significant progress on their writing in the company of other writers. This sort of event could be arranged by faculty members for their own students or could be arranged by other units on campus for any students.

Intensive Writing Experiences

Intensive Writing Experiences are sometimes called *camps* or *retreats*. They range from a single day to multiple weeks in length and usually include some sessions that are lessons, some dedicated writing time, and some group interaction time (e.g., discussing goals or writing habits or providing feedback). Events of this sort tend to work best with a group of writers working on similar documents, regardless of discipline. A common example would be an event for dissertation writers. Attendees of events like this cite the value of time in which to make progress on the document (and, in particular, advisor-sanctioned time), of the relational support provided by working with other writers going through the same process, and of the skills learned in the mini-lessons.

Writing Activities

Many skills writers need for improving their writing can be taught using writing activities. Such activities may take little practice (e.g., learning that reading aloud aids proofreading efforts), or they may require a more in-depth discussion about how to apply the method to one's own writing. Writing activities can be taught to writers early in a program, with the expectation that writers will continue to use them to revise their writing throughout their time in graduate school and beyond. This section offers information and instructions for three useful activities that can help graduate writers progress in their writing projects.

Goal Setting

One of the most important ways to reduce fear of failure and task averseness (and therefore circumvent procrastination) is to help graduate students create discrete and measurable goals during their writing process. By virtue of the fact that graduate school tends to attract and encourage certain kinds of personalities and behaviors, many graduate students are high-achieving perfectionists who continually set lofty goals (often goals that are too high to be achievable) for themselves without any real sense of the actual amount of time required to reach a particular goal. Furthermore, graduate students who have yet to become familiar with academic expectations and institutionally-accepted behaviors may feel that they are awash in a sea of nebulous and confusing expectations because they do not yet understand the rules of the road. Teaching writers how to set appropriate goals helps to circumvent both unrealistic expectations that may result in writing paralysis and confusion that may result in misdirected attempts to produce appropriate documents.

> ***I learned to write in my discipline through multiple iterative processes of setting goals, reading writing, gathering feedback, and reflecting on what I accomplished.***
>
> *-Jeffrey R.*

Goals should be specific and measurable. For example, a goal such as "I will write my literature review chapter" is too broad to be of much use. A literature review chapter may require several steps, such as reading numerous articles, writing annotations for understanding, creating a map of relationships, and then spending significant time writing summaries and paraphrases of the findings before the act of actually drafting the literature review itself. If this is the first time graduate students have written an entire literature review chapter, they might not be familiar with what a complete or finished literature review looks like. Asking graduate students to break down big goals into discrete tasks makes goals more measurable and helps students understand the process and real time it takes to produce writing. Although it might only take someone a few days to write a twenty- or thirty-page literature review chapter, significantly more time has been invested in the prewriting phase, such as reading papers and learning how the ideas between scholars connect or diverge. Teaching writers to set clear and measurable goals allows them to see the entire scope of the project. For materials that can be used to foster goal setting behaviors, *see Appendix of Materials [page 48].*

Genre Analysis

Genre analysis is a technique for discovering the rules or conventions of a document type. It can be used for any piece of writing that has an implicitly or explicitly agreed-upon structure, and it is an excellent method for writers to use when confronted with a new genre. Swales and Feak (2012) identify this approach as "rhetorical consciousness raising" (p. ix). It consists of four steps that can be repeated for a number of genres (introductions, methods, professional bios, grant applications, etc.):

I've learned to write within my discipline by studying the structure of published articles and understanding how other scholars talk about their research.

-Christine M.

1. **Analysis**: Compile a selection of recent good examples of the genre, analyze the examples for the features all have in common, and note exceptions.
2. **Awareness**: Based on that analysis, articulate what constitutes the genre in question, in general, depending on the situation and field.
3. **Acquisition**: Attempt to replicate the genre based on the newly-acquired genre knowledge.
4. **Achievement**: Have the replication accepted as a successful deployment of the genre (i.e., produce a well-written research article that is accepted by a major journal).

(Adapted from Swales & Feak, 2012, p. ix)

A solid example of genre analysis that is often very helpful to graduate writers is the Creating a Research Space (CARS) model for introductions developed by Swales (1990). The CARS model for introductions is based on Swales's study of short article introductions across a range of disciplines, and it was revised based on input and critiques from other scholars in the field. He identified the following moves as common among most short article introductions (Swales, 1990, p. 141):

Move 1: Establishing a Territory
Step 1: Claiming centrality, and/or
Step 2: Making topic generalization(s), and/or
Step 3: Reviewing items of previous research

Move 2: Establishing a Niche
Step 1A: Counter-claiming, or
Step 1B: Indicating a gap, or
Step 1C: Question-raising, or
Step 1D: Continuing a Tradition

Move 3: Occupying the Niche
Step 1A: Outlining purposes, or
Step 1B: Announcing present research
Step 2: Announcing principal findings
Step 3: Indicating research article structure

Reverse Outlining

Reverse outlining is a technique for making the current organization of a document more explicit in order to locate problems with the logic of the document. Students have reported that it is a less overwhelming process than other revision techniques, such as addressing review comments about organization (King, 2012). Reverse outlining can be used on any document to make the structure and organization more clear. Once writers have reduced the document to its organizational skeleton, incongruities and incoherent organization are generally made apparent. This technique can be used on an as-needed basis for a paragraph, a section, or an entire document.

King (2012, p. 257) has identified four concrete steps in reverse outlining at the paragraph level, based on the assumption that organization is a problem and revisions will be needed:

1. Identify and list the topic of each sentence.
2. Arrange the topics in an outline format.
3. Based on the new outline, assess the structure and whether it serves the purpose and audience for the document.
4. Recreate the document by rearranging the content into the new structure, modifying content where necessary, and adding headings, overview statements, or other signals to aid reader comprehension.

Step 4 can be further aided by explicit instruction in how to write topic and transition sentences, transition words, and general paragraph organizational schema (e.g., problem/solution paragraphs, generalization/example paragraphs, chronological paragraphs, etc.).

The Purdue Online Writing Lab (2018) explains another reverse outlining method for larger document-level organizational issues:

- Identify the main topic of each paragraph in a section. If one main topic is not identifiable, the paragraph may be lacking information, may have too much information, or may not have a clear focus.
- Identify how the paragraph is advancing the overall argument of

the section or document. Each new paragraph should be adding to the argument, not simply repeating what has already been written.

These notes will help writers determine if revisions are necessary, and, if so, the location and the extent of needed revisions. The process will also ensure that a writer is neither repeating nor missing information, thereby encouraging concision and coherency.

Special Genres: Theses and Dissertations

While a thesis or dissertation is the capstone of a graduate degree, it is also a special genre that individuals (usually) only write once in a lifetime. As such, it carries a double burden: As a capstone document, it indicates the student's abilities in writing and research as a scholar in the disciplinary field and demonstrates the writer's readiness to become a full-fledged member of the field; as yet another academic exercise, it shows what has been learned during the years in graduate school. While the skills that lead to the dissertation will be utilized and sharpened in following years, the peculiarities of graduate school capstone documents may never be replicated in future writing projects. In other words, unlike much other scholarly writing, a thesis or dissertation is a document whose purpose is both the process and the end product. By definition, as students, graduate writers need support in learning the necessary skills for crafting a thesis or dissertation, a new genre for them, just as they needed support early in their program to learn the rhetorical situation within their field of study.

A writer's varied levels of success with previous writing and research tasks may not be predictive of thesis or dissertation success. A number of differences contribute to the potential difficulty a writer might have. First, the thesis or dissertation is often a much longer research and writing project than a graduate student has encountered before. Writers may lack clarity about how to structure a project of this length and complexity or about how to apportion their time. Second, unlike most course-related writing, a thesis or dissertation is not usually a discrete series of tasks with constant oversight. Writers who were good students all their lives may, as a result, be accustomed to the checklist nature to which classroom assignments lend themselves. With no explicit checklist provided for a dissertation project, they may fail to progress through the implicit, and therefore invisible, checklist required to successfully complete the project. Third, most thesis and dissertation writers do not receive frequent feedback (and, as a result, continual gratification) as one would in a classroom or when writing a document with a team. Unlike

previous classroom work, writers at the dissertation stage are expected to be independent researchers and writers. Again, unless that expectation is made clear to them, and unless information about how to work without such intervention is provided, progress on the dissertation may stall. The ability to successfully navigate classroom writing tasks may not transfer readily to the more open-ended, self-regulated arena of the dissertation. In addition to writing skills, writers may need to learn self-regulatory skills, such as goal setting, in order to complete their degree requirements. For more information about goal setting, *see Goal Setting [page 35]*.

Most of the material contained in this guide is applicable to dissertation writing as well as to any other scholarly writing, but it may need to be reapplied even for writers who seem to have progressed as scholars and writers. For instance, the writing relationship a faculty member set up with a graduate student may need to be revisited for this stage of the process. How will communication about drafts and progress change due to the change in genre to the dissertation? Will the level of feedback remain the same, or will the advisor have different expectations given the capstone nature of the project? For information about establishing a writing relationships, *see Establishing a Writing Relationship with Students [page 23]*. As another example of revisiting the material in this guide, genre analysis can be applied to large projects like a dissertation as well as to sections of papers like an introduction. Writers who procrastinate starting the dissertation because they lack a sense of what a dissertation looks like can be directed to conduct a genre analysis on successfully-defended dissertations from previous semesters. For information about conducting a genre analysis, *see Genre Analysis [page 36]*. The dissertation stage is also an excellent time for writers to form writing groups as a means of support or to seek out other feedback options in addition to advisor feedback. Reapplying the suggestions offered in this guide can allow graduate writers to successfully complete the capstone writing project.

Although graduate writers may see a thesis or dissertation as a final writing project, faculty know that writing does not stop after the defense. For master's students, a thesis ideally should prepare them to do the initial scholarly work required of a doctoral student. For doctoral students, a dissertation should prepare them to be full-

fledged (publishing) junior scholars in their disciplines. As a means of helping writers to understand the genre and successfully produce it, faculty should consider putting the document into perspective at the beginning of the dissertation process. For writers who plan to enter academia as faculty members, the thesis or dissertation can be the foundation for future research; however, it may also help a graduate student decide what not to study in the future. For writers who plan to work in industry, the thesis or dissertation may be the final academic writing project they will have to complete. For these writers, future writing projects will likely be technical reports or presentations to industry and company stakeholders who have a more general base of knowledge than a committee of faculty members. Understanding the relationship between this particular writing task and future writing tasks makes it possible for the writer to marshal previously-acquired skills in support of the current project while also consciously categorizing new, dissertation-related skills in order to make them useful in future writing. For information about how the Writing Lab can help dissertation writers, *see Figure 3: Potential Writing Lab Support through the Entire Dissertation Process [page 46]*.

Resources

This section contains resources for both graduate students and the faculty who work with them on their writing. The Purdue Writing Lab supports writers with any writing project at any stage of the writing process, but there are a number of other resources on campus as well.

The Writing Lab for Graduate Students

The Writing Lab can serve as a writing resource for graduate writers and for the faculty who work with them. During the 2019-2020 academic year, graduate writers comprised 43% of the Writing Lab's 5,700 consultations. Consultations for theses or dissertations made up 7% of visits. Student appointment information (collected between August 2019 and May 2020 and presented here exactly as written) demonstrates the range of writing support that graduate students are requesting:

Early-Stage Requests

- "I am starting to write my intro and I realized I need help figuring out the best way of organizing how I present my information."
- "Working on dissertation is generally stressful. I experience some (emotional?) difficulties and stuck in here and there, which made me feel more stressful . So I need some hands-on help in writing a small paragraph. Hope this tutoring can serve as a primer of the day to motivate my day-long writing work."

Mid-Stage Requests

- " At this point it will be useful to know if whatever I am telling makes sense. I would like to know if the argument flows the way I am writing. Also, if there are any [second language] issues. This is a very rough draft. So, any suggestions will be helpful."
- "Ensuring I'm covering the bases for uninformed audiences and introducing the problems in a compelling way. There are some big gaps in here - but if you, as a reader, picked this up, do you

get lost? Where do you have questions? Where should I be more clear? Probably in a lot of places but I can no longer figure this out because I'm too far inside it!"

Late-Stage Requests

- "Revisions around active vs. passive voice. Want my writing to be more clear, succinct, and POWERFUL."
- "I want to make sure I am consistently writing in the same tense and using appropriate grammar. I also want to make sure I am keeping my writing concise and using appropriate transitions throughout my document. The content for my dissertation has been approved, it is more about the overall structure and organization."

Post-session notes written by consultants after working with writers show that graduate students receive a wide range of types of support during a visit to the Writing Lab:

- We discussed strategies for beginning the [client's] dissertation writing process. We also talked about the importance of scheduling self-deadlines and carving out writing time. Towards the end of the session we went over how to construct an outline which might help with visualizing the writing process and help with time management."
- We read through the first two pages of the introduction, watching for any recurring argument-level and sentence-level issues. Overall, we noticed some inconsistencies in terminology, topic sentences that could be stronger, and a need for clearer transitions."
- [The writer] had questions about how to cite images in APA. . . [and] we talked about how to revise for grammar."

The Writing Lab allows writers to make standing appointments with consultants. For long-term documents such as dissertations, standing appointments can be particularly useful as a means for writers to receive different types of support at different stages of the process. *Figure 3* shows how standing appointments might be used during the entire dissertation process, from initial choice of research questions to final revision based on

committee feedback (*see Figure 3: Potential Writing Lab Support through the Entire Dissertation Process [page 46]*). Note that different disciplines may have different steps in the dissertation process, so this figure may need to be adapted to fit a particular discipline.

The Writing Lab for Faculty

In addition to supporting graduate writers, the Writing Lab also offers support for faculty members.

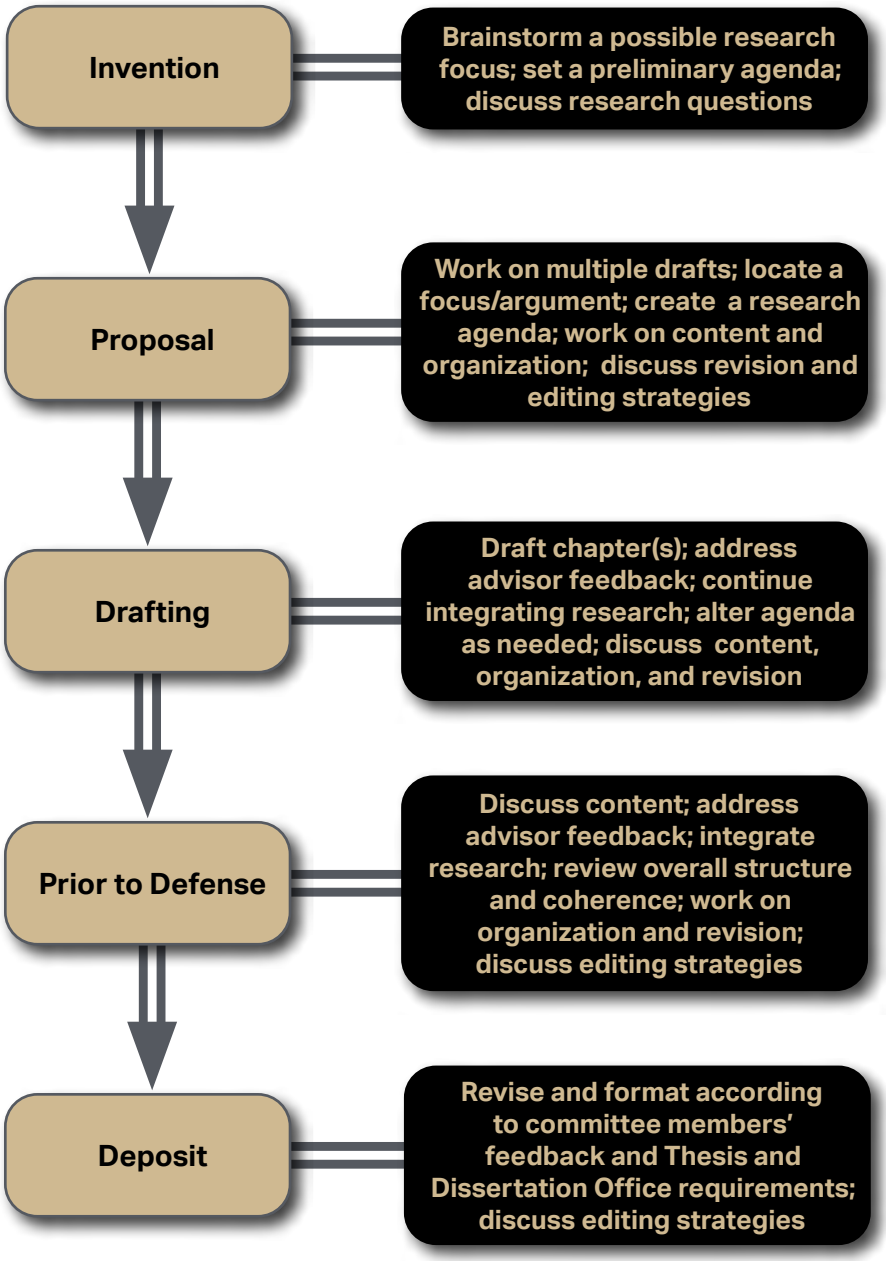
- Faculty can bring their own writing for a consultation, which provides them with feedback on the document and also with a model for interactive, conversational conferences about a writer's work.
- Faculty can request a meeting with the Writing Lab Director and Associate Directors to discuss ways faculty can support their own students' writing development, to acquire methods for integrating writing into graduate courses and programs, or to discuss in more detail the suggestions offered in this guide.
- Faculty who are interested in helping graduate students set up writing groups or who wish to create a culture of writing among their graduate students can find resources for doing so at the Writing Lab.
- Faculty who are unsure how to respond to graduate students' writing can meet with Writing Lab staff to discuss response methods and their relative merits, the use of feedback or grading rubrics, and the relative timing of different types of feedback.

Books about Graduate Writing

For Faculty:

- S*upporting Graduate Student Writers*—Simpson, Caplan, Cox, & Philips
- *Thesis and Dissertation Writing in a Second Language: A Handbook for Supervisors*—Paltridge & Starfield

Figure 3: Potential Writing Lab Support through the Entire Dissertation Process



On Mentoring

- *The Mentoring Continuum: From Graduate School through Tenure*—Wright (Ed.)
- *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*—Johnson
- *Three Magic Letters: Getting to Ph.D.*—Nettles & Millett

On Disciplinary Writing

- *Academic Research and Writing*—Bergmann
- *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*—Swales & Feak
- *Science Research Writing for Non-Native Speakers of English*—Glasman-Deal
- *Write It Up: Practical Strategies for Writing and Publishing Journal Articles*—Silvia

On Theses and Dissertations

- *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes*—Bolker
- *How to Write a Thesis*—Eco
- *Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation: Entering the Conversation*—Clark

Other On-Campus Resources

Purdue Graduate School Thesis and Dissertation Office

For information and workshops about formatting, templates, and deadlines, visit Young Hall or call 765-494-3231.
https://www.purdue.edu/gradschool/research/thesis/

Purdue Language and Culture Exchange (PLaCE)

The PLaCE program provides various forms of language support for international students. **https://www.purdue.edu/place/**

Purdue Statistical Consulting Service

For statistical help with all phases of research projects, contact statistical consultants at stat-help@purdue.edu.
http://www.stat.purdue.edu/scs/

Appendix of Materials

Goal Setting

1. **Think about not only what you need to write, but also how to break that into smaller bites of writing (tasks between 5 and 55 minutes). Goals should be specific and measurable. Examples of specific and measurable goals:**
    - I will write 600 comprehensible words of my introduction, specifically about the gap my research fills in the scholarship. (estimated time: 55 minutes)
    - I will re-read my introduction and make sure I have topic and transition sentences. I will write or revise any topic and transition sentences that are missing or misleading. (estimated time: 45 minutes)
    - I will go through 5 pages of my discussion section and make sure I have correct in-text citations for my quotes, paraphrases, and summaries. (estimated time: 30 minutes)
    - I will draft five different titles for my dissertation and then put them away and decide later if I like them or not. (estimated time: 10 minutes)
2. **Clear your mind of thoughts that will hinder your writing.**
    - What would make my sessions today great?
    - Today, I am excited about . . .
    - Today, I am anxious about . . .
    - Worries for another day
    - Ideas and thought
3. **Set goals for the specific work time you have available.**
    - For every 2-hour time block, set between 2 and 5 tasks.
    - Each task should presumably take between 5 and 55 minutes.
    - Each task should be specific and measurable.
4. **At the end of your work time, revisit your goals to determine your progress.**
    - Percentage of goals achieved
    - Wins
    - Next Steps

Scholarly Writing Inventory

Directions: The purpose of this writing inventory is to assist you in identifying your strengths and weaknesses as a scholarly writer. Please read each question carefully and select the response that most closely aligns with your experiences or feelings. Please reserve *I'm not sure* for cases in which you really have no sense of the question or your response. The more you select *I'm not sure*, the less you'll be able to gain awareness about your strengths and weaknesses as a scholarly writer.

Emotional/Psychological

1. **Overall, when I have to work on a piece of scholarly writing, like an article, thesis, or dissertation, I feel (check all that apply).**

☐ Happy	☐ Sad	☐ Angry
☐ Anxious	☐ Scared	☐ Determined
☐ Relaxed	☐ Indifferent	☐ Worried
☐ Other:		

2. **I procrastinate on my writing because I don't know how to start or I am afraid of doing a bad job.**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. **When I am writing, I feel good when I am doing it, but I feel bad when I review what I have written.**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. **When I am writing, I feel bad when I am doing it, but good when I review what I have written.**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

This inventory was adapted from a Scholarly Writing Inventory developed by Michelle M. Campbell for a Purdue Writing Lab event, December 2016.

Writing Routines

5. **I write on my scholarly writing projects on a regular basis, such as every day or multiple times per week.**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. **I only write when I have to, like when an article or section of my thesis or dissertation is due.**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. **I write my scholarly writing projects at the last minute.**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Research

8. **I feel that my writing abilities accurately reflect my abilities as a researcher.**

Yes	Somewhat	No	I'm not sure
☐	☐	☐	☐

9. **I feel that my field values scholarly writing.**

Yes	Somewhat	No	I'm not sure
☐	☐	☐	☐

10. **I feel that I know enough of my field's specialized content (which may include theories, methods, specialties, recent research, leading researchers, etc.) to be able to participate in the field's scholarly debates and conversations, or to contribute to its knowledge base.**

Yes	Somewhat	No	I'm not sure
☐	☐	☐	☐

11. I feel that I have difficulty putting my research into words that scholars in my field will *understand*.

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐

12. I feel that I have difficulty putting my research into words that scholars in my field will *respect*.

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐

Organization

13. I feel like I have a good understanding of how an article, thesis, or dissertation is organized in my field.

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐

14. I feel like I have a good understanding of how to write a scholarly *introduction* in my field.

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐

15. I feel like I have a good understanding of how to write a scholarly *methodology and/or methods* section in my field.

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐

16. I feel like I have a good understanding of how to write a scholarly *results section* in my field.

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐

17. I feel like I have a good understanding of how to write a scholarly *discussion section* in my field.

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐

18. I feel like I have a good understanding of how to write a scholarly *conclusion* in my field.

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐

Mechanics

19. I feel like I have a good understanding of how to use verbs in scholarly writing.

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐

20. I feel like I have a good understanding of how to use punctuation in scholarly writing.

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐

21. I feel like I have a good understanding of how to use articles (a/the) and prepositions in scholarly writing.

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐

Citation

22. I feel confident that I know how to accurately cite my sources and avoid plagiarism.

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐

23. I feel confident that I know the expectations of my field when it comes to citing sources.

Yes ☐ Somewhat ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐

Accessing Help

24. I feel like I can get help from a faculty member or advisor about my writing.

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

25. I feel like I can get help from other graduate students, peers, or colleagues about writing.

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

26. I feel like I can get help from the Writing Lab for my writing.

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

27. I feel confident that I can help others with their writing.

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐ Never ☐

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