Support While Writing

Good writers know that writing feedback and other forms of support will improve their document. They also know that talking over ideas with someone can be a useful tool when thinking through a project and that commiserating with a fellow writer can result in the sharing of mutually useful strategies. Aside from feedback on the writing itself, however, graduate writers often need support for the other dimensions of their lives, such as social and emotional needs or practical life concerns.

As with other relationships in life, you cannot expect any one person to meet all of the needs you might have related to working on a particular document. For instance, while you might expect an advisor to give you feedback on the content of your piece, they may not be the right person with whom to set accountability goals; perhaps a peer would be better suited for that. Your writing support should be a writing support network.

However, not all feedback is equally useful for all types of questions. Feedback from someone inside your discipline might look very different than feedback from outside your discipline. Feedback from someone who has experienced graduate study themselves might look different than feedback from someone who has never gone to graduate school.

Other forms of support work in a similar manner: not all offers of support contribute to productive work on the document. For instance, venting to a friend might make you feel better in the moment, but it may not encourage you to do more work on the document.

When you think about support while writing, you'll want to do a few things:

- Know the kinds of support that are available to you.
- Make informed decisions about which type of support to choose in any given moment.
- Choose offers of support that contribute to productive work rather than distract from it.

The activities on the following pages will help you think about the kinds of support you already have, the kinds of support you might still wish to receive, and some options for finding that support.

Activity: Identifying Your Needs as a Writer

Learning objective: To identify types of support that you are currently receiving in order to consider whether there are types of support you need.

Directions

Step 1: Being able to articulate your specific needs as a graduate writer will help you better advocate for yourself as a writer and better support yourself as a writer. Use the list below to identify areas in which you are **currently receiving support**. Please keep in mind that every writer's needs are different and context-based: you may not need every one of these areas to be met at this particular moment, and these needs will likely change over time.

Feedback on ideas and plans

- Direction of project
- Research design
- Career trajectory and goals
- Job search and materials

Feedback on document-level aspects of writing

- Specific genres
- Disciplinary conventions
- Logic & flow
- Organization
- Indicating research gaps
- Specific sections of papers

Feedback on sentence-level aspects of writing

- Sentence structure
- Word choice
- Grammar
- Proofreading skills

Help with process concerns

- Goal-setting
- Revision

- Writer's block
- Getting started
- Time management

Socio-emotional support

- Confidence
- Belonging
- Developing a voice
- Motivation
- Independence
- Accountability

Help with life concerns

- Writing while parenting
- Writing with a disability
- Other? _____

Step 2: Now that you have identified which of your needs are being **currently met**, look over the list and identify **three areas** for which you need support. Keep in mind that you, or your current project, may not require every need on this list to be met at this time. What are your three most pressing, and current, needs as a writer?

1)

2)

3)

Activity: Identifying Writing Support

Learning objective: To create a collection of potential resources to use when you need writing support during graduate school.

Directions

Step 1: Fill out this table with resources available at your institution. Additional resources might be offered by your department or college, by the graduate school, or by other academic organizations. Survey these resources, particularly any you weren't already familiar with. You can add to the chart with any additional resources you know of.

Examples of support	**Web address**	**Summary of what is offered**
Writing consultations	Example: Purdue's On-Campus Writing Lab	Example: Face-to-face and online consultations for Purdue students
Writing coursework		
Writing groups		
Graduate-level writing workshops		
Graduate-level writing retreats or dissertation camps		
Online resources (handouts, vidcasts, videos, guidelines for citation and style)		
Editors for hire		
Document-specific support (grants, scholarships, fellowships, etc.)		
Thesis/dissertation formatting resources and templates		

Examples of support	Web address	Summary of what is offered
Practical life support (childcare, disability accommodations)		
Other types of support you found		

Step 2: Choose two to three types of writing support that you plan to make use of this semester. Remember to revisit this list as you progress through your graduate program.

Activity: Identifying Your Needs as a Writer

Learning objective: To proactively identify writing support on campus that meets your unique needs.

Directions

Every writer, and every document, has unique needs. Use the table below to clarify your writing support needs and to identify who might be able to provide this support.

Step 1: Fill in the left-hand column with a list of writing support you need; this can vary from document to document and also which stage of the process you are in. Think broadly (e.g., emotional support, encouragement, a perspective outside your field, a peer's perspective inside your field, an expert's perspective inside your field, an expert on a certain kind of document such as a Fulbright grant, grammar check, etc). You might refer back to the Identifying Writing Support table in the earlier part of the document. Keep in mind that one document could benefit from multiple areas of support; for example: NSF grant applications could be supported by educated readers outside of your field, an expert in your field, and someone who has expertise in grant applications.

Step 2: Once you have your list, for each item, think about who can provide this support and add that to the right-hand column. Remember that "supposed to provide" does not necessarily equal "able to provide." Only list people/units that you know can actually provide the support you are seeking.

Step 3: If some of the lines in the right-hand column are blank (i.e., you do not know who can provide the support), use resources identified in the table above as potential sites for support.

What types of writing support do you think you need over the course of your graduate career?	**Who can provide this support?**

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(recreate this table and add more lines if necessary)	