

Best Practices for Using Writing Consultants in Classes

Writing Consultants can be incorporated into your classes in a variety of ways. A separate scheduling sheet should be filled out by all faculty teaching WRT 120/130/150 to determine which model works best for you and your classes. For sections of WRT 120/130/150, your consultant can be present for 1 hour a week, normally during lab days. Teams of consultants can also be requested to facilitate small groups of writers, whether they are brainstorming, discussing ideas, or providing peer review on drafts.

* The professor may let students know the week before that the consultant will be joining the class. When the consultant arrives, the consultant should be introduced (or be asked to introduce him or herself). This helps the class to see the consultant as part of the course itself. Once the consultant is introduced, students may be more inclined to seek out individual help, either during class time or afterwards during Writing Center service hours, which are available in-person and online.
* Much of the first WRT session and the first few minutes of subsequent sessions may be spent building rapport. Consultants often find that students are more willing to discuss papers and give feedback when they have developed relationships with the other members of the group. It may look like not much work is being done, but the consultant is laying groundwork for later.
* Some groups may opt to stay in the classroom. However, this can lead to a noisy classroom and/or groups working uncomfortably close together. For this reason, about half of the groups will choose to leave the classroom and seek out new space. Leaving the classroom can also be beneficial for students as they discuss and brainstorm in a different environment. This, too, has its drawbacks; in certain buildings (AuSable, for instance) there is little hallway space for group work and other classes may be disturbed.
* The more information your consultants have before meeting with groups, the better. Consultants try to arrive before class begins (schedules permitting) so there is time for you to “fill them in” on the assignment students are working on, what you hope they will accomplish in the session, and any potential problems of which consultants should be aware.

If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions for how best to utilize consultants in your WRT course, please contact the Director of the Fred Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors - Patrick Johnson (johpatri@gvsu.edu).