Required Writing Conferences

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

To ensure that your students’ writing conferences are as helpful as possible, there are several steps you should take:

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

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

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

**If you aren’t sure whether to suggest or require writing conferences:**
*Suggesting* to your students that they have a writing conference will result in a low rate of participation. *If you want all of your students to have a writing conference,* make the conference a requirement for the assignment.

**PUT ON THE SYLLABUS AND DISCUSS WITH THE CLASS:**

**The need to confer on a full first draft**
A writing conference is more effective when the student has already thought and written about the assignment. Emphasize to your students the importance of completing a full draft.

**The student’s active role in the conference**
The student who comes to the conference knowing what he or she wants to discuss and prepare to actively discuss ideas will get the most from the experience.

OVER
EXPLAIN TO YOUR STUDENTS:
Your objectives in requiring writing conferences
Discuss why you want students to have a writing conference—the value of a multi-draft writing process.

The need to drop by or call the Writing Center ahead
Students should make appointments *four to five days in advance* to be guaranteed an appointment.

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

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

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

Please call or e-mail Sharon Williams, Writing Center Director, if you would like to discuss anything related to writing in your classes: (x4362, swwilliam).

6/09