

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

The Writing Center 2021-2022

**This semester the Writing Center will return to in-person tutoring.**

### **Where is the Writing Center?**

The Center is located on the ground floor of the Mulligan Building, just down the hall from the Academic Skills Center and the Post Office.

### **When is the Center open?**

We usually open in the second week of each semester and close on the last day of exams. Our daily hours vary from semester to semester. Most semesters we open at 8:00 or 9:00 in the morning and close in the early evening, normally at 8:00. We often have Sunday hours as well. The director sends out a schedule to all students at the beginning of each semester and posts the hours on the door and on the Writing Center web page.

### **Who can use the Center?**

All students who attend classes at King's, from first-year to graduate level, are welcome to bring their work to the Writing Center.

### **Do I need an appointment?**

No. Come by whenever we are open. If tutors are busy helping other students, you may either wait in the Center or return later in the day. If you would like to make an appointment for a future date, you may do so at the Writing Center.

### **Who staffs the Center?**

Our staff includes a director and approximately twelve undergraduate peer-tutors from several majors.

### **How long is a tutorial?**

Most tutorials last anywhere from twenty minutes to forty-five minutes depending on the length of the writing and the amount of revision needed. Don't try to squeeze in a visit to the Center in the few minutes before one of your classes begins. Leave at least an hour in your schedule when you visit the Center, and plan to sit with your tutor for at least twenty minutes.

### **What should I bring with me?**

Bring whatever you've written, whether it's a few sentences or an entire draft. Also—and this is very important—bring the assignment handed out by your professor. In order to help you meet the requirements of an assignment, the tutor needs to know exactly what the assignment is. Don't trust your memory. Bring the assignment sheet with you! And bring a pencil or pen to take notes and make revisions to your writing.

### **What type of assignments can I bring to the Center?**

Our tutors can help you with analytic and interpretive essays, lab reports, summaries, senior seminar projects—pretty much anything that is routinely assigned in college courses.

**What will a tutor do for my writing?**

Our tutors are dedicated to helping you become a better writer, which means working with you in every stage of the writing process, from coming up with ideas to revising and editing your work. Tutors can help you formulate a thesis, brainstorm for supporting ideas, and organize your thoughts. They can also help you improve the coherence of your writing and the structure of your sentences. A tutor will respond to your essay the way a reader might, challenging assumptions, asking for more support, or pointing out any fuzzy logic in your argument. When it comes to helping you improve your writing, a tutor will do what he or she can, but there is a limit, as you'll see in the next question.

**I just need to have my work proofread. Can I come by for that?**

The short answer is no, but that word “proofread” needs to be defined. Many students mistakenly use the word “proofread” to mean reading, evaluating and commenting on the overall quality of a paper. In other words, many students will ask “Can you proofread my paper?” as a way of asking if a tutor will thoroughly read for both content and form. If that’s the case—if you’re asking whether a tutor will read and comment on your paper’s argument, development, effectiveness and so on—sure, absolutely, we can do that. In fact, that’s what we’re here for. But strictly speaking we will not simply “proofread” a paper. Literally, to proofread means to read something called a proof, the printed copy that publishers use in their final effort to catch errors before the official printing of an article or book. Someone who is reading the proof—a proofreader—is simply looking for such things as typographical errors or stray marks on a page. Our tutors have been forbidden by their director to proofread in this more literal sense of the word. Our mission in the Writing Center is to contribute to the teaching of writing at King’s, and proofreading is not teaching. So the short answer is: bring your writing in for a thorough examination; if you're looking just for someone to catch spelling errors, perhaps your roommate can do that for you.

**What happens in a tutorial?**

When you arrive you'll be asked to fill out a simple form listing your name, your professor's name, the course, and a few other bits of information. You'll also indicate on the form what you hope to accomplish in the tutorial (improvements in organization or coherence, for example). Your tutor may ask you a few additional questions before reading your work. The tutor will usually read the entire essay before commenting, although he or she may stop at various points to make suggestions or ask questions. After the tutor has read your work thoroughly, he or she will discuss the paper with you. Keep in mind that the tutor's job is to help you find the most effective means of expressing *your* ideas in *your* words. The tutor will not tell you what to write or write the paper for you. After discussing your work with you, the tutor will jot down some suggestions for improving the assignment.

**Will the tutor help me find a topic?**

Yes, a tutor can, in conversation with you about your assignment, help you decide on a topic and determine an approach to the topic. For many assignments, however, your professor must approve of your topic. When necessary, be sure that your professor has approved of your topic before pursuing it any further with a tutor in the pre-writing or drafting stages.

**What if I know my paper is good enough and I just need a stamp to prove I've been there?**

Even a published essay can be improved. If you're coming to the Center with a written text, the tutor is required by our policy to read the text and comment on its quality and effectiveness. If you feel that your professor has unjustly required you to attend a session in the Writing Center, please take the issue up with your professor. The tutors in the Center will not stamp a paper without reading it, and, after reading, they will address with you the paper's strengths and whatever weaknesses it may contain.

**Can I drop off my paper, leave, and return to pick up the paper later?**

No. A tutor will often ask the writer during a tutorial session to explain a confusing point or clarify what she was hoping to accomplish in a paragraph or passage. You must be present during the tutorial.

**What should I do while a tutor is reading my paper?**

If a tutor is reading your essay silently, he or she is focusing diligently on your work in an effort to help you improve as a writer and student. The most courteous thing to do is to sit quietly and patiently. Each tutor is different, but it might be a good idea to assume that your tutor will be insulted if you text or read other work while he or she is trying to help you. Remember that the tutors in the Writing Center are your peers, students just like you. Their goal is to help you, not to judge you or demean your writing. Their critical comments are intended to help you improve your writing.

**Can I bring more than one paper at a time?**

Not usually. If no one is waiting, you might be able to ask your tutor to read an additional paper or assignment. In order to serve all students in a timely manner, however, the director of the Center asks that each student normally bring only one paper or assignment per visit. You'll often find that the suggestions your tutor makes for improving one paper can be applied to the other.

**How much time should I leave between a visit to the Center and the due date of the assignment?**

Many of the papers that come into the Center need extensive revision or require many hours of new research to complete. Leave ample time to revise your work and to return to the Center with subsequent drafts.

**Can I bring the same paper to the Center more than once?**

Yes, absolutely. In fact, we encourage it. After you've revised according to your tutor's suggestions, bring your next draft to the Center. If you want to work with the same tutor, be sure to come during his or her scheduled hours. There is no limit to the number of times you can visit the Writing Center.

**I need help with citing sources. Can the Writing Center help me?**

We will certainly try. Be sure to tell the tutor what style of documentation your professor requires (MLA, APA, Chicago/Turabian, etc.). All of these styles are complicated, and your tutor may not know the finer points of documentation in the style you are using, but the tutor will help you determine what needs to be acknowledged and will make every effort to help you cite correctly. The tutor can also point you in the right direction for additional help.