Policies and Procedures

Section 1: General writing centre policies

Writing centre overview

Vision statement

Saint Mary's University writing centre strives to support the development of clear, compelling writing, as well as the development of effective analytical and critical-thinking skills. Writing tutors take an approach that actively involves the student in a session through a dialogue between writing tutor and student. In addition, by assisting with the immediate assignment, students improve their overall writing skills. Rather than proofreading or editing, tutors provide students invaluable and lasting take-home knowledge.

Help is offered to students from any discipline, at any stage of the writing process. The centre strives for a comfortable and relaxed environment to enhance student visits, while remembering the importance of academic rigor, clarity in writing, improving scholarship, and professionalism.

The Saint Mary's University Writing Centre and Academic Communications (the centre) provides academic support for students, faculty, staff, and alumni, as well as for students of the Atlantic School of Theology. The centre offers free, in-person, one-on-one tutoring, as well as workshops, in-class presentations, and online support.

1. **Mission statement**
    1.1. The Saint Mary's University Writing Centre provides academic support for students, faculty, staff, and alumni. The centre offers free, in-person, one-on-one tutoring, as well as workshops, in-class presentations, and online support.
    1.2. The centre strives to instruct and support the development of clear, compelling writing, as well as the development of effective analytical and critical thinking skills.
2. **Centre offerings and services**
    2.1. **Student and alumni services**
        2.1.1. One-on-one tutoring in writing and writing development, as well as critical thinking skills
        2.1.2. Group tutoring, both at the centre, as well as in the classroom
        2.1.3. Online tutoring support and resources
        2.1.4. Writing Help Online (WHO)
        2.1.5. Workshops
        2.1.6. Events and awards
        2.1.7. Paper and online resources
        2.1.8. Writing centre undergraduate journal, *Afficio*
        2.1.9. Summer Writing Workshop
    2.2. **Faculty services**
        2.2.1. Workshops and presentations
        2.2.2. Online resources
        2.2.3. Writing and assessment skills workshops
        2.2.4. Private writing support
    2.3. **Professional services**

2.3.1. Professional editing services

3. Scheduling, operating hours and remuneration

3.1. The centre's tutoring locations are 115 Burke (the centre) and Atrium 107.

3.2. The centre's hours of operation are as follows:

3.2.1. September to April, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday, and weekends 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm, unless otherwise indicated; drop-in hours: Monday to Thursday, 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm, unless otherwise indicated

3.2.2. May to August, 10:00 to 4:00 pm, unless otherwise indicated.

3.3. The centre is closed for tutoring support during the following periods:

3.3.1. November reading week

3.3.2. February reading week

3.3.3. Last week of April to the first week of May

3.3.4. Last week of June to the July 1st holiday

3.3.5. The two weeks of August to the first day of the fall semester, after the Summer Writing Workshop

3.3.6. Last two weeks of December to the first workday in January, after New Years

3.4. The centre operates on three schedules, Spring/Summer, low session, and high session.

3.4.1. The Spring/Summer schedule is a follows:

3.4.1.1. The two summer semesters

3.4.1.2. The first two weeks of September

3.4.1.3. The last week of the fall semester

3.4.1.4. The first week of the winter semester

3.4.2. The low session schedule is used for the following:

3.4.2.1. September

3.4.2.2. December, after the last day of class to the holiday closing

3.4.2.3. January, the first week to the third week

3.4.2.4. April, after the last day of class to the end of term.

3.4.3. The high session schedule is used for the following:

3.4.3.1. Second last week of September to December, to the last day of classes

3.4.3.2. Second last week of January to April, to the last day of classesFrom time-to-time, weekend scheduling is required beyond the centre's regular weekend tutoring schedule.

3.5. Remuneration is based on hours worked.

3.5.1. Tutors called to work for less than three hours will be paid for three hours.

3.5.2. Tutors may work up to 10 hours per week, with no guaranteed number of hours.

3.5.3. Those employees whose regularly scheduled shift falls on a stat holiday will be paid for that holiday.

3.5.4. No overtime is available.

3.6. Tutors may not work more than four tutoring hours per day, unless directed.

3.7. All tutors work on a casual, semesterly employment. All employment ends at the end of the semester.

3.7.1. Each semester runs September to December, January to April, and May to August.

3.7.2. All employment is terminated at the end of each term. Tutors may sign a new casual employment form for each term, based on the employment needs of the centre.

4. Employee responsibilities

4.1. All centre staff are employees of Saint Mary's University, and, as such, are responsible to the policies of Saint Mary's University. University policies and procedures are available. All employees are responsible to know these polices.

4.2. Tutors are expected to adhere to all responsibilities, as outlined and described in this policies and procedures manual, as well as the duties and responsibilities as outlined by Human Resource, Saint Mary's University.

4.3. As representatives of the university, tutor behaviour and demeanor will reflect a positive attitude toward the university and the centre in all interaction with students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

4.4. Tutors should make every attempt to attend all scheduled shifts.

4.4.1. In cases of a missed shift due to illness, a tutor must contact the centre at the earliest opportunity.

4.4.2. If a tutor cannot make a scheduled shift, the tutor must contact *both* the centre's secretary and director by phone and/or e-mail.

4.4.3. Failure to appear to three schedule shifts may result in termination of employment.

4.5. Tutors may change/cover other tutor's shifts.

4.5.1. Tutors are required to inform *both* the director and the secretary of any changes to shifts and trading of shifts with other tutors.

4.6. Some tutors will be assigned a key to the centre's main door. This key is the property of the university, and must be treated as such.

4.6.1. Tutors must return their key one day prior to their finally day of employment.

4.6.2. A $10 fee will be levied for lost keys.

4.7. Each tutor is assigned a locker.

4.7.1. Tutors are to place personal items in their locker during a shift.

4.7.2. Lockers are to be cleared prior to the last shift of employment.

4.8. All external correspondence must be cleared with the director prior to it being sent, without exception.

4.9. Tutors may not enter the centre during off hours or use the centre or its resources (including computers) for purposes other than assigned, except at the direction or agreement with the director. Using the centre outside of scheduled working hours may result in termination of employment.

4.10. Centre computers are for the use of centre staff only.

4.10.1. Centre computers may not be used for any purpose that contravenes the policies of the university.

4.10.2. Centre computers may not be used for personal use, except at the direction of the director.

4.10.3. Tutors should not check social media during his or her shift, except with the permission of the director.

4.10.4. All passwords must be kept confidential and never shared. Doing so may result in termination of employment.

5. **Tutor deportment**

5.1. Tutors relationship with students during a session is to be professional in nature. In this regard, conversation should centre on the work at hand.

5.2. To maintain a level of professionalism, tutors may not provide personal contact information, including e-mail addresses and phone numbers, add students/be added to instant messaging services, or to 'friend' a student on a social networks during working hours.

5.3. Mobile phones should be left in your assigned locker.

5.3.1.Tutors should refrain from check mobile phones during their shift.

5.3.2.Ringers on mobiles phone must be turned off during tutoring shifts.

5.3.3.Tutors should not answer personal mobile phones during a scheduled shift, except in the case of emergency. Emergency calls received during a shift must be taken outside of the centre.

5.3.4.Tutors must not text during their shift.

5.4. Tutor's clothing should be clean. Dress is casual, though clothing should be in good repair.

5.5. Tutors should maintain an appropriate level of personal hygiene, including limiting body odour.

5.6. Avoid perfumes or other scented products. SMU does have a scent-free policy.

5.7. Headphones must be removed during a tutoring sessions.

5.8. All personal belongings, including purses, backpacks, and outerwear, should be placed in assigned lockers.

5.9. Tutors are to not consume food or hot drinks during a tutoring session. Cold drinks are acceptable.

5.10.　　　Tutors should tidy and neaten tutoring areas at the end of a tutoring session: replace writing pads, pens and pencils, push in chairs, recycle use paper, etc.

5.11.　　　Between appointments, tutors should not congregate at the front desk, as this can be intimidating for those entering.

6. Significant incidents and harassment

6.1. Saint Mary's University and the centre have a *zero tolerance* to harassment of any kind.

6.2. A significant incident or harassment is a situation whereby an employee of the centre feels personally threatened, whether physically or psychologically.

6.3. In the case of a significant incident, tutors should indicate that the appointment is over and leave the area.

6.4. Should a tutor feel as though they are threatened, Security should be called immediately (ext: 5000).

6.5. All significant incidents are to be reported to the director as soon as is possible.

6.6. All significant incidents are to be considered private and confidential by the director.

6.7. Steps according to the harassment policy of Saint Mary's will be enacted to resolve a significant incident, including the participation of appropriate departments.

6.8. Training in dealing with significant incidents and harassment is to be provided by the centre.

7. **Project work**

7.1. Project work is work that enhances the centre's resources and workings.

7.2. During period of work where a session is not scheduled or there has been a cancelation, tutors are expected to work on project work.

7.3. Project work is assigned by the director or a designate.

7.4. When work is not assigned, tutors should use any time available to complete readings, either from assigned reading binders or other reading materials. Tutors should check with the director or secretary for the location of these materials.

8. Tutoring sessions

8.1. Tutoring is open to all students, faculty, staff, and alumni of Saint Mary's University, as well as students of the Atlantic School of Theology.

8.2. Tutoring sessions are 50 minutes for booked appointments and 20 minutes for drop-in appointments, reserving ten minutes to complete client report.

8.3. Client reports should be completed as soon as possible after the completion of the session.

8.4. Tutors should review appointments prior to beginning a session, as well as review any Client Report Forms for that student.

8.5. Tutors should not enter into negative talk regarding courses, instructors, fellow tutors, and/or the institution. Such action may lead to official reprimand and/or dismissal.

8.6. Tutors are to make no comments regarding an instructor or an instructor's assignment, syllabus, or personal experience of or with an instructor.

8.7. Tutors are not to provide grade predictions.

8.8. Students are allowed a maximum of two hours of tutoring per week, a combination or drop-in and hour-long sessions.

8.9. The centre does not offer proofreading or editing services to students, unless directed by the centre's director.

9. **Booking an appointment**

9.1. Students may book two appointments on the same day, but with at least an hour's division between the two appointments.

9.2. Students returning with the same assignment must demonstrate that they have worked on the assignment between appointments (sections that have been worked on *and* sections that have not been looked at). If they do not, the appointment will be rescheduled.

9.3. All students must attend an appointment with a hardcopy of the material on which they wishes to work, as well as any assignment pages given to a student from their instructor.

    9.3.1. Students cannot print assignments on the writing centre's printer.

    9.3.2. Students may use the kiosk computer the print to the Atrium printers.

9.4. Students may work from laptop if they require it for the assignment on which they are working, or if they have a special-needs requirement or dispensation.

9.5. For group assignments, students may only work on sections they have personally written.

    9.5.1. The entire group must be present at the tutoring session.

9.6. Students are not allowed to bring in work of others; all work must be their own.

10. **Cancelation**

10.1. If a student is more than a fifteen minutes late for their appointment, the appointment will be deemed a 'no show.'

10.2. A student with a 'no show' is not allowed access to centre's services.

    10.2.1. Appointments booked before 'no show' designation will be canceled.

10.3. A 'no show' appointment will be liable to an appointment cancelation fee of $10.00.

10.4. Payment must be made in full prior to a student's writing centre privileges being reinstated.

    10.4.1. Students who fail to make payment will have his or her transcript withheld.

    10.4.2. Payment of the fee is to be made through Banner.

    10.4.3. A student may dispute this fee in person to the director. The director has final determination on the levying of the fee.

    10.4.4. Students must make an appointment for disputation.

10.5. If a student is late for an appointment more than three times, that student's use of the centre's service will be reviewed.

10.6. A student who contacts the centre to tell of his or her lateness will not lose his or her appointment, but will receive tutoring for only the time remaining of that appointment once he or she arrives.

10.7. A student must cancel his or her appointment at least 24 hours prior to the beginning of a scheduled appointment.

10.8. If a student cancels more than twice, that student's use of the centre's service will be reviewed.

10.9. If student fails to cancel an appointment without 24-hour notice, the appointment will be deemed a 'no show' appointment.

10.10. A student may send an alternate to his or her appointment. The alternate must have a valid writing need, as determined by the writing tutor of that appointment.

11. **Language Centre students/non-SMU student and faculty**

   11.1. Students of the Language Centre are allowed tutoring sessions.

   11.2. Tutoring is not to be offered to students of other institutions.

      11.2.1. If a student from another institution requests an appointments, tutors are to inform the secretary and director.

      11.2.2. Students and faculty from other institutions are encouraged to use Saint Mary's University Writing Centre online handouts and style guides. Publication of centre materials are to be cleared by the director.

   11.3. General public inquiring about tutoring or writing services are to be directed to the dire

12. **Confidentiality**

   12.1. All centre staff are to sign a confidentiality agreement as a requirement of employment.

   12.2. The centre's Confidentiality Policy is intended to protect students' personal information, their intellectual property, and any confidential information included in their writing.

   12.3. Except for the specific exclusions listed below, the centre and writing tutors will adhere to the following principles:

      12.3.1. Students' personal information is collected for the sole purpose of understanding our clients and improving services provided to them. This information is stored on a Canadian-based database, and is not be shared with third parties.

      12.3.2. Any information and topics discussed in a tutoring session are confidential. Additionally, writing tutors will take all reasonable steps to ensure that colleagues, staff, and trainees with whom they work understand and respect the need for confidentiality regarding any information obtained.

      12.3.3. No information on students or details of appointments or assignments will be given to a third party without the consent of the student, including other students, professors, parents, and friends, among others.

   12.4. Specific exceptions to the above principles are listed below:

      12.4.1. Writing tutors fill out reports at the end of each tutoring session for the sole purpose of providing general information about the appointment. This information includes the writing topics discussed (i.e., what problems were worked on, what concerns the student(s) had, any difficulties encountered, and any advice given). This information is used for the sole purpose of assisting the student: other writing tutors and the director have access to the generalized information in order to understand how best to help the student in future appointments.

      12.4.2. If a student argues a grade with a faculty member by explaining that a tutor told him or her to do a specific thing, and if the faculty member seeks clarification, the general information from the session report may be provided to the faculty member. However, this information will only be provided by the director in exceptional circumstances with consent of the Office of the Registrar.

12.4.3. Tutors should seek advice from the director about how to handle specific situations or to improve tutoring abilities. In such cases they may refer to specific appointments. However, these discussions will remain between the director and the tutor.

12.4.4. If a student is behaving in a manner not conducive to tutoring (i.e., being aggressive either physically or verbally) or is causing havoc in the centre, then his or her name may be shared with the director and/or the university's administration in order to deal with the problem.

12.4.5. During staff meetings, tutors may share general information about appointments in the interests of asking questions, receiving guidance, and developing their skills. However, names of specific students will not be mentioned in these instances. Confidential subject matter of assignments will not be discussed.

12.4.6. Where a student provides information of a criminal nature or where the student may be suicidal or in harm's way, this information is to be shared with the director immediately.

12.5. Due to confidentiality, no one but the student(s) who booked the sessions and the writing tutor may sit in on a tutoring session. An exception is in the case of training and/or mentoring, with the agreement of the student.

Section 2: Procedure for Distance Appointments

From time to time, students require tutoring but are not able to physically come to the centre. Several options are available: e-mail, telephone, and video tutoring.

1. **General procedures**: The procedure for booking distance appointments is the same as a regular appointment.
   1.1. The appointment is booked in WCOnline. The appointment should be marked as a *distance appointment*.
   1.2. All the same policies and procedures for an in-person appointment apply.
   1.3. Appointments are either 1 hour (undergrads) or 2 hours (graduate) in length.
   1.4. Client reports are completed as usual with a noted that the appointment was a distance appointment and the platform of the appointment (e-mail, telephone, video).
2. **E-mail appointments**
   1.1. The student should email their paper to the Writing Centre the day before the scheduled appointment.
   1.2. At the appointment time, the tutor will review the paper online. Using the "Track Changes" feature, the tutor will edit the paper in the same proportions as in a regular appointment. The comment function will allow the tutor to provide explanations and brief lessons on the suggested changes. General feedback for passages can also be recorded here.
   1.3. At the end of the document, provide an overview of the edits and comments, as well as any other recommendations to improve the paper.
   1.4. Save the document, and send it back to the student.

By conducting the appointment during the booked period, we can ensure that the student receives the same amount of time and attention as they would in a regular session.