RESPONDING TO STUDENT WRITING

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Writing across the Curriculum

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Course-Based Writing Tutorials For Your 2014-2015 Classes
Would your students benefit from a lecture and small group tutoring specifically designed around your writing assignment? If so, consider enrolling your class in Writing Across the Curriculum’s group writing tutorials program.

Would you like to improve the writing of your students? Improve their learning of your lecture material? Are you looking for new ways to engage your students in your course materials? If this interests you, contact Roger Graves at roger.graves@ualberta.ca or call 780-492-2169.

What we do for individual instructors:
- meet to talk about ways to incorporate informal (short, impromptu) writing assignments into any class, small or large
- review via email any assignment you give students that has a writing component to help make it clearer for students and to help develop grading rubrics to improve the speed and accuracy of grading
- visit your class to help students get started on your writing assignments

http://wac.ctl.ualberta.ca/
Response can come at any stage of the writing process:

- Thesis statements (idea generation)
- Outlines (organization)
- Drafts (coherence, development)
- Final/finished products (editing, proofreading)
- At each stage, the focus of the response should change.
The Writing Process: A Model

Identify a project

Research, Read, write

Share, talk

Draft, refine, revise

Reflect/enjoy
   Retool/enjoy
   Resume/engage

Research can happen at all stages of writing

Note the recursive nature of the process
Summative evaluation/response sums up, totals, gives a final comment on a performance

Formative evaluation helps shape or form the performance in advance of a final judgment of it
Peer Feedback: Proposal Writing

1. Identify the main claims made in the proposal.

2. Using the schema on pages 114-115, identify the claim, link (because statement), reason, and evidence that are explicit or implicit in at least one of these claims.

3. Identify a rebuttal (challenge) that someone might make to one of these arguments, and then suggest how the writer could counter that rebuttal.

4. Using the proposal evaluation sheet as a guide, identify 3 areas you think the writer could improve if they revised their proposal.
• Peers in class
• Centre for Writers tutors
• Friends, family
• Instructor
Principles of response

- Respond to encourage revision rather than justify a grade
- Organize your comments into a hierarchy—most important to least important
- Comment on ideas and organization first
- Wherever possible, make positive comments
- Avoid over-commenting: students learn faster if they must find and correct their own errors

• Do not waste time on careless student work.
• Do not extensively mark grammar and punctuation.
• Address fundamental concerns first.
• Consider comments without grades.
• Use comments only for teachable moments.
• Spend more time guiding.
• Use only as many grade levels as you need (2 = p/f to 13).
• Limit the basis for grading.

Higher-order concerns

- Does the draft follow the assignment?
- Does the writer have a thesis that addresses an appropriate problem or question?
- If the draft has a thesis, what is the quality of the argument itself?
- Is the draft organized effectively at the micro level?

Lower-order concerns

- Are there stylistic problems that you find particularly annoying?
- Is the draft free of errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling?

Coach

• Uses writing workshops to draft and revise student work in class

• Believes praise works better than censure

• Depends upon students to take responsibility for their own learning

Editor

- Focus on sentence-level errors
- Conversant with rules and conventions of standard edited English
- Every word and punctuation mark counts
- Devote much time marking essays

Academic reader

• Focus on how well the paper meets the standards of academic discourse for style, evidence, citations, sources

• If not, what must be changed?

Average reader

Read as if you were reading a magazine or newspaper—to see what the writer has to say

Speak back to the writer about what interests you, confuses you, annoys you

Customs officer

- Guards the academic border to ensure only approved students pass on
- Works from a clear set of rules
- Applies the rules consistently
Which of these metaphors describes how you see yourself as a responder to student writing?

Is there another metaphor that captures what you are trying to accomplish when you respond to student writing?
Coach photo: http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/photo/T4NhrhxVWMh8qfkL2NbmUw

Border shot: http://farm1.static.flickr.com/52/131161403_afb1b40c45.jpg

Edmonton Journal: http://www.edmontonjournal.com/