



**Thomas Jefferson University  
East Falls Campus  
Academic Success Center**

**Frequently Asked Questions – Faculty Edition**

**Who are the writing tutors?**

The writing tutors are all professional, rather than peer, tutors. This means that they have at least a master’s degree in a writing-intensive discipline, and have experience teaching and tutoring students at the collegiate level.

**When and where are the writing appointments?**

East Falls writing appointments are either 30 or 60 minutes long, and can take place between 9am – 8pm Monday through Thursday, and 9am – 5pm on Fridays in the Academic Success Center (located in Haggard Hall). We also have tutoring appointments available on the weekends in the Rena Rowan Reading Room on the second floor of Gutman Library from 11am – 3pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

**Can students meet with a writing tutor online?**

Yes! In addition to our in-person appointments, we also offer online tutoring via Zoom video conferencing, as well as written feedback sent via email. More information about online tutoring can be found in the “Instructions for Online Writing Assistance” document on our website.

**Are walk-in appointments available?**

Writing tutoring is only available by appointment; we do not have any regular drop-in hours. However, if a student does stop by the Academic Success Center to see if they can meet with a writing tutor, we will work with the student if there is an available appointment at that time. This is unlikely to be the case, however, after midterms.

**How do students make appointments?**

Students can self-schedule in-person appointments via Starfish. If they have any issues self-scheduling, they can email [Tutoring@Jefferson.edu](mailto:Tutoring@Jefferson.edu) or call 215-951-2799 during business hours. For online appointments, students should email [Tutoring@Jefferson.edu](mailto:Tutoring@Jefferson.edu) with their availability for a Zoom appointment at least one day before their desired appointment time, or if they seek written feedback they should upload their paper through the link on our website. More information about scheduling online appointments can be found in the “Instructions for Online Writing Assistance” document on our website.



## **Can I have a tutor visit my class to talk to my students about writing tutoring?**

Yes, we can visit your class to provide an overview of writing tutoring, walk your students through making an appointment online, and answer any questions they have about writing tutoring. These visits typically take about 15 minutes, and can happen at the beginning or ending of your class. Contact the Assistant Director of Writing Services if you would like to set up a class visit.

## **Do students need to have written their paper before they can meet with a writing tutor?**

Students can come in for writing tutoring at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming/outlining to final revisions. In fact, we encourage students to come in earlier rather than later, so that we can help them get off to a good start and not have to end up completely starting over because they misunderstood the assignment, for example.

## **What should students bring to a writing appointment?**

Students should bring the assignment prompt and anything they have written so far. You can also encourage your students to bring in any prior feedback you have given them, so that the tutor has a better sense of your priorities and expectations.

Either print or electronic copies are fine, although if they rely on electronic files they should download any cloud-based documents to prevent any WiFi connectivity issues, and ensure that they have the charger for their laptop so it doesn't lose its battery charge during the session. We do not have printers available for student use in our building, so if they plan to use paper copies they should print them out before coming to Haggard Hall.

## **What happens in a tutoring session?**

At the beginning of a tutoring session, the writing tutor will ask the student questions about the assignment and any concerns they have. After this brief conversation, the tutor will negotiate with the student an agenda for the remaining time.

While this agenda can give the tutor a starting point, it must also be flexible and adaptive to any concerns the tutor identifies during their reading, or any new questions the student thinks of over the course of the conversation.

During the last five minutes of the session, the tutor will return to the agenda, and if there are items that weren't discussed, the tutor will check and see if the student would like to schedule an additional appointment to follow-up. The tutor will also recommend some next steps that the student should take to apply what was discussed during the session.



At the end of the tutor's shift, they will enter into Starfish a summary of the session, which will be emailed to the student and can always be accessed in the "Meetings" tab of the student's profile in Starfish.

### **Is there a limit to how many times a student can come in for writing tutoring?**

The cap for each student is two hours of writing tutoring per week, with no more than one hour of writing tutoring per day (receiving tutoring in other subject areas does not count towards this cap). However, we do make exceptions to this policy from time to time, so if you believe a student will need more writing help than this, please reach out to the Assistant Director of Writing Services to discuss the particular student's circumstances.

### **Are there any limits on the length of papers for in-person or online tutoring sessions?**

Although we do not set a hard limit on the number of pages allowed, we generally can't discuss more than 5 double-spaced pages in a 30-minute appointment, or 10 double-spaced pages in a 60-minute appointment. We strongly recommend that any students working on a large, ongoing project (like a capstone or thesis) bring only one section at a time and meet with their tutor frequently. Every semester we have a few students who try to receive feedback on their entire thesis a day or two before it's due, and are disappointed with the 5 – 10 pages of feedback we are usually able to provide.

### **Can students meet with the same tutor on a regular basis?**

Yes. If you believe a student would benefit from regularly meeting with the same tutor on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, please reach out to the Assistant Director of Writing Services for help with encouraging a student to arrange this. We highly recommend recurring meetings for multilingual writers who want to work on grammar, as well as any students working on a larger writing project like a capstone or thesis.

### **Can I require my students to meet with a writing tutor?**

You may require your students to attend one writing appointment, and/or offer extra credit. The limited research available on required writing appointments suggests that overall, students find required visits helpful, even when they are initially resistant, and often go on to continue meeting with writing tutors for future assignments.

**However, if you are going to *require* all of your students to meet with a writing tutor, please send the Assistant Director of Writing Services an email with your assignment prompt, due date, and enrollment numbers.** It is also important that you stress to your students that we are not obligated to meet with them before the deadline, so it is their responsibility to schedule their appointment far enough in advance to ensure that they are able to find an available appointment with a writing tutor.

We also ask that you encourage your students to meet with a writing tutor at least two days before the assignment is due, so that they can actually implement the feedback they receive. Lastly, we strongly recommend that students write at least part of their assignment prior to the required visit; they can still come in for brainstorming appointments too if they would like help at that stage, but that should not be the only visit. In the past, we have had a few students attending for a required visit show up with nothing written, and no desire for real brainstorming help either, so we would like to avoid this happening again as much as possible.

### **Can I refer a specific student to writing tutoring?**

You can submit a “Writing Tutoring Referral” in Starfish, which will be sent to both the student and the Assistant Director of Writing Services. The Assistant Director will then send the student a follow-up email with more information about writing tutoring, and encourage them to make an appointment or reach out if they have any questions. The Assistant Director will also send you a note through Starfish letting you know that the student has been contacted.

### **Can I verify whether my students met with a writing tutor or not?**

You can request an excel spreadsheet report on all of your students’ attendance at writing tutoring by emailing the Assistant Director of Writing Services, or you can look up students individually in Starfish by searching their name and then going to the “Meetings” tab on their profile. Students should also receive a summary of their session sent to their Jefferson email account by the end of the day of their appointment, so you can request that they forward this message to you as evidence that they attended a writing appointment.

### **Do you offer any support specifically for multilingual writers?**

Multilingual writers are welcome to meet with any of our professional writing tutors. All of our tutors are experienced in helping international students and other non-native English speakers develop their writing.

In addition, we have a part-time ESL Specialist who can work with multilingual students to develop their abilities to write, speak, read, and present in English effectively. We also have an undergraduate peer ESL tutor who can meet with students one-on-one to specifically work on their conversational English skills.

### **My student met with a writing tutor, but their writing doesn’t show any improvement. Why didn’t their writing get better?**

This situation can happen for several different reasons:

- 1) Writing tutoring is an educational conversation about writing. It is not the same as submitting a manuscript to an editor who will “fix” the writing. The student still needs to do the work of revising their writing after the session is over, and sadly sometimes

they did not leave themselves enough time to do this, or they choose not to revise post-session. The best advice in the world only helps if it's actually followed.

- 2) The student didn't understand the tutor's feedback. They might need to meet with a different tutor who can explain things in a different way, or become more willing to ask questions when they don't understand. Tutors, of course, should also use techniques to elicit student questions and give them opportunities to test their understanding during a session, so we certainly welcome any feedback from students or faculty that can be used for our tutors' professional development.
- 3) The student didn't bring in the assignment description, rubric, and, if available, your prior feedback. Without this information, the tutors are not able to adapt their feedback to the expectations specific for your class, which makes it much less effective. While there are commonalities across professors and across disciplines, each discipline (and each professor within that discipline) can also have unique expectations. The more information the student provides their tutor, the more likely that the tutor's feedback will help the student be successful in your specific class.
- 4) The student's writing *did* get better, just not a lot better. You may need to modify your expectations regarding how much progress is realistic to expect from one tutoring session. This is especially important when the student struggles with grammar, or there are many layers of writing challenges to address. In these cases, you could encourage your student to meet regularly with a writing tutor. As much as we all enjoy a dramatic makeover, small, incremental progress is much more realistic; after a semester of regular, dedicated tutoring (and individual work on the part of the student), I can guarantee that the student's writing will show improvement.

### **Do you offer any writing workshops?**

We do not offer any generalized writing workshops, as we have found these typically have low attendance, and they are also not a rhetorically sound approach to writing instruction. All writing takes place within specific contexts that shape what counts as "good writing."

Because of that, we only offer writing workshops on request, and we ask that you work with us to tailor the writing workshop to your course context. We can hold the workshop either during your regularly scheduled class time (ideal if you want to ensure that all of your students attend), or outside of class (you can combine different sections of the same course this way, and not have to give up any of your class time, but you risk having lower attendance due to scheduling conflicts).

If you are interested in having a writing workshop for one or more of your classes, contact the Assistant Director of Writing Services as soon as possible to negotiate the schedule and ensure sufficient preparation time.



## **I would like to improve my assignment prompts or how I teach writing. Can you help me with that?**

We would be happy to share with you our observations of how students frequently interpret your assignments and feedback (or if you're new here, how they *might* interpret them). As tutors, we can serve as a bridge between faculty and student perspectives. We help students understand faculty feedback and interpret assignment prompts more effectively, and we can help faculty better understand how students frequently read their assignments and feedback.

If you would like more comprehensive development in your approach to teaching writing, we recommend that you reach out to the Director of the Writing Program to schedule an individual consultation.

## **I'm working on writing a journal article for publication. Can your tutors help me with that?**

While our tutors are experienced writers, and several of them are also published writers, we do not work with faculty on their writing for publication. Our mission is educational in nature, so all of our work must be in alignment with that mission. However, thankfully you can receive writing support too, from the Office for Professional Writing, Publishing, and Communication.

That office exclusively works with faculty and students who are writing for publication or preparing to present in a professional/academic context. If your students are working on writing something that they hope to eventually publish, they should work with the ASC tutors until the class has ended. Once they're ready to start preparing their manuscript for publication, *then* they can reach out to the Office for Professional Writing, Publishing, and Communication for further support.