

The Writing Process for Sustained Projects: Understanding, Adapting, Strategizing

Presented by:

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DePaul University Writing
The University Center for
Writing-based Learning

University Center for Writing-based Learning Core Beliefs...

1. Anyone who writes **anything** is a **writer**.

3. Writing facilitates communication and learning.

5. All writers, no matter how accomplished, can improve their writing by **sharing** work in progress and **revising** based on constructive criticism.

2. There is no **universal** writing process that all writers (should) use.

4. Collaboration **among peers** is an especially effective mode of learning.

6. Writers produce written texts in many different contexts, using many different **genres** of writing. Understanding these contexts and genres can help writers as they write.

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If You Are Beginning or Returning to Your Program

Workplace Expectations

- Workplace communications respond to a need to know or a need to act
- Employers are in control and hold the copyright to your work

Academic Expectations

- Academic, Scholarly writing respond to a desire to know, often for intellectual as well as “practical” purposes
- You have authorial control and copyright, but also are judged

A Grad School Writing Sampler: Ongoing and Culminating Projects

“The journalist writes, ‘The skills and duties required of a superintendent today differ greatly from those required over 100 years ago.’” (Joyner 2012)

“The scholar writes, ‘According to several recent studies (Boldt, 2004; Candoli, 1995; Cuban, 1976; Kowalski, 1999) many practicing superintendents agree that the superintendent position has gone through fundamental changes since the first school superintendent was appointed in 1837.’”

Graduate School Writing Expectations

- critical thinking and analysis,
- subject-area knowledge
- Knowledge of :
 - types of discourse
 - levels of formality
 - Seminar Paper
 - Literature Review
- manage your resources and responsibilities
- Awareness of the ongoing conversation
- Originality

Don't shortchange any part of the process:
Try to allocate about equal time to explore
your subject, do research, read, track and
synthesize your findings, draft, get feedback,
revise – but also to “just” *think!*

Examining the Overall Rhetorical Situation

- conduct and publish substantive research
- make useful contribution to knowledge
- enter the scholarly and/or professional ranks

So...

- Consider your Exigence, your Audience, your Ethos, and your Purpose and Goals. Think carefully about what you are doing, and why!
- Respect the requirements and remember your readers:
- Take time to think about your processes, build on your strengths, and anticipate/address problems and potential setbacks

Readers' Expectations and Your Tasks & To-Do's:

- identify/define problems
- generate questions and hypotheses
- review and summarize the literature
- determine the type of dissertation (Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods)
- apply appropriate methods
- collect data properly
- analyze and judge evidence
- discuss findings in a sustained piece of research or argument
- think and write critically and coherently
- produce publishable results

No Dissertation was Built in a Day

(or an All-Nighter)

- ❖ Graduate students approaching the final project have knowledge and disciplinary expertise. The main reason why they don't get their degree is that they don't finish writing their thesis or dissertation
- ❖ All the tricks you employed to pull off all those "just in time" assignments & work projects are not necessarily helpful when you write long, in depth works over time
- ❖ Build in time to think, to reflect, and to REST

Write & Discuss : *Examine & Write Your Process*

Write about it (3-4 minutes):

- Think about your most common writing projects (typical writing project for your graduate classes)
- Your process – what you typically do to get started and to keep going
- Strengths and trouble-spots



Write/Discuss *Part 2* (4-5 min): *Compare Notes with Fellow Writers*

In groups, compare notes (4-5 minutes):

- How you get started
- Useful ideas/strategies
- What's worked
- Working with others
- What is your favorite



format for generating and organizing ideas (list, roadmap, diagram, Post-It, etc.)

- What “tools” you use (software, pen, etc.)

**Thinking Ahead to the
Culminating Project, and
Drawing Connections
Among Them (i.e., how one
task prepares you – and
even helps you – write the
other)**

Write & Discuss

- Look over the slides on the Qualifying Paper, Prospectus, Proposal, and Dissertation elements, and write 3-5 quick notes on ways they might intersect and/or build on each other.
- Pair up with a discussion partner sitting near you and share your impressions.
- Together or individually consider how this specifically applies to your own project.

The Prospectus

Elements – One Model:

- A. Problem Statement
- B. Significance
- C. Background
- D. Framework
- E. Research Question(s)
- F. Method and Theory
- G. Sources/Schedule
- H. References

Elements – Another Model:

- A. Statement of the Problem (including literature survey)
- B. Method
- C. Discussion of Data (if relevant)
- D. Chapter Outline
- E. Select Bibliography

Helpful Resource:

<http://comparativestudies.osu.edu/dissertation-prospectus>

The Dissertation Proposal

(Adapted from “Plain Talk”: http://www.ling.upenn.edu/advice/green_proposal.html)

The purpose is to convince your committee that there is a tractable question which is worth pursuing and that you are in a position to pursue it.

- Questions your proposal should answer directly:
- What problem are you going to tackle?
- Why is it a problem, and why is it important to solve it?
- Where are you going to look for answers and why are you going to look there?

The **Dissertation**: Common Component Parts

Front Matter

- Title Page)
- Dedication and Acknowledgments
- Table of Contents
- Lists of Tables, Figures, Schemes, Nomenclature, Abbreviations, etc.
- Abstract

Body of Text

- Main (Chapter-level) Headings
- Subheadings
- Notes

- **Tables and Figures**
- **Photographs, Hand-Drawn Illustrations, Images, Audio, and Oversized Illustrative Materials**
- **List of References**
- **Back Matter**
 - **Appendices**
 - **Vita**

Chapter Level

Chapter 1: Introduction

An overview of the problem; importance; summary of extant work; your hypothesis. Readable by anyone.

Chapter 2: Definitions

New terms only.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Model

Central concept tying together all your arguments. If necessary, additional chapters on problem or solution.

Chapter 4: Experimental Measurements

Describe results of experiments that provide evidence in support of your thesis. Usually experiments either emphasize proof-of-concept or efficiency.

Chapter Level, part two

Chapter 5: Corollaries And Consequences

Describe variations, extensions, or other applications of the central idea.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Summarize what was learned and how it can be applied.
Possibilities for future research.

Abstract:

Dissertation summary. Emphasize the original contributions.

Planning & Organizing Schedules & Logistics Nuts & Bolts

- Devise a realistic Schedule
- Line up resources and support
- Be honest
- Plan short-term as well as long-term
- Ask for advice!

Crafting a Preliminary Plan

- Identify & Quantify
- List
- Map out
- Re-visit feeder assignments as often as needed

Some Execution Strategies for Organizing Your Research

- Be realistic in your planning
- Use models for guidance
- Programs & apps
- Organize

Some Brainstorming Strategies

- Free-write
- Clustering
- Outline
- Talk and Collaborate
- Storyboard
- Outline using PowerPoint

Writing-Related Strategies

- **Find the best way to start**
- **Develop a full, working** Table of Contents, and use it to guide and to motivate your writing
- **Build in time** to get feedback, to rethink your research and arguments, and to revise
- **Keep reading** – read in chunks – and keep asking questions and talking to keep up your momentum
- **Build in accountability** outside of your dissertation or thesis committee with a writing buddy, writing center tutor, and/or writing group. Meet regularly to keep on track

Writing Groups

condor.depaul.edu/writing/what/WG/index.html

Apps Bookmarks Grad Writing Resour... Military Writing, Vet... International Writin... 3rd Space and Outr...

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writing groups

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LIBRARIES
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CAMPUS CONNECT
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DIGICATION

who we are

what we do

- Writing Center
- Writing Fellows
- Writing Groups
- The Collaborative for Multilingual Writing and Research
- Faculty Development
- Workshops
- Outreach
- UCWbL Productions
- News and Events

locations & hours

resources for writers

resources for instructors

resources for tutors

Make a Writing Center Appointment:

Email Address:

Password:

Create an account

Writing Groups are an UCWbL service in which a Peer Writing Tutor facilitates a review and discussion of works in progress for a group of 3-6 writers. These 90-minute meetings are scheduled on a weekly or biweekly basis, and they are designed to provide support and feedback for specific fields of writing. Each session usually combines discussion and feedback, although the focus is determined by the writers' needs, and the meeting's agenda is developed collaboratively by the facilitator and writers.

Writers seek or join Writing Groups for a variety of reasons:

- **Accountability**—Writing Groups give writers a deadline and motivation to write
- **Feedback**—Writing Groups provide reassurance, suggestions, and recommendations for revision
- **Guidance**—Writing Groups can help writers become familiar with new genres, reader's needs, and reader's expectations
- **Brainstorming**—Writing Groups help writers generate and develop ideas
- **Networking**—Writing Groups provide a community for people with like-minded interests
- **Inspiration**—Writing Groups help people who are looking for different perspectives and new ideas

The UCWbL will provide a space and a facilitator for your group, and Writing Groups can be scheduled to meet at the Loop or Lincoln Park Campus, depending on the group.

To request or to join a Writing Group, contact Elizabeth Coughlin, the UCWbL Associate Director: Email: ecoughli@depaul.edu
Phone: **773.325.4273**

Winter Quarter 2015-2016 Writing Groups

- **College of Education PhD/EdD students Writing Group:**
Tuesdays in COE 201 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM, WG Leaders Jen F. & Maggie C.
- **College of Education PhD/EdD students Writing Group:**
Thursdays in COE 146 3:45 PM - 5:15 PM, WG Leaders Edward E. & Amber S.
- **Writers Guild for Creative Writers:**
Wednesdays LPC SAC 212 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM, WG Leader Michele L.
- **Writers Guild for Creative Writers:**
Thursdays LPC SAC 212 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM, WG Leader Jen Fi.

Writing Groups by Request

Want to be a part of a Writing Group, but don't see a time or place listed for your writing area? Or maybe you want to form your own group with friends or with classmates? We can help! You can form your own Writing Group at the time and campus you want and we will offer a tutor and a location to help facilitate the group. **Contact us today!**

Some Parting Advice...

- Build in time for change
- Write down all changes
- Keep in touch with advisers
- Remember If you fall behind, waste some time, or otherwise screw up, forgive yourself, dust yourself off, and get back to work

Discuss

- What's next? Where will you go from here?
- What strategies might continue to be useful as you move ahead with your thesis or dissertation?
- What challenges (familiar or new) do you foresee?
- What ideas do you have for addressing them?

Thank You

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