



1. Instructional Materials. Guide to useful writing group practices.

This document gives instructor and student guidance on how to conduct a useful writing group meetings. The guide contains three sections: (i) Facilitator guidelines, (ii) student guidelines, and (iii) instructions for a reflective group workshop to improve writing group practices.

Writing Group Facilitator (guidelines)

Typically, a writing group meeting has three stages (the meeting start, the reviewing of the students' draft texts, and the meeting end). *The meeting start* sets the learning scene, *the reviewing stage* promotes feedback interactions, and *the meeting end* allows student reflection of group feedback interactions. Each stage needs careful nurturing to ensure a successful meeting outcome. If time permits, we suggest that you also participate as a feedback giver as this will provide the students a model of beneficial feedback practices.

Facilitation of Meeting Stages

Following the student guidelines (see section two below), your main role is to ensure the careful facilitation within the following writing group stages:

Meeting Start (setting the scene and ensuring participant understanding)

The facilitator:

1. Builds a harmonious learning environment through greetings and other appropriate indicators of social presence;
2. Performs a technical check (if conducting the meeting online);
3. Ensures the students are fully prepared;
4. Provides feedback and writing group instruction and procedural guidance as necessary, and particularly in earlier feedback rounds.

Reviewing Stage (promoting feedback exchanges)

The facilitator:

1. Designates turn-taking;
2. Ensures each author gives a brief cover speech;
3. Ensures that each author is given equal time;
4. Gives a review as the last feedback giver on each author's draft;
5. Gives or elicits a synopsis of given feedback at end of reviewing stage;
6. Clarifies authorial understanding of given feedback;
7. Allows authorial reflection on given feedback comments .



Within each peer review, the facilitator:

1. Elicits peer feedback;
2. Ensures each peer review consists of a balance of justified *critical* and *positive feedback comments*;
3. Provides an opportunity for reviewer expansion on their feedback comment, and then allows authorial or reviewer clarification;
4. Allows the author to reflect on the given feedback comment;
5. Repeats steps (ii) to (iv) on all subsequent feedback comments until the end of the peer review.

Meeting End (reflection on peer feedback exchanges)

The facilitator

1. Gives a synopsis of all the groups' given feedback;
2. Provides feedback and writing instruction (*direct instruction*);
3. Provides guidance on course practicalities (effecting discourse);
4. Concludes the meeting by ensuring a harmonious learning environment through closures and other such niceties.

Technology

If using technology, problems can arise during the writing group meeting. The loss of potential oral interactions caused by technological impedance can be substantial. For example, if one student is unable to connect for the whole duration of a writing group consisting of five students, this would result in the loss of at least one peer review and four student reviewing turns, and also a loss of approximately five minutes of participation time. Although obvious, technological support should be provided to the participants and facilitator as necessary to minimise loss of synchronous oral interactions and meeting time.



2. Instructional Materials (Students). Guide to beneficial writing group practices.

How to conduct a useful writing group meeting (student guidelines)

These instructional notes give guidance on how to get the most from your synchronous writing group meetings.

What is a writing group?

Near the beginning of the course, we will place you in a small writing group (ideally four persons) with colleagues in your discipline (or as close as we can find). The purpose of your group is to provide long-term writing support to each other. You will achieve this by meeting regularly to critically discuss each other's drafts. Please note, that you can change your writing group if you feel that you belong more in another group. In this case, do let us know.

The importance of writing group meetings

A face-to-face group meeting is one of the last stages of the peer feedback process and it takes place after the written feedback stage. As a reviewer, this is your opportunity to expand upon the feedback you gave to your colleagues. As an author, you can ask for clarification on any feedback points you do not understand. There is a strongly suggested procedure for conducting the meetings (see below) to ensure that the session is effective. Please ensure that you are fully prepared. If you cannot attend, please inform your group as soon as you can as these writing group meetings are carefully planned.

Suggested agenda for feedback meetings (general points)

If a facilitator is not available, we suggest the following procedure:

1. Appoint a *time-manager* and find out how much time there is for each member (download writing group time management sheet below) and remember to allocate time for scheduling a new meeting before the time is up.
2. Choose one author's draft and cover letter to start the group meeting (e.g., start with Ann's draft in a group consisting of Ann, Bob, Claire and Dave).
3. Starting from their cover letter and written peer feedback (received earlier), allow the author (e.g., Ann) to give a brief *cover speech* (no longer than a minute) about what their draft submission contains and to communicate their feedback expectations.
4. Next, each reviewer in turn (e.g., Bob, then Claire, and finally Dave) gives their oral feedback (based on their written feedback and the author's cover speech).



5. During the review round, feel free to expand on feedback given earlier if you feel this will help the author improve their writing.
6. At the end of the review round, the author (e.g., Ann) gives a brief summary (no longer than one minute) to seek clarification, confirm understanding, and process the given feedback.
7. Repeat steps 2-5 for each subsequent member of your writing group (e.g., Bob, Claire, and Dave) until everyone has had their writing peer reviewed.
8. At the end of the last review round, we suggest that you allow time to reflect on how you will implement, or not implement, the feedback you received from your peers.
9. At the end of the meeting, arrange a time and method (e.g., in person or through *Zoom*) for your next meeting.

The basic principle is that each author gets equal time for each group review.

Suggested agenda for feedback meetings (specific points)

As author

1. In your cover speech, ask for honest and realistic feedback on one or two specific textual aspects on global concerns (e.g., specific content and ideas, textual organisation, and writing purpose) and also on a holistic aspect (e.g., on overall readability) if this will help your writing self-assessment.
2. If you are at the start of the writing process and cannot ask for specifics, ask for general feedback on one or two areas you are unsure about (e.g., ideas, organisation, writing purpose, and overall readability).
3. After the meeting, allow a little time to reflect on how you may improve the feedback you received through your cover speech for next writing group meeting.

As reviewer

1. When giving feedback, start from the author's cover speech and the written feedback comments you gave on their draft text.
2. Comment on two or three aspects on what the writer can improve or has done well. Give your reasoning.
3. Be polite, concise, honest, and critical with your feedback.
4. Only comment on local concerns (e.g., language and punctuation) when it impedes textual readability or if specifically requested.
5. After the meeting, allow a little time to reflect on how you may improve your feedback comments for next writing group meeting.



Tip- As author, consider the competencies of your reviewers (i.e., on what textual aspects can they help you improve your writing) and respect their time.

Tip- As reviewer, consider your author and prioritise on two or three specific feedback points.

If you are the person receiving feedback (the author), you should help and respect your reviewers (your group members) as follows:

1. Make notes on the feedback you receive from your colleagues.
2. Listen attentively and only interrupt with necessary clarifying questions.
3. Do not reject the feedback with negative body language.
4. Thank your reviewer for his/her feedback
5. At the end of the reviewing round, give a brief summary on your understanding of the feedback you received from your group members.

Similarly, when you give feedback to your colleagues, you should help and respect the authors as follows:

1. Prioritise your feedback and do not ask the author questions.
2. Illustrate the feedback by pointing at passages in the text.
3. Give positive feedback on areas the author has written well.
4. Repeat briefly whether you agree or disagree with the comments of the previous feedback givers.

After the meeting

It is a good idea to turn on the computer and start writing useful feedback and your own thoughts into the text as soon as the meeting is over while you can still remember the feedback. To help you organise your thinking process, you could consider writing a revision plan. A revision plan is where you systematically record what you do with your received feedback comments (see resources: how to revise your text for more info.). Do not use the writing-group meetings as an excuse not to work anymore on the project that day.

Remember

1. Start on time.
2. Do not wait for those who are late.
3. Allocate a time-keeper (use a timer).
4. Follow the rules.



3. Instructional Materials. Writing Group Reflective Workshop (Instructor notes)

These prompts are intended to be given to the students as a reflective tool to improve their writing group practices. We suggest allowing time after the first meeting (e.g., a day or a week) before conducting this workshop.

Aim.

- To reflect upon how you can improve your writing group practices to give and receive useful feedback
- To improve your writing and feedback processes through these reflections

Required materials for the workshop (to help you remember what happened in your writing group meeting):

- Your feedback cover letter
- Your draft text(s)
- The feedback comments you gave to your writing group members
- The feedback comments you received from your writing group members

Workshop Prompts (Students)

The purpose of the writing group meetings was to give you the opportunity to discuss the feedback comments with your peers in more detail. This allowed you, as a writer, to clarify any possible misunderstandings you may have had with the reviewer. This also allowed you, as a reviewer, to clarify and elaborate on the written feedback you gave.

As a group, discuss the following points:

- Did you as a group have any difficulties arranging a time to meet? If so, how can you improve your group communication for the next writing group meeting?
- As an author, did the writing group meetings help you to understand the written feedback comments you received?
- As a reviewer, did the writing group meetings help you to explain the feedback comments you gave?
- What did you find particularly useful in the meetings? Why?
- How as a group could you improve your writing group meeting for the next feedback round?

As a group, please share your thoughts about your discussion (about 3-5 sentences)