What happens at the Undergraduate Writing Center?

The Undergraduate Writing Center offers free peer writing support to students taking classes at the University of Vermont. Tutors do not correct papers for students or write comments on drafts; rather, they engage writers in conversation and activities designed to help them move forward with writing projects.

Who provides the tutoring?

The Undergraduate Writing Center is staffed by about 50 peer tutors from a variety of disciplines. Tutors are carefully chosen through an interview and application process after being recommended by an instructor. They also take a year-long course exploring how to work with students in a writing center setting.

Contact the Undergraduate Writing Center Director to:

- request information about the Writing Center to put on your syllabus
- arrange to introduce students to the Writing Center through a class presentation or workshop (lasting anywhere from 10 to 45 minutes)
- discuss ways the Writing Center can support your students in completing a writing project
- arrange for a student to be matched with a writing partner for weekly appointments
- consult about individual students with Sue Dinitz, the Writing Center Director
- have a writing tutor attached to your class, through the WID Mentor Program (open to faculty who have participated in WID programming)

Have any students to recommend as future writing tutors? Please forward their names to Sue Dinitz (sdinitz@uvm.edu)
Frequently Asked Questions

My student went to the Undergraduate Writing Center. Why are there still so many errors in the paper?
A tutoring session should enable a student to improve a paper, but the final draft may still have problems for a variety of reasons.
• Our mission is to help students become better writers, not fix their papers for them.
• The tutor and writer only have an hour to work together.
• Unless the paper is due soon, tutors generally consider global issues (e.g. the assignment, development of ideas, organization, clarity) before sentence-level issues.
• If students and tutors work on editing, tutors will try to improve writers’ editing skills by helping them learn to identify and correct patterns of error that appear in their writing.
• Tutors have no control over what students do as they continue to revise after the session.

Can a student see a tutor with experience writing in my discipline?
• We hire tutors from a variety of disciplines. Students can find a list of the tutors, their areas of concentration, and their tutoring hours on our webpage at www.uvm.edu/writingcenter. If you would like to see more tutors from your discipline on our list, please recommend some! We hire new tutors for the following academic year in March.

I have a student with many writing issues. Can I send this student to the Undergraduate Writing Center?
• We have a limited number of tutors available to work with students on a weekly basis as writing partners. If a student has gotten to college with what seem to be deep-seated issues with writing, a weekly meeting with a peer tutor is unlikely to produce quick improvement. But it can be a start!

Can I require students to go to the Undergraduate Writing Center?
• You can require a small number of students to use the Writing Center, but please don’t make this a requirement for a group of students without first consulting Sue Dinitz (sdinitz@uvm.edu), so we can make sure the students can be accommodated.

My students have problems citing sources correctly. Can tutors help with this?
• Tutors can introduce students to the basics of common styles of documentation, and can help students figure out where to find answers to more complex questions about how to cite a source.

Can multilingual writers have their papers edited at the Undergraduate Writing Center?
• Tutors can work with multilingual writers to edit their papers, helping them (1) rewrite passages where the meaning isn’t clear and (2) learn to identify common patterns of error in their writing and to correct them. This is a slow but useful process; improvement takes place over time.
• Tutors cannot edit papers for students. We don’t have the resources and this does not fit our mission, which is to help students develop their writing abilities. For students who want to hire an editor, we can provide the contact information for some professional editors in the area.

Can graduate students use the Undergraduate Writing Center?
The UVM Writing Centers now include the Graduate Writing Center.
• It is staffed by trained consultants who are MA and PHD students from across the disciplines.
• It supports graduate students at all stages of the writing process and at all levels of experience, working on a wide range of projects for both academic and public audiences.
• It also offers a Graduate Writing Retreat on some Sunday afternoons and a dissertation/thesis Jump Start program in the summer.
• It is coordinated by Nancy Welch, Professor, Department of English.
For more information, follow the link on the UVM Writing Centers webpage (uvm.edu/writingcenter) to the Graduate Writing Center.