

Best Practice in Peer Mentoring Programs: Reflecting on the Role of Student Writing Mentors

Linda Thies

Deakin University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

linda.thies@deakin.edu.au

Abstract

Many Australian universities have introduced formal peer mentoring programs, with one more common model focusing on undergraduate students' learning development, specifically their academic writing. Deakin University's Writing Mentor Program provides one-to-one 'drop in' sessions where Writing Mentors (WMs) work with a peer, and it is coordinated by Tertiary Learning Advisers (TLAs). The Program's overall aims include helping students interpret academic expectations, and better understand how they can succeed with their studies. However, this Writing Mentor Program also aims to facilitate WMs' learning from their peers, through reflections on their interactions with students. This study aimed to inform the professional development program for WMs by identifying the perception of the role of WMs held by both WMs and TLAs at the commencement of the program, and also the perceived differences between the roles of WMs and TLAs. Findings from the study highlighted the need to include reflective practice as a topic in on-going training sessions. The study also suggested the need for a more structured approach to developing a 'shared understanding' of the roles of WMs.

Keywords: peer learning, writing mentors, tertiary learning advisers, reflective practice

Formal student peer mentoring programs which have become common in Australian universities, (Cornelius et al., 2016), have a variety of objectives, and may be based on different models of peer learning (Bernard, 2017; Boud et al., 2001; Harrington et al., 2007). There are also differences in the rigour of training programs offered to peer mentors to help them understand and become proficient in their mentoring role (Reid et al., 2012; Schwaller,

& Miller-Cochran, 2020). The model being discussed here focuses on student learning and assignment writing, and could be described as being loosely based on the practices of Writing Centres on college campuses in the United States, where student mentors focus on students' writing development, and their successful completion of written assessment tasks (Nakamaru 2010; Winder et al., 2016).

This student writing mentor program is offered at Deakin University, an Australian multi-campus university, with campuses in Melbourne, Geelong and Warrnambool. Deakin University has an enrolment of approximately 45,000 undergraduate students. Writing Mentors (WMs) have to have completed at least one year of undergraduate study, and the recruitment process is at the start of the academic year. Students apply for a WM position and are selected after attending an interview. They are paid at an hourly rate for attending training sessions, and for the number of hours they facilitate student interactions. The program is one where WMs work with peers in 'drop in' one-to-one sessions offered over a three-to-four-hour period each day. The time allocated for a single 'drop in' session is flexible, ranging from a short interaction of ten minutes to a longer session of approximately 50 minutes. This timing is often determined by the student's needs, or the number of students accessing the service at one time. While the title of the program suggests a focus on assignment writing, the overall aims are broader, and include supporting students to make a successful transition into university. More recently due to restrictions on face-to-face interaction between students, the service has been offered as an on-line 'drop in' service. This on-line program involves students clicking to join a Zoom meeting where they talk with a WM. The program, which is coordinated by Tertiary Learning Advisers (TLAS) was initially offered in 2013 on one campus of the University, and then expanded to all four campuses. Initially the program was coordinated by four TLAs (one TLA on each campus), but during the period of Covid restrictions the program moved to on-line delivery, and the coordination role was undertaken by only one TLA.

Students who are appointed as WMs are required to complete an on-line induction and two training sessions during the year. Initially these training sessions were conducted face-to-face by TLAs on three campuses. The initial one day training program includes both instrumental 'advice', such as 'how to record data after a learning interaction', and discussion of theories of peer learning. The WMs read three articles on tutoring sessions and student and writing mentor learning interactions, prior to attending the first session (Appendix A). They

are also required to be familiar with a key document ‘Deakin’s Best Practice Principles for Writing Mentors’ (Appendix B). Additionally, the training sessions include:

- Participating in activities to develop rapport with other WMs
- Discussing prescribed readings and the role of WMs
- Observing and participating in learning interaction role plays
- Discussing frameworks for reflective practice
- Becoming familiar with on-line academic skills resources
- Practising using on-line meeting platforms, such as Zoom
- Reviewing students’ evaluative comments

During the first training session, WMs are introduced to reflective practice frameworks such as Gibbs (1988) reflective cycle and Rolfe et al.’s (2001) ‘Framework for Reflective Practice’. Rolfe’s framework includes three questions: What? – describing a situation, So What? – discussing what has been learnt and Now what? – identifying what needs to be done in the future. WMs practise recording a reflection, and are required to post at least one written reflection on the WM cloud site during the trimester. They are also encouraged to respond in writing to at least one of their colleague’s reflections.

The Writing Mentor program sits within the ‘Student Academic and Peer Support’ unit. TLAs who are part of this unit provide a number of different services, including individual student consultations. Students can make a meeting time with a TLA to discuss any aspect of their study, using an on-line booking system. These appointments are generally for a half hour, and while learning interactions can vary, in general TLAs are focusing on development of the academic literacies students need to successfully complete their course of study (Lea & Street, 1998; Thies & Rosario, 2019). Key academic literacies as identified by McWilliams and Allan (2014, p. 3) include “critical thinking, database searching, familiarity with academic conventions such as referencing, use of formal register and ability to manipulate a range of genres...” Many students arrange individual meetings with TLAs to get feedback on their writing – assignment plans, assessment task drafts and parts of these.

Clearly there are differences in the way the two services are offered and delivered, but one of the key differences is the emphasis by TLAs on students’ developmental learning, and the sharing within the TLA team of on-line notes on individual student’s progress and learning. TLAs are also much more likely to work with an individual student over a longer period of time, and use the on-line notes to plan responses to student’s learning development

based on different pedagogical approaches. Another difference is TLAs extensive knowledge of academic literacies, and how these may differ across disciplines. One aim of this study was to identify additional perceived differences, similarities and boundaries between the roles of WMs and TLAs in order to contribute to a more integrated academic writing service across the University. The second aim was to inform the content of professional development sessions for student WMs, and promote further engagement in reflective practice.

Writing Mentor Programs

Peer mentoring, especially when focused on developing students' academic writing, contributes to students' successful transition into university, and is an important part of students' higher education learning experience (Harrington et al., 2007). Falchikov (2001) suggests that writing mentors can lead these discussions on students' writing because they have a credibility with other students that may stem from their success in competing assessment tasks, and also from their understanding of the university system. Thomas (2019) argues that writing mentor programs should not be based on a deficit model, but rather encourage a creative and collaborative approach to writing instruction. One key objective of these programs should be to encourage a dialogue around writing, and this is most likely to be achieved when students feel comfortable discussing their writing with peers (Archer 2007; Bräuer, 2002; Thaiss et al. 2012; Thomas, 2019). This could be described as a conversation between 'near peers', where there is a low power distance between the writing mentor and the student (Chan et al. 2016; Ladyshevsky & Gardner, 2008). Hofstede (2001) defines power distance as the distribution of power between individuals in a specific social situation. Also, writing mentors are not judging or assessing students' writing, but rather act as readers of the writing, who encourage students to think and talk about both the content and the writing process.

The Role of Writing Mentors

While organisational support and provision of resources are highlighted as important components of WM programs, training which helps mentors understand their mentoring role is seen as one of the key factors identified as contributing to program success (Falchikov, 2001; Lloyd & Bristol, 2006; Packard, 2003; Zhang & Bayley, 2019). Much of the literature emphasises the importance of including the detail of training in program design, planning and

the reviewing process (Lloyd & Bristol, 2006; Thomas, 2019). Cornelius et al. (2016) argue that the training should include goals and objectives of the program and clear guidelines, which outline the responsibilities of mentors and mentees. It is also suggested that training programs need to be continually evaluated and updated as mentors' roles may change as the programs develop (Harrington et al., 2007). Harrington et al. (2007) emphasise the importance of writing mentors' reflections in contributing to this evaluation. They argue that there is value in writing mentors reflecting on their capacity to build rapport and facilitate a conversation with other students around writing practices.

When considering the content of writing mentor training, much of the debate centres on whether the conversation between mentors and students should focus on higher order or text level issues. Nakamaru (2010) describes this as a non-directive or rhetorical approach compared to a syntactic or lexical approach. These terms refer to an approach where WMs discuss the content or student's response to the assignment question, presentation of the key concepts and how the writing is structured, compared to a focus on grammatical errors at the sentence level (Nakamaru, 2010). Winder et al. (2016) suggest that one way to resolve dissonance between these different approaches would be to adopt a two-way reciprocal learning process. This would involve the writing mentors encouraging students to talk about their assignment topic, and also asking questions which direct the writer to consider higher order writing skills, such as sequencing, connecting of ideas and paragraph structure. In addition, Nakamaru (2010, p. 16) suggests that international students and L2 writers may have additional and different needs, and calls for WMs to provide some scaffolding to help these students express what they want to say, by providing some modelling in the use of idiomatic lexical chunks and sentence patterns. While currently the 'Deakin's Best Practice Principles for Writing Mentors' (Appendix B) give WMs some initial understanding of the different suggested approaches to how WMs can help facilitate students' development of their writing skills, further training on how they might 'teach' proof reading or help student writers find out how to best check their own work would be helpful. Adopting the different approaches previously explained assumes that writing mentors have the appropriate metalanguage to provide both global feedback and to talk about language issues. Clearly WM training programs cannot produce experts in linguistics. However, WMs could become familiar with common errors of syntax, and after an assessment and discussion around student need, they could direct students to on-line resources and/or refer them to a TLA. While training programs can help writing mentors acquire the required metalanguage, their

experience and their shared reflections on different approaches is another key component, which can contribute to the development of a student-centred approach, which responds to student need.

A student-centred approach also involves consideration of mode of delivery of student mentoring programs. While face-to-face peer programs have flourished in higher education settings over a lengthy period of time, online peer programs have only been introduced in more recent years. In comparing modes of delivery, Huijser et al. (2008) acknowledge face-to-face contact could be the most beneficial for some learners, and there may be more difficulty in building rapport with students in the online environment. Although Watts et al. (2015) focus on peer programs that are embedded within courses, they suggest that there are a number of benefits of on-line programs, such as flexibility and synchronous chat which encourages students to ask questions. Currently the Deakin University WM program is now offered face-to-face, although on only two campuses and for a reduced period of time, and as an on-line service. However, there has been no formal evaluation of these different modes of delivery. Also, while the data for this study was collected before the Writing Mentor Program moved to online delivery, WMs ability to interact with other students online has now become an important addition to their role (Ferguson 2010; Mintu-Wimsatt et al., 2010; Sakulwichitintu et al., 2018; Watts et al., 2015).

Method

The method for this study was a qualitative analysis of responses to questionnaires completed by both WMs and TLAs. Questionnaires were completed by WMs at the conclusion of their initial training session during the fifth year of the program (March, 2018), and they were asked to provide a written response to four questions. There were 27 responses to this questionnaire, with 13 responses from new WMs and 14 from returning WMs. TLAs responded to questions during a planning day at the commencement of the academic year, with 10 replies to the questionnaire from a TLA team of 14. Key themes around the role of WMs and TLAs were identified by the author through analysis of both sets of questionnaire data. Similar wording in all responses was coded, and then the coded responses were used to generate key themes. Although further data collection was planned, Covid restrictions resulted in the WM program being discontinued for a time, and the second phase of the research was not completed.

The study also included an analysis of WMs' reflections based on the topic and complexity of the reflection. The WM induction included a session on guided reflections, and as a follow-up WMs were required to post a written reflection on the WM site reflecting on their work with students during the trimester. During the first half of the trimester 23 WMs posted a reflection in the WM cloud site. The length of WM reflections recorded varied, and data from 14 of these reflections is presented. The chosen reflections highlight how WMs viewed their role, and the pedagogical practices they adopted during learning interactions with students. Ethics approval (HAE-17-137) was granted for this study.

Findings

The three most common themes identified from WMs' responses to each question are presented in the table below. In response to the first question a small number of WMs included reference to more than one identified theme in their response. The table also includes an example comment for each of the key themes.

Table 1. *WM questionnaire responses*

Questions	Key themes	Number of responses
What is the role of WMs?	Developing academic skills	13
	Facilitating independent learning	11
	Helping students understand assessment tasks – assignment writing	9
“To provide peer support to students from all faculties in relation to assessment writing, and referring them on when appropriate to both face-to-face and the on-line resources.”		
What is the role of TLAs?	Offering help that requires more depth, time and knowledge	15
	Improving students’ use of language	11
	Improving learning practices	5
“To work with students who need assistance with regard to their language skills and learning practices and competencies, particularly where the issues the student faces are going to be a blockage to their progress through their studies.”		
What are the boundaries/differences between the two roles?	TLAs provide more in-depth support	14
	WMs refer students to TLAs	6
	Drop-in service c/f longer booked appointments	4
“We can tell students what’s wrong with their writing and possibly how to fix it, but we can’t necessarily explain why ... it’s the next level of help.”		
Can you suggest how WMs and TLAs can best work together?	More collaboration	13
	A system of referrals	8
	Better understanding of roles	3
“By having clear expectations and guidelines when to refer.”		

The most common themes identified in each of the responses from the TLAs to the questions are presented in the table below.

Table 2. *TLA questionnaire responses*

Questions	Key themes	Number of responses
What is the role of WMs?	Supporting students in adapting to university learning	7
	Supporting students' assignment writing	4
	Building confidence and providing moral support	2
	Sharing experience ("near peers")	2
	Directing to further resources	2
	Referring to TLA	2
What are the boundaries/differences between the roles of TLAs and WMs?	TLAs can foster developmental learning	6
	Qualifications TLAs – experience in teaching and linguistics	3
	TLAs work on curriculum design – have knowledge of course level goals	3
	Time TLAs – fixed appointment time WMs – no time allocation	2
	Physical space TLAs – confidential office space WMs – 'Drop in' in open space	1
How can WMs and TLAS become more aware of the boundaries and differences between their roles?	More collaboration, shared meetings and training sessions	6
	Additional information and video clips on the Study Support website	3
	Posters which explain differing roles	3

In response to the question on awareness of roles, all TLAs, except one who was 'unsure' recorded that there was a need for WMs and TLAs to be more aware of the differences between the two roles. There were a number of suggestions regarding how this might be achieved.

As shown, responses suggest that WMs have a more consistent and clearer sense of their role as WMs than TLAs. However, TLAs clearly expressed a differentiation between the roles, and provided a number of examples of the differences. There appears to be agreement between a significant number of respondents to both questionnaires, that

collaboration between WMs and TLAs would result in a better understanding of the differences between their roles.

Writing mentor reflections

There was a significant difference in the depth and complexity of the 23 WM reflections. Only five WMs followed Rolfe et al.'s (2001) model of reflection. For example, one returning WM wrote a two page reflection which included a number of new insights and different ways of practice:

“I have come to the conclusion that I need to undertake some form of triage when I first meet a student ...”

“I think I made a mistake focusing on the paper and the issues the paper had to deal with so specifically and deeply.”

“As a final reflection, ... it was clear to me that the student was not writing anything down as we spoke. I should have flagged this with the student or, if not, then I should have come back, and at least given him a short list of four or five key things that we had discussed to take away.”

In contrast, reflections from other WMs focused on one component of the learning interaction, and confirmed the approach being used.

“I think that having a student do a practice reference in front of you ... this really helps their confidence when it comes to referencing ... this student was able to correctly write his practice reference.”

Four WMs reflected on how to respond to student's individual needs rather than following a suggested format presented during the initial training session that involved reading and discussing one section of the writing, and then referring the student to appropriate resources. These included comments on trying to cover too much in the session, and needing to make a follow-up meeting time, and a comment on working with a student who appeared extremely stressed:

“I should also rather than covering everything at once, have invited them back to review the next iteration of their works and suggested that this would just be a review of their first go ...”

“I have found in some situations however, a more direct approach is needed, particularly when a student is stressing out of their mind. Sometimes a student is simply looking for reassurance that they’re on the correct track, and bringing up alternative ways of research, or reams of information and resources may only serve to stress them more. It can sometimes be something of a balancing act!”

There were also five reflections which focused on the need to emphasise that the goal of the sessions is the development of academic writing, rather than just achieving a higher mark for an individual assignment. These reflections referred to the importance of using the writing skills being discussed in relation to a specific assignment, to help students learn to apply them when responding to other assessment tasks. See ‘Deakin’s Best Practice Principles for Writing Mentors’ (Appendix B).

“I think the importance of it is that they come to you and it’s easy to say ‘fix this and change that’- they may get an assignment out of it but ... they don’t get any knowledge of how to fix it themselves ... it’s about teaching them to write, not how to finish a particular assignment.”

The WM reflections presented here illustrate a varying degree of understanding of the value of reflective practice. This is confirmed by the fact that only 23 WMs (from a team of approx. 50) had submitted a reflection before the second half of the trimester, even though reflective practice and using reflective frameworks had been a component of their training session. However, shared issues of concern in the reflections, such as some students’ incorrect perception of the purpose of the ‘drop in’ sessions, helped inform the WM training program. Also, the content of the more detailed reflections indicate the learning and possible impact on future practice, which results from engaging in reflective practice and the sharing of reflections.

Discussion

One of the guiding principles for peer learning programs is that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. It is assumed that induction and training programs help to clarify these roles for peer mentors. Again, it would be expected that peer mentors can recognise the boundaries, which also help to define their role. This study sought to identify WMs’ perception of their role. The questionnaire results showed that WMs recognised that their role was broad, and had a focus beyond just discussing students’

writing. For example, more than half of the WM respondents acknowledged that one of their goals was to facilitate students' independent learning. Similarly, more than 50% of TLA respondents referred to the WM role as supporting student learning. They also highlighted broader aspects of the WM role such as building rapport, sharing experiences and contributing to students' increased confidence. It would seem that respondents from both groups have a shared understanding that WMs do not focus only on assignment writing, but rather have a broader role as facilitators of student learning.

One consideration when planning WM training sessions is how much focus should be placed on pedagogical approaches, linguistics and lexical issues. Mackiewicz and Thompson (2018) focus on pedagogical approaches and explain that experienced WMs are able to scaffold students' intellectual development. Winder et al. (2016) argue that WMs need to acquire a metalanguage that allows them to ask questions about the topic or content of the writing, and also to lead a discussion on higher order writing skills. They suggest that these questions are particularly helpful for second language writers. The response from WMs in this study suggests that they do not see this as a key part of their role, but rather see 'improving students' use of language' as a component of the TLAs' role. TLAs' experience in teaching and linguistics is highlighted as a difference between the two services. One WM commented that she could help students change their writing so that it reads well, but not necessarily explain the reasons behind the suggested changes. While a clear understanding of the roles of WMs and TLAs is crucial for the planning and delivery of both services, differentiation on the basis of what has been described as 'content' and 'grammar' is not necessarily helpful (Nakamaru, 2010). WM training programs should aim to give WMs the skills to choose between various pedagogical approaches in order to scaffold student learning. Thus, while initial training sessions may only provide an introduction to teaching and learning practices in a writing mentor session, content of the follow-up training sessions could include components which focus on WMs' acquisition of metalanguage to ask questions about both content and the language being used.

In commenting on other aspects of the writing mentor program both groups highlighted the need for WMs to have knowledge of the on-line resources that they could 'showcase', and University services so that they could direct students to these as needed. Both WMs and TLAs acknowledged that WMs should direct students to the TLA service, but WMs also expressed a need to have clearer guidelines as to when students should be referred to TLAs. More than half of the TLA respondents included fostering developmental learning

as a key role of TLAs, which involves a process of identifying student need and planning a staged learning process. This involves a series of individual appointments with a TLA over a period of time. The majority of respondents from both groups agreed that there were a number of different initiatives that could contribute to a clearer and/or more shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of WMs and TLAs, the most common one being an increase in collaboration. Ashman and Colvin (2011) reviewed a peer program embedded within a course, but their conclusion is also relevant to student writing mentor programs. They recommend training sessions for peer mentors which ‘unpack’ different roles of stakeholders, and also shared professional development sessions in order to alleviate confusion.

The reflections written by WMs also contributed to an understanding of how they saw their role. The requirement for them to share reflections had a number of objectives, one being that writing reflections and reading and considering their peers’ reflections would lead to improved practice. Finlay (2008, p. 1) defines reflective practice as “... the process of learning through and from experience toward gaining new insight of self and/or practice.” She further explains that such reflection requires the practitioner to be self-aware and to critically evaluate his/her responses, which could lead to new understandings and improved future practice, as illustrated by the example WM reflections in this study.

It was assumed that sharing reflections and suggesting alternative approaches would serve as on-going training for the WMs, as they would identify with the issues being raised, and reflect further on their own practice. Reflections such as those that focused on considering student’s individual needs and facilitating their extended learning could be used to initiate discussion, and to inform follow-up training sessions. However, although reflective practice was one topic in the WM initial training, and a formal component of their role, more consideration needs to be given as to how WMs can become more proficient in reflective practice. Also, the fact that not all WMs fulfilled the reflection requirement, and the variation in the complexity of the WM reflections indicate that further time needs to be given to ensuring that WMs understand how these shared reflections contribute to their development as WMs.

Much of the literature on critical reflection acknowledges that it is both complex and situated, and also cannot be applied in a simplistic way (Boud & Walker 1998; Finlay 2008; van Manen 1990). This would suggest that WMs need more professional development on

reflective practice, and that they will become more confident reflecting in different ways on their practice as they become more proficient in their role. Members of the Deakin TLA team could present on reflective practice during the WM professional development sessions. Grushna et al. (2005) emphasise the need to consider the timing of reflections during the teaching and learning cycle and the different purpose of each reflection. Johns (2006) uses the term ‘reflexivity’ to describe a reflection that focuses on both internal and external factors, which refers to consideration of both the learning situation and the emotional responses or feelings experienced during the interaction. Johns also recommends using cue questions to prompt responses. While WMs were introduced to Rolfe’s (2001) ‘Framework of Reflective Practice’ during their initial training session, introducing prompting questions which focus on aspects of the learning experience, such as building rapport, clarifying objectives and providing feedback could be introduced in follow-up sessions, in order to contribute to WMs professional development. Further professional development of reflective practice could also include production of short video clips where WMs record their reflections, and share them on the Writing Mentor training site.

Conclusion

The findings from this research project emphasise the importance of training and professional development sessions, which help students understand their role in peer learning programs. The project also draws attention to the need for processes which help all stakeholders gain a shared understanding of student mentors’ roles, and the differences between the practices used to deliver student support programs. Also, although the writing mentor program described here is coordinated by a TLA, it seems that introducing more structured ways of collaborating between WMs and TLAs would be beneficial. Examples would be the involvement of different TLAs in the WM professional development sessions on reflective practice and how to ‘teach’ editing. While the research confirms the value of reflective practice as a key component in assisting students to understand their peer mentoring role, it also suggests that reflective practice is complex, and that further professional development sessions would contribute to improving practice. Professional development for WMs also needs to include the skills needed for teaching and learning online. While the project focuses on WMs’ and TLAs’ perception of their roles, further research on how students who access these two services differentiate between them, how they make choices about which service to access, and how they perceive the role of WMs is needed. This research would help WMs

and TLAs further differentiate between their roles, and provide content for posters and/or introductory information on our unit websites. The document ‘Deakin’s Best Practice Principles for Writing Mentors’ (Appendix B) emphasises that WMs need to engage in on-going learning, and to continue to ‘grow’ into their role. While this document provides a good starting point for WMs professional development, clearly for student mentor programs to continue to be relevant there is a need for on-going evaluation and revision of both training programs and practices.

References

- Archer, A. (2007). Critical access to higher education: Challenges and goals for South African writing centers. *Writing Lab Newsletter*, 32(3), 1-6.
https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11427/8808/CHED_article_WritingCentresChallenges_Archer_2007.pdf
- Ashman, M. & Colvin, J. (2011). Peer mentoring roles. *NADE Digest*, 5(2), 45-53.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1097559.pdf>
- Bernard, S. (2017). Peer mentoring: Improving student outcomes by collaboration. *ATLAANZ Journal*, 2(2), 34-44. <https://journal.atlaanz.org/atlaanz/article/view/33/26>
- Boud, D. & Walker, D. (1998). Promoting reflection in professional courses: The challenge of context. *Studies in Higher Education*, 23(2), 191-206.
http://mcgillclinicaleducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Promoting_Reflection_D_BOUD.pdf
- Boud, D., Keogh, R., & Walker, D. (1985). Promoting reflection in learning: A model. In D. Boud, R. Keogh & D. Walker (Eds.). *Reflection: Turning experience into learning* (pp.18-40). Routledge Falmer.
- Boud, D., Cohen, R., & Sampson, J. (Eds.). (2001). *Peer learning in higher education: Learning from and with each other*. Kogan Page.
- Bräuer, G. (2002). Drawing connections across education: The Freiburg writing center model. *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*, 5(3), 61-80.
- Bräuer, G. (2012). Section essay: Academic literacy development. In *Writing programs worldwide: Profiles of academic writing in many places* (pp. 467-484). The WAC Clearinghouse.
- Chan, N., Phan, C., Aniyah, S., & Dipolog-Ubanan, G. (2016). Peer assisted learning in higher education: Roles, perceptions and efficacy. *Pertanika, Social Sciences & Humanities*, 24(4), 1811-1822.
<http://eprints.sunway.edu.my/569/1/Chan%20Nee%20Nee%20Peer%20Assisted%20.pdf>
- Cornelius, V., Wood L., & Lai, J. (2016). Implementation and evaluation of a formal academic-peer-mentoring programme in higher education. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 17(3), 193-205. [doi:10.1177/1469787416654796](https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787416654796)
- Falchikov, N. (2001). *Learning together: Peer tutoring in higher education*. Routledge.
- Ferguson, R. (2010). Peer interaction: The experience of distance students at university level. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 26(6), 574-584. [doi:10.1111/j.1365-2729.2010.00386.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2729.2010.00386.x)
- Finlay, L. (2008). Reflecting on 'reflective practice'. *Practice-based professional learning*, Paper 52, The Open University.
<https://ncsce.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Finlay-2008-Reflecting-on-reflective-practice-PBPL-paper-52.pdf>
- Gibbs, G. (1988). *Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic.
- Grushka, K., Hinde-McLeod, J., & Reynolds, R. (2005) Reflecting upon reflection: Theory and practice in one Australian university teacher education program. *Reflective Practice*, 6(1), 239-246. <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kathryn-Grushka/publication/248968410>
- Harrington, K., O'Neill, P., & Bakhshi, S. (2007). Writing mentors and the Writing Centre: Producing integrated disciplinary writers. *Investigations in University Teaching and Learning*, 4(2), 26-32. <http://metranet.londonmet.ac.uk/depts/fssh/applied...>

- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: International difference in work related values* (2nd Ed.). Sage.
- Huijser, H., Kimmins, L., & Evans, P. (2008). Peer assisted learning in fleximode: Developing an online learning community. *Australasian Journal of Peer Learning*, 1(1), 51-60. <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=ajpl>
- Johns, C. (2006). *Engaging reflection in practice: A narrative approach*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Ladyshevsky, R. K., & Gardner, P. (2008). Peer assisted learning and blogging: A strategy to promote reflective practice during clinical fieldwork. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 24(3), 241-257. <https://ajet.org.au/index.php/AJET/article/view/1207>
- Lea, M., & Street, B. (1998). Student writing in higher education: An academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, 23(2), 157-172.
- Lloyd, S., & Bristol, S. (2006). Modelling mentorship and collaboration for BSN and MSN students in a community clinical practicum. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 45(4), 129-132. doi: 10.3928/01484834-20060401-06
- Mackiewicz, J. & Thompson, I. (2018). Talk about writing: The tutoring strategies of experienced writing center tutors. Routledge. <https://www.proquest.com/resultsol/50DE6A06322245AFPQ/1>
- McWilliams, R., & Allan, Q. (2014). Embedding academic literacy skills: Towards a best practice model. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 11(3). <http://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol11/iss3/8>
- Mintu-Wimsatt, A., Kernek, C., & Lozada, H. R. (2010). Netiquette: Make it part of your syllabus. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 6(1), 264-267. https://jolt.merlot.org/vol6no1/mintu-wimsatt_0310.pdf
- Nakamaru S. (2010). Lexical issues in writing center tutorial with international and US-educated multilingual writers, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 19, 95-113. doi: 10.1016/j.sltw.2010.01.001
- Packard, B. W. L. (2011). Student training promotes mentoring awareness and action. *Career Development Quarterly*, 51, 335-345. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2003.tb00614.x>
- Quinn, F.M. (1988/2000). Reflection and reflective practice, in F.M. Quinn (Ed.) *Continuing professional development in nursing* (pp. 121–145). Stanley Thornes.
- Reid, S., Estrem, H., & Belcheir, M. (2012). The effects of writing pedagogy education on graduate teaching assistants' approaches to teaching composition. *WPA, Writing Program Administration*, 36(1), 32-42. https://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1265&context=english_facpubs
- Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D., & Jasper, M. (2001). *Critical reflection for nursing and the helping professions: A user's guide*. Palgrave.
- Schwaller, E., & Miller-Cochran, S. (2020). Writing pedagogy education: Preparing and professionalizing graduate students as writing instructors. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning. Special Issue: Approaches to Graduate Student Instructor Development and Preparation*, 163, 65-72. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.20410>
- Thaiss, C., Bräuer, G., Carlino, P., Ganobesik-Williams, L., & Sinha, A. (2012). *Writing program worldwide: Profile of academic writing in many places*. Parlour Press. doi 10.37514/PER-B.2012.0346
- Sakulwichitintu, S. Ellis E. Colbeck P. & Turner, P. (2018). A peer learning framework for enhancing students' learning experiences in online environments. *IEEE 18th International Conference on Advanced Learning Technologies*. Conference Paper,

July 2018.

[doi 10.1109/ICALT.2018.00123](https://doi.org/10.1109/ICALT.2018.00123)

- Thies, L. & Rosario, V. (2019). Partners in a changing dance: Embedding academic literacies in unit and course curricula. *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*, 15. <https://journal.aldinhe.ac.uk/index.php/jldhe/article/view/538>
- Thomas, S. (2019). Learning to write by writing to learn: How writing centres and creativity can transform academic writing instruction. *TEXT*, 23(1).
www.textjournal.com.au/april19/thomas.htm
- van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. State University of New York Press.
- Watts, J. Malliris, M. & Billingham, O. (2015.) Online peer assisted learning: Reporting on practice. *Journal of Peer Learning*, 8, 85-104. <https://ro.uow.edu.au/ajpl/vol8/iss1/8/>
- Winder, R., Kathpalia, S.S., & Swit Ling Koo (2016). Writing centre tutoring sessions: Addressing students' concerns. *Educational Studies*, 42(4), 323-339.
[doi: 10.1080/03055698.2016.1193476](https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2016.1193476)
- Zhang, Z. & Bayley, J. (2019). Peer learning for university students' learning enrichment: Perspectives of undergraduate students. *Journal of Peer Learning*, 12, 61-74.
Retrieved from <https://ro.uow.edu.au/ajpl/vol12/iss1/5>

Appendix A.

Prescribed Readings.

Andrews, J., & Clark, R. (2011). Section 6: Writing peer mentoring: In the students' own words. *Peer mentoring works! How peer mentoring enhances student success in higher education*. Aston University.

Gillespie, P., & Lerner, N. (2000). The tutoring process. In P. Gillespie & N. Lerner, *Allyn and Bacon guide to peer tutoring* (pp. 26-36). Allyn & Bacon.

Ryan, L. (2002). 'Inside the tutoring session', In L. Ryan & L. Zimmerelli, *The Bedford guide for writing tutors*, 3rd edn, (pp.15-29). Bedford/St Martins.

Appendix B.

Deakin's Best Practice Principles for Writing Mentors.



Deakin's Best Practice Principles for Writing Mentors

Writing Mentors: because writers need readers...

Hmmm...is this what I mean? Should this sentence go first? Do I need this sentence? Did I define x? Do I need to? Is this word better? Do I need this paragraph? Should this word be capitalised? When you write, you likely ask similar questions as you read your own drafts. Better writers read their own writing critically, and the more experienced a writer is, the more naturally they assume the reader's stance and question what they have written from the reader's perspective. As a Writing Mentor, you are the student's critical reader, modelling what you would do if it were your own writing: ask a lot of questions!

1. Writing Mentors are critical readers

Writing Mentors don't judge or evaluate what they read; they help writers find their own answers. To do this, you read critically and engage your students in discussions of their topics so they can develop their ideas and practise the kinds of discourses they will be writing. You may offer feedback, ask questions about what you have read or verbally rephrase it to see if that was the meaning the student intended.

2. Writing Mentors read writing from a variety of courses and levels

No matter what your area or level of study, you can help students from other disciplines and levels and give feedback on writing of any form (lab reports, essays, law documents). In fact, the less you know about a topic, the easier it may be to ask useful questions: What is the assignment asking you to do? What is an x? Where do you define it?

3. Writing Mentors help students at any level of writing proficiency

Even professional writers have others read their work and give feedback before publishing because writing is about communicating as clearly as possible, and it is very difficult for anyone—even experienced writers—to know how different people will 'interpret' what they have written. The more feedback a writer can get from good readers, the better.

4. Writing Mentors focus on a student's individual needs

To start a session, find out what the student needs or wants. You should consider the student's present situation, assignment requirements, past writing history, general writing habits and approaches to learning, attitudes, motivation, and whatever else is needed to determine how to proceed. Encourage the student to help set the agenda for their session, but use your own knowledge if necessary to guide them down the most helpful path.

5. Writing Mentors help students understand academic writing expectations

Many students are unaware of audience and may not understand why they are being asked to write (e.g., to show they understand the topic rather than have perfect grammar). Looking at assignment instructions, rubric or criteria, or discussing your own experiences can help.

6. The student writer's success is *not* the Writing Mentor's responsibility

The student you are helping is 100% responsible for their own writing, and, therefore, 'own' any success (or failure). You are an objective, knowledgeable, outside reader who discusses, points out, asks questions, etc., but it is the student writer's responsibility to make decisions based on the session and to make (or not make) any changes to their writing.

7. The student writer keeps control of their writing

Use proven techniques to ensure you don't take over your student's paper; for example, don't write on it—it's their paper and theirs to revise. If you can't resist writing, then don't hold a pen! Try not to take the paper from your student—they can read their paper aloud to you. If you want to read it silently, keep it on the table. Or you can read the paper aloud so the student can hear what they wrote. Give feedback that keeps the student in control by asking questions rather than making statements. Also, uncertain language is gold: This *appears* to be... This *may*... Is it *possible* that...? Have you *thought* about...? *What if* this...?

8. Experimentation and practise are encouraged

Because learning to write involves practise, risk taking and revising, you may want to encourage the student to experiment or try something new during the session, which is a safe, non-evaluative space away from assessment. This trying-out can be verbal or silent, with the student formulating ideas aloud or in writing.

9. It's about improvement, *not* perfection

Writing is complex. There are assignment instructions, organisation, analysis, support, word count limitations, research needs, format requirements, grammar, spelling, etc. etc. There is so much to know! How can anyone know it all? Well...they don't, you included. Even if you (or someone) did, there would not be enough time to sort out all the possible issues in a session. Experienced Writing Mentors listen to and interpret what the student writer wants, see their writing and use this information to focus on one or two relevant, important points for the session. As this does not overwhelm the student, it helps them to better understand how to improve their own writing. Prioritising is essential—is there any point in looking at grammar if the paper is not even answering the question?

10. It's about writing, *not* an assignment

Although students usually ask for help on a specific assignment, your ultimate goal is to help them develop writing skills they can apply to other assignments and situations—peer support is about fostering independence. Using the assignment the student presents is an excellent way to help them learn: an immediate, assessable paper is timely, relevant and highly important to the student, so their focus and willingness to learn will be high. (Students do not need to know this, but it is important for Writing Mentors to understand.)

11. Writing Mentors are not proof readers

Student writers often ask Writing Mentors to help with proofreading. While it is not your role to proofread, there are times when proofreading should be discussed, and student writers may benefit from finding out how to best check their own work.

12. Writing Mentors continue developing and growing

Although you are trained to be a Writing Mentor to ensure you understand your role as a critical reader, peer model and 'explorer' of other students' writing, that is just the start. Enjoy your role, forgive yourself any 'mistakes' and be aware that your own learning as a Peer Writer has just begun.