

University Writing Centre

Tutoring Handbook



Preamble and acknowledgements

This handbook is designed with two audiences in mind. The first of these is tutors working in the Maynooth University Writing Centre; the second is any writing centre director who may wish to produce or revitalise a handbook for writing centre tutors. With regards the former, we have found, since we established our centre in 2011, that we have needed to declare our philosophy and our practice for ourselves, for new tutors, and for other stakeholders. With regards the latter, we hope that this modest offering might prevent colleagues in other setting from having to start from scratch should they wish to develop a handbook for their tutors. We are not suggesting that this is the definite guide to this work; rather, we are offering it as contribution to an ongoing national and international conversation about how we tutor in the writing centre.

We acknowledge the work of O’Sullivan, Í. and Farrell, A. (2017) and the permission under Creative Commons from Irish Network for the Enhancement of Writing (INEW) and the All Ireland Society for Higher Education (AISHE) to reproduce and re-work extracts from *An Introduction to Tutoring in the Writing Centre* within this handbook.

We also acknowledge the work of Dr Oona Frawley and Dr Sinéad Kennedy of Maynooth University English Department, who produced a *Peer Tutoring Handbook* on which much earlier versions of this document were based.

This handbook has been compiled by existing Writing Centre staff and staff who have since moved on from the Writing Centre. We are very grateful to everyone who contributed to this document.

Finally, all colleagues should feel free to use, re-use and/or re-purpose this document in part or in whole in line with the Creative Commons licence noted below.

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Overview of Maynooth University Writing Centre

Maynooth University Writing Centre is committed to helping all students to become competent, flexible, fluent and enthusiastic writers.

The Writing Centre offers free, friendly, non-judgemental writing help to any student, undergraduate or postgraduate, regardless of course, degree or level. Students can work on their own or in groups with tutors on written aspects of course work or material/topics with which they may be having trouble. Currently the Centre offers the following services:

- One-to-one tutoring by appointment
- Discipline-specific work with individual departments
- Referral to other services/supports on campus
- Supervised study and group working space
- Access to relevant materials and handouts
- Facilitated writing groups
- Web-based learning materials including self-diagnostic tests
- Interdisciplinary and collaboratively provided workshops, e.g. work with the Library, Access, Assistive Technologies, individual or groups of academic departments
- Scheduled topic specific sessions ('hot topics').

The Centre is also engaged in on-campus, national and international research into academic writing and literacy. Writing Centre staff liaise regularly with colleagues in other higher education institutes, locally and nationally, and across the sector there is a genuine commitment to the sharing of resources and good practice. In addition, the Writing Centre in Maynooth University has strong international collaborative connections with a number of institutions in the United States and across Europe.

The Centre is extremely fortunate with regards the calibre of its tutors, who are at postdoctoral and postgraduate level. Their commitment, to helping students to develop their writing and their confidence, is exemplary. This team of tutors is focused on providing learner-centred writing support to all students.

Introduction to tutoring in the Maynooth University Writing Centre

As writing centre staff and tutors, we have good relationships with writing, and have strengths as writers that we hope we can communicate to students who are struggling, who would like to improve, or who feel that their work would benefit from the opinion of another writer. One of the things that we do before, and often after a tutoring session, is to spend some time thinking about our own writing practice and what we have found works best for us. Sometimes, we are not aware of the process that we go through to produce a piece of text. Where we spend time considering that process, and indeed revisiting it, we are better placed to help other writers. This reflection can also have very positive outcomes for our own writing.

It is common for us to have anxieties and concerns about the tutoring process. We alleviate this by working closely as a team, sharing practice and regularly reviewing how we work. We know that we cannot perform miracles, act as counselors, or handle situations that are beyond our brief. Where we feel uncomfortable or uneasy about our work in general, or about a particular tutoring moment, we each arrange to talk this out with our line manager.

We enjoy our work and are committed to it. We hope that the interactions we have with students will be positive and beneficial. We recognise that we frequently get as much out of this work as the students we meet do, and we gratefully acknowledge that here.

Overview of tutoring in higher education writing centres

Context

Tutoring in higher education writing centres varies from place-to-place. Nevertheless, there are similarities across the international writing centre world and across the practices employed within higher education writing centres in Ireland.

A nationally produced document entitled *An Introduction to Tutoring in the Writing Centre* outlines what writing centre tutoring looks like in Ireland. Rather than inadequately rework the document, the extract below is reproduced verbatim here. Some readers might find it useful, or indeed interesting, to access the full document, which includes an overview of tutoring in a writing centre as well as four international case studies that describe writing centre practices in different settings.

Beginning of Extract from O’Sullivan, Í. and Farrell, A. (2017) *An Introduction to Tutoring in the Writing Centre*, Irish Network for the Enhancement of Writing (INEW) and the All Ireland Society for Higher Education (AISHE).

The idea, purpose, philosophy and pedagogy of a writing centre is a complex topic which is explored widely in the mainstream academic literature and, more recently, online in websites, blogs, listservs, etc. It is not the purpose of this booklet to consider this area in any depth. For an overview of this work, we direct the interested reader to other related booklets in this series and to Barnett and Blumner (2001), Harris (1985), Hobson (1992), North (1984) and Ryan and Zimmerelli (2015). The development of writing centres in the Irish higher education context can be explored further in Cleary et al. (2009), Cleary and O’Sullivan (2015), Farrell and Tighe-Mooney (2015), O’Sullivan and Cleary (2012) and Tighe-Mooney and Farrell (2015). These texts, amongst the wide variety that exist, outline items such as how writing centres are organised, the philosophies that are frequently employed, the pedagogy associated with tutoring and the research that informs approaches.

The contribution that this booklet makes to the conversation on writing centres is to consider tutoring. In this regard, we suggest what we have found most useful, how we achieve our goals, what the different stages in tutoring might be, and how a range of tutoring approaches are required at different times depending on the student and the writing stage and/or task.

As noted in another of the publications in this series, *An Introduction to Higher Education Writing Centres* (Farrell et al., 2015), the core activity of a writing centre tends to be the provision of one-to-one consultations between staff of the writing centre and students. These consultations take the form of tutoring, where the tutors are typically either peer tutors or expert tutors. The make up of the tutor cohort will vary from institution to institution and will be impacted by any number of factors, not least among them the pedagogical philosophy/approach adopted by the writing centre and the available resources. In this overview, we discuss, albeit very briefly, peer and expert tutoring, and general and specific/discipline-specific tutoring. It should be remarked that the particular approach that an institution adopts under these two broad headings will be context specific and, therefore, even under the general approaches, there will be much local variety and rich diversity of provision.

Peer tutoring or expert tutoring

Topping suggests that 'peer tutoring is a very old practice, traceable back at least as far as the ancient Greeks' (1996: 322). When writing about the effectiveness of peer tutoring in 1996, Topping noted that as peer tutoring had developed, defining it had become more difficult and that, then, any definition that one could offer would be so broad as to be 'rather bland' (322). When Topping revisited this topic in 2005, he focused on peer learning which he defined as 'the acquisition of knowledge and skill through active helping and supporting among status equals or matched companions. It involves people from similar social groupings who are not professional teachers helping each other to learn and learning themselves by so doing' (2005: 631). Boud et al. describe peer tutoring as the 'use of teaching and learning strategies in which students learn with and from each other without the immediate intervention of a teacher' (1999: 413). While Karen Arrand notes, with reference to the literature (Colvin, 2007; Falchikov, 2001; Goodlad, 1998; Boud et al., 2001), that, in general, 'peer tutors help other students either on a one-to-one basis or in small groups by continuing classroom discussions, developing study skills, evaluating work, resolving specific problems and encouraging independent learning' (2014).

Various terms are used in the literature to describe this type of teaching and related approaches to learning. The terms, peer tutoring, peer instruction, peer mentoring, reciprocal peer tutoring, peer assisted learning (PAL), supplemental instruction (SI), peer assisted study sessions (PASS), cross-year small-group tutoring, personalised system of instruction, academic mentoring, academic success mentoring, co-operative learning, peer collaboration, all appear. For our purposes, in this booklet, we have agreed on the use of the term peer tutoring where we define peer tutoring as involving those of the same group, or academic standing, educating one another when one peer has more knowledge,

greater experience and/or better processes and approaches (adapted from Colvin, 2007).

While peer tutoring is very common in writing centres internationally, some centres also employ expert or faculty tutors who have particular writing and/or other expertise or experience. They may be staff who, as well as working in the writing centre, are involved in the delivery of on-campus writing programmes. Equally, they may be tutors with extensive research/postgraduate experience in that they may be pursuing doctoral studies or may be postdoctoral staff. Likewise, some tutors will have specialist discipline knowledge or they may have expert knowledge of a technical or technological nature.

Generalist or specialist tutoring

The notion of generalist versus specialist tutors in support for writing has existed for some time. Kristin Walker in her article 'The Debate over Generalist Tutors; Genre Theory's Contribution', written now nearly 20 years ago, remarks on the fact that then 'Over the past ten years or so, much has been written about whether writing centre tutors should be generalist or specialist' (1998: 27). More recently, Gordon (2014) suggests that 'Using genre to guide our pedagogical strategies in the writing center can be an excellent way to achieve the goals of scaffolding students' learning, enhancing their sense of agency, and reaffirming their membership in the academic community.' Dinitz and Harrington (2013) join this conversation by examining the role of expertise in tutoring sessions. Their research suggests 'a strong connection between a tutor's knowledge of writing in the discipline, the quality of a session's agenda, and a session's overall effectiveness' (2014: 73). Laura Plummer's blogpost of May 2015 certainly contributes to the development of this same discussion. Plummer directs Indiana University's Campus Writing Program, which administers the writing center. In a thoughtful, evidence and practice-informed manner, she considers a case for disciplinary tutoring in the writing centre. In her post, she argues for 'more discipline-specific skills among tutors but not by suggesting 'that "generalists" are ineffective.' What she proposes is that 'some basic knowledge of writing in various disciplines can at least help us sometimes avoid real gaffes and to make inroads toward higher-order, meaningful "re-envisioning" with writers' (Plummer, 2015).

In our writing centres, we employ generalist and specialist tutors, some of whom have substantial experience and expertise. Our work centres around helping our students to become better writers. The approach we take to this work depends a great deal on the writing phase and/or the stage in the writing process. When the work is very much at the expressive/informal stage, the approach is especially non-directive allowing as much space as possible for the student to

expand their ideas, voice their questions and articulate their thoughts. When the writing moves closer to the transaction/formal stage, that is, where it is at the point of being given to a specific audience often for grading, our work can concentrate on helping the student to prepare that text for the specified reader. This can be quite a technical exercise where we help the student to revise and hone their work. We encourage students to identify issues for themselves; where we identify errors they have missed, we help them to see what is happening in the text and how to correct it. For sophisticated texts, this may call for particular specialist knowledge by the tutor. Equally, where the texts are complex, for instance, dissertations and theses, specialist tutors will have the knowledge required to help students to improve both their work and to develop the particular processes needed for longer, more complicated pieces of writing.

Philosophy and ethics of tutoring

While we certainly draw on philosophies and pedagogies that have been successful in other settings, as with the other elements associated with our writing centre work, the philosophy and ethics around our tutoring are unique to our context. In the writing centre we employ a range of approaches to our tutoring. At times it is most beneficial for the students we meet if we are especially non-directive, and the appointment focuses on expressive, free writing which is student-led. In this scenario, our ability to ask good questions of the writer is essential. In many ways, this is a form of minimalist tutoring. At other times, the writer needs a reader response from the tutor. Again, this requires good questioning but also support and encouragement. We suggest to tutors that they respond to student writing as an intelligent reader and a critical friend. We have found that it is often useful to begin reader responses with students with the phrase 'I was wondering about ...' or 'I was wondering why ...' Our job is to work with the writer so that they can improve the text: this requires prompting writers to consider the rhetorical choices they have made and to encourage them so that they grow in confidence as authors. Where this works effectively, tutors and students end up in a constructive dialogue about the work which contributes positively to the student's writerly identity as well as helping the student to complete the writing task as hand.

Following consideration, we have distilled our practice with regards our ethics, and the concern we have for our students, down to key points which should be taken in the overall context of our way of working in the writing centre. This is by no means an exhaustive list, rather a noting of particularly significant points of our practice:

- The central premise of our work in the writing centre is that the writer does the work, not the tutor.

- We do not engage in criticism of particular instructors or courses; if the writer suggests that s/he isn't doing well because of a particular lecturer, we try to steer the conversation back to the essay/assignment, in order to maintain the desired, constructive tone of the appointment.
- We try to avoid writing on the writer's text as this takes ownership of it: we are working with the writer, not the paper.
- We do not aim for a mark/discuss marks. We make it clear that we cannot predict what mark a particular essay/assignment will receive.
- We recognise that we are not counsellors, and that we are not required to tutor writers' emotional problems, difficulties, or to mitigate challenging personal circumstances. Where we feel uncomfortable with what a writer is telling us we bring this to the attention of our line manager. If we find ourselves in a situation where during a writing centre appointment a student is upset and wishes to talk about personal issues other than writing we do the recommend the following:
 - Listen carefully and sympathetically.
 - Recognise the situation and acknowledge that we can see how upset the student is.
 - Ask if the student feels able to continue the appointment on the writing issues with which he/she presented. If yes, continue the appointment. If no, ask the student if it would help to speak to someone about the personal problem.

If no, ask the student again if they would like to finish the appointment or if we should wrap up and resume at a better time.

If yes, we recommend the on-campus Counselling Service and we show the student where they can find information about the service. If the student remains very upset, we refer the student to the Counselling Service. As writing tutors we are not qualified to deal with any emotional or physical issues. Therefore, it is paramount that we make an instant referral to the Counselling Service or to The Student Health Centre. This means that we tell the student the location of the Counselling Service, give them information on drop-in which is 2-3pm daily, give the student the

Counselling Service telephone number or bring them over to the Service.

Effective tutoring – lessons learned

The literature around writing centres and the practical experience on the ground seems to converge happily on the notion that key to the success of any writing centre is its tutors. In our experience, this is certainly the case. We recognise in our work as writing centre directors (and tutors ourselves) that we are constantly learning from our interactions with students and each other, and from the conversations and reflections we share as tutors about these interactions. In the compilation of this booklet, we worked directly with tutors in order to capture their substantial wisdom on the topic of tutoring. The following guidelines were initially generated during a national workshop for new and experienced tutors, including peer and expert tutors.

The presentation of this learning in a bulleted manner, makes the contribution particularly accessible; we trust the format does not diminish the insightfulness of the work. We also hope that the balance between these short snappy contributions, and the narrative and case-based reported approaches reflects the dynamic nature of tutoring where agility in terms of approach is frequently required.

End of verbatim extract from O'Sullivan and Farrell (2017).

The following points represent a summary of the findings made in this study. A substantial amount of the language is taken directly from O'Sullivan and Farrell (2017).

Working as a Writing Centre Tutor - Best Practice, Tips and Things to Remember:

1. **A tutor is like a detective asking many questions.** Asking questions helps to set the parameters and priorities of the appointment, based on the tutee's current stage in the writing process and when the assignment is due to be submitted. Asking questions will also help to put both parties at ease as the first moments of any session can be a nervous time for all involved. A tutor should never make any assumptions regarding a tutee's ability or level of commitment.

2. **A tutor needs a well-equipped toolkit.** This toolkit encompasses many things, from computer software, to personal experience, to skills or tips learned from other tutors. Every student is different and will require a unique approach so it is important to keep up with developments in your area and set aside time for learning about new websites, resources, etc.
3. **Tutoring is a collaborative process where the tutee and tutor work together as they both become better writers.** A tutor has valuable experience to share but, s/he does not need to be a subject expert or even an expert in writing. The process is generally non-directive, meaning that tutors should not feel responsible for the ultimate success of particular sessions or assignments. A writing tutor is not an authority, but a resource.
4. **Writing is a way to learn and a way to learn to become a better writer.** A great deal of our writing is connected to how we see ourselves as writers, our writerly identity. Often, students will feel anxious or lack confidence in their ability to express themselves through writing. In our work as tutors, it is important to stress that writing is a skill that can be learned, improved upon over time and employed to help our understanding of other subjects and the development of other skills. Open and empathetic engagement with students about our own processes and difficulties can help them to understand that writing is not necessarily an innate talent, in turn helping them to gain confidence.
5. **Tutoring is as much about learning as it is teaching.** The collaborative nature of the tutoring process extends beyond merely working through assignments with students. Appointments can offer exciting opportunities to learn about subject areas and topics outside of our own disciplines. Often, tutors will seek the advice of colleagues when approaching a challenging session; this creates opportunities for growth and reflection on best practices, both in our role as tutor and our own writing. Finally, engaging critically with writing on a regular basis helps raise awareness of our own writing processes and skills, helping us to become more confident and objective in our own writing.
6. **A tutor must give various kinds of feedback.** It is important to provide students with honest feedback on their work so that they can identify areas for improvement. However, it is imperative that this feedback be delivered in a kind and non-judgemental manner, with a focus on potential for improvement over failings. Positive body language and a friendly disposition are vital to a successful tutoring session.

O'Sullivan and Farrell (2017)

Guidelines and information provided for students on one-to-one appointments

The linchpin of writing centre work, in most contexts, is the provision of one-to-one appointments. Each centre will have its own approach to these appointments. We found early on in our work that it was beneficial to have a user-friendly document for students which explained what they might expect during an appointment. The document below is our version of this and it has the student body as its audience.

Overview

As an undergraduate or postgraduate in Maynooth University, you may book a one-to-one appointment to discuss your writing with a tutor in the Writing Centre. All one-to-one appointments are 45 minutes in length. A one-to-one appointment may be made by emailing the Centre at writingcentre@nuim.ie

How a one-to-one works

A one-to-one will begin with the tutor asking you about your concerns around your writing. The tutor wants to find out what you want to work on in the one-to-one, so giving this a little bit of thought before you arrive at the appointment is a good idea; also, if you are working on an essay title or an assignment, it is important to bring the question with you and any attempts you have made to answer it.

Once you and the tutor have figured out what you will work on, you will then have the tutor's undivided attention for the remainder of your one-to-one session. A few minutes from the end of the session, the tutor will begin to wrap up the appointment by completing, with you, the 'record sheet'. Here you note what your initial concerns were, what was covered in the session and any agreed action from the appointment.

Things to remember

- If you are working on a particular piece of writing, bring it with you, ideally in hard copy (print out);
- Please be punctual – our tutors will be in the Centre on time and they cannot 'run over' as they may have other appointments or may need to be elsewhere;
- If you have made an appointment and you know that you cannot avail of it, please email us as soon as possible to cancel/postpone. If you 'don't show' for an appointment you run the risk of not being able to book further appointments in any given semester;

- Please book your appointment as far in advance as your schedule allows; we will try to accommodate every request we get for an appointment but if you email at the last minute you may be disappointed.

Respect

All of the Writing Centre tutors will treat you with respect and will never ridicule your efforts. You should feel comfortable coming to the Centre to discuss your writing regardless of how good or bad you think your work is. Similarly, if you are using the Centre, please remember that the tutors are there to help you and should not be treated with anything less than the courtesy you would expect from them.

We look forward to meeting you in the Centre.

Description of Maynooth University Writing Centre provision of one-to-one appointments for undergraduate students

Context

As it was necessary to document what students might expect from an appointment with the writing centre, we also considered it wise to record how we work for colleagues and other stakeholders. We captured this practice from our tutors in April 2016. Since then, we have expanded the description of our work in order to provide greater clarity for our stakeholders.

How we work with local undergraduate students in the writing centre

In the writing centre we adopt a learner-centred approach; we have written about our pedagogy in the *Journal of Academic Writing*, available here <http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/6655> When we work with undergraduates in the writing centre we share our good writing processes with them. How we help students, the sorts of questions that we ask them and the advice we provide depends on where they are with their writing generally and where they are specifically with any text they are drafting. We find the idea of a continuum moving from expressive/informal writing to transactional/formal writing useful in guiding our approaches which we describe here in terms of pre-writing, drafting and revising, and editing and proofing.

Stages in tutoring in the writing centre

Section 1. Before tutoring begins

Think about the questions you are likely to be asked so that you can articulate your own writing processes, and the kind of questions you can ask to facilitate critical thinking.

Getting started: techniques for putting the writer at ease

Introduce yourself, open the conversation and listen attentively to the writer to get information about what it is they are finding difficult/what they hope to achieve. Allow them the space to articulate their thoughts about their writing project. Work out together how to proceed and what you might achieve in the session. Let them know that they can come again to work on other areas that may need addressing. Let the writer set the agenda.

Remember: The objective is to make progress with the essay or assignment and to empower the writer to develop their writing processes. Progress, not necessarily completion, is the goal.

Section 2: Basic tutoring and studying guidelines

Effective tutoring

Effective tutoring relies on asking good questions to explore the difficulties/problems, to prompt the writer to think about new ideas or how they might address a topic and to help the tutor to determine the writer's learning orientation, so that effective assistance can be tailored accordingly.

Effective tutoring also relies on an ordering of priorities: Higher order, such as audience, purpose, genre, stance, argument and structure, and Lower order concerns, such as sentence structure, grammar and punctuation.

Section 3: Pre-writing

A writer may have collected the research and notes but be unsure of how to organize it, or have trouble coming up with an argument, a thesis or even a topic. Whatever the situation, we can help these writers develop their own ideas and move forward to the next stage in the writing process. As in any session, it is important to ask questions. Questions such as, 'What interests you most about this topic?' or 'What kind of research has been done in this area?' can prompt writers to determine the best topic according to their interests and the assignment.

For writers who have a topic, but are having trouble arranging their ideas and examples, we can suggest or demonstrate methods of development. Every writer is different, so we may suggest they try several approaches and think about which is most helpful. Examples of such methods include Listing (jot down all ideas, revise and reorder the list), Clustering (a diagram of their ideas and adding 'branches' of supporting ideas), Freewriting (writing without stopping for a few minutes while letting ideas flow without restraint) or indeed, writing an introductory paragraph to kickstart ideas for the session.

We will often help students to unpack command words – identifying what the writing task requires the student to do, for example, describe, evaluate, consider, outline, etc. We might suggest strategies for answering the question including recommendations around referring back to lecture content and using visits to the library effectively.

Once the parameters of the question have been determined, we will encourage students to write a thesis statement and begin, where appropriate, to plan their argument.

We reinforce the idea that students should include time for drafting, revising and editing; we remind them that writing is a fluid process which often involves moving forwards and backwards with the text.

We note the importance of robust evidence. We ask students to document what they already know that is useful in answering their assignment and to identify what else they need to find out, thus helping them to direct their research.

Section 4: Drafting and revising

At the drafting and revising stage, we tend to work with students on structure, clarity, coherence and evidence. At this point, we might ask students to read their work aloud during an appointment. Particularly with first year students, we focus on how they have organised their thinking at paragraph and sentence level. We emphasise the importance of the flow of ideas in a piece, and the need to ensure connectivity between these ideas as the piece progresses. We also discuss ways to avoid wandering off the point and being over-ambitious in the number of points and ideas being addressed. We ask questions of the students to confirm that what they have written makes sense and addresses the task set out in the assignment. We frequently remind students of the functions of each of the elements of the piece, for example, the function of the introduction or the conclusion in an essay. We share with students how, and how often, we revise our work in order to hone our ideas. We remind students of the importance of tone and register, of the need to meet the audience's expectations, and of the necessity to follow the conventions of the genre in which they are writing.

Tips for working with a rough draft

- Read sections aloud so that the writer is included in the process;
- Ask questions, let the student lead the session and prioritize areas that they feel are of most concern;
- Demonstrate approaches to problem solving—brainstorming, use of resources, etc;
- Do not assign or suggest grades.

Section 5: Editing and proofing

When students arrive at the writing centre with a piece of writing that is close to submission, we help them to edit and proof by recommending good approaches and sharing our practices. In this phase, we generally ask the student, again, to read their work aloud. Where they identify errors themselves, they correct the piece; we can help them to do this if they are unsure. Where we identify errors in the work, as students are reading their piece, we point them out to students and see if they can correct them. Where they cannot, we explain the mistake and help the student to make the

correction. These errors would fall under the general heading of mechanics (grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.). We also help students with referencing; this usually involves working with them to consult the department guidelines and/or the appropriate handbook or guide. In this manner, we work with students on developing their capacity for self-assessment of their own writing. Students and tutors collaborate on identifying strengths, areas for improvement and patterns of errors in a student's text. Where appropriate, this is used to build a framework through which the student can assess and develop their academic writing.

Tips for working with a final draft

- Find out when the assignment is due, tailor the approach and proceed as above;
- Where time is of the essence, manage concerns by working with the student to determine what is most pressing.

Tips for working with graded assignments

- Avoid looking at comments until you have read the student's work. In this way, we can approach the writing without bias;
- When moving on to the instructor's comments, let the student determine which comments they wish to address;
- Work with the student to assess the issues raised and determine the best approach to address concerns.

Tips for students on proofreading

- Read aloud, slowly;
- Read for one type of error at a time: grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.;
- Try tricks like reading entire sections or even sentences out of order;
- Try to take time away from your draft before attempting to proofread. This will allow you to assess the draft with 'fresh eyes'.

Section 6: At the end of a session

- Summarise the main points that arose—determine areas to work on;
- Ask the student to assess their own feelings on the session/the possibility of another appointment.

In summary

In all our work we want to encourage students to see writing as a process, whereby different approaches are required at different stages. Our aim is to help students to become more competent, flexible, fluent and enthusiastic writers. In the strategies we describe here, we try to strike a balance between encouraging students to develop an approach that works for them and sharing our processes and our technical knowledge.

We want our writing centre work to be research-informed and to reflect good practice internationally; equally, we want the centre to be context-specific and to serve our unique student cohort in the best way we can. In an effort to balance both of these desires, the way we work, since we began in 2011, continues to evolve.

Maynooth University Writing Centre Tutors, April 2016 and April 2017

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