

# Structures and Strategies for Virtual Consultations

*This document was created for use by the UNLV Writing Center, and incorporates steps, policies, and technologies tailored to our center's specific needs and operational contexts.*

## Setting up the session

- Receive appointment notification - in email
- Check intake folder and copy paper URL
  - Ask writer to fill out during the session if they haven't already filled it out
- Enter the meeting (Salesforce)
  - Sign out of other Google accounts if you have difficulty logging in to consultation. Refresh page if writer doesn't seem able to join. Do NOT stay in the lobby (you must let the writer into the meeting).
- Share the Google Doc with writer in the chat
- Open both Docs and Meet on the same screen to see the writer and the piece of writing side by side

## Welcome and introduction

- Greet the writer– make them feel comfortable
- First-time writers might be uncertain; be sure to explain your tutoring process and the goals of consultations generally, including instructions for navigating the virtual space.
  - Remind the writer that they can use closed captioning
  - Check in with the writer and/or explain what you will do next (Ex/ "Can you see what I am highlighting here?" or "I will post the link in the meeting chat")
- Find out about the assignment/task: Read the prompt and make sure you and the writer both understand it (possibly share the screen to make it easier to stay on the same page)
- Recognize that some writers have experience, so they may take the lead
- Set the goals of this particular consultation with the writer--what will you focus on and what will be prioritized?

## Working with the writer and the text

- Narrate your actions
- Make sure you keep an eye on the assignment prompt to ensure what you say aligns with the expectations
- Make very clear that the instructor is the final reader, authority, and evaluator--you will not estimate a grade and you will make explicit that your thoughts are your own and might not align with the instructor's
- Strategies:

## Structures and Strategies for Virtual Consultations

- Transfer skills learned for instructional, motivational, and cognitive feedback– while this may look different in terms of modality, the tools you've used up until this point can still be a foundation for you to fall back on
- Let the writer keep ownership by encouraging them to also take notes alongside you
- Use the digital tools available to you (ex/highlighting, underlining, Google Meet Jamboard etc.)
- Give the writer writing tasks (especially if you need to look something up yourself--don't leave them with nothing to do)
- Look things up together -- can share screen

### Wrapping up the consultation

- Track your time– it's easy to lose track of time in the virtual space
- How to begin to close:
  - Let the writer know the end of the session is coming
  - Tell them it is beneficial to recap explicitly what has been accomplished during the consultation, and do so
  - Help them to plan out their next steps so they know exactly what to do the next time they sit down to work on this project
- Remind them to download the document so they don't lose access to the document

### **Activity: Consultant Tools and Strategies**

- Instructional, motivational, cognitive feedback
  - Utilize knowledge checks. Ask them if the writer understands by checking in with them regularly or having them explain a point/next steps back to you. Encourage them to actively take part in the session to encourage student ownership and to ultimately ease the burden of
  - Take more time to wait for confirmation. Sometimes writers need time to think and process information. Don't be afraid to sit in that silence if the writer needs it.
  - Give the writer time to do writing tasks
  - Set up clear expectations and guidelines, especially if the writer has never been to the Writing Center before
  - Encourage the writer when they are doing things affectively– affirming what they do well can better encourage the writer to transfer those skills to other areas
- Let the writer keep ownership

## Structures and Strategies for Virtual Consultations

- Focus on what the writer is trying to do– what are their goals? What skills should you focus on to help the writer get there?
  - After each suggestion, wait for the writer to respond, approve, and/or demonstrate understanding
  - Have them write in their own words in the comments– encourage note taking in the document or through comment functionality
  - Make sure you aren't editing their paper
  - Make sure you ask for their input
  - Give writers time to work independently. Use a timer to give blocks of time for independent work
  - Ask writers to explain suggestions and strategies back to you
  - Write down a list of what the writer wants to achieve in the session (in the comments or in the document itself– just make sure the writer is aware of where you put it!)
- Tech and Digital tools
    - Make sure you are using a good mic (tech can make a huge difference!) Remember we have computers and headphones in the Writing Center
    - Ask the writer if they can hear you/see you and let them know you can hear them.
    - Use online tools and websites: Jamboard, Purdue OWL, the official APA/MLA style guide website, Wordhippo, Speechify, Grammarly, Citation machine, Easybib, EpicPen etc.
    - Share screen to look at websites together (as for APA style, etc.)
    - Utilize other modalities to enhance your consultation, such as like music (Ex/ Lofi beats)
    - Show examples of reputable sources. Use the UNLV library database. You can also show them <https://guides.library.unlv.edu/home> to familiarize them with databases specialized for individual subjects.