ANATOMY OF A WRITING CENTER CONFERENCE

Orienting
(5 minutes)

The Writing Center Fellow will likely ask you some orienting questions to get things started. Some of these might include:

- What’s the assignment?
- What feedback have you received about your writing in the past?
- How much time can you devote to revision?
- Is there something in particular you’re struggling with?
- What about your writing project excites you?

Negotiating an agenda
(5 minutes)

In collaboration with the Writing Center Fellow, you’ll narrow the scope of what you’ll focus on to two or three main concerns.

In preparation for reading your text together, the Fellow will ask what you want them to pay attention to as they read, where you want them to start, and how much you want them to read.

The initial agenda you set together can be renegotiated as the conference continues!

Reading your text
(5-15 minutes)

As you and the Fellow read together, you’ll be involved in the process. The Fellow might ask you to highlight areas you have questions about, or perhaps you’ll create a reverse outline, distilling each paragraph into one main idea.

The Fellow will honor your preliminary agenda. That said, they may also identify additional areas for discussion as they read.

When the two of you have finished reading, you’ll begin discussing together, starting with the previously identified issue(s). You may also renegotiate your agenda at this stage.

Working together on the text
(20-25 minutes)

In 25 minutes, you and the Writing Center Fellow may only be able to work on two or three kinds of problems in an essay—motive and thesis, sources and evidence, orienting and structure, etc.

This section of the conference will be interactive! The Fellow will help identify areas of concern in your writing, but it will be up to you to imagine solutions. Your writing is your own!

It may be productive for you to do some additional freewriting at this stage. Feel free to ask for time to do this if it would be helpful!

Planning next steps
(5-10 minutes)

Planning for revision is an essential component of a successful conference. All writers need more revision than is possible during a single conference!

Together, you and the Writing Center Fellow will make a list of your next steps for revision and takeaways for future writing projects. This may include advice about longer-term issues that you can work on in your writing moving forward.