

University of Nizwa



جامعة نِزْوَى

Writing Center 2010 Annual Report



September 2009 ~ August 2010

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Building 11i-17

University of Nizwa

Sultanate of Oman

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Introduction:

The Writing Center is one of the most energetic and vibrant facilities on campus at the University of Nizwa. The center has served a pivotal role in assisting students with the improvement of their academic writing skills and general English proficiency. The center focuses its resources towards various types of writing, the writing process, reading comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition. The Writing Center has performed above and beyond expectations with close to 15,000 appointments throughout the year, far exceeding and out performing other Writing Center's in the region. It has become to be recognized as a respected instrument for students and faculty alike, as a viable resource tool for the procurement of academic excellence and student success.

Core Staff:

Derek M.N. O'Connell (A/Director of the Writing Center), Leona Wellington Haynes (ESL Writing Specialist), *James Donald Tate (Former; ESL Specialist), Lisa O'Connell (Head Administrator), Badriya Al Tobi (Administrator for Academic Students), Jokha Al Tobi (Administrative Assistant)

Writing Center Usage 2009-2010:

During the academic year from September 2009 ~ August 2010, the Writing Center serviced the needs of UoN students as per the following:

Writing Center Usage 2009-2010	Total
Total Number of Appointments	14521
Academic Students	11780
Foundation Students (*Tutorials Only)	2741
Workshops (50 Minutes)	2176
Tutorials (30 Minutes)	8239
Academic Consultations (45 Minutes)	242
Conversation (30 Minutes)	3864
Total Number of Registered Students	2995
Academic Students	1938
Foundation Students	1057
Graduate Students	149
Staff & Faculty	52
Visually Impaired Students	6

Summary of Services:

The Writing Center at the University of Nizwa provides writing support across the curriculum to all academic students through one-on-one writing tutorials, workshops, academic consultations, peer critique facilitation, and conversations sessions on a daily basis. The center as well, offers extracurricular activities in the form of scholastic competitions and various undertakings that promote writing, academic achievement, and independent learning. In addition, the Writing Center provides assistance to many faculties and departments across the university through classroom visitations, supplementary workshops, and faculty collaboration for the continuous long term success in providing quality education conducive to student achievement, academic excellence, and the establishment of academic affiliations within the region and internationally.

Writing Center Advisory Board

The advisory board of the Writing Center convened 6 times during the 2009-2010 academic year. As a collective body it reached a consensus on the significant following issues:

- Established the center's vision, mission and objectives
- Contributed to the development of the center's strategic plan for 2010-2015
- Finalized the winning contestants of the 1st Annual Essay Contest
- Provided academic guidance for the successful operation of the center

Peer Tutoring:

The Writing Center in conjunction with the Trusteeship Student Support Fund employed the services of 27 qualified academic students to serve and gain teaching experience as peer tutors throughout the academic year. In efforts to improve their teaching pedagogy and effectiveness as an educator, the center's professional staff provided tutoring training workshops three times a week for an hour on a continuous basis for quality assurance purposes. In addition, tutors were responsible for advancing their English writing proficiency by participating in the maintenance of daily journaling activities aimed to further foster a positive writing culture.

It has become apparent, that the position of a tutor has become a highly sought after position amongst the student populace as being one of competence, prestige, and an ideal way to gain valuable teaching experience required in securing fulltime employment after graduating from the UoN. The Writing Center has exerted enormous efforts in the professional development of its peer tutors through the awarding of letters of recommendations, preparation of job interviews, provided assistance in applying for academic scholarships regionally and internationally, and have strongly encouraged its tutors to continue their education in pursuit of graduate degrees and doctorates as responsible educators for the future of Omani society.

The Writing Center is proud to have witness the growth and maturity of many of the peer tutors that have serviced the needs of students over the past year. Ms. Badriya Al Tobi, was the one of the center's most productive peer tutors from 2008~2009, and has since been employed as a fulltime administrator at the Writing Center. The center has fulfilled many of the objectives towards Omanization, and has

successfully contributed the procurement of nine former tutors gaining meaningful employment as teachers at the Ministry of Higher Education, as administrators at the University of Nizwa, and other reputable positions within the local private sector.

Assessment:

The Writing Center conducted two surveys in January 2010 to assess both student and faculty awareness of the Writing Center's programs and services, and to evaluate its performance as a student learning support facility. The comparable data regarding the performance, resources, cognizance, and programs and services of the Writing Center provided useful comporment for the decision-making process for the WCMB and the Director's future planning.

A thorough and comprehensive document on the outcomes can be found in the *Writing Center Summary of Findings for the January 2010 Student and Faculty Surveys* report. Succinctly, the results for the most part were very encouraging with more than 97% of the faculty across the four major colleges were willing to recommend their students to visit the Writing Center. Additionally, 89% of students had a positive experience and would recommend the Writing Center to their friends, and 85% indicated that the Writing Center help improve their English proficiency.

Official Documentation & Records:

1. Writing Center Strategic Plan 2010~2015
2. Writing Center Summary of Findings for the January 2010 Student and Faculty Surveys
3. Writing Center Audit Portfolio for Student Learning Support
4. Writing Center Operational Manual
5. Writing Center Bi-Annual Report – December 2009
6. Writing Center 1st Annual Essay Contest Policy and Guidelines
7. WCMB Agendas and Minutes
8. Writing Center Workshop Curriculum
9. Writing Center Official Registration Records
10. Writing Center Official Weekly and Monthly Attendance Records
11. Writing Center Peer Tutoring Training Program Curriculum and Attendance
12. Writing Center Peer Tutoring Interview Evaluation
13. Writing Center Creative Journals
14. Writing Center Academic Peer Tutoring Internship Hiring Policy
15. Writing Center Daily Tutorial Surveys

Professional Development:

The Writing Center in association with Professor Joseph Rega and the American Embassy, hosted its first professional development workshop on March 8th 2010. The guest presenter was Mr. Christopher Merrill, University of Iowa, USA. Mr. Merrill provided a two hour creative writing and poetry workshop to members of the Writing Center and the English Department.

Mr. Merrill spoke about cultivating good writing habits by having students write every day; a literary apprenticeship. He also focused on descriptive writing and suggested that creative, playful writing exercises can influence academic writing. Mr. Merrill gave some example writing exercises to use in the classroom setting. A key discussion focused on Discourse Analysis and Dramatic Dialogue as teaching techniques. Plagiarism was also discussed, as well as how reading precedes effective writing.

Mr. Merrill answered questions from the participants with copious examples to assist the writing instructors. Finally, Mr. Merrill spoke at length about the growing field of writing translation.

Disability Service Support:

The Writing Center has provided academic writing support to three students that are legally blind. A total of 37 appointments were made by students with visual impairments. The center's staff assisted them to the best of their abilities in academic writing, and through further collaboration with the Foundation Institute instructors with the recording of quizzes, assignments, tests, and final examinations for course subjects in reading, writing, grammar, TOEFL, and listening. Despite the Writing Center's greatest efforts in accommodating students with disabilities, it must be noted that the staff of the center are ill-equipped to respond to such needs and that the institution will need to address the educational concerns in the near future for students with disabilities.

Activities

1. The Writing Center conducted the 1st Annual Essay Contest at the University of Nizwa. The successful response from the students resulted in approximately 300 participants taking part in the academic competition.
2. Professor Qasim Ahmed Al Riyami from the College of Pharmacy collaborated extensively with the Writing Center to further advance student reading and writing skills for external pharmacy licensing examinations. The Writing Center provided intensive workshops for 22 graduating pharmacy students over two week duration.
3. Professor Edward Eaton and Professor Daniel Baxter from the English Department collaborated with the Writing Center in the formulation of assignments, and requested the center's assistance familiarizing their students with the writing process.
4. Professor Rizwan Said from the College of Economics and Information Systems collaborated with the Writing Center to further develop student writing skills for course assignments.

5. The Writing Center had a successful summer program and accommodated 58 registered high school students during the month of July.
6. The Writing Center actively participated in the spring 2010 Culture Week.
7. Writing Center instructors adopted an 8 hour work day.
8. Writing Center instructors were rewarded with salary increases.
9. Mr. James Donald Tate resigned his teaching position in May, 2010.
10. The Writing Center was interview twice for a highlight article in the Al Sharaqia University of Nizwa Newspaper.

Plans

1. To have members of the Writing Center instructional staff present at the University of Sharjah Writing Center Conference on February 17th & 18th 2011.
2. Explore the possibility to have members of the Writing Center instructional staff present at the TESOL Arabia Conference in conjunction with the MENAWCA in Dubai in March 2011.
3. To continue to build affiliations with the Middle East North African Writing Center Alliance (MENAWCA).
4. To provide consultancy advice to other institutions in the promotion of starting, maintaining, and developing a writing center.
5. To continue to support the Annual Essay Contest, and implement a spelling contest and speech contest aimed to further enhance student interests and proficiency in English through competition and academic excellence.
6. To publish a bi-annual Writing Center newspaper that is organized by students for students at the University of Nizwa.
7. To establish a weekly book club that fosters quality reading habits for pleasure.
8. To further develop the Writing Center website.
9. To further foster collaborative efforts with the faculty from the College of Arts Science, Economics & Information Systems, Pharmacy & Nursing, and Architecture & Engineering.

10. To further promote academic writing, the writing process, and the importance of academic honesty and integrity of written work.

Current Needs:

1. Further collaboration with the Department of Foreign Languages and other colleges to promote the responsible use of the Writing Center.
2. Improve student awareness about the writing process and further urge student to utilize the center's services in advance to the submission of assignments and projects and promote the importance of time management skills.
3. Refurbish and remodel the interior design of the center to optimize space, capacity, and improve the layout conducive to a quality instructional environment.
4. Increase the involvement of male students at the Writing Center and recruit additional qualified male tutors.
5. Additional office space for the administration and tutorial staff of the Writing Center.
6. Revised employment contracts of its instructional staff that reflects the department, position, and responsibilities and entitlements of the academic position.
7. Revamp the structure of the 1st Annual Essay Contest to minimize plagiarism. The current plan is to host the contest on a single day, where students would write their essay in the confines of Al Fiqir Auditorium/Al Shahba Auditorium.

Final Thoughts

As the Writing Center embarks upon its second full year of operation, it has prepared and positioned itself for continued growth and success. The amount of hard work and dedication put forth by its instructors, tutors, and administration ensures that student interests are paramount in the progression of writing and the establishment of an academic writing culture that is worthy of academic legitimacy and authenticity. The students at the University of Nizwa have embraced the programs and services that the Writing Center offers, and are considered an integral part of its success. The center has served as a viable facility to academic students to gain valuable ESL guidance and further develop their writing skills outside the traditional classroom setting. The fact that so many students have sought and supported the center's services in the past year speaks volumes about its credibility, quality of support, and its necessity which justify the Writing Center's agenda and existence.

The Writing Center recognizes that as it continues to grow and specialize in writing related amenities, it will have to at some near point in the future restrict its focus to purely students that are enrolled in their degree programs. The facility and its resources are already stretched to its limits, and will have to encourage Foundation Institute students to seek further assistance from their individual instructors

during their office hours as a feasible solution. The spectrum of English proficiency of academic students in their degree programs is currently very broad; to continue to further incorporate students that are at the beginning of their second language acquisition studies from the Foundation Program has contributed to added pressures and strains for the center as a learning support provider. For the Writing Center to truly function and support quality academic writing, it requires a student base with a reasonable level of English proficiency. The Writing Center supports the benchmark TOEFL score that the University of Nizwa requires for students to enter their degree programs as an optimal starting point to further develop student writing skills.

For the approaching academic year, the Writing Center will continue to promote quality academic writing skills across the curriculum, support the development of its staff and tutors, and build upon its achievements and address areas in need of enhancement for the sustainable improvement as a learning support facility. The Writing Center is a valued added commodity for the students that enroll at the University of Nizwa. As a main instrument for its measurement of success, as do all Writing Centers in the MENAWCA, IWCA and EWCA, accomplishments are determined by student support and usage. As an indicator, the Writing Center at the University of Nizwa performance is well above average, and perhaps the most accomplished in the Middle East during in a relatively brief period of time. The Writing Center looks forward to another extraordinary efficacious year with the continued support from the students, university faculty and administration in 2010~2011.

Addendum:

Brief Outline of Writing Center Workshops and Programs:

Please consult the Writing Center's curriculum & course outlines in its strategic plan for complete and official details

Area of Focus	Workshops	Per Week	Goals	Learning Outcomes
Writing	Paragraph, Essay & Short Composition Writing	4	Improve student writing abilities conducive to academic assignments and familiarize students to the various stages of the writing process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build student confidence in academic writing • Improve fundamentals of sentence and paragraph development • Develop quality thesis statements, introduction, conclusions and supportive arguments
	Practical Writing (Emails, memos, formal & informal letter writing)	3	Introduce various styles and forms of practical writing to enrich student writing opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve writing in a practical sense for personal needs and interests • Build student self confidence in writing for real life situations • Improve practical compositions conducive to the needs of the workplace and business community
	Creative Writing (Poetry, Short Stories & Plays)	3	To provide opportunities for the expression of creative ideas and self-expression through writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop explanatory and descriptive skills • Develop student interest in poetry, short stories plays and encourage creative talents • To promote writing as a means of expression through creative thought and imagination
	Introduction to Research Writing (Quotations, paraphrasing, footnoting, & bibliographies)	1	To provide support to student with English to effectively conduct and write research papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve student research techniques • Increase familiarity of various sources of information • Reduce plagiarism • Improve referencing and academic honesty
	Editing, Revising & Grammar	3	Improve understanding of the writing process through grammatical forms, word order, punctuation, spelling and error correction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve understanding of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions • Improve understanding of subject-verb agreement • Develop quality writing

				habits for editing, revision, and refining Compositions
Reading	Reading Activities	4	Improve reading comprehension skills and promote reading for academic study, knowledge and pleasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve analysis, summarization & interpretation skills • Improve reading speed and fluency • Develop critical thinking skills
Vocabulary	Vocabulary and Idiomatic Expressions	3	Improve extensive vocabulary and familiarity of everyday expressions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve understanding of contextual use of words • Develop vocabulary growth of root words, prefixes and suffixes • Expand students vocabulary and idiomatic usage
Academic Consultations (Maximum of 1 student per consultation)		20	Provide guidance to students for success with written assignments/research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve understanding of written course work • Improve quality of student written submissions • Reduce acts of plagiarism
Peer Tutoring Training Program (Participation mandatory for all tutors)		3	Improve quality of instruction given by peer tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve tutorial performance • Improve tutors self confidence • Improve quality of instruction
Conversation Sessions (Maximum of 10 students per session)		25	Provide speaking opportunities for students to practice English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve student oral fluency, pronunciation, and confidence • Provide opportunity to practice English • Improve English proficiency and develop social skills
1-on 1 Peer Tutorials (Individualized assistance with a tutor for 30 minutes)		135 per day	Provide academic mentoring to students from senior peer tutors that have accomplished an efficient level of proficiency in English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide assistance in reading, writing, and vocabulary development • Provide assistance in reviewing of subject course content • Provide educational teacher training and work experience for peer tutors.

Writing Center Programs & Services:

 University of Nizwa 					
Time	Writing Center Workshops				
	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
9:00 AM - 9:50 AM	Paragraph, Essay & Short Composition Writing	Paragraph, Essay & Short Composition Writing	Vocabulary & Idioms	Editing, Revising and Grammar	Vocabulary & Idioms
10:00 AM - 10:50 AM	Reading Activities	Reading Activities	Creative Writing (Poetry, Short Stories and Plays)	Practical Writing (Emails, memos, formal & informal letter writing)	Practical Writing (Emails, memos, formal & informal letter writing)
11:00 AM - 11:50 AM	Editing, Revising and Grammar	Editing, Revising and Grammar	Paragraph, Essay & Short Composition Writing	Reading Activities	Reading Activities
12:00 PM - 12:50 PM	Practical Writing (Emails, memos, formal & informal letter writing)	Vocabulary & Idioms	Creative Writing (Poetry, Short Stories and Plays)	Paragraph, Essay & Short Composition Writing	Introduction to Research Writing (Quotations, paraphrasing, footnoting & bibliographies)
3:00 PM - 3:30 PM	English Assistance for Administration & Faculty members	English Assistance for Administration & Faculty members	English Assistance for Administration & Faculty members	Creative Writing (Poetry, Short Stories and Plays)	 Have a nice weekend!
1 on 1 Tutorials					
8:30 AM ~ 4:00 PM	Writing, Reading, Computer Assisted Learning, Vocabulary, Idioms, Exam Prep ***Improve your English proficiency with a senior academic student*** ***1:30PM ~ 2:00PM – LUNCH BREAK FOR PEER TUTORS***				
Conversation Sessions					
8:30AM – 8:55AM, 1:00PM – 1:25PM, 1:30PM – 1:55PM, 2:00PM – 2:25PM, 2:30PM – 2:55PM *** Oral discussions to improve communication skills***					
Academic Consultations with Native Speakers					
10:00AM-10:30AM, 11:00AM-11:30AM ***Students seeking assistance with assignments, homework, research, projects & presentations***					

Extra-Curricular Activities

Art Through English: Every Sunday from 4:30PM-6:00PM

*****Acquire English as you become an artist*****

2009~2010 Internships & Employment Status:

	Peer Tutor	Student I.D #	Major	Employment Status
1.	Aiman Al Rawahi	13902821	English Translation	Peer Tutor
2.	Ashwaq Al Lamki	18331937	English Translation	Peer Tutor
3.	Asma Al Farsi	09058977	English Translation	UoN, Human Resources
4.	Bahiya Al Riyami	13454043	English Education	Peer Tutor
5.	Basma Al Yaqoobi	07405893	English Education	NA
6.	Hawriya Al Masroori	11819442	English Translation	Private Sector in Muscat
7.	Huda Al Amri	09381848	English Translation	Peer Tutor
8.	Amna Al Hadidi	12402063	English Education	Graduate Studies
9.	Khalid Al Mughairi	09347039	Architecture	Student
10.	Khalsa Al Abri	11797457	English Translation	Peer Tutor
11.	Latifa Al Sibani	13084392	English Education	Student
12.	Mai Al Shmali	05467241	English Education	Ministry of Higher Education
13.	Manar Al Sabahi	05994925	English Education	NA
14.	Mariyam Al Fizari	11488517	English Translation	Student
15.	Najiya Al Bahri	13785245	English Education	Peer Tutor
16.	Khoula Al Kalbani	14831451	Statistics	NA
17.	Salwa Al Anqoodi	11247309	English Education	Student
18.	Wafa Al Dahmashi	15248815	English Education	Ministry of Higher Education
19.	Huda AL Marhoobi	12028243	English Education	Ministry of Higher Education
20.	Raya AL Marhoobi	12027358	English Education	Ministry of Higher Education
21.	Badriya AL Tobi	05979443	English Education	UoN, Writing Center Administrator
22.	Salma AL Maskri	09129476	English Education	Student
23.	Jamila AL Shuraigi	11536493	Computer Education	Ministry of Higher Education
24.	Zaher Al Siyabi	09781278	English Education	Student
25.	Kawther AL Amri	18351858	English Translation	NA
26.	Hiyam AL Wahibi	04209362	English Translation	NA

27.	Hala AL Felahi	08225768	Marketing	Student
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