

Extra Credit and the Writing Center

Because all SVSU instructors want to encourage good writing practices on our campus, many faculty offer extra credit to their students who visit the Writing Center to work on brainstorming, drafting, or revising their writing assignments. The following list provides some best practices for creating extra credit assignments which include a tutorial session at the Writing Center.

1. **Set a timeline.** Many students will wait until a day (or even an hour) before a paper is due, leaving little or no time for the revision process. This can be frustrating to the tutor and the student; due to the limited time available, the student is not able to make significant changes to their writing. In addition, because students often need help with the brainstorming, outlining, and drafting process, coming into the Writing Center early can be useful in the writing process. *Consider setting due dates for students to complete a tutorial session at the Writing Center, offering more points for a visit to the Writing Center 10-6 days before the assignment is due, and a lesser amount of points 3-5 days before the paper is due.*
2. **Create an assignment sheet for extra credit.** Students—and tutors—work best when the expectations are clear. *Consider creating a short extra credit assignment sheet, adding the following details: timeline, points possible, Writing Center days/hours/website, and other reminders you would like to give the students (see below for more options).*
3. **Limit the amount of extra credit points.** Although good writing practice emphasizes process, giving students too many points for extra credit encourages them to value the extra credit work over the actual assignment. *Consider offering no more than 5% of the final assignment grade as extra credit.*
4. **Require a tutorial session, not a designated amount of time.** Tutorial sessions vary in length. A strong piece of student writing may take a tutor only 20 minutes to discuss; a weak piece of student writing might take over an hour. Tutors and students can struggle to meet a time limit for a tutorial session. *Consider advising students to complete a tutorial session at the Writing Center.*
5. **Remind students to bring writing assignment guidelines and/or rubric.** Knowing exactly what the assignment is and how it will be assessed is helpful to the students as well as the tutor. *Consider encouraging students to bring the writing assignment guidelines and/or rubric to the Writing Center, and make these resources available on your VSpace course site.*
6. **Ask students to write a reflection about the tutorial session.** We like to think we offer good advice to students, but sometimes the students don't remember this advice. By

asking your students to write a short letter/reflection/paragraph about their Writing Center tutorial session, you encourage them to reflect on their writing process and the feedback they received as writers. It also helps you understand some of the choices they made as writers when they completed the assignment. *Consider making a short reflection part of the extra credit assignment, with questions that might include: What happened in the tutorial session at the Writing Center? What did the tutor point out you are doing well in this writing assignment? What advice did the tutor give you to improve this writing assignment? What did you do to revise this writing assignment, based on the Writing Center tutorial session?*

7. **Tell students to notify you of their visit.** When all students visit the Writing Center, they complete a written session record form. One of the questions on the form asks, “Would you like the Writing Center to notify your instructor of your visit?” If the student checks “yes,” an email will be generated to you as the course instructor, informing you of the student’s visit. This email includes the student’s name, the date of the tutorial session, the assignment they worked on with the tutor, and the length of the tutorial session. These emails are automatically sent every Friday during the semester. *Consider reminding students to indicate they want you notified when they visit the Writing Center.*
8. **Use the Writing Center as extra credit, not as a requirement.** Because of students’ schedules, commutes, and the Writing Center’s hours, not all students can visit the Writing Center. *Consider emphasizing visiting the Writing Center is something that a student can do to earn extra points, but it is not required.*
9. **Limit the number of times a student can receive extra credit.** While extra credit can be a good way to get students to visit the Writing Center initially in a course, students that are repeatedly given extra credit for Writing Center tutorials often become resentful and disengaged in the writing process. *Consider offering extra credit for one assignment only.*
10. **If you are using extra credit as a part of the revision process, meet with the students before the tutorial session.** Often, instructors will allow revision of an assignment based on a student visiting the Writing Center. Many instructors will require a student schedule a time during office hours to have an initial conversation about the paper. After this visit with their instructor, the student can visit the Writing Center with a clearer sense of what to work on in the tutorial session. *Consider making a quick conference with the student part of the extra credit assignment.*