

What is a Peer Writing Assistant?

Peer Writing Assistants (PWAs) at the Writing Centre (part of Student Academic Success Services) are skilled upper-year and graduate student volunteers who enjoy helping others become better writers. They provide a vital component of our program, extending the service the Centre offers, by running one-on-one writing consultations with lower-year undergraduate students.

What do PWAs do?



PWAs are trained to work one-on-one with first and second year students looking for writing support. They help with clarifying the terms of the assignment, brainstorming, pre-writing and structuring, providing feedback, and directing students to the resources they need to produce good papers. For many students, this service makes a significant difference in their academic performance and confidence.

Sessions are always challenging, and no two are alike. Each session, however, requires a collaborative approach between the PWA and the student seeking assistance – i.e., PWAs do not proofread, or make writing decisions, for the students they help. Instead, they help students develop their own skills in writing, editing and critical thinking, in the context of working on a particular assignment.

PWAs also occasionally offer workshops on writing-related topics in collaboration with SASS' Peer Learning Assistants, and have the chance to work at various SASS writing and learning events throughout the year.

Why become a Peer Writing Assistant?

Knowing that you're helping others is a good feeling, but that's not the only reason to become a PWA. You can also strengthen your own writing, editing, and communication skills, belong to a fun team of people from diverse faculties and backgrounds, and receive practical training in a variety of areas from professional staff. If you intend to pursue an academic, communications, or teaching career, this experience is a helpful addition to your CV, and perhaps a way to connect with professional staff who can challenge and support your growth and give you a great reference when you graduate.

"I'm so grateful for my experience as a PWA. From the workshops, the training, and the support we received to the actual sessions with students, the program allowed me to help others while also strengthening my own skills (for example, I finally learned how to properly use a semicolon). Because of my experience as a PWA, I was able to go into my publishing program with a renewed and strengthened confidence in my skills and abilities."

Kirstie Turco, PWA 2014-2015 & 2015-2016

What kind of time commitment is required?

PWA sessions take place Monday-Thursday, 6:30-8:30 pm, and Saturdays 11:00 – 1:00 pm in four 25-minute sessions per evening. Currently, each PWA volunteers for **two hours per week** from mid-September to the end of November and from mid-January to the end of March.

In addition, we have an hour-long team meeting twice per term.

Training takes place:

- In the summer: PWAs have short readings and online AODA training to complete (about 4-5 hours total)
- On September 16, 2018: a full day of in-person training on campus (about 7 hours)
- Throughout the year: PWAs attend one or two hour-long sessions on topics related to their roles, and also choose two out of many possible additional sessions to complete over the academic year, to support their development (about 3-4 hours total)
- Online: PWAs complete a series of short lessons in grammar and style over the summer and fall term (about 8-10 hours).

What do I need to apply?

Although you'll receive full training to get you ready to work one-on-one with students, we're looking for:

- Students in second year or upward from any program.
- Some evidence of work with people and/or students. This might be in summer camps, tutoring, or other leadership roles.
- Developed writing abilities in **any subject**: we're just as keen on Engineering as we are on Economics, English or Environmental Science!
- An interest in or experience working with ESL (English as Second Language Students) is also particularly welcome.

To apply:

Submit the following to Ian Garner, ian.garner@queensu.ca:

- A covering letter explaining why you want to work as a PWA, how your background will help you fulfil the role's responsibilities, and how your own writing has developed during your time at Queen's.
- A brief resume.
- A 2-page writing sample from any undergraduate course.

For more information, please visit: <http://sass.queensu.ca/about/peers> or email the coordinator, Ian Garner, ian.garner@queensu.ca