**The Student-Mentor Writing Plan**

**Not just a plan …** This three-year plan is actually a **Learning Progression for Scholarly Writing**, with the assumption that, by the time they earn their degree, *they will have the skills to write and publish in leading journals in your field*. As I will say many times, the point is not to simply use this plan, but to **use a plan** that works toward the goal of publication in leading journals in your field.

**Definitions**

These are not mutually exclusive and can be additive.

**Reciprocal**: Reciprocal mentorship recognizes that mentees can bring complementary knowledge and experiences to the relationship. It functions as a creative and dynamic alliance in which all parties regularly engage in identifying, communicating, and investing time working toward developmental goals.

**Adaptive**: Mentoring changes with the needs of mentees, reflecting the mentees’ current career stage, professional goals, and need for guidance. Over time, adaptive mentoring relationships develop beyond transactional, hierarchical structures into ones in which all parties move between expert and learner roles as appropriate.

**Mentoring v. Advising**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Advisor** | **Mentor** |
| **Goal** | Guiding academic progress | Support student’s larger career and goals |
| **Timeline** | Graduate school | Graduate school and beyond |
| **Function** | Official/regulatory | Interpersonal |
| **Focus** | Requirement-based | Skills-based |
| **Interaction** | One way | Two way |
| **Primary Activity** | Teaching/explaining | Modeling |

**YEAR ONE[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Mentoring Relationship** — Meetings 1-3

Meetings 1-3 are crucial to the Student/Mentor relationship because they set the tone for the rest of your interactions, however long or short that time may be. My argument would be that your ability to successfully mentor your graduate student writers will depend upon your ability to foster a healthy working relationship.

1. Establish Relationship

Through good communication skills like:

Listening

Echoing

Validating

Modeling

Common Ground

Vulnerability — sharing work

1. Agree on rules and boundaries of the relationship — put them in writing

Establish Norms

How often will you assess their work

What is the typical format of your feedback?

Expectations about contact

Who initiates and how?

How often?

How does responding to drafts work? Expectations?

Know your limits and communicate them

1. Identify Student Goals — how and how much writing figures into their goals?

*Identify specific writing goals*.

1. Make a Plan — part of this plan should be comprised of both writing assessments and training

**Writing Goals for Year One**

1. Writing Consistency
2. Efficient Writing

**Mike’s Writing Rubric**

This represents just one way of differentiating levels of writing skill and may not be appropriate or useful to you in your discipline. The point is to have one, to talk about it liberally with your students, and to use a rubric to perform yearly evaluations of their writing.

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| --- | --- |
| **Efficient** | Writing that does an effective and efficient job of communicating-accomplishing the Spine of a Work (Purpose-Argument-Value). A minimum requirement for graduate student writing. |
| **Elegant** | Writing that is efficient but does so with minimal effort from the reader to navigate the writer’s Spine. Focus on transition and rhetorical shape. Again, graduate writers should, in my opinion, complete their degrees being able to generate this kind of prose in at least 80 percent of their writing. |
| **Engaging** | The scholarly equivalent of a page-turner, Engaging Writing is writing that we want to continue to read. A focus here on rhetorical structure and strategies based on Audience and Value. Engaging writing has a heightened ability to convince. Something for graduate students to attempt, if not to regularly achieve. |
| **Powerful** | Writing that this equally adept at explaining, convincing, and persuading. It can be either intellectually inspiring or emotionally inspiring and, at times, both of these. |

**Writing Objectives**

1. Skills vs. Tools — writing is a skill that you can perform. Student-Mentor work depends upon introducing and practicing with tools to write better.
2. Sentence-level competence by focusing on things like the S-V-O relationship
3. No concern for style

**Writing Activities**

* 1. Meeting 4 — Assessment
  2. Daily Writing Plan on a 2X/day schedule
  3. Modes of Writing

1. Description
2. Summary
3. Exposition

**YEAR TWO**

**Mentoring Relationship**

1. Continue to share your work
2. Portfolio examination as part of the assessment apparatus

**Writing Goals**

1. Writing Consistency
2. Move students from Efficient Writing toward Elegant Writing

**Writing Objectives**

1. Reach paragraph-level competence
2. Consider rhetorical shape in multi-sentence constructions
3. Transitions within and between paragraphs
4. Modes of writing
5. Analytical
6. Comparative

**Writing Activities**

1. Beginning-of-year Portfolio exercise
2. Daily writing

**YEAR THREE**

**Mentoring Relationship**

1. Earliest consideration of collaboration
2. Portfolio examination

**Writing Goals**

1. Writing Consistency
2. Writing Duration
3. Dealing with criticism/multiple sources of advice
4. Introduce students to Engaging Writing

**Writing Objectives**

1. Begin to work on pieces with two readers v. one
2. Engage in advanced revision techniques
3. Modes of writing
4. Deployment of advanced rhetorical forms: parallelism, repetition, metaphor, and simile
5. Logical fallacies

**Writing Activities**

1. Portfolio exercise
2. Daily Writing, experimenting with longer daily sessions (up to 1 hour)
3. Organize multi-commenter revision with colleague

**The Initial Writing Assessment**

1. Draw upon ideas from colleagues

Do it with something non-academic , but ask them to write it as if in academic prose in your discipline. One page, single spaced, no more. Your prompt should focus on Year One writing modes: description, summary, exposition. Why non-academic prose?

Not a measure of their knowledge but of their skill

Measures their grasp the written conventions of your discipline

Evidence of their ability to write within word count/space limitations

1. Share a version of your own. In doing so, you’re showing what you’re looking for and you’re modeling the sharing that’s important to mentoring.

Can’t hide behind jargon

What are you looking for? That’s the next workshop.

Describe the motivations behind some habit you began during the pandemic and have continued.

Provide a description of the landscape of a room in your apartment/house.

Describe the reactions that take place in the baking of an apple pie or spaghetti sauce (extra points for samples).

Do a close reading of a single scene in a recent TV show.

1. The year-designations, while, ideally, represent a student’s arrival in your department’s program, more accurately represents your time with students. So, Year One would be your 1st year serving as a student’s adviser, even though that student might be in their second or third year in the program. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)