

## Undergraduate Online Tutoring Program Guidelines, Policies, and Procedures

### I. Purpose & Program Overview

In an effort to provide services to student populations with limited physical access to the Learning Enhancement Center, the center offers an asynchronous online tutoring program. Online tutoring can be done for writing or PowerPoint projects from any discipline, and its use is currently restricted to the following student populations only:

- La Verne Online students;
- CAPA students;
- Regional Campus location (RCA) students;
- Students in off-campus programs;
- Military installation students; and
- Graduate students.

### II. How Online Tutoring Works

1. When the student books an appointment, he/she will request “online tutoring,” indicated in AccuTrack by activities that begin with OWRT. Currently, there are 11 online writing activities to which students may be assigned: OWRT100 (Undergraduate Writing Project Online), OWRT105 (Emergency over-flow online appt), OWRT200 (CAPA Student Online Writing Project), OWRT201 (RCA Student Online Writing Project), OWRT202 (Military student writing project online), OWRT300 (Off-Campus Education project online), OWRT400 (ESL UG Writing Project online), OWRT500 (Graduate Online tutoring), OWRT501 (ESL Grad Writing Project online), OWRT600 (PhD Online Tutoring), and OWRT699 (ESL Dissertation Project online). Ideally, the Center Supervisor will assign the student the most appropriate activity.
2. The Center Supervisor then reminds the student to review the Online Tutoring guidelines on the LEC’s website (<http://sites.laverne.edu/learning-enhancement-center/tutoring/online-tutoring/>).
3. Both the student and the online tutor receive confirmation emails of the appointment from AccuTrack. The student also receives a separate email detailing the proper online tutoring procedure.
4. By 8:00am the morning of the scheduled appointment, the student emails the paper or project as an attachment to [tutoring@laverne.edu](mailto:tutoring@laverne.edu) (which is the same as [online.tutoring@laverne.edu](mailto:online.tutoring@laverne.edu)). In the subject line, the student is directed to include his/her name as well as the tutor’s name.
5. The tutor has 24 hours from the end of the scheduled appointment time to return the paper/project with feedback to the student. For example, if the student’s

appointment is 3:00-4:00pm on Tuesday, the paper is due back to the student by 4:00pm on Wednesday.

6. During the review period, the tutor accesses the student's document through the [tutoring@laverne.edu](mailto:tutoring@laverne.edu) mailbox. From the La Verne homepage, under the Current Students tab on the left side of the page, click "Email." This will open up the Alumni/Student Gmail log-in page:

**Username:** online.tutoring

**Password:** {please see appropriate LEC personnel for current password}

Download the student's attachment (should be Microsoft compatible) and review the project. Using the comments, Track Changes, Notes or a combination of these three features, respond to the student's work citing specific parts recommended for revision, clarification, deletion, expansion, etc.

7. Return the reviewed project to the student by replying to his/her original email. Be sure to attach the reviewed project and that the attachment includes your suggestions. In the body of the email, be sure to provide the student holistic feedback about your overall impressions of, questions about, or suggestions for the project. Also be sure to ask the student to complete the Session Satisfaction Survey, and include the link in your email: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QD8WGGQT>. Also offer to complete a session verification form in the event the student requires proof of a tutoring appointment.

### III. After You Return the Document to the Student

If the student responds back after you've already returned the document, they may want to include follow-up questions or have a discussion. You should check back on the [tutoring@laverne.edu](mailto:tutoring@laverne.edu) mailbox another 24 hours after you've sent the project back to the student to check for any follow-up questions/comments.

You may answer these at your discretion. Simple, easy-to-answer questions should probably be addressed; however, students may start to see you as their personal tutor – available anytime online.

If the student tries to send you another version of the same project (to review his/her revisions), tries to send you an entirely new project, or asks you a substantial set of questions that would require a lengthier response (and hence, more of your time), tell the student he/she **must book another appointment** through the front desk. When you spend "extra" time with a student on an online project outside the time already allotted, we have no way to track that data or pay you for the time you've spent.

#### IV. Online Tutoring Philosophy

In every way possible (given resources and limitations), the goal of an online tutoring session is to replicate the quality of and philosophical approach to face-to-face (f2f) tutoring. Generally, this includes the following three actions:

- Engaging the student in a discussion about his/her work;
- Avoiding editing and/or appropriating the student's work; and
- Focusing on the long-term learning of the student, rather than just the product or project at hand.

##### A. *Engaging Online Students in a Discussion*

Because the LEC currently utilizes an asynchronous online tutoring platform, the student and tutor don't have the opportunity to interact with one another while the "tutoring" is happening. Chances are, you're reviewing the paper at a time convenient for you while the student waits idly by for your reply. As such, the "discussion" we're used to as f2f tutors must be altered to fit this format (but not ignored or eliminated from the tutoring equation). Here are some steps you can take to put the discussion back into asynchronous tutoring:

1. Be sure to **read the student's entire email**, not just dive straight into the project. She may share important information about her goals for the session, the intent of or motivation for the project, or give you some clues as to what parts of the assignment she would like feedback.
2. Don't be afraid to ask the student for additional information regarding the assignment or project, the student's session goals, or any feedback or dialogue the student may have had with his/her instructor *before* you review the work.
3. When commenting on the student's work, **ask questions** when it's appropriate, just like you would in f2f sessions. For example, instead of saying, "This is a good idea. You should expand this part of your paper," you can provoke reflection in the student by asking, "How might you expand this section of your essay to give the reader a more comprehensive understanding of this concept?"
4. Be sure to **include feedback that addresses both lower order concerns** (LOCs) and higher order concerns (HOCs). Remember LOCs including sentence-level issues like grammar, punctuation, word usage, formatting, and sentence structure. HOCs focus on larger issues with the document, including argument construction, use of evidence, logic, organization, fulfilling the assignment purpose, etc. By providing a student feedback (comments, suggestions, and questions) on both HOCs and LOCs, you

entice the student to think about his/her project at both local and global levels.

### ***B. Avoiding the Editing Trap***

Generally, tutors are quite adept at avoiding editing for students during face-to-face sessions by using a variety of techniques. Many of these strategies, however, are unavailable to the online tutor, making it easier for you to fall victim to editing documents (rather than providing online tutoring). As a result, you may also end up appropriating (taking ownership of) the student's work, which brings up further questions about the integrity of that work. Here are some strategies you can use to avoid straight editing:

1. Engage the student by taking advantage of opportunities for discussion rather than simply assuming whatever revisions you include are directions rather than suggestions (as they should almost always be). (See ***Engaging Online Students in a Discussion*** above.)
2. Direct the student to web-based or hardcopy resources or supplemental materials that will help the student help him or herself. The LEC's website currently includes a page entitled [Academic Web Resources](#) which links to sources across the internet on grammar, English language instruction, references and citations, and academic writing projects in general. Take the time to peruse these resources and link them within your Comments to students to promote self-directed learning.
3. Clarify your role as a tutor, not an editor, to the student as soon as possible to avoid confusion. Especially direct students to the LEC's Tutoring Services page that includes our official policy on "editing and proofreading" student work. This will help ensure a unified message and remind students about their roles in their own projects.

### ***C. Focusing on Long-Term Learning***

As an administrative unit of the University of La Verne, the Learning Enhancement Center is committed to supporting the values and mission of the University as a whole. One of the key values of La Verne we support here in the LEC is the dedication to the student's long-term or life-time learning. If we simply do the work for students, we are preventing them from achieving their own goals and progressing as learners and as individuals. This is often easier said than done, but here are some ways to promote long-term learning:

1. Ensure your student understands how the Learning Enhancement Center approaches tutoring and the student-tutor relationship. When the opportunity arises, clarify the Center's mission and your role as a tutor.

You can, and should, direct students to review the LEC's mission and student outcomes as posted on the LEC's homepage.

2. When a student sends you a project that will take longer to review than the time allotted, remind the student about your capabilities and that you won't be able to "fix" or comment on everything; in these cases, be sure to explain to the student that your primary focus is always on the higher order concerns of the project (organization, structure, argument, clarity, and achievement of purpose). *Remind them that a paper perfect in grammar and formatting doesn't mean it's a perfect paper.*
3. During your Comments, focus on larger, generally-applicable strategies and/or issues that the student may be able to connect to past or future projects. This is not to say you should not address project-specific concerns, but you should take the opportunity to demonstrate in what ways students can reuse tools, strategies, resources, or methods to other academic work.

## V. Examples of Approaches to Online Tutoring

Below, you'll find some snippets of actual student writing and tutor comments. While no tutor uses the same tutoring technique, there are some principles that are generally more student-centered. Both of the samples below have strengths as well as room for improvement.

## Sample 1 – Online Tutoring with Business Student

modern public administration.

**Model Application In a Real Scenario:**

Iran Fanarloom is a helical spring manufacturing company-. The company produces different kinds of products for different industries and sectors, including the such as: A auto industry, H the home appliance industry, and the military. In this case, in order to infuse the structure of the private sector instructure to the structure of public administration-format, members of (the) board of organization are assumed as policy makers and memebers of different departments and in particular procurement department are assumed as administrators.

The company had faced with a crisis, derived from the existance of traditional approach in procurement department so that highly complex flow of information mainly based on paper works in this department had led to high operating costs, delay in delivering products and poor performance of the suppliers. This left the organization to face with dissatisfied clients dissatisfaction and consequently a iligitimate status in the eyes of the public.

The Pprocurement department administrators made a proposal through the manager of

**Comment [JM25]:** which military – the military of which country?

**Comment [JM26]:** Which case? Are you talking about the company? the products? The industries they serve? Relationships between the above?

**Comment [JM27]:** which one? Which country are we in? Who is in charge of this board? Is it the US? Lebanon? Nigeria? Iran Fanarloom? Germany? The UN?

**Comment [JM28]:** who is assuming this?

**Comment [JM29]:** who in which procurement department are administrators?

**Comment [JM30]:** when? what kind of crisis?

**Comment [JM31]:** what is this traditional approach? Define?

**Comment [JM32]:** What do you mean? Iligitimate means not legal.

**Comment [JM33]:** again, what is your context?

In our first sample above, the tutor is using a combination of the Track Changes (TC) and Comments features in Microsoft Word. The tutor is using the TC feature to eliminate wordiness, clarify meaning, and make simple grammatical/punctuation modifications. The Comments feature primarily engages the student in a critical, self-reflective dialogue with clarifying questions that distort the reader's (tutor's) understanding of his message.

Note the tutor's tone, on occasion, could be interpreted as abrasive or indifferent. How could the tutor revise his/her comments that still ask the writer to consider these questions in a way that won't provoke a defensive response? Also, be wary of the sheer volume of Comments; some students may be overwhelmed by the number of revisions/suggestions. What might you do differently in this situation?

## Sample 2 – Online Tutoring with Education Student

college (Adelman, 2002; Smith & Zhang, 2009). Even with a rigorous course schedule, other factors are contributing to the realities of making a healthy adjustment into college; (whether students received adequate advice from guidance counselors, parental support, nurturing peer relationships, and college information about what is expected of new students. )

Technology is playing an increasing role in the lives of adolescents and it can pose a problem for students entering college in ways they were not expecting. Social networking and texting have replaced interpersonal relationships with virtual friends. When students move away to college, the students needs “real” friends to help facilitate the transition into campus life. Dorm roommates and classmates are “real” people, creating the dilemma for students to have more social and interpersonal relationship skills. Increasingly, colleges are restricting enrollment due to prospective student’s social networking pictures that go against the image the college wants to portray.

**Comment [G2]:** To adjust to something.

**Comment [G3]:** This is an incomplete sentence. Re-read it from “even,” and then see how it does not flow.

**Comment [G4]:** You could add a sentence here: “Virtual friends have become the sought after \_\_\_\_\_” or “Virtual friends have replaced “real” friends ....”

**Comment [G5]:** I think I understand what you are trying to convey, but you may need to expand this sentence a little to be clearer.

In Sample 2, this tutor also uses a combination of the Track Changes and Comments features. Track Change revisions are accompanied by explanations or suggestions using Comments, and the sheer volume of Comments has been reduced to something more manageable for a student. The tutor uses the Comments feature to provide direction on higher order concerns (i.e. “You may need to expand this sentence a little bit to be clearer.”). However, he/she could have addressed the issue of clarification with a question (“Do you mean...here?) instead of a statement (“I think I understand what you are trying to convey...”).

## VI. Resources

Hundreds of articles, books, blogs, and conference presentations have been devoted to issues concerning online tutoring. Below is just a small sample of those to which you have direct access within the Learning Enhancement Center.

Coogan, David. "Email 'Tutoring' as Collaborative Writing." *Wiring the Writing Center*. Eric. H. Hobson, Ed. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1998. 25-43.

---. "Towards a Rhetoric of On-Line Tutoring." *Writing Lab Newsletter* 19.1 (1994): 3-5.

Cooper, George, Kara Bui, and Linda Riker. "Protocols and Process in Online Tutoring." *The Longman Guide to Writing Center Theory and Practice*. Robert W. Barnett and Jacob S. Blumner, Eds. New York: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008: 309-19.

Healy, Dave. "From Place to Space: Perceptual Administrative Issues in the Online Writing Center." *Computers and Composition* 12 (1995): 183-93.

Hewett, Beth L. *The Online Writing Conference: A Guide for Teachers and Tutors*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 2010.

Hobson, Eric H., Ed. *Wiring the Writing Center*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1998.