HERMES

Journal of Language and Communication in Business

Thematic Section (issue 64-2024)

Rollen/Roles in der Schreibwissenschaft

Editors:

Dagmar Knorr / Carmen Heine

Published by the School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University

ISSN: 1903-1785

HERMES
Journal of Language and Communication in Business

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Toward a Systematic Approach to Developing Professional Roles: What Writing Tutors Need to Know and Know How to Do

Abstract

The ability to write well in academic context is usually the result of a long and uneven learning process that requires commitment, persistence, and, ideally, formal training. Professionals tasked with supporting academic writers, for example writing center staff or peer writing tutors, not only are expected to write well but also need to learn how to facilitate the individual development of their clients. To prepare peer tutors for this role, many writing centers have developed training programs. Contributing to the literature on this specific dimension of writing center work, this article introduces a design of a training program that considers the different knowledges that writing tutors need to have so that they can support their clients. Based on the Systemization Writing Consultations, this program identifies key educational objectives for new tutors and prepares participants for further systematic individual development over the course of the training and beyond. Emphasizing the importance of reflection in this respect, this article discusses several approaches and strategies that allow participants to reflect on their writing and their future role as peer writing tutors. The training discussed here is not only of interest to writing center directors and staff but also to professionals in similar contexts tasked with designing and running programs and interventions geared toward the long-term development of professional skills and roles.

Keywords

academic writing; writing tutor training; reflection; professionalization; roles

1 Introduction

A structured approach to developing key skills, self-guided learning, persistence, and reflection contribute to professionalization and can lead to university diplomas and successful careers. This is also true in higher education, where individuals need to learn—perhaps in introductory or advanced disciplinary writing classes, but mostly on their own—how to produce academic texts over the course of one or more degree programs. To this end, individuals have to develop a wide range of skills and acquire generalist and specialist knowledges related to their course of study. If they embark on a career as researchers, they need to master, among other professional writing tasks, the key genres in their discipline. To make sure that students and future faculty know how to meet the challenges facing them as writers, many universities offer the aforementioned writing courses or programs or have established writing centers.

Those tasked with supporting writers in higher education need to have additional skills that allow them to engage students and perhaps also faculty in conversations about writing, to identify opportunities for future growth, and to facilitate learning and reflection. Doing so is an inherently complex task and places numerous demands on professional writing specialist working at universities. This group, which includes writing program or writing center directors and staff, constantly needs to adapt to different circumstances due to, for example, the globalization of higher education and increasing linguistic and cultural diversity (Martins, 2015; Rafoth, 2015) or due to technological change, such as the one brought about by generative AI. Under these difficult circumstances, directors and staff members at many writing centers worldwide need to train students as peer tutors. Because these students, usually working toward bachelor and master's degrees, are

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still learning how to write academic texts in a complex environment, writing center professionals face the daunting task of designing peer tutor writing programs that prepare students for their work on writing with their peers in a short period of time.

Since the emergence of the peer writing tutor program movement at university writing centers in the US in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Bruffee, 1984), a wide range of publications in English and German have explored the various ways in which writing center professionals can share key skills, approaches, theories, and pedagogical practices with their peer tutors. These publications include theoretical and empirical studies as well as textbooks and anthologies collecting canonical contributions to key debates in the field. Current popular textbooks in the English-language on peer tutoring include Ryan and Zimmerelli's *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors* (Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2010), Murphy and Sherwood's *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors* (Murphy & Sherwood, 2011), or Gillespie and Lerner's *The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring* (Gillespie & Lerner, 2008). A classic text in German is *Zukunftsmodell Schreibberatung: Eine Anleitung zur Begleitung von Schreibenden im Studium* (Grieshammer et al., 2012). Most of these textbooks offer general introductions to core principles, theories, and practices, at times using a distinct approach. Ianetta and Fitgerald's *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors: Practice and Research* (Ianetta & Fitzgerald, 2016), for example, argues that peer writing tutors should independently conduct or at least be involved in (empirical) research on writing as early as possible for them to become evidence-based practitioners, and the last section of the volume collects studies conducted by undergraduate and graduate peer writing tutors.

The literature on peer tutoring at writing centers written in English and German also includes studies that have focused on approaches to and the design of curricular and non-curricular tutor training programs (Beck et al., 1978; Podis, 1980), also in multilingual contexts (Aksakalova & Squires, 2021; Ronesi, 2009). As already suggested in an early study by North (1982), these programs aim to provide tutors with the skills and knowledge to engage their peers in conversations about writing that encourage reflection on the writer's part and that prioritize process and individual long-term development over short-term fixes to products. This kind of approach, which has been described as collaborative learning (Bruffee, 1984), is guided, with the possible exception of multilingual contexts (Bruce & Rafoth, 2009, 2016; Manchón & Matsuda, 2016), by the principle of non-directiveness (SIG „Qualitätsstandards und Inhalte der Peer-Schreibtutor*innen-Ausbildung", 2016). Later studies have heeded North's call for more empirical work on how peer writing tutors can achieve these and other outcomes, for example by identifying effective tutoring, instruction, and scaffolding strategies used by "experienced" writing tutors, that is, those who had completed a training program and more than one year of experience on the job (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015).

In light of the limited time and resources available to both university writing professionals and students and given the level of complexity of peer tutoring as a practice, writing center directors and staff often have to make hard choices about what issues to prioritize and which instructional methods, approaches, and readings to pick for their training programs. Because participants' identities and roles as writers and as tutors will, ideally, continue to evolve long after the first round of formal training has been completed, the programs, curricular or non-curricular, should best be conceived of as starting points for a long-term development also involving self-directed learning and reflection. To map out a future direction for themselves, peer writing tutors would need to identify skills and other dimensions of their practice that offer potential for growth. To do so, they would first need to have a better understanding of all of the different knowledges writing, and the tutoring of writing, involves in the first place.

To help individuals reflect on their individual trajectory as writers and tutors and related roles, we introduce a framework and a design for a program that is based on an overview of the various demands placed on writing tutors or consultants and related competencies or knowledges. This framework, Systemization Writing Consultation (Knorr, 2025), which is described in the next

section, can be used both at the individual and institutional levels to evaluate the status quo as well as to identify priorities and possibilities for future development. In the section that follows, we discuss how we apply this approach at our institution. After a brief introduction to Leuphana's Schreibzentrum / Writing Center and the general design of the non-curricular peer writing tutor training program, we show how participants reflect on their identity, process, and practices as writers before they begin to consider these aspects from the perspective as tutors. We focus on process in part because this issue is often addressed in the literature and existing designs and because, perhaps a more pressing concern for us, a considerable number of students meet with our team to discuss process-related challenges. In this section, we show that our approach allows participants to relate what they experience and know as writers about process to the knowledge they need as tutors while maintaining a clear distinction between these two roles.

Drawing, for example, on the results of reflective writing activities from previous rounds of the training we have conducted at Leuphana's Schreibzentrum / Writing Center, we suggest that developing a curriculum based on the Systemization Writing Consultation (Knorr, 2025) might be beneficial to other writing center professionals hiring peer writing tutors. This approach addresses key aspects commonly covered in these kinds of training programs, but it has the additional benefit of laying the groundwork for long-term professional development. Specifically, we argue that the approach proposed here allows participants to systematically explore different dimensions of writing and writing consultations in what is essentially an open-ended process of reflection and life-long learning. As participants track their progress and map future trajectories, they begin to develop their roles as both writers and writing tutors. While we focus on the development of roles at writing centers, we believe that key features of our approach, for example systematically mapping and developing key skills or emphasizing reflection, could be taken up by freelance writing coaches or professionals in adult education contexts. Toward the end of our contribution, we also suggest that our approach might also be used by writing center professionals to identify potential for professional long-term development at an institutional level.

2 Theoretical Framework: Systemization Writing Consultation

The Systemization Writing Consultation (Knorr, 2025) identifies the different **knowledges** that writing center staff or other writing professionals need to acquire and develop if they are to work with writers and facilitate their learning. These knowledges are related to different **demands** placed on writers, primarily in the context of higher education, in a biaxial matrix. Following Mandl et al. (1993), the Systemization Writing Consultations distinguishes between declarative, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge. Instead of "*knowledge domain*" ("Wissensbereich," (Dengscherz, 2019, p. 115), Knorr (2025) uses the term *demands* (*Anforderungen* or *Anforderungsbereich*) to emphasize the connections between the two dimensions. The three demands and related sub-demands listed along the vertical axis have been derived from a systematic review of the literature and the empirical work by Knorr (2025). The demands related to context, person, and situation will be discussed in greater detail in the following.

The first demand addressed by Knorr is "Context," that is, that of academic and scientific writers as well as related professionals. In other words, the focus is on the "domain academia" ("Handlungsraum Wissenschaft," Jakobs, 1995, pp. 101–102) and "disciplinary cultures" ("Fachkulturen," Everke Buchanan & Meyer, 2016, p. 52). Writing professionals such as writing center staff need to understand, at a bare minimum, how researchers generate and communicate new insights or how one discipline and related conventions differs from the next. These professionals also have to be familiar with what Knorr refers to as "Media Environment" ("mediale Umgebung", Hicks & Perrin, 2014)). An online consultation, for example, may place additional communicative or technological demands on consultants.

Demands involving the "Person" relate to the personality ("Persönlichkeit"), the role ("Rolle") as writing consultants, the use of communication strategies to engage writers in conversations on their work ("Gesprächsführung"), and "Language" and "Literacy" (Knorr, 2025). When writing consultants meet with clients, they need to consider their own identity as well as that of the individuals they work with (Ianetta & Fitzgerald, 2016, pp. 109–115). Their role is circumscribed by their professional duties (Grieshammer et al., 2012, p. 100). Writing consultants, then, need to reflect on their self-concept, their own behavior and practices, and their understanding of writing consultations in general and their specific context. A client-centered approach to consultations (Grieshammer et al., 2012, p. 100; Rogers, 1985) is only possible if writing consultants know how to use at least basic communication and scaffolding strategies. In light of the national, cultural, and linguistic diversity characterizing higher education and other professional contexts today, demands in terms of language or literacy have increased considerably and therefore should be prioritized in peer tutor training programs. For example, the German literature on multilingualism (*Mehrsprachigkeit*) shows that the attitude toward a language affects the ways in which individuals use that language (Dirim, 2013; Knappik, 2018; Knorr, 2019). For this reason, writing professionals such as writing center staff and peer tutors need to reflect on their linguistic background if they are to draw on this rich resource in consultations with clients.

The demands related to "Context" and "Person" provide the basis for the work of writing professionals such as writing center staff, which is the focus of the third demand listed along the vertical axis in the Systemization Writing Consultation. This demand, "Situation," is divided into two main sub-demands, "Identification of Individual Challenges" and "Consultation," which, in turn, include additional ones. When it comes to demands related to the identification of individual demands, the Systemization Writing Consultation distinguishes between "Process-Related" and "Text-Related Concerns" by clients. For example, students tend to contact writing center staff with process-related concerns when they do not make any meaningful progress on their projects or, perhaps, no progress at all. This might happen at different stages and be due to various reasons. Students may struggle to get started or have a hard time wrapping up. (In the German literature, this is referred to as "Nicht-Anfangen-Können" and "Nicht-Aufhören-Können," respectively Kruse, 2007 [1993]; Ruhmann, 1995, 1996). They may struggle to draw up a realistic timeline for their projects or to stick to it, or they might be overwhelmed when conducting research or managing their sources. It is often difficult for clients to articulate what their "problem" is. Consultants working with these clients need to engage them in a conversation on their process to analyze the situation and to identify possible causes and solutions. To that end, consultants need to understand how academic and scientific writers go about producing texts. This knowledge is crucial for most writing consultants, and for this reason, most programs, including the peer writing tutor training program discussed in this article, address writing processes and relate insights from the literature to the experience of participants. In the case of text-related concerns, students show up for a consultation with a text or share it with consultants prior to the meeting. Consultants can infer what clients' most pressing concerns and current challenges might be by analyzing the text in front of them. This kind of analysis requires a very good understanding of, among other aspects, disciplinary or genre conventions.

Once writing consultants have identified individual challenges, they need to pick a strategy for the session with clients. In process-related consultations, writing consultants may work with theoretical process models such as the Cascade Model of Academic Text Production (Knorr, 2024) or the wiki[1] maintained by Leuphana's Schreibzentrum / Writing Center. These tools can be used to jump-start a conversation on individual approaches to writing, to develop a shared vocabulary, and to foster clients' reflection on their strategies and practices. For this kind of conversation, consultants need, among other competencies, the ability to switch perspectives on writing.

[1] https://lehrwiki.leuphana.de/display/SWCRessourcen

In text-related consultations, consultants need to reflect and draw on their knowledge and experience as academic and scientific writers. The demands on academic and scientific writers have been mapped in the Systematic Academic and Scientific Writing (Knorr, 2025). The Systematic Writing Consultations (Knorr, 2025) adopts this overview and considers demands as they appear in writing consultations. How well individuals can write in academic contexts can be inferred based on two features: first, their ability to position themselves in a debate with a distinct voice and, second, an awareness of and the ability to write for a specific audience. These two "social-communicative demands" ("sozial-kommunikative Anforderungen") have to be met for academic or scientific texts to do more than "have a contextual fit" in a discipline or debate ("kontextuelle Passung," as Steinhoff (2007, p. 138, our translation) puts it). Ideally, a text will stand out from the rest of the crowd because it is characterized by a distinct voice (Elbow, 1994; Tardy, 2016). To develop their own voice, writers need to, among other aspects, understand the social dimension of scientific writing, which poses a major challenge "for students in particular" (Kruse, 2012, p. 14, our translation). In addition, writers need to anticipate readers' prior knowledge and expectations, and texts should reflect a concern for their needs (Beinke et al., 2016).

Meeting these two "Social-Communicative Demands" is a high bar for most academic and many scientific writers, and, depending on their own level of expertise and development, not all peer writing tutors might be able to work with students on these issues. For this reason, writing center directors and staff have to figure out how to properly match tutors with tutees. Assigning students to tutors based on level alone (bachelor, master's) may lead to misunderstandings and frustration. Whenever possible, other data points, for example on semester standing, academic program, or linguistic background, should be factored in as well when scheduling appointments.

Whereas demands regarding voice and audience have to be met by tutors primarily working with more advanced writers, other demands, for example with regard to "Organization of Text" or "Language" ("textorganisatorische" and "sprachliche Anforderungen") are likely to be front and center in most other cases.[2] The former involves issues such as structure or conventions. During the peer writing tutor training at Leuphana's Schreibzentrum / Writing Center, participants learn more about genres commonly assigned by faculty, for example research papers or essays. Genre knowledge and an awareness for related expectations by instructors makes it easier for tutors to discern if and to what extent students know how to respond to these assignments. When it comes to conventions, staff members and tutors often need to move beyond the specific guidelines issued by professional organizations such as the APA or MLA and also provide clients with the knowledge and tools to meet expectations regarding other unwritten rules in their field, for example in terms of style or use of the first-person singular or plural.

When asked to respond to clients' language, another demand related to the situation, consultants need to consider several aspects. Clients may or may not, depending on the institutional context and their linguistic background, feel comfortable expressing themselves in one or more languages used at their institution. In many degree programs at Leuphana University, students may, for example, turn in written assignments in either German or English. Some native speakers of German feel more comfortable completing papers in English ("Wohlfühlsprache"), whereas others use it because it is required and the norm in their future professional contexts ("Arbeitssprache") (Knorr, 2019, p. 701). To what extent program guidelines and other external regulations regarding language use result in individual challenges depends on users' subjective assessment of their linguistic competences (cf. Dengscherz, 2020a).

[2] "The results of an analysis of 613 minutes shows that 40% of consultations dealt with the development of research questions. In 35% of the cases, clients indicated that they needed support regarding process and related issues such as project planning. 32% of consultations focused on the organization of texts, and 10% of these deal specifically with genre. In 17% and 15% of the cases, clients sought help regarding formal aspects and language issues, respectively." (Knorr 2025, p. 303, our translation)

The last demand mapped by the Systematic Writing Consultations involves challenges related to the use of media and technology. This aspect has received little attention in the literature on consultations, although the impact of writing technologies in general has been investigated for several decades (Haas, 1987; Hartley, 1992; Sharples & van der Geest, 1996). Students may struggle to manage all of the information they have collected for their writing projects (Knorr, 1998). As suggested by client data for the period from 2017 to 2023, students requesting an appointment with a staff member or tutor at Leuphana's Schreibzentrum / Writing Center need support when it comes to using citation and reference management software or word processors. Workshops on these tools and related practices are usually fully booked. The emergence of powerful generative AI tools such as ChatGPT is likely to place additional demands on writing center staff and other professionals, who will need to develop their AI literacy and deepen their understanding of the legal and ethical implications of this new technology in order to work with their clients.

3 Context and General Design of the Peer Writing Tutor Training Program

The Schreibzentrum / Writing Center at Leuphana University supports undergraduate and graduate students writing in English and German, faculty assigning and assessing papers completed in either one of these languages, as well as administrators and committees dealing with writing-related issues. The majority of students at Leuphana University are native speakers of German, but this writing center aims, in line with the literature in German and English on multilingual (*mehrsprachig*) and translingual writing theories and pedagogical practices (Donahue & Horner, 2023; Duarte, 2019; Gogolin et al., 2016; Horner & Tetreault, 2017), to draw on students' entire linguistic repertoire. The two full-time staff members and a team of about 10 bachelor and master's students hired as peer writing tutors each semester do so, in person or online, in one-on-one consultations, workshops, or during events such as the Long Night of Writing (*Lange Nacht des Schreibens*).

Before writing tutors begin to work at the Schreibzentrum / Writing Center, they usually complete three mandatory core modules of the non-curricular training program, which takes place over the course of five days before classes resume in October. The three modules—The Writing Process, Discussing Writing, and German and English for Academic Purposes—cover, as we discuss below, several major demands mapped in the Systemization Writing Consultation. These modules were developed based on data collected during registration processes for individual consultations in recent years. Although incomplete, the data indicates that about one third of students requesting an appointment at the writing center have questions regarding the writing process and related matters. We will focus on the module on the writing process below to illustrate the application of Systemization Writing Consultation in the context of our training program.

In addition to the core modules, participants need to sit in on consultations by staff members or experienced writing tutors and work with students under supervision. Toward the end of the program, they have to turn in a portfolio, in which they reflect on their development as writers and tutors. Total workload for these required modules is 64 hours. To complete the training, participants also need to attend several workshops for students dealing with different genres or issues such as citation and reference (total workload: 16 hours).

In recent years, the two staff members have offered 8 rounds of the peer tutor training program, and participants have differed considerably in terms of their disciplinary, linguistic, and national background as well as their experience as writers of academic texts. As a result, the team of peer writing tutors in a given semester may include students who have just completed the second semester of their bachelor's degree and master's students working on their thesis. This heterogeneity is not only unavoidable but also desirable. Difference creates an opening for discussions across, for example, disciplinary boundaries and the transfer of knowledge from more to less experienced writing tutors.

4 Core Module 1: The Writing Process

We now turn to the module dealing with writing processes to show that the Systemization Writing Consultation can function as a framework for peer writing tutor training programs and as a roadmap for the development and professionalization of individuals and even institutions. In this module, participants reflect on their approach to producing (academic) texts, learn more about different theoretical and empirical findings about writing processes, and consider how they can support other writers dealing with process-related challenges. To that end, they obviously need to conceive of writing as process, and they have to learn how to negotiate their own experience as writers with the demands and responsibilities associated with their new professional role as writing tutors.

To achieve these educational goals, we use a wide range of instructional methods and, specifically, several activities meant to encourage reflection among participants. While it usually makes sense to ask individuals to consider why, for example, new information might matter to them and how they could apply this insight to their benefit in the future, we launch into this module by focusing on participants' prior experience and often implicit knowledge about writing processes. By doing so, we hope to make visible, to them and to other participants, how they conceive of (academic) text production. Not unlike their future clients in writing consultations, participants tend to arrive at the peer writing tutor training with very different ideas about how writing could and should happen in higher education. Our goal here is not to weed out what might be, for some, problematic ideas about writing (processes) because they may result in what Keith Hjortshoj refers to as interferences (Hjortshoj, 2001). Instead, we invite participants to consider what their assumptions and practices are and could be and, in a next step, how they might provide guidance in process-related consultations.

Without providing any prior input, we ask participants to draw their writing process, sometimes the actual one, that is, the one they have taken during their last major project or the ideal one, that is, the kind of process they aspire to because they believe that this would be, as they put it, the "proper" or "more effective" one. We chose drawing instead of writing because participants seem to find it easier to integrate non-verbal and non-linear aspects in their responses. That said, the complete lack of guidance on our part also causes irritation and consternation among some participants. This response, too, is welcome because it can lead to reflection (Sennewald, 2020, pp. 99–112). Participants share their drawings with the group, and in the discussion that follows, they begin to think through, in increasingly abstract terms, their process and related practices.

The results also provide an opening to engage in the theoretical literature on writing processes, which we introduce in a next step. One of the participants visualized their approach as a linear process with different stages (Fig. 1), whereas other drawings emphasize recursivity (Fig. 2) or a combination of different tasks and actions (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3., respectively).

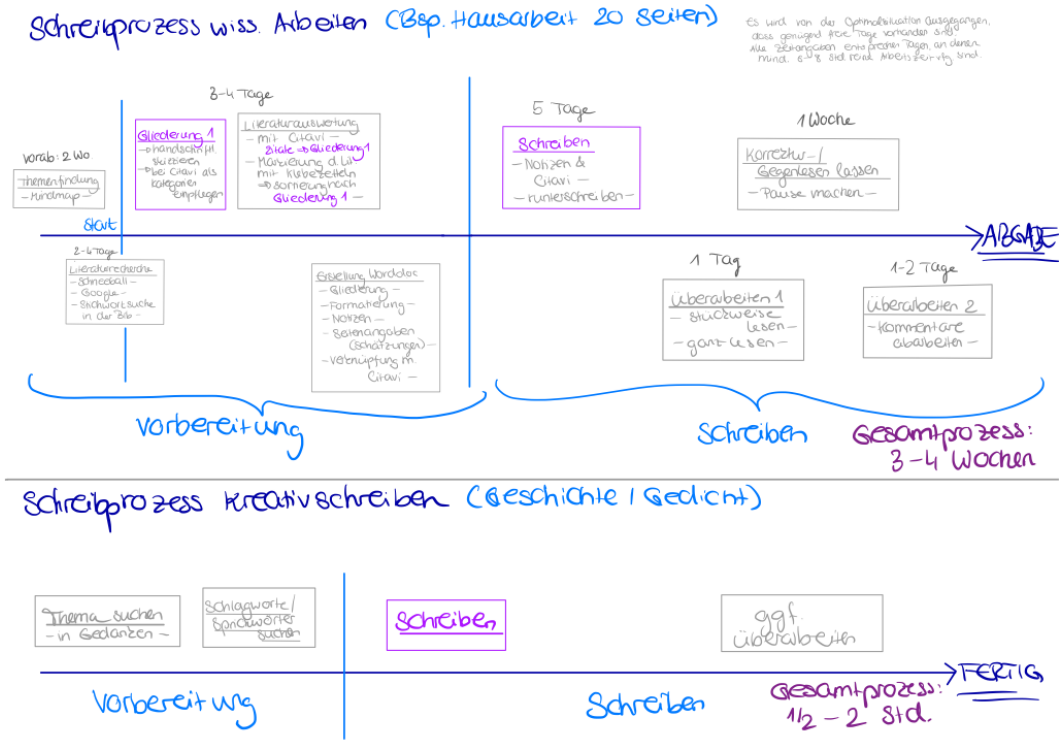

Fig 1: A participant's visualization of the writing process as a linear process with different stages

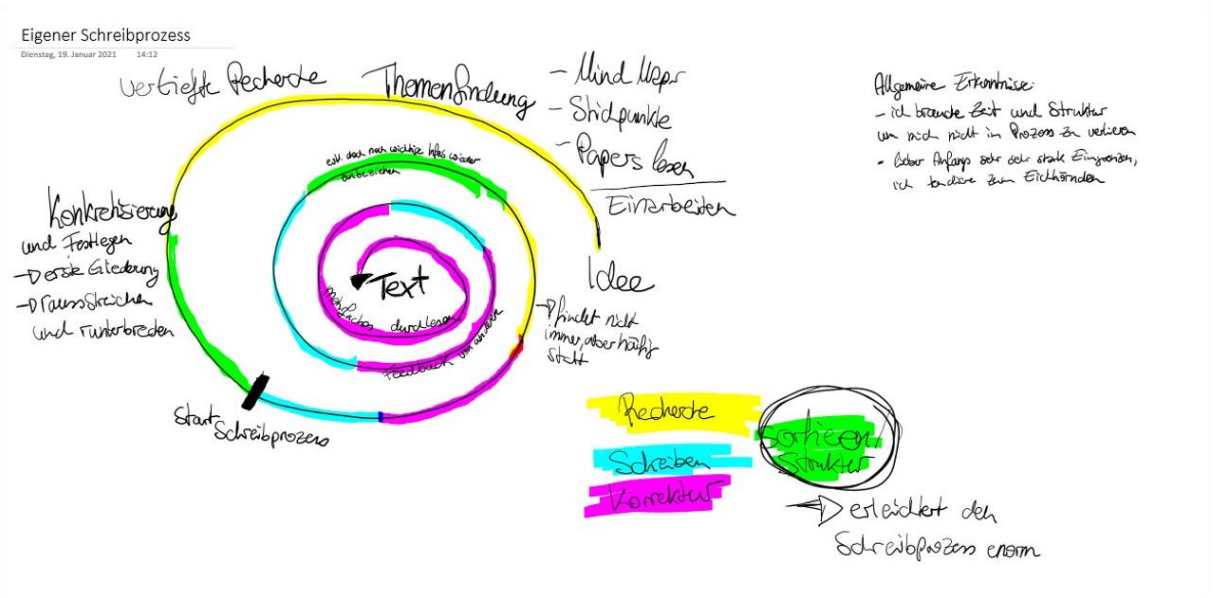

Fig 2: A participant's visualization of the writing process with an emphasis on recursivity

Fig 3: A participant's visualization of the writing process as a complex combination of different actions and tasks

We keep referring back to these drawings in our discussion of models such as the one by Hayes and Flower (1980), Perrin (2013), or Dengscherz (2020b), respectively, encouraging participants to relate their experience to these theoretical findings as well as the processes sketched by others in the group. This compare/contrast approach leads, in our experience, to a deeper engagement with the theory, as participants not only acquire declarative knowledge, but also have to relate this to their experience and that of their peers. Because we cannot anticipate what kinds of processes participants will draw during the training, we include descriptions and visualizations of several key models in a slideshow, giving us the flexibility to focus on those models that speak to participants' experience. We also introduce the Cascade Model of Academic Text Production (Knorr, 2024) because this model integrates key aspects of earlier theoretical work on writing processes. In addition, it links overlapping stages of academic and scientific writing processes with related practices such as reading or writing, a feature that can be used as a heuristic in process-related consultations. Peer tutors can, for example, encourage students to think how their reading strategies need to be adjusted depending on their goals and progress.

Having completed the drawings and learned about theoretical approaches in the literature on writing processes, participants begin to develop a more nuanced understanding of academic and scientific text production. Moving beyond simplistic binary notions, they, ideally, come to conceive of writing processes as a complex interplay of decision-making, actions, and various practices on their part, which allow them to respond to different demands placed upon them (e.g. when collaborating with others on a project report). Importantly, they do so in increasingly distinct roles, as they compare their process to those of others and to other options available to academic and scientific writers. They will also realize that what may work for them as writers may, at best, be one of the options they may share in their capacity as writing tutors with their clients.

To facilitate the development of meta-cognitive knowledge, we conclude the module with an extended writing activity meant to encourage reflection. We use a simple approach to reflection on experience involving three steps (*What? So what? Now What?*, 2020), one that will also be used in other modules of the training program and, we hope, beyond. Providing explicit guidelines, we ask participants to reflect on their experience by responding to three questions: What? So what? Now what? First, they need to identity and merely describe a recent experience (what?). Second, they analyze and argue, in writing, why this event matters to them (so what?). Third, they describe, in as much specific detail as possible, what they intend to do in the future (now what?).

Despite some limitations, this approach can be easily shared and practiced over the course of the training. Most of the students who have participated in our training program are, we learned, new to this kind of writing, even those who keep a diary or a journal. We found that at first, many participants move from the descriptive to argumentative mode too eagerly and are too quick to evaluate and interpret. We encourage participants to slow down and to consider, for instance, that many scientific texts are also marked by shifts in mode and tone, for example in the case of the results and discussion sections of research articles. We use the three-step approach to reflection and similar activities several times in the core modules and in later ones to help participants to develop this practice.

Participants are also encouraged to include texts they have written during their training in their portfolio. These documents provide a window in the development of participants' competences as outlined in the Systemization Writing Consultations. The longer excerpt below was written by hand and in German toward the end of the module on the writing process by the participant whose drawing emphasized complexity (Fig. 3). A scanned version of the text was included in the portfolio and transcribed and translated by us for this article. As can be seen, the participant, who identifies as non-binary and prefers the pronoun *they*, begins to map out different roles and specific goals in terms of their own development.

(1) What happened? Reflection on Theoretical Approaches to Writing Processes

(1) What?

The writing process was discussed. This topic was introduced with a reflection activity. We were asked to do the following: "Describe/draw your writing process." After we had all worked on this on our own, we shared our results. We identified similarities and differences. In several shorter sections, we were introduced to different models. Advantages and disadvantages were mentioned.

(2) So what?

It was quite overwhelming. I wonder how important it is to have all this theory for the hands-on work with students. It felt great to draw my writing process. It took away some of the anxiety I felt toward future writing processes. To learn how others deal with writing processes was really interesting. At least I feel that my writing process, which works better on some days than others, is recognized. The theories overlap in some respects with my writing process. That was encouraging. Especially the last model, which indicated that writers might be in four different stages at a given point in time, appealed to me. It makes sense and does accurately describe many writing situations. Because these different phases are not named, it can be used for various purposes.

(3) Now what?

In writing consultations, I want to understand where the writer is during their process. We could do this together, or I figure this out without directly asking the client. For my own writing, I have learned that it can be beneficial to recall when writing that this is a process and to consider where I am at this stage. I also want to use the model to identify obstacles

> and to acquire strategies. I have also tried adding insights into my visualization of the writing process. ... My writing process is fine as it is. (our translation)

In the portfolio, the participant added the following comment, which was written six months later:

> (2) Visualizing my writing process had a positive effect on me. I keep going back to it. I also describe the Cascade Model. I have used this, too, in recent months. I still feel that it does a good job of describing the writing process. I feel that I raise two important points in the reflection: I write that writing needs to be understood as a process. Since the training, I have internalized this point. I also write this beautiful sentence: My writing process is fine as it is. (our translation)

As these excerpts from one of the portfolios shows, the three-step approach to reflections has, as noted earlier, some limitations to the extent that it may not encourage the kind of deep reflection one might hope for. The response to the first question in particular remains somewhat superficial and vague, although, admittedly, the writer certainly knows what they is referring to in their text. Their response to the second question indicates that the participant already thinks about possible implications for their own writerly practice. The participant has yet to figure out how to use the declarative knowledge they acquired in future consultations, but it is important to note here that this step would not be expected of participants at that stage of their development.

The text written toward the end of the module on writing processes does reflect a key insight relevant for all writing professionals (Girgensohn & Sennewald, 2012, p. 102): Talking about writing processes and sharing experiences is helpful because there are challenges resulting from demands on academic and scientific writers and not necessarily from a lack of ability. This insight marks a key step in the participant's development as a writer and as a peer tutor. In addition, they describe, in response to the third question, fairly specific individual developmental goals based on their engagement with the Cascade Model. Distinguishing between individual practice and theory, the participant begins to integrate declarative and procedural knowledges about writing processes as a writer and tutor. These outcomes, also as reflected in the comment written six months later, are in line with the long-term goals of the training program, which cannot fully prepare peer tutors for their assignments but provide the basic means for them to gradually deepen their knowledge and develop their skills.

To gradually prepare participants for the application of this knowledge in the context of a consultation, we include mock scenarios (Murphy & Sherwood, 2011, pp. 104–105) in another core module, Talking about Writing. Some of the scenarios we developed also require participants to draw on the declarative knowledge on writing processes acquired in Core Module 1 and to develop related procedural and meta-cognitive knowledges. To that end, participants play the role of the tutor and the tutee. The second role is needed for logistical reasons, but participants also do get a chance to experience writing consultations from a perspective that differs from that of an interested outside observer and that opens up new ways of thinking about affective, ethical, and interpersonal dimensions of writing center work. During the first round of mock consultations, participants work on texts they have written during the first two days of the intensive five-day training program, for example those dealing with writing processes. Participants are, by that time, familiar with writing processes and the genre under consideration, and they can draw on this knowledge as they begin to apply what they have learned about conversation strategies, key principles such as non-directiveness, and related matters. In other words, participants can explore, in a safe space and from different perspectives, the practical implications of the declarative knowledge vis-à-vis the specific situational demands sketched in scenarios for the mock consultations.

In the next round of mock consultations, which are usually scheduled on the last day of the intensive five-day training program, participants continue to explore the new role as tutors as they are being confronted with challenging scenarios. These include tutees facing several personal crises

or intercultural conflict. To navigate these situations, participants need draw on the insights of all three core modules. Because of the inherent complexity of consultations and because participants have only just begun to develop many of competencies needed for this line of work, the mock consultations raise numerous questions, which are explored in discussions that follow. These center on, among other aspects, the limits of the support provided by peer tutors and the distinct personalities that emerge during these interactions. In any case, these mock scenarios open up new perspectives on development, as the following statement taken from a participant's portfolio indicates:

(3) Because we had not yet addressed this in the seminar, I felt, at first, completely lost when I was, all of a sudden, asked to work with a client in a specific situation. […] Because we did several scenarios, I realized that you learn something new with every consultation. With each consultation under my belt, I feel more confident, and you also learn from others and by sitting in on consultations because you always gain one new insight that you can add to your repertoire. (our translation)

This approach to developing one's skillset is, of course, helpful, while we encourage participants take advantage of this kind of learning in a systematic manner using the three-step reflection approach. Ideally, expanding and deepening one's knowledge about writing and the tutoring of writing will happen, however, in the context provided by the Systemization Writing Consultations, which provides structure and potentially also points to aspects that may not be obvious while merely sitting in on a session. It emphasizes a systematic, long-term learning and relates the knowledges generated in response to specific situation to the complex matrix of knowledges and demands that writing consultants navigate day in, day out.

5 Conclusion and Outlook

Complementing existing approaches to writing tutor training programs, the approach based the Systemization Writing Consultation (Knorr, 2025) introduced here provides a useful framework for both writing center professionals and future tutors by identifying and mapping key competencies needed in this context. By aligning demands placed on writers in academia with declarative, procedural, and metacognitive knowledges, users can pinpoint competencies they intend to develop. Specifically, those tasked with designing programs and activities can, we suggest, more readily hone in on specific key competencies, communicate intended learning outcomes to participants, and strategically foster the learning of their current and future staff. Participants, in turn, have a much better sense throughout the program and beyond where they are in terms of their professional development. One of our tutors compared our approach to playing Bingo. With each completed module, she had taken another step toward building the complex set of competencies needed to work with writers at our institution and beyond.

We illustrated our approach, which draws on the suggested curricular standards for peer writing tutor training in countries such as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (SIG „Qualitätsstandards und Inhalte der Peer-Schreibtutor*innen-Ausbildung", 2016), by focusing on the issue of process. Process-related consultations are quite common at writing centers regardless of their location and profile, and this is also true, as indicated by client data, when it comes to our institution. For this reason, we make sure that participants in the non-curricular peer tutor training program offered by Leuphana's Schreibzentrum / Writing Center acquire declarative knowledge about writing processes in higher education as well as about related strategies and challenges. It is only then that they have the means to engage writers in conversations about their process (procedural knowledge) and to offer different perspectives on writing (metacognitive knowledge). The latter knowledge is crucial because it determines writers' decision-making and actions. During the training, participants complete a wide range of activities that encourage reflection on their personal experiences and practices vis-à-vis the empirical and theoretical insights from the literature on process. Forging their own connections

between the two allows participants to acquire the knowledges they eventually need for their own writing and the work on writing with others. Similar steps would be taken with regard to other key aspects, for example written feedback on texts.

As some of our current peer writing tutors noted, our approach may also pose some challenges. At the beginning of the training, the Systemization Writing Consultation (Knorr, 2025) may seem overwhelming, and participants may doubt whether they will be able to acquire all the skills they need for their assignments. To avoid this potential problem, we introduce our framework later in the first modules when participants may be ready to check a few of the boxes on their "Bingo" scorecard. While using this basic matrix in tutor training programs seems an obvious choice, we are also considering other means of integrating the framework at our institution. Specifically, we have prepared a questionnaire that has been tested by our current group of peer writing tutors. In this document, we include several questions for each item in the matrix. The questionnaire could be used on a regular basis by peer tutors and even other professionals at writing centers to monitor one's personal development and perhaps to identify, at the institutional level, possibilities for further professional development by aggregating individual results.

While we focused on writing centers at the university-level, we feel that the approach proposed here could also be relevant for other contexts. In many ways, it meets the standards for training programs for other professionals as outlined, for example, in Reinmann et al. (2018). In these programs, participants also acquire new declarative knowledge, and by relating these new insights to their personal experience and reflecting on the relevance for their future career trajectory, they continue to develop their professional role and competencies. Our approach, then, could potentially have implications for practitioners in adult education and related context, for example coaching. Here, too, the goal is to support individuals in the life-long pursuit of their professional goals, self-directed learning, and the development of roles, all of which are key ingredients for successful careers in academia and beyond.

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