2016

Scholarly Writing Among Graduate Students: A Qualitative Project Study

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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PhD, Oxford Graduate School, 2004

MLitt, Oxford Graduate School, 2002

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Doctoral Project Study Submitted in Fulfillment

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Abstract

This project study focused on scholarly writing skills of adult students enrolled in a private graduate institution in the West Indies. The institution provided writing instruction, but scholarly writing skills remained inadequate for some students when they began their final projects. The project study provided insight into the most pervasive writing skill deficits and the positive and negative influences on writing skill development among graduate students. The research design was an applied qualitative case study using data collected from a purposeful sample of convenience within a bounded system of current students, faculty members, and administrators in one institution. Open-ended questionnaires ($n = 5$), interviews ($n = 14$), and qualitative assessments of student writing samples ($n = 10$) provided data for thematic qualitative analysis. Findings indicated a wide range of individual needs for writing development and guided the formation of a writing improvement project. The theory of andragogy provided the theoretical foundation for both the study and the project. Enrollment in the institution was limited to adults over 25 years of age; therefore, consideration of andragogical assumptions about how adults learn helped in understanding students' writing deficits and influences on their writing skill development. The project, called the Writing Suite, is an integrated curriculum aimed at developing students' scholarly writing skills throughout their graduate programs. When paired with the institution's emphasis on social change, the development of proficient writing skills will increase each student's potential for effecting positive change in his or her community and workplace.

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Section 1: The Problem

The topic of this study was scholarly writing skills among graduate students in a private graduate institution in the West Indies. Section 1 includes the definition of the problem, the rationale for choosing the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, and three guiding research questions. The literature review includes a description of andragogy as the theoretical framework for the study and a summary of literature addressing problems with scholarly writing skills. The reviewed literature includes studies focused on the types of writing deficits found in student writing and factors that may have influenced writing skill development among higher education students.

Definition of the Problem

At the time of this study, a common problem existed with writing skills of students at all levels of education (Singleton-Jackson & Colella, 2012). Many adult learners, especially those who returned to undergraduate or graduate studies after spending several years away from formal education, struggled to write well enough to complete assignments successfully (Cleary, 2011). At the Institute for Social Change (ISC, pseudonym), a graduate institution in the West Indies, some of the adult students entering the master's programs were underprepared for graduate level scholarly writing, according to Dr. Pate (pseudonym), ISC's Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer (CEO, personal communication, March 15, 2013). Prior to this study, ISC administrators maintained electronic files containing student assignments along with the respective instructors' comments and grades. The school's records also contained each student's

grades, but there was no existing compilation of writing assessments to provide an overall summary of students' writing needs.

Faculty members and administrators perceived a need to assist students with writing. Therefore, ISC required all students to take a two-credit course in academic writing and offered academic writing tutorials for students who needed extra help. Nevertheless, some students continued to struggle with writing skills that were less than proficient for their academic needs. This problem negatively affected the learning environment at ISC by hindering some students' abilities to produce high-quality written assignments. ISC needed this research to provide insight into the most prevalent writing skill deficits among students as well as the perceived positive and negative influences on writing skill development.

The site for this study was an independent graduate institution that offered three master's degree programs: Master of Education in Assessment, Research, and Educational Leadership; Master of Science in Organizational Leadership; and Master of Arts in Family Life Education. According to ISC's CEO (P. Pate, personal communication, January 10, 2014), a goal of ISC was to prepare adult learners to make positive social change. The CEO explained that a primary focus of ISC was developing scholars to benefit society by applying high standards of integrity, morality, and ethics in their professional and personal lives.

The higher-education institution offered the graduate programs through a combination of on-campus and Internet-based course work. The students attended residencies and completed online work. Each term began with a 5-day, campus-based

residency called a *core*. The first core included a Program Entry Workshop and instructional presentations and discussions for the first-term courses. Following each core residency, the master's students submitted 30-, 60-, 90-, and 120-day course assignments via an online education management system. To earn a master's degree, students had to complete a minimum of 39 or 40 credits, including a capstone study, within a selected program of studies.

According to ISC's administrative manager (G. Stow [pseudonym], personal communication, June 17, 2013), the student body at the graduate school consisted of 65% female and 35% male adults. The students were 25 years of age and older, and they had diverse cultural and professional backgrounds. There were 57 students enrolled in ISC. Their careers primarily were in the education, business, industry, and social services professions. The median age of students was 53 years. Students represented five West Indies countries. The ethnic diversity of students included 37.5% of Indian descent, 37.5% of African descent, and 25% of mixed ethnic descent. Among the adult students, 90% were natives of the country in which the institution was located, and 10% were from other West Indies countries; 100% of the students were native speakers of English.

The programs of study at the institution prepared students to serve as social change agents in their respective fields. The Master of Education program in Assessment, Research, and Educational Leadership prepared students to serve as effective leaders in educational settings and to design and carry out educational research and assessments. The Organizational Leadership program developed strong, capable leaders who benefited their respective organizations while also enhancing social well-being. The Family Life

Education program prepared students for teaching about a variety of family-related topics to audiences of all ages. The courses in the Family Life Education program also prepared graduates for the Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) examination, which, when passed, qualified the individual for the nationally recognized CFLE designation.

One program objective of the graduate school was to develop individuals who would demonstrate scholarly writing skills (ISC, 2012). In keeping with this objective, students followed the guidelines in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2010) throughout every program of study. ISC's instructional strategy was research and writing intensive, requiring consistent application of APA guidelines. Additionally, in every course students searched the academic literature and created learning logs with multiple APA-formatted citations. Although students' writing skills improved during their course work, some reached the final stage of their master's programs with markedly deficient writing skills. The deficient writing skills among some of the graduate students had become an impediment to developing scholars for social change.

The institutional mission of building a community of scholars for social change had two imperatives: scholarly preparation and social change. According to ISC's CEO (P. Pate, personal communication, November 27, 2013), it appeared that the school responded aggressively to developing social change agents. However, many students remained inadequately prepared for scholarly writing, which hindered their effectiveness as social change agents. This study addressed a gap in practice between the school's

objective to develop scholarly writers and the lack of writing proficiency among some of the graduate students.

Inadequate writing skills that remained unaddressed throughout a student's enrollment at ISC caused frustration and discouragement, especially when the student began a final research paper or project. These underdeveloped writing skills burdened course instructors with the need to teach writing in addition to course content. Faculty members expected students to begin their final course papers with well-developed scholarly writing skills, and some students were unable to do so.

A survey of the literature indicated that the problem with less-than-proficient writing skills among higher education students extended beyond ISC. The literature showed that the writing strengths and weaknesses of adult and graduate students may have been as diverse as the students were from one another (Mueller, Wood, Hunt, & Specht, 2009; Tran, 2010; University of Connecticut, 2010; Whitley & Grous, 2009). Adult and graduate students entered academic programs with many dissimilarities, including differences in the following characteristics:

- educational backgrounds (Alter & Adkins, 2006; Cleary, 2011; University of Connecticut, 2010; Whitley & Grous, 2009),
- writing experiences (Alter & Adkins, 2006; Cleary, 2011; Lambie, Sias, Davis, Lawson, & Akos, 2008),
- cultural experiences (Maguire, 2011; Serag, 2011; Whitley & Grous, 2009),
- English language proficiency (Whitley & Grous, 2009),

- professional experiences (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Whitley & Grous, 2009),

- motivations (Can & Walker, 2011; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Mueller et al., 2009; Tran, 2010),

- learning styles (Chen & Ansalone, 2008; Dunn et al., 2009), and

- personal study habits (Whitley & Grous, 2009).

These diverse characteristics of adult and graduate students affected their writing competencies and the ease with which they transitioned into scholarly writers.

One challenge to writing skill development was that each adult student entered graduate studies with distinctly individual learning needs (Mueller et al., 2009; Tran, 2010; University of Connecticut, 2010; Whitley & Grous, 2009). Researchers had addressed problems related to writing skills and initiatives to solve writing problems in a variety of settings. However, the unique characteristics of ISC students necessitated examining the pervasiveness of writing skill deficits, along with the influences on writing development at the graduate school.

This study included an examination of writing difficulties faced by adult students who enrolled in a private graduate school, often many years after their most recent experiences in formal education. The primary focus of this study was to understand the writing deficiencies among students at ISC. A secondary benefit of this research was its potential to enhance the understanding of scholarly writing skill development among adult graduate students at other institutions.

To address the problem of inadequate writing skills among adult graduate students at the study site, it was necessary to understand the following:

- faculty perceptions of writing skill deficits among the students,

- student perceptions of their own writing skill deficits,

- faculty perceptions of positive and negative influences on students' writing skill development,

- student perceptions of positive and negative influences on their writing skill development, and

- observed writing skill deficits in a sample of student assignments.

This study addressed both the pervasiveness of writing skill deficiencies and the positive and negative influences of writing skill development to understand what gaps existed between ISC's objectives and practices in the development of scholarly change agents.

Rationale

This subsection includes the rationale for choosing scholarly writing skills among adult graduate students as the topic of this study. I describe evidence of the problem at the local level, as well as evidence of the problem from the academic literature.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The impetus for this study was a concern that inadequate writing skills could complicate the educational processes of adult graduate students and hinder their effectiveness as scholars of change. Over the course of several years, I filled a variety of roles in higher education, including some editing responsibilities. In the process of

editing student papers, I observed that many students struggled with scholarly writing throughout their higher education, including graduate studies.

A variety of student writing problems may be common in many graduate institutions, and diverse adult students may have highly individualistic writing improvement needs. The student body at the study site was few in number but diverse in learner characteristics, including culture, ethnicity, educational background, professional background, life experiences, socioeconomic status, gender, age, and learning style. Additionally, the small size of the school required a problem solution that would meet the needs of diverse students while operating within ISC's financial and staffing capabilities.

According to Pate (personal communication, March 15, 2013), students struggled with the following:

- writing structurally sound sentences,

- avoiding overuse of passive voice,

- writing transitional sentences,

- avoiding repetitive words,

- writing problem statements,

- developing a complete thought in a paragraph, and

- avoiding grammatical errors.

During this study, I explored faculty and student perceptions of these writing skill deficiencies, along with other scholarly writing issues such as competent computer use and ability to adhere to APA (2010) style guidelines. Results from the study provided an understanding of the pervasiveness of writing skill deficits and the positive and negative

influences on writing skill development at the graduate school. Findings from the study may inform administrative decisions regarding possible solutions and future research.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

Examination of the scholarly literature revealed a common theme of writing problems among graduate students. Myriad personal, circumstantial, and institutional influences on students' writing skill development complicated academic writing problems. Personal factors that may have affected writing skill development included the following:

- learning style (Chen & Ansalone, 2008; Dunn et al., 2009),

- motivation (Can & Walker, 2011; Merriam et al., 2007; Mueller et al., 2009; Tran, 2010),

- writing self-efficacy (Hemmings & Kay, 2010; Mattern & Shaw, 2010),

- writing habits from professional and personal experiences (Cleary, 2011),

- personal study habits (Whitley & Grous, 2009),

- levels of computer literacy (Singleton-Jackson & Colella, 2012),

- misconceptions about writing (Irvin, 2010),

- native language (Maguire, 2011; Serag, 2011), and

- English language proficiency (Whitley & Grous, 2009).

In addition to these influences on writing skills, Merriam et al. (2007) identified several personal characteristics of adult learners that may have influenced student learning in general. According to Merriam et al., an adult's age, self-directedness, emotions, personal experiences, and memory could affect his or her learning.

Circumstantial factors that could have affected a student's writing ability included such varied influences as educational background (Alter & Adkins, 2006; Cleary, 2011; University of Connecticut, 2010; Whitley & Grous, 2009), former writing instruction (Cleary, 2011; Crank, 2012; Donham, 2014; Lambie et al., 2008), and the amount of time spent away from formal education (Cleary, 2011). Additionally, cultural experiences (Whitley & Grous, 2009), professional experiences (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Whitley & Grous, 2009), and competing time demands (Ewing, Mathieson, Alexander, & Leafman, 2012; Mueller et al., 2009) could have affected students' writing skill development. Factors that may have affected adult learning in general included social position (Merriam et al., 2007; Whitley & Grous, 2009) and a student's marginalization through power and oppression, racism, and sexism (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 243). Each of these factors potentially influenced the scholarly writing skills of students at ISC.

The literature indicated that some institutional factors exacerbated the problem with students' writing skills. According to several authors (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Donham, 2014; Fergie, Beeke, McKenna, & Crème, 2011; Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2012), negative institutional influences on writing skill development may have included an underlying assumption among institutional leadership that graduate students were accomplished scholarly writers prior to enrollment. However, research studies (Alter & Adkins, 2006; Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2012; Singleton-Jackson, Lumsden, & Newsom, 2009) have indicated that many graduate students are not proficient writers and struggle to meet the demands of academic writing requirements.

According to several authors (Hart Research Associates, 2009; Kokaliari, Brainerd, & Roy, 2012; Moskovitz, 2011; Singleton-Jackson & Colella, 2012), strong writing ability was an important outcome of higher education programs. Even though academic leaders may emphasize the importance of writing proficiency, this emphasis alone may not produce the desired result because writing instruction is difficult to carry out. Writing instruction is exhausting, time consuming, and labor intensive (Singleton-Jackson & Colella, 2012, p. 24). At the institutional level, competing time demands (Ewing et al., 2012; Mueller et al., 2009) and insufficient funding (Mueller et al., 2009) can induce a gap in practice and leave students with unmet needs for developing their writing skills.

The purpose of this study was to identify the most pervasive writing skill deficits and the positive and negative influences on writing skill development among students at ISC, a small graduate institution for adult learners. Definitions of terms related to the purpose of this study are in the following section.

Definitions

Adult graduate student: Graduate students with a minimum age of 25 years and at least 3 years of work experience, as required for admission to ISC (ISC, 2012)

Scholarly writing skills: The ability to produce written communication through word-processing expertise; effective composition, including content and organization appropriate for academic research (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Lambie et al., 2008); and diligent adherence to formatting and style guidelines, such as those required by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010; Lambie et al., 2008; McDonald, 2011)

ISC: An independent West Indies graduate school for adults; the setting for this project study

Significance

Through this study, I provided insight into a local problem with student writing skills at ISC by describing the pervasiveness of writing skill deficits and identifying positive and negative influences on writing skill development among ISC's adult learners. Student needs for writing improvement may have been highly individualistic due to a wide variety of personal, circumstantial, and institutional factors that influenced writing skill development. Narrative descriptions of student writing deficits and influences on writing skill development illuminated specific areas of recurrent problems and offered direction for the development of problem solutions to facilitate writing improvement. Because this study involved the exploration of the problem at the local level, potential solutions could address ISC's specific needs.

An institutional goal of ISC was developing scholars to carry out positive social change through scholarship and leadership in society. Each program of study included social change as a primary goal for students who earned degrees in Family Life Education; Organizational Leadership; and Assessment, Research, and Educational Leadership. In this study, I examined a problem with writing skill development that may have hindered students in the degree-completion process, resulting in failure to complete the program or minimal ability to initiate social change through scholarship.

The literature indicated that poor writing skills among graduate students were common throughout the field of education (Alter & Adkins, 2006; Hoyt, Allred, & Hunt,

2010; Singleton-Jackson et al., 2009; Willis, Wilkie, & Gracey, 2012). This study may add to the body of literature regarding academic writing problems by addressing the pervasiveness of writing skill deficits among students in a graduate institution and indicating positive and negative influences on writing skill development. Although the findings in this study cannot be generalized to the larger educational context, they may be used to improve the understanding of scholarly writing skill development at other institutions.

Guiding/Research Questions

Academic literature indicated that scholarly writing skills of adult and graduate students were frequently insufficient at the time of enrollment in graduate programs. Some students failed to develop scholarly writing skills as they progressed through their programs of study, and the writing needs among these students were wide-ranging and highly individualistic. Factors contributing to the problems with graduate student writing skills included several categories of differences among individual learners:

- educational differences (Alter & Adkins, 2006; Cleary, 2011; University of Connecticut, 2010; Whitley & Grous, 2009),

- cultural differences (Maguire, 2011; Olaniran, 2009; Serag, 2011; Whitley & Grous, 2009),

- professional differences (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Whitley & Grous, 2009),

- experiential differences (Alter & Adkins, 2006; Cleary, 2011; Lambie et al., 2008; Whitley & Grous, 2009), and

- personal differences (Chen & Ansalone, 2008; Cleary, 2011; Dunn et al., 2009; Merriam et al., 2007; Mueller et al., 2009; Tran, 2010).

The literature also indicated that adult learners often had valuable input into how they learn. Concerned about a scarcity of literature addressing graduate students' perceptions of scholarly writing and writing programs, Caffarella and Barnett (2000) conducted a study to address writing development among graduate students. Since that time, over 150 authors have cited the Caffarella and Barnett study (https://scholar.google.com/). The literature offered much insight into writing development among graduate students, but an aim of this study was to address both the deficits in writing skills and the factors that positively and negatively influenced writing skill development in a local setting.

The problem addressed in this study was that some master's students at ISC were not skilled academic writers by the time they needed to write their final papers for degree completion. The purpose of this study was to identify the most pervasive writing skill deficits and the positive and negative influences on writing skill development among students at ISC. In alignment with the research problem and the purpose of the study, I addressed three central research questions:

1. What were the perceptions of ISC's students, faculty members, and administrators regarding the most pervasive writing skill deficits among ISC's adult graduate students?

2. What were the perceptions of ISC's students, faculty members, and administrators regarding positive and negative influences on student writing skill development?

3. What writing skill deficits were observed in student documents written by ISC's adult graduate students?

The research questions were suitable for examination through a qualitative case study to (a) describe writing skill deficits from the perspective of the students, faculty members, and administrators; (b) describe the influences on writing skill development from the perspectives of the students, faculty members, and administrators; and (c) identify writing skill deficits observed in student papers.

Review of the Literature

In this subsection, I describe andragogy as the theoretical framework for the study of scholarly writing skills and demonstrate that studying writing skill deficits and writing development among adult graduate students is a worthwhile scholarly pursuit. Following the description of andragogy, I present a critical review of literature to document the broader problem of scholarly writing deficits among students in higher education. The literature included studies identifying some types of writing skill deficits found among higher education students, as well as substantial evidence of various factors that may explain why writing skills varied widely among adult learners.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study of adult students' writing skills was Knowles's (as cited in Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011) theory of andragogy. Knowles identified six assumptions about how adults learn:

- Adults need to understand the relevance of the subject matter before they will engage in learning.

- Adults generally accept responsibility for learning what they need to know, and they need others to perceive them as capable of self-directed learning.

- Adults possess a wealth of experiences that influence their learning. Many adults prefer experiential learning.

- Adults learn when new knowledge will influence their lives immediately.

- An adult's orientation to learning is life centered, task centered, or problem centered.

- Adults' motivations to learn derive primarily from internal needs, such as needs to improve self-perceptions, reach a goal, or attain a sense of accomplishment.

Knowles's andragogical assumptions provide insight into possible reasons why adult learners may not have developed scholarly writing skills before entering graduate school.

Two of Knowles's (Knowles et al., 2011) assumptions regarding adult learning concern an adult's need to understand why learning is important and his or her readiness to learn. Because graduate school may be a student's first encounter with extensive scholarly writing requirements, adults may enter graduate school without having

developed some of the necessary skills. Whitley and Grous (2009) also emphasized that students need to learn specific writing skills at the time they need to use those skills. According to Knowles and Whitley and Grous, when adult students face the need to apply unfamiliar writing skills, they will be ready to learn those skills.

In close relationship to an adult's readiness to learn is his or her orientation to learning and motivation for learning. Most adults learn new skills and knowledge when doing so will make an immediate difference in real-life situations, according to one of the assumptions of andragogy (Knowles et al., 2011). Likewise, adults are likely to learn new skills or knowledge when they are intrinsically motivated to do so. In the case of writing skills, adult learners likely will learn scholarly writing skills when they need to produce scholarly writing in order to reach a goal, such as earning a graduate degree or publishing work in an academic journal.

An additional andragogical assumption pertains to the adult learner's self-concept. Inherent within an adult's self-concept is the perception that he or she is responsible for his or her own decisions (Knowles et al., 2011). Accordingly, as adults accept the responsibility to learn scholarly writing skills, they will pursue ways to learn those skills. Conversely, if an adult student believes he or she is incapable of learning the necessary writing skills, he or she may be more likely to drop out of a writing-intensive program (Cleary, 2011). In consideration of Knowles's (Knowles et al., 2011) assumption regarding adult students' feelings of responsibility and Cleary's (2011) concern that adults must feel capable of developing skills, adult students likely would benefit from accessible resources to support them in self-directed development of writing skills.

In conjunction with the preceding assumptions about how adults learn, Knowles (Knowles et al., 2011) proposed that adult learners' experiences play an essential role in their learning new skills and knowledge. Adult students enter a graduate program with considerable writing experiences that include both scholarly and "not-so-scholarly" writing habits. Cleary (2011) proposed that writing instruction should build on what the learners already know. Development of some writing skills may require only brief refreshers regarding basic writing rules while other scholarly writing skills could be completely new to an adult learner.

In addition to Knowles' (Knowles et al., 2011) andragogical assumptions regarding the needs of adult learners, Knowles and others identified several negative influences on adult learning:

- a lack of opportunity to learn (Knowles et al., 2011),

- a negative self-concept (Knowles et al., 2011),

- competing time demands (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Ewing et al., 2012; Knowles et al., 2011; Whitley & Grous, 2009), and

- instructional methods that are not suited for adult learning (Knowles et al., 2011).

The assumptions of andragogy, along with the identified hindrances to adult learning, related to one of the research questions in this study: What were the perceptions of ISC's students, faculty members, and administrators regarding positive and negative influences on student writing skill development? Exploration of the positive and negative influences

on writing skill development allowed participants to reveal how the assumptions of andragogy might relate to adult students developing their writing skills.

Scholarly Writing Skills

To address the problem of scholarly writing skill deficits among adult graduate students, I conducted a literature review of academic works about the topic. The Education Research Complete database, available through the Walden Library, provided most of the articles cited in this study. The search term *scholarly writing* produced the most articles; other search terms, including *what are scholarly writing skills*, *computer skills and scholarly writing*, *modality theory*, *learning styles*, *writing*, *writing skills and adults*, and *writing and graduate students*, yielded one or more relevant articles each. The reference lists in the relevant literature led to the discovery of several additional articles. In addition, when an article was highly relevant to this study, I used the "Cited by" link in Google Scholar to locate other sources that had cited the relevant article. Factors related to scholarly writing skills included individual characteristics of writers; cultural, educational, and experiential influences on writers; and institutional factors that positively and negatively impact writing skills.

Literature related to writing skill development was abundant, although studies focusing on writing skills among graduate students were less abundant than studies addressing writing skills in earlier levels of education. After noting a scarcity in research focused on graduate students' writing skills, Caffarella and Barnett (2000) conducted a study that continues to be cited as a seminal work in scholarly writing skills of graduate students. Caffarella and Barnett investigated doctoral student perceptions of learning

scholarly writing. Caffarella and Barnett, as well as some recent research teams (Fergie et al., 2011; Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2012), noted a common assumption among university faculty that graduate students were accomplished scholarly writers prior to entering graduate studies, when in fact many graduate students could not write like scholars. Since the early 2000s, studies addressing problems with writing skills and approaches to enhancing scholarly writing skills have become more abundant.

The literature indicated that strong writing skills were among the most crucial outcomes in higher education (Flaherty & Choi, 2013; Hart Research Associates, 2009; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Moskovitz, 2011; Singleton-Jackson & Colella, 2012; Willis et al., 2012). Hart Research Associates (2009) conducted a study for the Association of American Colleges and Universities to examine trends in higher education. Results from a survey of 433 chief academic officers showed that writing was an essential learning outcome for higher education students.

Even with institutions emphasizing writing skills as important outcomes, several studies indicated a lack of writing proficiency among college graduates (Alter & Adkins, 2006; Hoyt et al., 2010; Singleton-Jackson et al., 2009; Willis et al., 2012). Hoyt et al. (2010) assessed competency in writing mechanics, content mastery, and critical thinking and found that only 64% of recent graduates from a degree completion program were competent in all three areas while 8% were not competent in any of the three areas (p. 24). Alter and Adkins (2006) found that approximately one fourth of new graduate students in their study failed a writing skills assessment, and Singleton-Jackson et al. (2009) found no significant differences in writing assessment scores between graduate

students and college-bound high school students. Willis et al. (2012) found that the

average percentage of correct answers on a standardized diagnostic test of writing skills

was 61% among third- and fourth-year college students. Alter and Adkins (2006), Hoyt et

al. (2010), Singleton-Jackson et al. (2009), and Willis et al. (2012) reported there was a

strong need for graduate institutions to include writing skill development among their

essential program goals. However, addressing the writing needs of graduate students

could be a daunting task due to the variety of skill deficits and difficulties involved with

correcting them.

    Types of writing skill deficits. Several authors identified specific types of

writing skill deficits among higher education students and adult learners (Alter & Adkins,

2006; Bair & Mader, 2013; Howard, Serviss, & Rodrigue, 2010; Hoyt et al., 2010;

Kokaliari et al., 2012; Lambie et al., 2008; Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008; Willis et al.,

2012). Some authors focused on specific aspects of writing, such as a literature review,

while others examined student papers in their entirety.

    Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) examined types of writing errors among first-year

college students by duplicating a study from the 1980s. In light of the Singleton-Jackson

et al. (2009) study that indicated no significant differences in the writing proficiency of

graduate students and college-bound high school students, Lunsford and Lunsford's

findings were relevant to my study of writing skills among adult graduate students.

Lunsford and Lunsford began their study by reviewing literature ranging from the early

20th century through the early 21st century to assess how writing among college students

had changed over time. Lunsford and Lunsford found that the numbers of errors (2.1-2.3

errors per 100 words) had remained stable over the 100-year period, but other measures related to writing had changed dramatically.

Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) compared student writings collected for their current study and student writings examined in a similar study by Connors and Lunsford (as cited in Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008) in the 1980s. Results indicated substantial differences between the findings in the two studies. Essays in the 1980s were primarily personal narratives with an average length of 422 words. In contrast, essays in 2006 were primarily research-based and argumentative with an average length of 1038 words. Spelling errors were the most common errors in the 1980s, but spelling errors ranked fifth on the list of most common formal errors in 2006. Some errors in 2006 seemed related to dependence on spelling and grammar checking software and acceptance of suggested changes when those changes were incorrect. The most common error in 2006 was using a wrong word. Other common errors listed by Lunsford and Lunsford included faulty sentence structure and incorrect use of commas, capitalization, and hyphenation, among others.

In a more recent study, Willis et al. (2012) collected and analyzed diagnostic writing test scores of 620 third- and fourth-year university students who had enrolled in business communications classes. Willis et al. used a standardized test to assess five categories of writing skills that students should have learned in elementary school: grammar, English mechanics, confusing words, spelling, and sentence structure (p. 66). The average percentages of correct responses in the five categories were 61%, 55.7%, 69%, 61%, and 51%, respectively. Although the students did not receive grades for the

diagnostic tests, the average grades would have been Ds and Fs. The students in the Willis et al. study demonstrated a lack of writing skill proficiency even though they had taken three college English courses, including College Writing and Research Writing, prior to enrolling in the business communication classes.

Kokaliari et al. (2012) also studied writing skills of students nearing completion of their undergraduate degrees. Kokaliari et al. examined capstone research papers of recent social science graduates. They began the study by evaluating papers from students who had not received intensive writing instruction during their undergraduate years. Most of the students

- failed to include an abstract,

- lacked clarity in introducing their topics,

- demonstrated weak critical thinking skills in their literature review sections,

- included personal opinions in their literature reviews,

- tended to present personal thoughts as results or attached all their raw data without coding it, and

- failed to compare their findings to the literature.

In addition to these errors, more than half of the students in the Kokaliari et al. study failed to mention methodology or other basic information about their study procedures. Additionally, Kokaliari et al. found that all of the capstone research papers contained grammatical and syntactical errors.

APA style guidelines were among the requirements for the capstone papers in the Kokaliari et al. (2012) study, but many of the students made multiple APA errors.

Howard et al. (2010) also found multiple style guideline errors in their study, and Lambie et al. (2008) noted common errors they had found during their experiences as instructors and academic journal editors. Some of the errors they identified included the following:

- failure to cite sources for uncommon knowledge (Howard et al., 2010; Lambie et al., 2008),

- crediting a source with information it did not contain (Howard et al., 2010),

- misinterpreting a source (Howard et al., 2010),

- failure to confirm agreement between citations and references (Lambie et al., 2008), and

- plagiarizing (Howard et al., 2010).

Some researchers studied writing skills from a holistic perspective to address writing constructs such as the organization of the paper, synthesis of various components and ideas, and evidence of critical thinking. Three research teams, Alter and Adkins (2006), Bair and Mader (2013), and Hoyt et al. (2010) studied writing proficiency of college graduates. Alter and Adkins, as well as Bair and Mader, examined writing skills of graduate students. Evaluators for the Alter and Adkins study indicated that the graduate students performed poorly in paragraph organization and failed to provide support for their arguments. Bair and Mader found that graduate students struggled with literature analysis and synthesis and lacked critical thinking skills to apply to their writing. Hoyt et al. also found that college graduates were weak in the application of critical thinking skills, with approximately one third of the graduates testing as less than competent in using critical thinking in their writing.

The authors in the Lambie et al. (2008) article were experienced educators and academic journal editors. They constructed a writing resource article to describe the various components of a research article and some of the most common writing errors the authors had encountered during their careers. Lambie et al. reported that common errors included poor organization and lack of continuity. A main contributing factor to poor organization was a lack of appropriate transitions between paragraphs and sections. Another common problem noted by Lambie et al. was insufficient support from cited literature for students' statements and claims. The Lambie et al. article was consistent with findings in the Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) study, indicating that the third problem category included syntax, grammar, and punctuation errors. Fourth, Lambie et al. stated that academic authors too often fail to connect their stated implications with the theory, literature, and findings from their research.

The writing skill deficits identified by researchers strongly support the need to examine writing difficulties at the local level and to determine why those difficulties exist. In the following subsection, I describe factors that have affected student learning and writing skills. Some of the factors may contribute to the local problem at ISC.

Personal factors affecting writing skills. Research studies have identified a number of factors that affect students' writing skills. Some studies focused on explaining why some students were not proficient writers. Other studies focused on discovering why institutions had not been successful in eliminating writing skill deficits. In this study, I explored both the personal and institutional factors that affected writing skill development. The literature informed the research methodology by providing some

direction in discovering the pervasiveness of writing skill deficits at ISC and discovering institutional factors that may have influenced writing skill development.

Some academic literature addressed factors that may have affected student learning in general or writing skill development in particular. The perspective of the learner-writer and his or her approach to learning can affect how well the student learns new concepts and skills. For example, Merriam et al. (2007) discussed several factors shown to influence adult learning in general. Among the factors, personal characteristics, such as age, self-directness, emotions, memory, and motivation, may have affected adult learners of writing and resulted in unique needs for writing assistance. Experiential and cultural factors also may have affected adult learners differently, according to Merriam et al. Personal experiences of social position and experiences of marginalization through power, oppression, racism, or sexism could have affected adult learning in all fields of education. Although this study could not address every possible variance in adult learners, Merriam et al. demonstrated that adult learners enter the learning environment with highly individualistic learning needs.

Some factors that affect learning in general may be especially applicable to this study. For example, Ewing et al. (2012) and Mueller et al. (2009) mentioned that competing time demands functioned as barriers to learning. Ewing et al. discussed reasons that many doctoral students failed to complete their dissertations and, thus, failed to earn their doctoral degrees after completing all of the course work. Competing time demands were among the reasons for failure to complete a dissertation. Mueller et al. found that, sometimes, adult learners avoided learning new skills when doing so would

require a substantial amount of time. Likewise, adults learned best when they received instruction at the appropriate time when they needed to use the new skill or knowledge. Adults did not learn well when they received instruction about something they would need in the future.

Another barrier to learning in general that may apply to writing skill development concerns the learning styles of adult learners. Studies conducted by Dunn et al. (2009) and Murray (2011) examined whether instructional methodologies that accommodated for a variety of student learning styles affected student learning. Each of the three studies found that learning-style-based instruction was especially helpful for underachieving or low performing students. In addition to supporting the use of teaching methodologies that would benefit students with different learning styles, Dunn et al. and Murray asserted that adult learners might have benefited from knowing their learning styles and developing personal strategies to enhance their learning. Differences in learning styles may have affected writing skill development among students in this study. Student learning styles may have played a part in student perceptions of positive and negative influences on writing skill development.

In addition to factors that affected learning in general, the literature presented a number of reasons that writing skills in particular may have differed among students. Several researchers noted that an individual's educational background could have explained some differences in students' writing skills at the time of enrollment in higher education (Alter & Adkins, 2006; Cleary, 2011; Fanetti, Bushrow, & DeWeese, 2010; Whitley & Grous, 2009; University of Connecticut, 2010). Of particular importance to

the current study, Cleary (2011) reported that adult learners who returned to formal education after spending some time away from education experienced higher levels of anxiety about writing than younger students did (p. 36). In another study of writing skills, Alter and Adkins (2006) found that students who began graduate school on probation were poorer writers than students who were not on probation. Alter and Adkins also found that students who received undergraduate degrees from institutions ranked highly on a selectivity index were better writers than were students with undergraduate degrees from less selective institutions.

Once enrolled in higher education, misconceptions about scholarly writing can hinder the writing skill development of novice writers. Irvin (2010) identified a number of common misconceptions about writing that might cause problems. According to Irvin, the following statements are truths about writing that contradict some of the common misconceptions.

- Writing is not a linear process in which an author writes in the order in which a final draft will appear. Writing requires a cyclical process of writing, revising, and rewriting.

- Writing begins long before a writer fully understands the direction the writing will take.

- No writing is perfect in a first draft.

- Writing ability is not a fixed quality in a person. Writers develop through practice.

Eliminating misconceptions about writing could be a key part of motivating students to improve their scholarly writing skills.

Closely related to students' beliefs about the task of writing are their perceptions of themselves as writers. An individual's writing self-efficacy may influence his or her success in academic writing throughout all levels of higher education. Mattern and Shaw (2010) studied the relationship between academic self-beliefs and success among first-year college students. Results indicated a strong positive correlation between writing self-efficacy and first-year GPA and retention in the second year of college. Concerning graduate students, Whitley and Grous (2009) found that student writers felt concerned about their abilities to satisfy academic writing expectations. Hemmings and Kay (2010) examined the effects of writing self-efficacy on publication output among new and inexperienced college lecturers. Results indicated that research self-efficacy related positively to publication output.

Maguire (2011) discussed a distinctive problem regarding writing self-beliefs among international students when they received peer reviews of their written assignments. Maguire taught two writing and research courses to graduate students in a North American university. She noted that international students, who had been successful elsewhere, expressed dismay and feelings of marginalization when native speakers of English reviewed their writing. Although many universities encouraged diversity among students, some international students felt as though their diverse characteristics were unappreciated and that success in the university depended on specific students' abilities, especially their abilities to think and write like westerners. Maguire

raised the question of whether universities valued only the ethnic and social diversity while shunning linguistic and cultural diversity within academia.

Maguire's (2011) question was relevant to this study, not because the students in this study spoke languages other than English, but because the students lived in a small country and may have differed in educational and cultural backgrounds. Some of the West Indies students consider entering a U.S.-based doctoral program after completing their master's degrees. Ideally, their scholarly writing skills would become proficient for developing their personal writing identities and meeting the requirements for degree completion in both settings.

Researchers have identified several other factors that can inhibit students from developing strong scholarly writing skills (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Can & Walker, 2011; Ewing et al., 2012; Lee & Boud, 2003; Whitley & Grous, 2009). Lee and Boud (2003) contended that undergoing a process of change is necessary for the development of research writing skills and that people tend to fear change. Therefore, Lee and Boud believed learning scholarly writing skills generated fear and anxiety in students. In relation to the tendency for students to fear change, Whitley and Grous (2009) found that students relied on old habits for writing, even when classroom instructors and writing tutors introduced them to more efficient and effective ways to accomplish writing tasks. Likewise, Ewing et al. (2012) reported that graduate students who also worked full-time struggled with the time required to produce high-quality scholarly writing. Motivating students to develop strong writing skills may necessitate a consideration of the personal factors that inhibit their investment in the learning process.

Even after students face their fears and take steps to improve writing, negative writing experiences could result in serious setbacks. One of the most common problems noted in the literature regarded negative feedback on writing assignments. Caffarella and Barnett (2000) found that graduate students experienced apprehension about their abilities as scholarly writers when they faced negative feedback on their writing from peers and instructors. The graduate students also experienced frustration when they received conflicting feedback from reviewers. Can and Walker (2011) focused their study on student perceptions and attitudes regarding written feedback on their academic papers and found that critical or negative feedback had several effects on students:

- 62% experienced emotional effects,

- 38% felt embarrassed,

- 34% lost self-confidence,

- 26% felt they were under personal attack,

- 25% feared negative feedback, and

- 24% lost motivation to continue working on their writing.

In spite of the adverse effects that students experienced when receiving negative or critical feedback, 73% would rewrite their papers (Can & Walker, 2011, p. 519).

Another important issue to consider in a study of student writing skills is whether students must develop computer skills in addition to their writing skills. In 1986, Faigley predicted that major technological changes would become an important focus for writing research. Since that time, several studies have explored some aspect of technological

changes in the process of exploring students' writing skills (Mueller et al., 2009; Singleton-Jackson & Colella, 2012; Olaniran, 2009; Whitley & Grous, 2009).

Mueller et al. (2009) studied student reactions to using computer software programs to learn writing skills and found that some adult students' difficulties with using computers exacerbated their problems with writing development. Mueller et al. identified several barriers to adults using computers. These barriers included conflicting time demands, technology training needs, and frustrations and expenses that accompany keeping computers and programs current. In the beginning stages of their study, Mueller et al. (2009) found the adult students felt overwhelmed by trying to learn how to use the computer software at the same time they were trying to complete a formal writing assignment. The students needed a considerable amount of assistance and time before they became comfortable with using the computer for writing independently.

Additional studies added emphasis to the importance of computer skills for academic writing. Singleton-Jackson and Colella (2012) stated that the computer had become more than a learning tool for writing and asserted technology had become a necessary part of the writing process. Whitley and Grous (2009) agreed, emphasizing that a wide variety of technology related factors are likely to affect students' academic writing. The authors listed conducting research online and avoiding plagiarism among the Internet-specific factors that may affect academic writing. One finding of Whitley and Grous related to the variable trends in technology. Students who were uncomfortable with changing trends, including the availability of more efficient tools for conducting a literature review, did not change from their old methods for searching even after

receiving instructor feedback indicating they needed to do so. The reasons the students gave for not changing their searching methods included lack of familiarity with the technological tools and a lack of time to learn how to use them.

In a different study regarding the use of technology, Olaniran (2009) explored the use of Internet-based social software as a learning platform. Olaniran's article drew from scholarly literature and worldwide, public, Internet-usage data. The author noted there were strong differences in Internet use between various cultures and the differences occurred due to a number of factors. Access to computers and Internet, skills needed to operate them, and governmental censorship were among factors that influenced an individual's ability to use Internet technology as a learning tool.

Several studies addressed the importance of the ease with which educators and students could adapt to technological changes (Mueller et al., 2009; Singleton-Jackson & Colella, 2012; Whitley & Grous, 2009). Mueller et al. (2009) found that when adult learners selected the technologies to use for writing, ease of use was a strong factor influencing their decisions. An example of technology selection based on technology ease-of-use surfaced in the Whitley and Grous (2009) study. In the study, students selected Google Scholar over their institution's library for literature searches. Over half of the students claimed that the school's library search tools were "too complicated" (p. 23), so they did not use them.

Singleton-Jackson and Colella (2012) also noted that technology ease-of-use was a key factor in using technology for writing skills instructions. Students benefited from technology with which they could set up their online accounts easily. Singleton-Jackson

and Colella implicated that, for instructors, online classroom management systems needed to be easy to use for communicating with students and entering and storing grades.

Institutional factors affecting writing skills. A number of factors that influence the development of scholarly writing skills lie within the institutions where writing takes place. Instructors' expectations of new graduate students' writing abilities, mentioned previously in the Rationale subsection, is one factor that may negatively affect the development of writing skills. Fergie et al. (2011) discussed how some academics view writing as a generic skill that, once learned, will meet the skill requirements in any context. Fergie et al. argued that writing skills are context specific and vary across academic disciplines.

Caffarella and Barnett (2000) and Plakhotnik and Rocco (2012) purported that most graduate students do not write like scholars when they enter graduate studies. Caffarella and Barnett (2000) took this idea a step further and stated that many graduate students may not have fully developed critical scholarly thinking skills. Fergie et al. (2011), Caffarella and Barnett, and Plakhotnik and Rocco consistently reported that scholarly writing is not a generic skill that students learn in basic writing courses. Scholarly writing is different from other types of writing, and graduate students generally are not proficient in scholarly writing at the time of enrollment. The authors of these articles believed there was a strong need for writing support among graduate students in any field of study.

Ewing et al. (2012) developed an instructional model to address the needs of doctoral students and increase the likelihood of degree completion among doctoral students. The Ewing Model focused on student needs for structured support and high-quality guidance through the research process. Research facilitators working with the Ewing Model referred students to the university's writing center for assistance with scholarly writing needs. In a separate study of graduate student needs in another institution, Tran (2010) noted that students were unaware of the writing support available to them through the university. Instructors in the Ewing et al. program informed students of the services, but instructors elsewhere may not do the same. Tran emphasized that research facilitators need to accept the responsibility of informing students of services and encouraging them to take advantage of the available support.

Cleary (2011) described a deeper problem that adult learners frequently faced in her own school: a lack of available writing support. When adult enrollees needed basic writing instruction to proceed toward success in their educational endeavors, they sometimes found it difficult to find an on-ground writing course available to them. If they could not enroll in a basic writing course immediately, they found themselves steeped in a nontraditional, writing-intensive program of studies without adequate skills and in need of considerable assistance. Ewing et al. (2012), Tran (2010), and Cleary (2011) agreed that support for writing skill development is a necessary service for student success. That support needs to be readily available at the time of the students' needs, and students need to know about that support and how to access it.

Although the literature has consistently shown the need for institutions to provide writing support for students, some institutions may not offer effective writing assistance. In a study of graduate student writing proficiency, Singleton-Jackson et al. (2009) discussed several difficulties that institutions must face when exploring options for the delivery of writing instruction. In a later case study of a writing program, Singleton-Jackson and Colella (2012) stated that providing writing instruction is both time consuming and laborious. Consistent with the Singleton-Jackson and Colella's comment about time and labor requirements, Kokaliari et al. (2012) proposed that every instructor is responsible for contributing to students' writing skill development. Fergie et al. (2011) and November and Day (2012) argued that every discipline has its own traditions and expectations for academic writing, suggesting that writing instruction should take place within each department.

In addition to the literature emphasizing differences in academic writing among disciplines, several authors explained there are differences among types of writing assignments. Bair and Mader (2013) and Quick (2012) noted differences between academic and professional writing. Lambie et al. (2008) emphasized that academic writing is a distinctive genre of writing that crosses into one's professional responsibilities in some disciplines. Although scholarly writing is a type of professional writing for some, Quick distinguished other types of professional writing that may not be scholarly in nature. For example, Quick described a résumé cover letter as a crucial type of professional writing. Quick explained that academic writing frequently serves as a way

to demonstrate one's knowledge to a reader who already has that knowledge. In contrast, professional writing serves to provide new information to a reader.

Within the context of academic writing, Tran (2010) and the University of Connecticut (2010) noted different types of academic writing assignments. Tran purported that argumentative essays frequently were the most difficult academic works for students to produce. Academic arguments have characteristics that may differ among disciplines or cultures. English essay writing may be the most difficult for nonnative speakers of English. Whitley and Grous (2009) stressed that a student's English proficiency strongly influenced his or her ability to produce high-quality essays because academic writing requires the ability to find and review appropriate literature. Paraphrasing literature also requires a strong vocabulary.

In addition to differences in students' writing skills, institutions face several other challenges when it comes to providing writing instruction. Writing instruction takes time (Cleary, 2011; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Singleton-Jackson & Colella, 2012), and it is important for writing instruction to take place at the time when students need it (Cleary, 2011). Some research indicates that writing instruction should take place throughout a student's enrollment in higher education (e.g., Kokaliari et al., 2012). Writing instruction is exhausting for facilitators (Singleton-Jackson & Colella, 2012), and some research purports that all instructors should include writing competency as a criterion for evaluation in their courses (e.g., Alter & Adkins, 2006; Kokaliari et al., 2012).

Course instructors and facilitators present other types of challenges for institutions when it comes to offering writing instruction. One such challenge is that sometimes

faculty members do not want to spend time on the development of students' writing skills (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2009). Faculty members may complain about deficits in writing skills, but, at the same time, they do not reduce student grades for writing errors (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2009). In addition, several studies indicated that students received unclear or contradictory expectations from course instructors regarding writing assignments (Barnett & Muth, 2008; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2012; Tran, 2010; Whitley & Grous, 2009). For example, one of these researchers (Tran, 2010) found strong evidence that students did not understand the writing expectations of instructors. Students claimed to receive inconsistent and conflicting feedback from instructors regarding academic writing assignments. In fact, the instructors in Tran's (2010) study did not agree on writing expectations and did not seem to focus on resolving their differences and negotiating disciplinary writing expectations. In consideration of the identified institutional factors that influenced writing skill development and the diversity of student needs for assistance, the literature revealed several implications for this study.

Implications

The literature provided insight into several potential implications for addressing the research questions in this study of scholarly writing skills among graduate students. To identify the types of writing deficits among the students, I pursued narrative descriptions of several categories of writing skill deficits. Categories of writing skill deficits included punctuation, paragraph structure, sentence structure, APA citations, word processing, and grammar and tense (Kokaliari et al., 2012; Lambie et al., 2008; Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008).

Additionally, the literature demonstrated that several factors are essential considerations for any project designed to assist adult graduate students with writing skills. Adult students are likely to have needs for writing assistance that are highly individualistic (Cleary, 2011; Merriam et al., 2007). Narrative descriptions of adult students' individual differences may be valuable to the development of the project. These descriptions may include factors such as competing time demands, learning styles, computer skills, writing self-beliefs, and experiences with negative feedback on writing (Can & Walker, 2011; Dunn et al., 2009; Ewing et al., 2012; Mattern & Shaw, 2010; Mueller et al., 2009; Singleton-Jackson & Colella, 2012).

During this research, I examined participant perceptions of positive and negative influences on student writing skills at ISC. I designed the data collection methods to provide opportunities for participants to reveal any type of influences on writing skill development, including influences that may have related to some or all of the Knowles's (Knowles et al., 2011) assumptions of andragogy. One example of influence on writing skill development that was important in the literature and that may be related to an assumption of andragogy is the level of confidence a student may have in regard to his or her writing skills (Maguire, 2011; Mattern & Shaw, 2010; Whitley & Grous, 2009). Although the theory of andragogy may offer some direction in the exploration of influences on writing skill development, the literature discussed other influential factors as well.

One negative influential factor that surfaced in several studies of writing skill development related to the instructions for writing assignments that students were to

complete (Barnett & Muth, 2008; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2012; Tran, 2010; Whitley & Grous, 2009). Instructions and expectations related to writing assignments were unclear, resulting in students failing to understand the expectations. Prior to data collection, it was unknown whether students at ISC struggled with understanding writing assignment instructions and expectations. Because difficulty in understanding assignments surfaced as a negative influence on writing skills in several studies, I asked participants to describe their understanding of writing expectations at ISC. Additionally, I asked students to describe what an instructor could do to help them develop scholarly writing skills. I asked faculty-administrators to explain whether they did or did not perceive that students understood the instructions they provided for writing assignments. The combination of these questions provided an opportunity for study participants to indicate whether there was a problem with students' understanding of writing assignments at ISC.

To understand the positive and negative influences on writing skill development at ISC, data included narrative descriptions of

- writing instruction and opportunities for assistance,

- instructor feedback on written assignments,

- faculty roles in supporting writing skill development, and

- other factors that encouraged and discouraged students in their efforts to produce scholarly works.

Findings from the data analysis informed the structure and content of the writing development project (see Appendix A).

Prior to the study, project considerations included one or more of the following: writing courses, writing seminars, individual writing assistance, or self-use writing aids, such as topic-specific tutorials or broad-topic writing manuals. I considered several possible venues for writing assistance: a face-to-face environment during residencies or through online webinars, tutorials, and documents available for downloading. I also considered developing a writing center similar to writing centers found in other institutions. A writing center possibly could accommodate most or all of the options I was considering. Section 3 includes an additional review of literature focused on how other researchers have addressed student-writing needs in other institutions.

Summary

The focus of this study was a problem with scholarly writing skills among adult students at ISC, a graduate institution in the West Indies. Section 1 contained the research problem, the local and literature-based rationales for selecting the problem for this study, and an explanation of basic building blocks in the design of the study. The section included an explanation of the significance of the study, as well as identification of the guiding research questions. A comprehensive literature review indicated a widespread need to study graduate student writing skills. Existing studies revealed multiple types of graduate student writing problems and explained multiple reasons for writing skill deficiencies among students. The final portion of the section contained descriptions of implications drawn from the literature; these implications shed light on possible projects that may help with writing skill development among students at ISC.

Section 2 of this project study includes descriptions of the research design, procedures, and findings. Section 3 includes a description of the writing development project, and Section 4 is a narrative reflection upon my experiences in conducting this project study.

Section 2: The Methodology

Section 2 includes a detailed description of the research methodology for studying the scholarly writing skills of students enrolled in a graduate school for adult learners. A qualitative case study methodology was best suited for the exploration of two phenomena: student writing skill deficits and positive and negative influences on writing skill development. This section includes explanations for the research design, selection of participants, data collection and analysis procedures, and research findings. The section also includes descriptions of the measures taken to ensure ethical treatment of participants, as well as procedures for demonstrating the accuracy and credibility of the research findings and interpretations.

Qualitative Case Study Design

The selection of the qualitative design for this study derives from the problem, purpose, and research questions presented in Section 1. Creswell (2012) described a research problem as an educational issue that is justifiably in need of research and that is important to a particular audience. Creswell also explained that research problems generally fall into one of two categories: practical or research based (p. 66). Practical research problems derive from a concern within a particular setting. Research-based problems usually focus on a gap in the literature about a broad-based educational issue. I focused on a practical issue regarding writing skills among graduate students in one institution. Specifically, some students reached the final research phase of their master's programs with inadequate scholarly writing skills (P. Pate, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

A research purpose, according to Creswell (2012), is the intention or aim of a research study, and research questions are specific inquiries designed to address the problem and purpose of the study. The purpose of this study was to identify the most pervasive writing skill deficits and the positive and negative influences on writing skill development among students at ISC. Three guiding questions addressed the problem and purpose of this study:

1. What were the perceptions of ISC's students, faculty members, and administrators regarding the most pervasive writing skill deficits among ISC's adult graduate students?

2. What were the perceptions of ISC's students, faculty members, and administrators regarding positive and negative influences on student writing skill development?

3. What writing skill deficits were observed in student documents written by ISC's adult graduate students?

To answer the research questions, I needed to provide a full description of phenomena related to student writing skills at ISC.

Qualitative research, according to Creswell (2012), is the best option for addressing a research problem that involves a need to explore the possibility of unknown variables (p. 16). This study encompassed the possibility of uncovering unanticipated writing skill deficits and unforeseen influences on writing skill development. A quantitative research design would not allow for a full description of the phenomena to emerge from the data. Instead, quantitative methods would be used to measure only the

factors already included in a data collection instrument (Creswell, 2012). Because the research questions focused on participant perceptions and researcher observations regarding writing skills, a qualitative study was the most appropriate design choice.

Merriam (2009) explained that qualitative studies typically fall into one or two categories: basic or applied research (p. 3). Basic research has a goal to extend the knowledge base regarding a phenomenon; applied research addresses a desire to improve practice in an educational setting. According to Merriam's descriptions of basic and applied research, an applied approach was the best option for this study because a goal of the research was to provide information about a specific problem at ISC. Merriam explained further that applied research has a primary goal to assist with educational decisions. A goal of this study was to provide information for administrative decision-making regarding writing skill development at ISC. Therefore, an applied qualitative research design was appropriate for this study of graduate student writing skills.

Action research is one form of applied research that I considered for this study. Merriam (2009) explained that action research addresses specific needs within an educational setting. This study addressed the specific problem of deficient writing skills within ISC. However, Creswell (2012) and Glesne (2011) further explained that action research includes phases of implementing changes at various points during the research. Because this project study was not intended to include the implementation of changes, it would not include the *action* part of action research. Therefore, an action research strategy was not an appropriate choice for this study.

Within the context of qualitative research, a case study seemed to be the best design for this research. Hancock and Algozzine (2011) stated, "Case study research is richly descriptive because it is grounded in deep and varied sources of information" (p. 16). This research benefited from a qualitative case study design because students, faculty members, and administrators had the opportunity to offer different perspectives on student writing skill deficiencies and influences on writing skill development at ISC.

Merriam (2009) further described a case study as an in-depth qualitative research endeavor involving the study of some phenomenon of interest within a bounded system (p. 40). The bounded system in this research included students, faculty members, and administrators at ISC. The phenomenon of interest was a lack of proficiency in scholarly writing skills among some of ISC's students. Because the study included only the collection of qualitative data within a bounded system, the appropriate design was an applied qualitative case study suitable for informing decision-making.

In summary, this qualitative case study focused on student, faculty, and administrative perceptions regarding writing skills at a graduate school for adult students. Additionally, qualitative assessments of student writing samples yielded further descriptions of students' writing skills. The next subsection includes descriptions of the target population, procedures for access to and selection of participants, the participants in this study, the researcher's relationship to participants, and procedures for ensuring the ethical protection of participants.

Participants

The population for this study included active students, faculty members, and administrators at ISC. The target population, or sampling frame, consisted of all students, faculty members, and administrators with current e-mail addresses on file with the administrative offices of ISC. At the time of this study, ISC had 57 adult students enrolled in the three master's programs: Master of Education in Assessment, Research, and Educational Leadership; Master of Science in Organizational Leadership; and Master of Arts in Family Life Education. There were six administrators and 20 members of the teaching faculty at the graduate school, all of who worked with student writing assignments.

The student body included 65% females and 35% males with ages ranging from 37 to 80 years. Ninety percent of the students resided in the same country with ISC while 10% were from other West Indies islands. All of the students were native speakers of English. The ethnic backgrounds of students were 37.5% of East Indian descent, 37.5% of African descent, and 25% of mixed ethnic background (G. Stow, personal communication, June 17, 2013).

Another factor that may have been relevant to this study of scholarly writing skills was the diversity of students' educational and professional backgrounds. Most students enrolled at ISC after completing bachelor's degrees and spending several years in professional careers. However, some students earned their first degrees from theological seminaries and worked as religious ministers prior to enrollment. Other students earned

various types of postsecondary education credits and then compiled portfolios of their lifelong learning experiences to demonstrate readiness for graduate study.

The students' professions also varied widely. There were educators, religious ministers, social workers, skilled artisans, and business professionals among others. Some student professions had required little writing while others required frequent, high-quality writing. An aim for this study was to understand the students' needs for developing scholarly writing skills.

Access to Participants

The institution's CEO granted me permission to contact all active students, faculty members, and administrators at ISC to request their participation in the study (see Appendix B). After the research proposal received approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB; approval #06-26-14-0261935), ISC's office manager provided me with the e-mail addresses of potential participants. I began recruitment on July 10, 2014.

Participant Selection

Creswell (2012) stated that purposeful sampling is appropriate for qualitative research. In purposeful sampling, the researcher selects individuals who are most likely to offer insight about the phenomenon studied. In further delineation of sampling methods, Creswell described a sample of convenience as a sample made up of participants who volunteer to take part in a study. Due to the small size of the target population and time constraints for data collection, I used a purposeful sample of convenience to explore multiple perspectives regarding scholarly writing at ISC.

I began recruiting participants by sending a recruitment e-mail message to each master's student, faculty member, and administrator for whom I had an e-mail address (see Appendix C). The e-mail message contained the following:

- the purpose of the research,

- options for participating in the study,

- researcher contact information,

- a link to an open-ended questionnaire with a built-in consent indicator, and

- an attached copy of the research consent form.

In accordance with Merriam's (2009) recommendation, the sample size for this study contained the number of participants required to answer the research questions. Merriam explained that a qualitative researcher must continue sampling participants until he or she stops receiving new information from additional participants. In this study, sampling for interviews and document analysis continued until the data answered the research questions and redundancy occurred in the data collection. Sampling for questionnaires continued until no additional participants were available.

Questionnaire participants. All participants who completed the online questionnaire made up the sample for the questionnaire portion of the study. My aim was to retrieve a minimum of five completed questionnaires from students and a minimum of five questionnaires from faculty members and administrators. After two recruitment attempts, I received only one faculty questionnaire and four student questionnaires. The individuals who responded to the questionnaire were as follows:

- Respondent 1 was a faculty member who taught courses to students in all of the master's degree programs. He taught a course in academic writing, graded narrative papers, edited student writings, and supervised the completion of end-of-program research papers. Beyond his work for ISC, he also worked full time as a businessman.

- Respondent 2 was a student in her final semester of the Family Life Education master's program. This student held a bachelor's degree in business and worked full time as a program consultant and coordinator.

- Respondent 3 was a student in the Family Life Education master's program. She studied adult education in her undergraduate studies, and she worked part time with three local educational programs.

- Respondent 4 was a student in the Family Life Education master's program. On the questionnaire, this student wrote that he or she had earned a Bachelor of Science degree, but the response did not include identification of the major discipline of study. He or she worked full time as a secondary school teacher.

- Respondent 5 was a master's level Family Life Education student who had attended a teacher's college. At the time of the study, he or she was a retired schoolteacher.

Participation in the questionnaire did not hinder an individual's opportunity to participate in an interview or provide one or two writing samples for analysis.

Interview participants. The sample for the interview portion of the study included 14 participants: eight students and six faculty members. The sample was

sufficient for redundancy to occur in the data collection (Merriam, 2009). I scheduled and

completed interviews with all 14 participants during a 5-day campus residency.

Additionally, I requested the assistance of a school administrator to identify faculty

members and administrators who were the most familiar with student writing skills or

who served as writing specialists at ISC. Most of the writing specialists volunteered for

interviews during the first round of recruitment, so I made no further request for their

participation. The faculty-administrator interview participants included the following

individuals identified by pseudonyms:

- Dr. Adams was a course facilitator for two courses: a general studies

  course required of all students and a disciplinary course required of all

  Family Life Education students. In addition to her work at ISC, Dr. Adams

  taught full time at another local college.

- Dr. Banks was an administrator and course instructor. At the time of this

  study, he taught some general studies courses required of all ISC students

  as well as some courses in the Organizational Leadership program. Dr.

  Banks also supervised the capstone studies for some master's students

  nearing degree completion. In addition to his work at ISC, Dr. Banks had

  an established and demanding business career.

- Dr. Clark was a course facilitator for three ISC courses: two general

  studies courses that were required of all students and one course in the

  Organizational Leadership program. In addition to her work for ISC, Dr.

  Clark worked as an educational consultant, which included adjunct

instructor responsibilities at two other higher education institutions and a number of privately contracted responsibilities.

- Dr. Davis was a course facilitator for two courses that were required for all Family Life Education students. In addition to her work for ISC, Dr. Davis worked part time for a local church.

- Dr. Elliot was an administrator and course instructor at ISC. She taught some general studies courses that were required for all students and some Family Life Education courses. In addition to her work for ISC, Dr. Elliot worked full time for an international organization.

- Dr. Fisher was an administrator and course instructor at ISC. He taught some general studies courses that were required for all students. Dr. Fisher worked full time in the field of education with a wide array of responsibilities.

Because all of the faculty-administrator participants were course instructors, I refer to them as *faculty* participants for the duration of this paper.

The student interview participants included the following students identified by pseudonyms:

- Ann was nearing completion of her Master of Science in Organizational Leadership. She worked full time in a health profession.

- Bob was in his first year in the Master of Education in Assessment, Research, and Educational Leadership program. He worked full time as a secondary school administrator.

- Carol was in her first year in the Master of Arts in Family Life Education program. She was a retired teacher, but she continued to work part time for a local business.

- Debra was nearing completion of her Master of Arts in Family Life Education. She worked part time for three educational organizations.

- Emma was in her first year in the Master of Education in Assessment, Research, and Educational Leadership program. She worked full time as a secondary school teacher.

- Frank was in his first year in the Masters of Science in Organizational Leadership program. He worked full time in scientific research for the government.

- Grace was in her first year in the Master of Arts in Family Life Education program. She worked full time as a school social worker.

- Helen was in her second year in the Master of Arts in Family Life Education program. She worked full time as a secondary school teacher.

The student participants included at least one student from each of the three master's programs.

Writing samples. An additional sample of 10 student papers served as examples of student writing for document analysis. ISC's CEO granted me permission to access the school's database of archived student papers to retrieve writing samples written by student volunteer participants. Each student author provided written consent to a review of his or her work. The writing samples included the following:

- Three of the writing samples were open-ended, question-and-answer assignments related to course content. Students completed this type of assignment at the beginning of the term and completed the same assignment with "expanded" answers at the end of the term. Two of the samples were first-semester, beginning-of-term submissions; one was a first-semester, end-of-term submission.

- One of the writing samples was a third-term developmental reading assignment. Students completed developmental reading assignments for each of their courses. These assignments involved locating a minimum number of appropriate resources, paraphrasing portions of the content, and documenting the source information according to APA guidelines.

- Five of the writing samples were course essays. Among the five essays, three were first-term, general studies essays; one was a fourth-term, Family Life Education essay; and one was a fifth-term, Organizational Leadership essay.

- One of the writing samples was a first-term Core Learning Journal assignment. Students completed end-of-term Core Learning Journals for most ISC courses. These assignments were reflective writings about learning gained during the term.

Researcher-Participant Relationship

Establishing a working relationship with the study participants proved to be an interesting challenge during this study. Glesne (2011) stated that a researcher must establish a rapport and trust with each study participant. Because I did not work for ISC

in any capacity at the time of the study nor did I have any power or supervisory role over any participants, none of the student participants knew me. Consequently, I did not receive any student volunteers for interviews in response to the recruitment e-mail message. Even though some students recognized my name from some of their course texts and the e-mail message mentioned my communication with ISC's CEO, one student participant, Carol, told me that students did not respond because they did not know me.

I knew several of ISC's faculty members and administrators from previous educational experiences, so I sought their assistance in establishing a relationship with potential participants. I assumed that support from faculty members and administrators whom students already trusted would increase the likelihood of voluntary participation in the study. Once I arrived on campus and the CEO introduced me to students who were attending their residencies, several students quickly responded by volunteering for interviews.

When communicating with potential participants, I endeavored to follow Glesne's (2011) recommendations that excellent researchers must be "sensitive, patient, friendly, and inoffensive" (2011, p. 141). When I visited the study site, I also practiced Glesne's other recommendations for managing relationships in the field. She recommended that a researcher should

- display a good sense of humor;

- exhibit a high level of tolerance for ambiguity;

- dress appropriately for the setting;

- take breaks to manage stress, emotions, fatigue, and the like;

- avoid personal over-identification or over-familiarity that could result in researcher bias;

- maintain a role of researcher without assuming a position of power over participants;

- respect the institution's goals; and

- demonstrate care for all individuals associated with the institution.

Finally, I practiced reflective thinking and journaling throughout the research (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2008). According to Merriam (2009), critically reflecting upon one's biases, perspective, and assumptions is a necessary part of the qualitative research process. Glesne (2011) suggested that critical reflection helps a researcher consider his or her own influences on the study outcomes. While conducting this study, I examined my own methods, perspectives, assumptions, emotions, and relationships to maintain neutrality and foster participant construction of the research findings.

Ethical Protection of Participants

This study was an international research study because ISC was located outside the U.S. and both Walden University and my residence were located inside the U.S. The Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB, 2009) required all international researchers to consult the *International Compilation of Human Research Standards*, provided by U.S. Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP, 2012), to ensure their studies followed all relevant research regulations. In the event that a difference existed between the U.S. research regulations and regulations in the country of the study, the

researcher was to follow the stricter of the two sets of standards (IRB, 2009). A review of

research regulations in the U.S. and the West Indies country of this study revealed that

human research regulations in the two countries were similar. Regulations and guidelines

for both countries followed principles similar to those found in *The Belmont Report*

(National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects [NCPHS], 1979). The U.S.

regulations explained the ethical expectations in detail, which brought the strictest level

of rigor into the research procedures. The U.S. regulations for conducting research with

human participants, along with the Walden University IRB policies, guided the ethical

decisions, procedures, and researcher behaviors related to this study.

Prior to planning the study, I completed a National Institutes of Health (NIH,

2011) training course in the ethical protection of human research participants (see

Appendix D for certificate of completion). In accordance with NIH recommendations, I

sought the assistance of administrative personnel at the study site to ensure that all

potential participants were autonomous adults who could comprehend all elements of the

informed consent form (NCPHS, 1979) and who had no legal or cultural limitations for

choosing to participate in the study. Additionally, every participant received and agreed

to an informed consent document (see Appendix E) explaining the nature of the research

and measures for protecting study participants.

The informed consent document included the following:

- an explanation of the purpose and procedures of the research;

- a statement informing the participants that participation was voluntary and

  that they could decline or withdraw from the study at any time;

- acknowledgment there was minimal risk and minimal beneficence for participants, but their participation could benefit future students at ISC;

- a statement of guarantee that the researcher would maintain participant confidentiality, which would include the use of aliases for participant names (Creswell, 2012, p. 281) and the protection of all data on a password-protected, private, personal computer with secure online back-up accessible by only the researcher;

- instructions and contact information for asking questions about the research and participants' rights;

- consent for me to use questionnaire, interview, and/or document analysis data for research purposes; and

- instructions for submitting the consent form and retaining a copy for the participant's records.

Each participant could consent to one, two, or three ways to participate in the research:

- completing an online open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix F), which included a built-in, consent-to-participate clause requiring participant acceptance prior to completing the questionnaire;

- agreeing to participate in an interview by signing a printed consent form or sending me an e-mail message indicating consent; and/or

- consenting to a review of previously submitted assignments (students only) by

  signing a printed consent form or sending me an e-mail message indicating

  consent.

Participants who responded by e-mail had the option to print a copy of the consent form

for their records; participants who signed a printed copy of the consent form could

request a separate copy for their records. Because all participants were autonomous, adult

volunteers, I provided no other protective measures or compensation to participants.

Data Collection

To understand issues regarding writing skills among ISC students, I collected

qualitative data from three sources: open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and narrative

assessments of students' writing samples. This subsection includes descriptions of my

role as researcher, the data sources, and procedures for collecting data.

Role of the Researcher

As the sole researcher in this project study, I was responsible for the design,

implementation, and reporting of the entire research. I recruited participants, collected

and analyzed data, reported the findings and interpretations, and developed the project

aimed at mitigating students' writing skill deficits. During the data collection, I

conducted all of the interviews and assessed all of the writing samples. Because I was the

only researcher, I took extra precautions to avoid any effects from researcher bias. First, I

reflected upon my previous relationships with potential participants and the likelihood of

those relationships influencing the study. I had never met any of ISC's current students,

but I knew some ISC instructors and administrators from previous educational

environments. However, I had little contact with them for several years prior to this study. Therefore, I did not expect previous relationships with study participants to cause any difficulties or biases in the research. Accordingly, during the research, I did not experience or observe any difficulties resulting from my previous roles and relationships.

Second, I took precautions to mitigate any personal biases that may have resulted from my professional experience as a research instructor and dissertation editor. To avoid these biases, I used a variety of data collection methods and engaged in several procedures to ensure accuracy of the research. I used two methods to collect participant perceptions regarding writing skills: interviews and questionnaires. Additionally, I took extra precautions to avoid personal biases while I assessed the writing samples. The three-step process I used to analyze the writing samples included the following:

- Prior to assessing the student writings, I noted student and faculty perceptions regarding writing skill deficits revealed in the interview and questionnaire data.

- Also prior to assessing the student writings, I noted common writing skill deficits indicated in the professional literature.

- Finally, I examined the student writings for deficits listed in the participant-perception notes and literature postulations in addition to writing deficits I had frequently noticed during my previous experiences.

Finally, I followed several procedures to demonstrate accuracy in the research findings (see Data Analysis: Evidence of Quality subsection). Together, the data collection

methods and quality indicators reduced the likelihood of any biased interpretations of the qualitative data.

Open-Ended Questionnaires

Creswell (2012) identified open-ended questions on questionnaires as appropriate means for collecting qualitative data. The presumed advantage of using a questionnaire as the first data-collection approach in this study was that potential participants, who lived on several different islands, would have the opportunity to participate in the study without traveling to ISC's campus. Additionally, the questionnaire responses had the potential to yield information that differed from the responses derived from the guided, time-constrained interview responses.

Participation in the questionnaire portion of the study was immediately available to all individuals who received the recruitment e-mail message (see Appendix C), which included a link to the online questionnaire. Questionnaire participation did not exclude individuals from participating in the interview or writing assessment portions of the study. I did not limit the number of participants allowed to complete the questionnaire portion of the study. I attempted to recruit a minimum of five students and five faculty/administrative persons to complete the questionnaire. After two recruitment attempts, I received only one faculty response and four student responses.

SurveyMonkey, an online survey program, served as the host for the researcher-produced, online questionnaire (see Appendix F). The questionnaire settings required each respondent to acknowledge that he or she had read and agreed to the informed consent. Next, the respondent identified his or her role at ISC: master's student or

instructor and/or administrator. At this point, the online survey automatically routed the respondent to the Questions for Students or Questions for Instructors and Administrators.

The question sets for both participant groups began with demographic questions. A student could identify his or her program affiliation at ISC, work status outside of ISC, current or anticipated professional field of work, and educational background. A faculty-administrator participant could identify his or her program affiliation at ISC, work status and field of work outside ISC, educational background, and involvement with student writing at ISC.

The rest of the questionnaire contained open-ended questions designed to address the first two research questions. The student questions elicited students' perceptions regarding their own writing skill deficits, positive influences on their writing skill development, and negative influences on their writing skill development. The instructor and administrator questions educed faculty perceptions regarding prevalent writing skill deficits among their students, positive influences on student writing skill development, and negative influences on student writing skill development.

The questionnaire remained available online another four weeks after the last participant submission. Then, I exported all questionnaire responses into a Microsoft Excel workbook. All of the questionnaire data had loaded onto a single sheet in Excel, so I created separate worksheets for each participant's responses and copied their responses to their respective worksheets. I stored the Excel documents in password-protected files on my personal computer for subsequent use in the data analysis process.

Interviews

One of the most common approaches to qualitative data collection is interviewing (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) stated, "Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (p. 88). I chose to conduct interviews because it was impractical to try to understand participant's perceptions regarding writing skills through observations. Interviewing students, faculty members, and administrators about their perceptions of the types and prevalence of student writing skill deficits was the most appropriate method for answering the first research question. Participant interviews were appropriate, also, for answering the second research question regarding the positive and negative influences on writing skill development.

The use of semistructured interview protocols was suitable for answering the research questions in this study. In a semistructured interview, a researcher asks several predetermined, yet flexible, questions, but the exact wording of the questions could vary (Merriam, 2009). Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2006) explained that conducting semistructured interviews allows a researcher to work with an interview protocol containing a list of preset questions while maintaining freedom to inquire further. For this study, I developed interview questions to lead participants to answer the research questions. I used follow-up questions to probe for more information or clarification of participant responses (see Appendix G).

I conducted semistructured interviews with eight students and six members of the faculty and administration. All of the 30-minute to 1-hour, face-to-face interviews took

place on the school's campus during a regularly scheduled, 5-day residency. The school's administrator provided a private interview room where I conducted 12 of the interviews. At the request of one participant, I used the dining hall for one interview. Additionally, I used an administrative office for another interview with a participant who needed to avoid the stairs to the interview room.

I used separate interview protocols for student participants and faculty participants (see Appendix G). Each of the interview protocols prompted me to review and collect the informed consent agreement and, prior to commencing the interview, obtain consent to record the interview. The protocols also reminded me to ask demographic and foundational questions regarding the research topic. On the back of the page, I included a list of types of writing skill deficits and examples of each. I supplied each participant with a copy of the deficits list with examples. Interviewees could use the list to help them describe writing skill deficits during the interview.

The student interview protocol included questions that related to the types of writing skill deficits with which they struggled. Additional questions focused on student perceptions of positive and negative influences on writing skill development, including any self-help behaviors and resources that seemed beneficial. The student interviews also included other types of questions that were potentially relevant to this study:

- Based on administrator comments about writing skill differences between students with theological and academic educational backgrounds (P. Pate, personal communication, March 15, 2013), I asked students to describe their undergraduate education experiences.

- Based on the theoretical framework for this study, I probed for further information when interview responses seemed related to assumptions of andragogy (Knowles et al., 2011) and relevant to the participant's learning preferences.

- Based on the literature review, I probed for more information when student comments related to learning styles (Dunn et al., 2009; Murray, 2011).

- Also based on the literature review, I asked each ISC student to describe his or her understanding of the institutional expectations for scholarly writing (Barnett & Muth, 2008; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Plakhotnik & Rocco, 2012; Tran, 2010; Whitley & Grous, 2009).

The faculty-administrator interview protocol included questions regarding students' writing skills from an evaluator's standpoint. Additional questions focused on faculty-administrator perceptions of positive and negative influences on student writing skill development. While participants described their perceptions of influences on writing skill development, I listened for possible connections to andragogical assumptions and learning styles theory. Finally, the participant's perceptions of institutional expectations for student writing and perceptions of whether students understood those expectations helped to answer the research questions.

At the close of each interview, I requested permission to contact the participant for further insight into his or her responses. Additionally, I asked each participant for permission to conduct a member check, during which he or she could validate the

accuracy of my interview interpretations and findings. Every interviewee agreed to participate in the member checks.

Immediately following each interview, I placed all recordings, consent forms, and notes in a locked case until I could convert them to computer files for storage. As time became available, I transferred the digital audio files to my personal computer. I began transcribing the recordings shortly after I completed all of the 14 interviews.

As recommended by Glesne (2011) and Merriam (2009), I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews into written documents. Merriam (2009) stated, "Transcribing your own interviews is [a] means of generating insights and hunches about what is going on in your data" (p. 174). Therefore, I personally transcribed all the interviews and saved the transcripts as Microsoft Word documents. I reviewed each audio recording two times: first to transcribe the audio into text and then to edit the text and make sure the transcription was accurate. I stored the transcripts in password-protected files on my personal computer for subsequent use in the data analysis process.

Student Writing Samples

The third research question regarded observed writing skill deficits in a sample of student-written documents. Because the questionnaires and interviews provided insight only into the participants' perceptions regarding the most pervasive writing skill deficits, I examined a sample of written assignments for additional insight into writing deficiencies. ISC's CEO allowed me access to student writing samples through the school's online educational management system. I found that most of the available assignments were in one of the following categories:

- essay responses to questions about course content,

- annotated literature reviews of materials relevant to a course,

- essay assignments, and

- reflective journal assignments about learning related to a course.

The writing samples I used in this study included at least one assignment from each category.

Although the online management system contained all of ISC's archived assignments, I exclusively chose assignments written by students who consented to a review of their work. I intended to begin with a sample of five student papers. However, I decided to assess 10 documents to evaluate a variety of assignments from multiple volunteers. I assessed a maximum of two papers per student volunteer. I chose only one paper from students who were in their first or second terms of their respective programs, and two papers of different types from students who were in their third or later terms in their respective programs. When I chose two papers from one student, I selected one paper from his or her first term in the program and one paper from his or her most recent submissions.

After downloading the writing samples to my personal computer, I used two steps to prepare for assessing the observed writing skills:

- I printed the documents and used them to make notes and mark errors by hand.

- I prepared a Microsoft Excel workbook that I used to record narrative descriptions of writing skill deficits I observed in the student papers (see Appendix H).

I used one worksheet in the Excel document for each writing sample assessment. After marking the hard copies, I entered my observations and comments regarding the writing skills evident in each paper into the respective Excel worksheet. Subsequently, I scanned the marked hard copies of the writing samples and stored the electronic documents in the password-protected computer files designated for this research. I also retained electronic copies of the original, unmarked writing samples. I destroyed the hard copies of the documents.

Post Data Collection Procedures

Upon completing the data collection, I completed the following procedures to secure all study-related data:

- I converted all observational and reflective notes into an electronic format,

- stored them in password-protected computer files, and

- destroyed all hard copies.

I maintained the digital copies of all audio recordings, interview transcripts, and writing samples and stored them in the password-protected computer files designated for the research. I kept the reflective notes in the same password-protected, personal computer folder with the qualitative data files.

Data Analysis

In this study, data analysis included the basic steps for analyzing qualitative data as specified by Creswell (2012), Glesne (2011), and Merriam (2009). The procedures included data preparation and organization, data coding, theme building, reporting and interpreting the findings, and providing evidence of accuracy in the findings. The data analysis procedures began immediately following receipt of the first data, as recommended by Creswell (2012), Glesne (2011), and Merriam (2009). Creswell (2012) recommended researchers should analyze their own data by hand to get a close look at the details. I conducted all of the data analysis by hand. First, I analyzed the interview data while the questionnaire remained available for online participants. Next, I conducted data analysis on the questionnaire data. Finally, I wrote narrative assessments of the observed writing skill deficits in a sample of student assignments and conducted analysis on the assessments.

Interview Data Analysis

An important step in the process of analyzing interview data is exploring "the general sense of the data" (Creswell, 2012, p. 243). During this step, I read the interview transcripts from beginning to end to facilitate a holistic understanding of each participant's comments that were relevant to the research questions. While reading, I made notes to keep track of early thoughts about codes or concepts to explore further.

Next, I edited a working copy of each transcript by deleting any text that was irrelevant to the study and removing personal identifiers. I divided the remaining text into

meaningful segments containing only one idea or concept per segment. I transferred the text segments into Microsoft Excel worksheets to begin coding the data.

I created two Microsoft Excel workbooks: one for student interviews and one for faculty interviews. On separate worksheets for the individual interviews, I assigned possible codes to the text segments that were relevant to the research questions. At first, there were few codes, but as the research progressed, more codes emerged. The coding process continued until every meaningful segment had an assigned code.

When the coding was complete, I sorted the segments with their codes into groups based on each segment's relevance to a research question. All segments that referred to perceived writing skill deficits belonged to one group and perceived positive and negative influences on writing skill development belonged to another group. I divided the text segments regarding influences further by separating them into positive and negative influences on writing skill development.

To begin theme building, I added theme-building worksheets to faculty and student interview workbooks (Glesne, 2011). For each participant group, I included three theme-building worksheets. For students, I placed all of the codes belonging to the following categories on their respective theme-building sheets:

- student perceptions of their own writing skill deficits,

- student perceptions of positive influences on writing skill development, and

- student perceptions of negative influences on writing skill development.

For faculty, I placed all of the codes on the following worksheets:

- faculty perceptions of students' writing skill deficits,

- faculty perceptions of positive influences on writing skill development, and

- faculty perceptions of negative influences on writing skill development.

I used the theme-building worksheets first to synthesize codes and then to build themes.

With all codes for one dataset on a single worksheet, I combined codes representing a particular concept into one code, as recommended by Glesne (2011). I continued working with the codes, grouping them by similarities, cross checking them with the original transcript segments to retain the meaning, and reflecting on the overall meaning of similar codes. When I completed the data coding and no new codes emerged from the data, I began the theme-building process.

According to Merriam (2009), themes should "*be responsive to the purpose of the research, . . . exhaustive, . . . mutually exclusive, . . . sensitizing, . . .* [and] *conceptually congruent*" (pp. 185-186). Merriam emphasized that when the themes are exhaustive, all data relevant to the research questions will fit into a theme. When the themes are mutually exclusive, no data will correspond to more than one theme. Themes are sensitizing when the theme names reflect the meanings in the data as sensitively as possible. Finally, conceptually congruent themes must make sense together as a group of concepts that answer the research questions.

To begin theme building, I identified possible themes to describe main ideas emerging from the data. The theme-building process included cycling back through all of the data, notes, codes, and reflections to reconsider and revise codes and possible themes. I noticed I could combine some codes into groups, but specific codes would be lost in the process. Some themes needed specific subthemes to represent the data accurately.

Accordingly, I began considering major and minor themes as a way to represent the data accurately. I continued the theme-building process until no new themes emerged from the data codes.

I used the theme-building worksheets again after analyzing the questionnaire data. I transferred the preliminary findings from the questionnaire data analysis into the interview analysis sheets. There, I finalized themes related to each research question by combining the findings from the interviews and questionnaires.

Questionnaire Data Analysis

The questionnaire data analysis began after I loaded individual participant responses into separate worksheets in Excel. I used a working copy of the questionnaire data to divide responses into meaningful, single-idea segments. For this analysis, I followed the same procedures I used for analyzing the interview data.

When I completed the questionnaire data analysis, I had themes corresponding to the following datasets:

- faculty perceptions of students' writing skill deficits,

- student perceptions of their own writing skill deficits,

- student perceptions of positive influences on writing skill development,

- faculty perceptions of positive influences on students' writing skill development,

- student perceptions of negative influences on writing skill development, and

- faculty perceptions of negative influences on students' writing skill development.

I copied the possible themes derived from the questionnaire responses and pasted them into the corresponding interview analysis worksheets. The questionnaire responses provided a small amount of new data applicable to the research questions. All of the new data matched existing possible themes that had emerged from the interview data. The combined themes resulted in a single set of possible themes to answer the first two research questions.

Writing Assessment Data Analysis

Merriam (2009) recommended collecting and analyzing data simultaneously. The format I used to document the narrative assessment data regarding observed writing skill deficits fostered simultaneous collection and analysis naturally. By the time I completed the assessments, I had synchronized the deficit descriptions by making sure I had used identical wording to describe specific writing skill deficits observed in multiple writing samples. Because I had written the assessments in lists of succinct comments, I was able to sort the observed deficits into categories and use the descriptions as possible codes.

The next step in the analysis was to examine the commonalities among the assessments and begin theme building. I made a cumulative list of the deficit descriptions used in all the assessments. Using the list as a checklist, I created a spreadsheet to record the extent to which each type of deficit appeared in the writing samples. For each paper, I indicated whether each listed deficit appeared to be a minor problem, a substantial problem, or a severe problem for the writer. If a deficit infrequently appeared in the paper and had little effect on the paper's clarity, I considered it a minor problem. A substantial problem was a deficit that appeared more than once in the paper or caused a noticeable

problem with intelligibility. I labeled a deficit as a severe problem when it occurred multiple times throughout the paper or negatively affected the work's overall comprehensibility or academic integrity.

As I continued examining the data and considering how I had grouped the writing skill deficits, I noticed the deficits fit into the same themes that emerged from the interview and questionnaire data to describe perceived writing skill deficits. I adjusted how I had grouped the observed deficits and found that all but one of my deficit descriptions fit within the imported themes. At this point, I realized the remaining comment did not identify a writing deficit, but a knowledge deficit. Because this study was not about knowledge of course content, I removed the assessment comment and the category I had previously labeled as *Other*.

After I had categorized all of the observed writing skill deficits into themes, I began a process to identify the prevalence of specific writing skill deficits. I used formatting features available in Excel to mark two prevalence-levels of deficits: those that appeared in all of the writing samples and those in most samples. The resultant analysis sheet included a table identifying all of the observed writing skill deficits grouped into themes. Additionally, the sheet contained indicators for the most common writing skill deficits identified among the writing samples.

Evidence of Quality

Merriam (2009), Glesne (2011), and Creswell (2012) described measures a qualitative researcher could take to provide evidence of quality in his or her study. Merriam recommended that qualitative researchers should describe measures taken to

ensure credibility, consistency, and transferability of the research. Glesne (2011)

discussed credibility and trustworthiness as characteristics that some qualitative

researchers attempt to demonstrate. Creswell (2012) used the term *accuracy* to label the

type of quality in need of support in a qualitative study. In this study, I demonstrated

research quality through several means:

- clarification of researcher bias (Glesne, 2011);

- researcher's critical reflexivity (Merriam, 2009);

- audit trail (Merriam, 2009);

- member checking (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009);

- external audit (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2011);

- triangulation of data sources (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009); and

- rich, thick descriptions (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009).

Prior to commencing the research, I acknowledged a potential for my own

relationships and experiences to introduce bias into the research (see Data Collection:

Role of the Researcher). According to Glesne (2011), the clarification of researcher bias

increases the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings. I designed the other quality

procedures described in this section to ensure the credibility of this study.

Throughout the study, I kept records of my reflective thoughts and the steps I took

to conduct the study. I practiced critical reflection regarding the research procedures and

my thoughts about possible codes and themes. I made notes to track impressions to

explore further and new insights regarding the research. I also maintained an audit trail in

conjunction with the reflective notes. According to Merriam (2009), a qualitative researcher should maintain a detailed record of the data analysis process. I kept track of each step in the research process with both electronic and hand-written notes. All handwritten notes stayed in a locked case until I duplicated them into electronic format and destroyed the hard copies. I stored electronic copies of all my reflective notes and procedural steps in password-protected files on my personal computer.

Four measures to ensure the quality of the research took place after data collection. A common method for increasing the accuracy of qualitative research is member checking (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Immediately following the first preliminary analysis, I conducted member checks with study participants. All of the interviewees agreed to participate in member checks. I wrote a brief synopsis of my understanding of an interviewee's comments and e-mailed the synopsis, along with the respective interview transcript, to each participant. I asked the participant to check my interpretations of his or her comments and inform me if I needed to make corrections. Few participants made corrections to my interpretations, and most of the corrections were minor. For example, one faculty participant wanted to make sure I understood that writing skills were problematic for only some, not all, of the students. A student participant informed me that she did not have a problem with a particular writing skill. I had interpreted her comment incorrectly. As participants responded to the member check messages, I revised or expanded my interpretations accordingly.

After completing the member checks and data analysis, I requested an external auditor to begin a review my work (see Appendix I for confidentiality agreement). A

colleague, who has no involvement in this study and no relationship with ISC or any study participants, conducted the external audit to verify accuracy in the data coding, theme building, reporting, and interpretation (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2011). The external auditor was knowledgeable about qualitative case study research and thematic data analysis; he performed the following tasks:

- reviewed four of the writing samples and confirmed the appropriateness of my assessments,

- reviewed the data analysis documents, procedures, and findings and confirmed the accuracy of the findings.

With the preliminary results corroborated, I began the process of triangulating the data sources. Triangulation in qualitative research is a strategy to verify the accuracy of research findings (Creswell, 2012; Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Triangulation involves comparing several sources or types of data to confirm the research findings. I used the following steps to triangulate the data:

- I examined the commonalities and differences among the three datasets representing writing skill deficits: faculty perceptions, student perceptions, and assessment observations.

- I examined the relationships among the four datasets representing influences on writing skill development: faculty perceptions of positive influences, faculty perceptions of negative influences, student perceptions of positive influences, and student perceptions of negative influences.

When discrepancies emerged within or among datasets, I explored further to discover potential reasons for the discrepancies. In cases with no apparent reasons for the differences, I reported the discrepancies honestly while acknowledging that no reasons for the differences were evident.

Finally and in keeping with the recommendations of Glesne (2011) and Merriam (2009) and as a final step in ensuring the research quality, I used rich, thick descriptions in the narrative report of the study. These descriptions should help the reader determine whether the study or portions of the study might be transferable to a different setting.

Qualitative Results

During the design and development of this study, Dr. Pate, the school's CEO and Vice-Chancellor, stated that only some of ISC's students struggled with writing skills. He then described some of the common writing skill deficits he had observed among the students who would benefit from some writing assistance. During the study, several other faculty members echoed Pate's sentiments, stating that most of their students were good writers. Keeping the faculty comments about the overall strong writing skills of ISC students in mind, I approach the presentation of the study's findings with caution. This section includes descriptions of writing skill deficits according to faculty and student perceptions and my observations of 10 student writing samples. This results section also includes descriptions of faculty and student perceptions of positive and negative influences on students' writing skill development. The findings do not include descriptions of writing strengths at ISC, nor do they include data analysis to reflect the overall writing ability of graduate students at ISC. The purpose of the study was to

discover the most pervasive writing skill deficits and the positive and negative influences on writing skill development. The ISC administrators and I wanted to discover the needs of students who needed writing assistance along with considerations for how to offer such assistance effectively.

RQ1: Perceived Writing Skill Deficits

Interview and questionnaire data answered the first research question: What were the perceptions of ISC's students, faculty members, and administrators regarding the most pervasive writing skill deficits among ISC's adult graduate students? I interviewed eight students and six faculty members. Four students and one member of faculty completed the questionnaire. The resultant datasets included student perceptions of their own writing skill deficits and faculty perceptions of students' writing skill deficits.

Five themes described participant perceptions of the most prevalent writing skill deficits among students at ISC. The five themes were as follows:

- paragraph structure deficits, which included poor internal organization of paragraphs (e.g., introduction, body, & conclusion), the inclusion of more than one idea within a paragraph, and a lack of transitional sentences between paragraphs;

- sentence structure deficits, which included errors in grammar, punctuation, and word and phrase placement, as well as problems with wordiness (e.g., unnecessary words, overly long sentences, etc.);

- APA guideline deficits, which included citation and reference list errors, format errors (e.g., titles & headings, figures & tables, etc.), and APA special purpose identifiers (i.e., italics to emphasize special terms);

- word-processing deficits, which included typographical errors and problems using basic tools in Microsoft Office Word (e.g., page setup, font settings, numbering and bulleting lists, spacing, working with tracked changes and comments, etc.); and

- academic authorship deficits, which included poor overall organization, missing or weak components (e.g., introduction, thesis statement, body, conclusions, etc.), and inconsistent flow (e.g., lacking logical progression, undeveloped concepts), as well as weaknesses in specific scholarly writing skills, such as academic voice (e.g., formal writing style, precise language, evidence of critical thinking, etc.) and articulacy (e.g., effective paraphrasing, scholarly self-expression).

Within the five themes, many codes emerged as specific perceived writing skill deficits among ISC students.

Paragraph structure deficits. Regarding paragraph structure deficits, half of the faculty participants stated that some students tended to include more than one idea in a paragraph. Faculty participants also identified problems with an absence of transitional sentences, which was consistent with findings in a study by Lambie et al. (2008), and poor internal paragraph organization, which was consistent with research findings by Alter and Adkins (2006). Some student participants simply acknowledged they struggled

with paragraph structure, but they did not describe specific difficulties they had with

writing paragraphs (see Table 1).

Table 1

Perceived Paragraph Structure Deficits

Paragraph structure deficits	Faculty perceptions N = 7 (6 interviews + 1 questionnaire)		Student perceptions N = 12 (8 interviews + 4 questionnaires)	
	Participants who commented (*n*)	Comments (*n*)	Participants who commented (*n*)	Comments (*n*)
Total counts for paragraph structure deficits	5	13	4	5
Overall paragraph structure	4	5	4	5
Missing or poor paragraph introduction	1	1		
More than one idea per paragraph	3	4		
Missing transitions	3	3		

Sentence structure deficits. The majority of faculty participants perceived that

student works contained sentence structure deficits. More than half of the faculty

participants mentioned that students struggled with punctuation and grammar, as well as

with overall sentence structure. Overall sentence structure problems included overly long

sentences and ineffective placement of sentence components. Students mentioned only a

few problems in this category. Some students mentioned struggles with grammar and

punctuation, and one student admitted he was unsure about rules of syntax. Among the 14

interview transcripts and five questionnaire narratives, I counted 47 comments related to

student struggles with sentence structure, which indicated participants perceived sentence

structure deficits as frequently occurring challenges within the participants' experiences at ISC (see Table 2).

Table 2

Perceived Sentence Structure Deficits

Sentence structure deficits	Faculty perceptions $N = 7$ (6 interviews + 1 questionnaire)		Student perceptions $N = 12$ (8 interviews + 4 questionnaires)	
	Participants who commented (n)	Comments (n)	Participants who commented (n)	Comments (n)
Total counts for sentence structure deficits	6	30	5	17
Overall sentence structure	5	6	2	2
Misplaced words or phrases	2	2		
Wordiness	2	3		
Punctuation errors	5	8	3	6
Overall grammar problems	3	3	2	6
Agreement errors	2	2		
Tense errors	4	6	2	2
Word choice problems			1	1

APA guideline deficits. The third theme describing perceived writing skill deficits was APA guideline deficits. Over half of each participant group said students struggled with APA guidelines, especially with the specifications for citing and referencing other authors. To the contrary, one faculty participant stated that students did not have problems with citations. As the majority of participants perceived some degree of difficulty with APA citations and references among ISC students, the single discrepant case was puzzling. In a reference to students' citing other authors, Dr. Davis stated, "They are good at that." There may be a number of possible explanations for this

instructor's comment. For example, perhaps she simply meant her students were good at giving credit to other authors, but she may not have been referring to the details of APA citation and reference guidelines. Another possible explanation could have been that, as an instructor, she worked diligently to guide her own students through learning the details of using APA guidelines, and, as a result, her students were skilled with APA citations and references (see Table 3).

Table 3

Perceived APA Guideline Deficits

APA guideline deficits	Faculty perceptions $N = 7$ (6 interviews + 1 questionnaire)		Student perceptions $N = 12$ (8 interviews + 4 questionnaires)	
	Participants who commented (n)	Comments (n)	Participants who commented (n)	Comments (n)
Total counts for APA guideline deficits	4	12	8	16
Citation & reference errors overall	4	6	7	11
APA special purpose identifier errors	1	3	1	1
Figures & tables errors	1	2	1	2
Title and heading format errors	1	1	2	2

Regarding other APA guidelines, only a few faculty and student participants mentioned perceived deficits. These perceived APA guideline deficits included specific APA special purpose identifiers (e.g., using italics to identify special terms), rules for inserting and labeling figures and tables, and precise guidelines for formatting titles and headings (see Table 3).

Word-processing deficits. Word-processing deficits emerged as a fourth theme or deficit category. Over half of the faculty participants and less than half of the student participants mentioned word processing as problematic (see Table 4). Some examples of perceived word-processing skill deficits included the following:

- Dr. Elliot said, "I can tell when they haven't spent time at least using a basic spell checker or giving it a second read because there are silly typographical errors."

- When asked to describe the most problematic writing skill deficit among ISC students, Dr. Clark said, "I would say word processing because of my background. So, I see these things. They actually jump out at me. The typing skills, the document formatting."

Table 4

Perceived Word-Processing Deficits

Word-Processing deficits	Faculty perceptions N = 7 (6 interviews + 1 questionnaire)		Student perceptions N = 12 (8 interviews + 4 questionnaires)	
	Participants who commented (*n*)	Comments (*n*)	Participants who commented (*n*)	Comments (*n*)
Total counts for word-processing deficits	4	7	4	11
Overall word-processing errors	2	2	2	5
Page set up errors	1	1	2	4
Typographical errors	4	4		
Track Changes problems			2	2

- Carol said she had only minor struggles with word processing; for example, she said, "the indentations would be when you move a little bit off [the margin], and, so, I'm not so good at that."

Academic authorship deficits. The final theme to describe perceived writing skill deficits among the adult graduate students was academic authorship deficits. These deficits did not fit into any category of writing mechanics or APA guidelines. Instead, these deficits had to do with the writer's ability to do the following:

- write coherently about a topic,

- provide evidence that he or she understood the subject matter,

- utilize precise language to communicate with clarity, and

- use logical progression to begin, develop, and complete a thesis.

Participant perceptions regarding academic authorship deficits emerged naturally from the data even though no questionnaire item or interview question directly addressed these skills. Most participants in both groups identified some aspect of academic authorship as problematic (see Table 5). A majority of faculty participants, but only one student participant, expressed concern about poor organization in student papers. Additionally, several participant comments implicated a lack of cohesiveness in student writing. The perceived cohesiveness problems included the following:

- poor introductions,

- unclear or absent thesis statements,

- inadequate concept development,

- unexplained content,

- irrelevant content,

- unsupported claims,

- insufficient evidence of critical thinking,

Table 5

Perceived Academic Authorship Deficits

Academic authorship deficits	Faculty perceptions N = 7 (6 interviews + 1 questionnaire)		Student perceptions N = 12 (8 interviews + 4 questionnaires)	
	Participants who commented (*n*)	Comments (*n*)	Participants who commented (*n*)	Comments (*n*)
Total counts for academic authorship deficits	6	34	10	34
Poor organization	6	4	1	2
Poor introduction	1	1		
Missing or poor thesis statement	1	1		
Poor concept development	2	3	1	2
Unexplained content			1	2
Content relevance			1	1
Lacking support	1	2		
Lacking evidence of critical thinking	2	3		
Weak summaries & conclusion	2	2	2	3
Formal style problems	1	1	2	6
Self-expression problems	1	1	2	2
Paraphrasing problems	1	1	4	8
Word choice problems	3	7	1	2
Problems with passive voice	2	2	2	2
First, second, third person errors	1	1		
Order of citations	1	2		
Overwriting	2	3	2	4

- weak summaries or conclusions,

- little content expressing the author's understanding of a topic, and

- overly long papers with little information.

In addition to problems affecting overall cohesiveness, participants were concerned about other academic authorship deficits.

Formal writing style seemed problematic to some participants. Emma, a secondary school teacher, described her struggle with scholarly writing:

> Sometimes, the style of writing – I mean academic writing is different from narrative. I'm accustomed [to] what is narrative. That is what I teach. I've been teaching it for so long. . . . That should contrast . . . to academic writing. Sometimes I catch, when I'm doing an assignment, it's academic writing, and then I'll see—this sounds narrative. I need to change it. So, sometimes, I have a problem with my style of writing, and I have to keep reviewing.

Dr. Fisher also mentioned that some students had problems understanding the difference between informal and formal writing. While Dr. Fisher explained students' formal writing difficulties, he described some specific problems with students' choices of words.

Dr. Fisher and other participants perceived that students had several types of word choice problems. Some students used cultural terminology in their writing, which is not acceptable in scholarly writing (APA, 2010, p. 68). One particular type of word choice problem occurred both within and without culturally influenced language: a student may have intended a word to mean one thing when in fact the word meant something entirely

different. At other times, students used ineffective or vague terms that could confuse readers.

Another academic authorship problem that several participants mentioned was difficulty with paraphrasing the works of other authors. Some students commented that they did not like to paraphrase an author's words, especially when they believed the author's words were flawless. Ann explained that she struggled with paraphrasing when she began her graduate studies several terms earlier. She closed her comments by saying, "[Paraphrasing] is still challenging, because the author states the intent or the ideas so perfectly!" Carol also mentioned challenges with paraphrasing. She labored over decisions between paraphrasing and using direct quotes. Debra, who was nearing the end of her program, had frequently used direct quotes in her writing. She disagreed with the frequent recommendations from her instructors to paraphrase other works. She wanted to cite the exact words of other authors and give them full credit for their words. If needed, she would discuss the quote further to explain its relevance to her topic.

Participant perceptions of writing skill deficits emerged five descriptive themes: paragraph structure deficits, sentence structure deficits, APA guideline deficits, word-processing deficits, and academic authorship deficits. Within the five themes, participants described many specific deficits with some of the deficits seeming more prevalent than others did. Findings regarding perceived influences on writing skill development and observed writing skill deficits provided further understanding of graduate student writing skills at ISC.

RQ2: Perceived Influences on Writing Skills Development

Interview and questionnaire data answered the second research question: What were the perceptions of ISC's students, faculty members, and administrators regarding positive and negative influences on student writing skill development? Students and faculty discussed their perceptions of what had helped or could help students develop their scholarly writing skills and what had hindered their writing skill development.

I interviewed eight students and six faculty-administrative personnel. Four students completed the questionnaire items about the positive and negative influences on writing skill development. I did not receive any faculty responses to this portion of the questionnaire. By combining interview and questionnaire responses, I generated four datasets to answer the research question regarding perceived influences on writing skill development: faculty perceptions of positive influences, faculty perceptions of negative influences, student perceptions of positive influences, and student perceptions of negative influences.

Preliminary findings emerged as three themes: institutional influences, faculty influences, and student influences on writing skill development. Participants from each group identified both positive and negative influences on writing skill development within each theme. Furthermore, participants' perceptions of positive influences fell within three categories: established, recommended, and both established (practiced) by some and recommended for all.

Institutional influences on writing skill development. Institutional influences on writing skill development were influences for which the institution was or would be

responsible. Faculty and student participants perceived both positive and negative

institutional influences on writing skill development (see Table 6). Established positive

influences on writing skill development included two of ISC's courses and the

institution's policies that allowed flexible submission dates. Beyond these beneficial

institutional provisions, study participants provided many recommendations that would

potentially increase ISC's positive influence on writing skill development.

Table 6

Perceived Institutional Influences on Writing Skills Development

Institutional influences	Faculty participants $N = 6$ (6 interviews)				Student participants $N = 12$ (8 interviews + 4 questionnaires)			
	Positive influences		Negative influences		Positive influences		Negative influences	
	Participants (n)	Comments (n)	Participants (n)	Comments (n)	Participants (n)	Comments (n)	Participants (n)	Comments (n)
Total counts	4	13	3	7	7	12	4	6
Instructions			2	2				
Policies	1	4	1	2	1	1	3	3
Relationships							1	2
Tools	2	6	2	3	6	8		
Training	2	3			3	3	1	1
Writing instructor	2	5			9	50	1	3

Several participants suggested that ISC should develop and distribute a writing manual or handbook that would explain the writing expectations that were specific to ISC. One faculty participant, Dr. Clark, who had written subject-specific educational handbooks, discussed the idea of a writing manual by specifying some of the needed content: specific instructions for different types of assignments and document formatting expectations. In addition to requesting a writing manual, participants recommended that ISC should offer writing instruction to all students beginning with the first term and continuing throughout the program.

Fifty interview and questionnaire comments from students included specific recommendations for offering writing instruction. The students described methods, resources, and content that they thought would help them develop their writing skills. Suggested methods included individual, small group, and classroom instruction based on the instructional needs of the students. Students recommended one-on-one feedback regarding writing skills as well as an available writing specialist who could provide assistance between the students' residencies.

Students wanted writing instructions in print. Debra, who worked part time for two educational organizations and volunteered some of her time with a third organization, explained the need for written guidelines: "The mind of the adult is bombarded by things that are meaningful. . . . You cannot depend on the memory of the adult." Students recommended handouts, worksheets, online resources, and examples of good writing as aids to help them with specific writing skills.

Regarding content for future writing assistance, students provided several recommendations:

- skill-specific refreshers on basic writing topics,

- explanations for writing requirements (e.g., why paraphrase rather than quote),

- tutorials on how to use word-processing tools,

- detailed instruction on APA citations and references, and

- assistance with individual writing needs.

When asked about their perceptions of negative influences on writing skill development, faculty and student participants identified some institutional-level quandaries they believed to be problematic. Participants perceived that different instructors had different expectations for writing, and more, faculty members disagreed over writing standards. Specifically, course instructors disagreed regarding when students must give credit to other authors. Dr. Clark described the problem:

We need to come together and have a standard as to what we are doing, what we expect. And do it. . . . [The students] get trained . . . in the first semester that an essay will not contain a bibliography, so, therefore, they write without . . . the referencing.

Bob described the problem from a student's perspective: "you find a conflict and contradiction between – one teacher is telling you this and the other one is telling you this and another one is telling you this."

Dr. Elliot described another institutional level problem that seemed to confuse students. She described some course assignments that were mandatory components of most ISC courses. The assignments included several questions about course content; students would respond with essay-type answers and submit the assignments 30 days after completing the core residency. Students were to submit expanded versions of their answers 120 days after the residency. Dr. Elliot explained further:

> I really think there's room for refining those questions, especially the expanded answers. Some of them really don't lend themselves to expanded answers and so … I would give them [my students] a specific direction in which I wanted them to expand.

Because course instructors were not responsible for developing student assignments, Dr. Elliot recommended ISC course developers review duplicate assignments to ensure they effectively cultivate the course objectives.

Faculty influences on writing skill development. Faculty influences on writing skill development were influences for which course instructors were or would be responsible. Participants in both groups talked about faculty feedback on assignments as a positive influence on writing skill development (see Table 7). In 42 comments, students mentioned the positive influence of instructor feedback on assignments, but they mentioned potentially negative influences of instructor feedback in only four comments.

Participants perceived instructor feedback on assignments as most beneficial when it was

- clear,

- encouraging,

- explanatory,

- private,

- specific, and

- timely (i.e., within 2 weeks).

Table 7

Perceived Faculty Influences on Writing Skills Development

| Faculty influences | Faculty participants N = 6 (6 interviews) | | | | Student participants N = 12 (8 interviews + 4 questionnaires) | | | |
| | Positive influences | | Negative influences | | Positive influences | | Negative influences | |
	Participants (*n*)	Comments (*n*)	Participants (*n*)	Comments (*n*)	Participants (*n*)	Comments (*n*)	Participants (*n*)	Comments (*n*)
Total counts	5	20	3	3	12	56	5	22
Feedback	2	7	1	1	12	42	3	4
Instructions	2	3	1	1	2	4	3	11
Methods	3	4	1	1	4	8	4	6
Relationships	1	3			1	2		
Discrepancy							1	1

In addition to providing feedback on assignments, instructors should follow up to observe

improvement. Bob said, "I expect him, now, in the subsequent papers, to check and see if

. . . I improve it. So, that I expect." Bob acknowledged that instructors have many papers to review, but he commented that students need responsive feedback when they are working on specific writing skills.

Several participants mentioned positive influences on writing skill development that were established practices of some instructors, and they recommended that other instructors could try similar tactics to help students with writing:

- Dr. Elliot said she used the track changes tool in Microsoft Word to show students how to improve their writing. She then sent the paper with changes and comments to the student via e-mail. This tactic provided her a better opportunity to provide detailed feedback than she could have provided through ISC's online education platform.

- Dr. Clark allowed students to submit a draft of their work for review prior to submitting it for a grade. Most students did not take advantage of the offer to review their work ahead of time, but the students who did seek pre-submission feedback generally improved their writing skills more quickly than students who did not ask for the early review.

- Grace commented that instructors who were motivating served as positive influences on writing skill development. She described how she had felt overwhelmed with the amount of writing she was facing after completing her campus residency, but one instructor changed her perspective. Grace exclaimed, "I'm feeling so motivated after [Dr. Fisher's class]! I feel I can conquer! Yes!"

Students might benefit if more instructors provide detailed feedback using track changes and comments, offer to review drafts of student assignments prior to the final submission, and frequently speak words of encouragement to students.

Teaching methods suited for adults could positively influence the writing skill development of the students at ISC. Debra mentioned that she would benefit from explanations for suggested revisions to her writing. She did not understand some of the recommendations she had received from instructors. According to Knowles et al. (2011), adult learners need to understand why they need to know something before they will apply effort to learning.

Debra also mentioned the importance of instructors integrating methods to meet the needs of students with a variety of learning styles. Some students struggled to focus their attention on learning when instructors expected them to sit silently and listen to long lectures that were unaccompanied by visual aids, interactive tasks, or note-taking. Debra's emphasis on learning styles was consistent with the findings of Dunn et al. (2009) and Murray (2011).

Another finding regarding perceptions of faculty influences on writing skill development was evident: Instructions for writing assignments must be clear in order to influence students' writing skill development positively. Faculty and student participants perceived that sometimes students were unsure about how to complete assignments to their instructors' satisfaction. Two factors seemed to affect assignment clarity: written instructions and instructors' explanations of those instructions. Students wanted to learn

and write successfully but sometimes struggled to understand exactly how and what they should write.

Student influences on writing skill development. Student influences on writing skill development were influences for which students were or would be responsible. The responsibility for student influences did not belong to the institution or its faculty, although ISC and the instructors might provide tools or encouragement to students. The students were responsible for initiating and following through with these self-learning tasks.

About half of the participant comments regarding both positive and negative student influences on writing skill development pointed toward the following recommendations to students:

- collaborate with others to learn writing skills,

- practice self-discipline (e.g., manage time wisely, work on assignments right away, proofread assignments before submitting them, etc.), and

- use various methods to develop writing skills (e.g., apply instructor feedback to next assignments, read academic works, use the Internet to learn writing skills, etc.).

Participants in both groups also perceived that each student's self-confidence regarding writing could positively or negatively influence his or her writing skill development. Students lacking in self-confidence might have to apply extra effort to push through their fears to develop their skills (see Table 8).

Table 8

Perceived Student Influences on Writing Skills Development

Student influences	Faculty participants N = 6 (6 interviews)				Student participants N = 12 (8 interviews + 4 questionnaires)			
	Positive influences		Negative influences		Positive influences		Negative influences	
	Participants (n)	Comments (n)	Participants (n)	Comments (n)	Participants (n)	Comments (n)	Participants (n)	Comments (n)
Total counts	5	14	5	26	11	52	10	23
Collaborate	1	1			6	8		
Discipline	3	5	5	14	6	24	8	15
Methods	3	7	3	7	8	19		
Relationships			1	1				
Requirements					2	2		
Self-concept			1	4			2	3
Skill level							3	4
Tools	1	1						
Discrepancy							1	1

Among all the participants' comments about negative influences on writing skill development, one participant's perceptions stood alone as an apparent discrepancy in the data. When I asked Ann if anything had hindered her in developing her scholarly writing skills, she responded, "No, because of my organization and discipline, I get things done early. So, the last two or three days of an assignment, I'm not doing the research. I'm

actually proofreading." Perhaps her response was a confirmation of other responses rather than a discrepancy to them. Ann did not allow the hindrances mentioned by other participants to keep her from developing her writing skills.

Analysis of participant perceptions of positive and negative influences on students' writing skill development emerged three descriptive themes: institutional influences, faculty influences, and student influences on writing skill development. The majority of participants perceived that much of the responsibility for developing writing skills belonged to the individual students, but faculty members and the institution played important roles for student writers. Participant perceptions regarding influences on writing skill development, along with perceptions and observations of writing skill deficits, helped to inform the recommendations offered to ISC.

RQ3: Observed Writing Skill Deficits

Writing assessments yielded data to answer the third research question: What writing skill deficits were observed in student documents written by ISC's adult graduate students? I assessed 10 archived student assignments and developed narrative descriptions of the writing skill deficits I observed in the documents. Findings regarding observed writing skill deficits in student writings emerged five themes:

- paragraph structure deficits,

- sentence structure deficits,

- APA guideline deficits,

- word-processing deficits, and

- academic authorship deficits.

The themes were identical to those that emerged as descriptors of participant perceptions of writing skill deficits. Similar to the findings regarding perceived deficits, each theme for the observed deficits encompassed several codes describing specific writing skill deficits observed in the sample of papers. However, there were some code differences between the perceived and observed deficits.

Paragraph structure deficits. Regarding paragraph structure deficits, my observations were consistent with the participant perceptions: Some students struggled with paragraph structure. I observed that eight of 10 papers were missing transitional sentences between paragraphs, and the same eight papers included paragraphs containing

Table 10

Perceived and Observed Paragraph Structure Deficits

Paragraph structure deficits	Faculty perceptions $N = 7$ (6 interviews + 1 questionnaire)		Student perceptions $N = 12$ (8 interviews + 4 questionnaires)		Papers with observed deficits	
	Participants who commented (n)	Comments (n)	Participants who commented (n)	Comments (n)	Non-essay assignments $N = 5$ (n)	Essay assignments $N = 5$ (n)
Overall counts for paragraph structure deficits	5	13	4	5	4	5
Overall paragraph structure	4	5	4	5		
Missing or poor paragraph introduction	1	1				3
More than one idea per paragraph	3	4			3	5
Single-sentence paragraph					2	
Missing transitions	3	3			3	5

more than one idea. Among the five essay assignments, three contained paragraph introduction problems: two essays contained paragraph introductory statements that were unrelated to the paragraph content. One essay contained confusing paragraph introductions. Additionally, two papers included single-sentence paragraphs (see Table 10).

Sentence structure deficits. Sentence structure deficits were among the most prevalent writing skill deficits that I observed in the writing samples. All of the writing samples included the following types of errors:

- punctuation errors,

- agreement errors, and

- word choice problems.

Additionally, nine of the 10 papers included the following sentence structure errors:

- misplaced words or phrases (e.g., misplaced modifiers, split infinitives),

- wordiness (e.g., unnecessary modifiers, overly long sentences),

- nonparallel construction (e.g., mismatched structure in a series or a compound sentence), and

- tense errors.

These findings were consistent with some participant perceptions of students' writing skill deficits, but I observed more sentence structure deficits than I expected based on participant comments (see Table 11).

Table 11

Perceived and Observed Sentence Structure Deficits

Sentence structure deficits	Faculty perceptions N = 7 (6 interviews + 1 questionnaire)		Student perceptions N = 12 (8 interviews + 4 questionnaires)		Papers with observed deficits	
	Participants who commented (n)	Comments (n)	Participants who commented (n)	Comments (n)	Non-essay assignments N = 5 (n)	Essay assignments N = 5 (n)
Total counts for sentence structure deficits	6	30	5	17	5	5
Overall sentence structure	5	6	2	2		
Misplaced words or phrases	2	2			4	5
Wordiness	2	3			4	5
Punctuation errors	5	8	3	6	5	5
Improper list set up					1	1
Overall grammar problems	3	3	2	6		
Nonparallel construction					4	5
Unrelated components in a compound sentence					1	1
Incomplete sentences					1	1
Agreement errors	2	2			5	5
Tense errors	4	6	2	2	5	4
Word choice problems			1	1	5	5

The most common punctuation errors involved missing commas before conjunctions in series of three or more items, missing commas in compound sentences, and missing commas to set off word and phrase modifiers. The papers contained several other types of punctuation problems that I have not listed.

Agreement errors included disagreement between singular and plural word forms within a sentence and anthropomorphisms (i.e., attributing human action to nonhuman organisms or inanimate objects). An anthropomorphism that appeared in one essay was

"This paper seeks to explore self-concept." A paper is not capable of seeking anything. Instead, the author could have written a statement explaining the *topic* of the paper.

Word choice problems that I categorized as sentence structure deficits included

- word form errors (e.g., *would* instead of *will*, *in emancipating* instead of *to emancipate*),

- incorrect prepositions (e.g., *on* instead of *for*, *in* instead of *on*),

- relative pronoun errors (e.g., *which* and *that*),

- unclear pronouns, and

- errors in using definite articles (i.e., *the*) where indefinite articles (i.e., *a* or *an*) or no articles were needed.

Several other types of Sentence Structure errors occurred in the sample of papers, although less frequently (see Table 11).

APA guideline deficits. The third theme to emerge from the data was APA guideline deficits. My observations were consistent with participants' perceptions that some students were not skilled at using APA guidelines consistently. While assessing the writing samples, I found that nine of the 10 papers contained APA guideline errors (see Table 12).

Three of five non-essay assignments and three and five essays were missing all or some in-text citations. Among the in-text citations that students did include in their papers, there were multiple errors, but the errors differed from one paper to the next. Additionally, several papers contained declarative statements that the student authors did not cite. For example, an essay about the role of a family life educator contained this

declarative statement: "The educator must see all individuals as people who have had their lives catapulted out of sensibility by negative experiences." There was no citation indicating the source of the inflexible mandate. Another essay, written about human self-concept contained this declarative statement: "Eastern philosophy concentrated on 'selflessness' as the person goes into the self until the consciousness of self leaves." Again, the student author did not cite the source of the information.

Table 12

Perceived and Observed APA Guideline Deficits

APA guideline deficits	Faculty perceptions $N = 7$ (6 interviews + 1 questionnaire)		Student perceptions $N = 12$ (8 interviews + 4 questionnaires)		Papers with observed deficits	
	Participants who commented (n)	Comments (n)	Participants who commented (n)	Comments (n)	Non-essay assignments $N = 5$ (n)	Essay assignments $N = 5$ (n)
Total counts for APA guideline deficits	4	12	8	16	4	5
Citation & reference errors overall	4	6	7	11		
Biblical citation errors					1	1
In-text citation errors					4	5
Reference list errors					4	5
APA special purpose identifier errors	1	3	1	1	2	4
Figures & tables errors	1	2	1	2	1	
Title and heading format errors	1	1	2	2	2	5
Acronym & abbreviation errors					2	1
Paragraph alignment errors					1	1
Block quote format errors						1

Reference list errors also varied widely among the papers. An error that occurred in several papers was the inclusion of a source in a reference list without an in-text citation for the source. Additionally, some papers did not include references to accompany in-text citations; some did not include any references. Among the existing reference lists, specific errors varied widely (see Table 12).

APA guideline deficits also included errors regarding APA presentation specifications. The presentation errors that I observed in the student papers included the following:

- incorrect presentation of acronyms or abbreviations,

- incorrect formatting (e.g., paragraph alignment, titles, headings, block quotations, figures), and

- presentation errors regarding APA special purpose identifiers (e.g., italics to introduce special terms, limitations for using quotation marks, specifications for using parentheses).

Word-processing deficits. Although word-processing deficits emerged as the fourth theme describing some of the observed writing skill deficits in student papers, the papers were neat in appearance. Several participants perceived that some students had underdeveloped word-processing skills. I found that all of the sample papers included word-processing deficits, although some papers had few (see Table 13).

Table 13

Perceived and Observed Word-Processing Deficits

Word-Processing deficits	Faculty perceptions N = 7 (6 interviews + 1 questionnaire)		Student perceptions N = 12 (8 interviews + 4 questionnaires)		Papers with observed deficits	
	Participants who commented (*n*)	Comments (*n*)	Participants who commented (*n*)	Comments (*n*)	Non-essay assignments N = 5 (*n*)	Essay assignments N = 5 (*n*)
Total counts for word-processing deficits	4	7	4	11	5	5
Overall word-processing errors	2	2	2	5		
Page set up errors	1	1	2	4	5	5
Typographical errors	4	4			4	3
Track Changes problems			2	2		
Capitalization					2	4

Most of the word-processing problems had to do with formatting page layouts and paragraphs. For example, seven of the 10 papers included extra space between paragraphs rather than continuing with evenly double-spaced typing from beginning to end of the document. A second formatting problem, indentation errors, occurred in two of five non-essay papers and three of five essays.

Additionally, typographical and capitalization errors occurred in several papers. I do not know if the capitalization errors resulted from typing errors or students misunderstanding capitalization rules.

Academic authorship deficits. The final theme to emerge as a description of observed writing skill deficits in the sample of papers was academic authorship deficits. These skills included overall construction and content of a paper as well as formal writing

skills that were appropriate for scholarly writing (e.g., supporting claims with citations or examples, fully developing concepts with clarity, etc.). Consistent with participants' perceptions that some students struggled with academic authorship, I found that some of the most problematic writing skill deficits observed in the papers involved academic authorship skills (see Table 14).

Among the 10 papers that I reviewed, I found the following:

- All 10 of the sample papers included unexplained content. For example, one paper included the phrase *these debilitating factors*, but the student author did not identify or describe any debilitating factors before or after writing the phrase. Other words and phrases that students did not explain included *this process*, *the execution*, *methods*, *aspects*, *the assumption*, *the course*, and *phases*. Additionally, each of two essays contained a new, unexplained concept in the last sentence of the paper.

- All 10 of the sample papers included word choice problems. Students sometimes used words to mean something that the words did not mean. Some examples include the use of *expected* instead of *allowed*, *carrying* instead of *depicting*, *ascend* instead of *progress*, *clinical* instead of *educational*, *elevate* instead of *accelerate*, and *found* instead of *believe*.

- Several students used words in ways that left the meaning vague. Some examples included the following phrases that were unaccompanied by explanations: *ethical pluralism*, *the set environment*, *the psychic life*, *the topic*, and *attitude values*.

Table 14

Perceived and Observed Academic Authorship Deficits

Academic authorship deficits	Faculty perceptions N = 7 (6 interviews + 1 questionnaire)		Student perceptions N = 12 (8 interviews + 4 questionnaires)		Papers with observed deficits	
	Participants who commented (n)	Comments (n)	Participants who commented (n)	Comments (n)	Non-essay assignments N = 5 (n)	Essay assignments N = 5 (n)
Total counts for academic authorship deficits	6	34	10	34	5	5
Poor organization	6	4	1	2		3
Poor introduction	1	1				4
Missing or poor thesis statement	1	1				4
Poor concept development	2	3	1	2		
Unexplained content			1	2	5	5
Content relevance			1	1		
Lacking support	1	2				4
Lacking evidence of critical thinking	2	3				1
Faulty logic					1	1
Weak summaries & conclusion	2	2	2	3		5
Formal style problems	1	1	2	6		
Self-expression problems	1	1	2	2		
Paraphrasing problems	1	1	4	8		
Word choice problems	3	7	1	2	5	5
Problems with passive voice	2	2	2	2	2	5
First, second, third person errors	1	1			1	3
Order of citations	1	2				
Overwriting	2	3	2	4		
Repetitiveness						3
Use of contractions					2	1

- Seven of 10 student papers included excessive use of passive voice.

- Three of five essays contained problems with first, second, and third person writing.

- Three of five essays were poorly organized.

- Four of five essays had poor introductions.

- Four of five essays had missing or poor thesis statements.

- Four of five essays lacked support for claims.

- All five essays contained weak summaries or conclusions.

Other academic authorship deficits infrequently appeared in the sample of papers (see Table 14).

Interpretations of Findings

Writing skill deficits. Research Questions 1 and 3 regarded perceived and observed writing skill deficits in student assignments at ISC. My interpretations of the findings regarding the five themes describing writing skill deficits are as follows:

- Paragraph structure deficits: Consistent with the findings of Alter and Adkins (2006) and Lambie et al. (2008), findings in this study indicated that some ISC student papers contained paragraph structure deficits. Students in this study needed to limit each paragraph to a single idea and include transitional sentences to maintain flow from one paragraph to another. Written guidelines for paragraph development, along with face-to-face presentations of brief tutorials might help students improve their paragraph structure skills.

- Sentence structure deficits: Forty-seven participant comments regarded perceived sentence structure problems, and I observed sentence structure errors in all of the papers I reviewed. These findings were consistent with a report by Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) in which the authors identified sentence structure errors among the most common writing problems seen by academic editors. Students at ISC would likely benefit from tutorials to address sentence structure issues such as the following: simple sentence components, agreement among sentence components, placement of modifying words and phrases, internal punctuation, and parallel construction, among others.

- APA guideline deficits: Consistent with findings from several studies (Howard et al., 2010; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Lambie et al., 2008), I observed APA guideline errors in most of the papers I reviewed. The majority of the APA guideline errors had to do with citations and references. One instructor told me that ISC students learned about APA citations and references during the first week of their first term. Some students explained that, during the same week, they received contradictory instructions regarding basic writing expectations, especially about citing and referencing other authors. Some study participants believed the contradictory instructions confused students and hindered their progress in developing scholarly writing skills. ISC students would benefit from a written policy explaining institutional expectations regarding citations, references, and plagiarism. The policy should

be included in the student handbook or school catalog and in a writing manual
for ISC.

Regarding other APA guidelines, one instructor advised that ISC
instructors were not strict about APA formatting. As a result, students were
unprepared for completing their final capstone projects. Each of the master's
students at ISC had to complete a capstone project before receiving a degree.
One requirement in the capstone projects was consistent use of APA
formatting throughout the project report. ISC students would benefit from
continual and consistent writing instruction to build their skills in using APA
guidelines throughout their programs of study.

- Word-processing deficits: Both faculty and student participants perceived that
  word-processing skills were problematic for some students. Correspondingly,
  I observed errors related to word-processing in all 10 of the papers I reviewed.
  Most of the errors had to do with page set up or simple typographical errors.
  Mueller et al. (2009) and Whitley and Grous (2009) found that adult students
  struggled with learning how to use technology effectively. Mueller et al.
  found that learning computer skills and formal writing skills at the same time
  overwhelmed adult students. Whitley and Grous found that adult students did
  not learn and use new skills as technology was improved. Perhaps ISC
  students would benefit from sequential instructions regarding efficient and
  effective word-processing tools. Written instructions and individual or small

group tutorials could be effective methods for instructional delivery regarding word-processing tools.

- Academic authorship deficits: Participant perceptions regarding academic authorship deficits were similar to my descriptions of observed deficits in the student papers. Students struggled with organization, continuity, and cohesiveness in their written works as well as other academic authorship deficits. The most prevalent academic authorship deficits I observed were unexplained content, a lack of support for statements, and word choice problems.

Regarding unexplained content and lack of support for statements, some students wrote statements in their papers that seemed disconnected from surrounding statements. ISC students would benefit from instructional sessions addressing the importance of concept development, connectivity among statements, and support for stated claims.

Concerning word choice problems, Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) found that the most common error in student papers was using a wrong word. Nevertheless, I was surprised at the abundance of misused words in the sample of students' papers that I reviewed. While reviewing the student papers for this study, I frequently used a dictionary to ensure that I understood exactly what the writers were trying to communicate. Rather than discovering the students' intended meaning, I found that many words had no definitions suitable for the contexts in which they were used. Additionally, I found

several statements containing words with vague meanings. ISC students would benefit from word choice tutorials that include examples of words with vague or wrong meanings and words that communicate with clarity.

Influences on writing skill development. Research Question 2 addressed participants' perceptions of positive and negative influences on writing skill development. Three themes describe the perceived influences: institutional influences, faculty influences, and student influences on writing skill development. In this section, I explain my interpretations of the findings regarding participant perceptions of influences on writing skill development. Additionally, I explain my interpretations regarding missing data that I expected to find.

I examined the findings regarding participants' perceptions of institutional influences on writing skill development. I triangulated these findings with my field observations and the professional literature. Subsequently, I drew the following conclusions:

- Participants perceived that the writing training offered at ISC positively influenced students' writing skill development, but that additional writing training would be beneficial. ISC could benefit students by integrating writing instruction throughout each of the master's programs.

- At the time of this study, administrators and faculty members disagreed about some of the basic requirements in scholarly writing. One administrator, who also taught a first-term writing course, wanted his students to focus their writing on personal understanding of a topic. He wanted the students to write

personal narratives, a type of essay that required little or no research-based support. Such essays, therefore, would require few, if any, cited resources. Personal narrative essays were prevalent in higher education in the 1980s, but by the early 2000s, the trends had changed (Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008). During the 21st century, including at the time of this study, most institutions required research-based and argumentative essays including cited literature to support the authors' positions. Students at ISC would benefit from writing instruction that clarifies the difference between personal narrative essays and research-based essays. Additionally, students would benefit from guidance regarding when they should write each type of essay.

- Consistent with findings in a study by Tran (2010), students at ISC did not always understand instructors' expectations regarding assignments. ISC students would benefit from writing assignment clarification. Additionally, students would benefit from clearly stated policies regarding citations and references, plagiarism, and requirements for following APA guidelines.

- Several participants suggested that a writing manual specific to ISC would help students develop their writing skills.

- Participants perceived that it would be helpful for ISC to have a faculty member devoted to writing instruction. Students' writing skills would improve if ISC assigned one or more writing specialists to work with administrators, faculty members, and students on writing skill development.

- ISC faculty members might benefit from professional development seminars that clarify ISC's policies for citations and references and how an instructor should address these policies with individual students.

- Few participants mentioned the APA manual as a positive influence on writing skill development. Writing skills development among ISC students would improve if every faculty member and student owned and used a copy of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2010).

Participant perceptions of faculty influences on writing skill development, along with findings in the professional literature, led me to the following interpretations:

- Faculty and student participants agreed that instructor feedback on assignments served as one of the most positive influences on student writing skill development at ISC. ISC students expected constructive feedback on their assignments. ISC instructors should continue to provide detailed, constructive feedback on student assignments, which is consistent with the recommendations of Can & Walker (2011).

- Many ISC students applied their instructors' feedback recommendations in later assignments. Because students submit assignments on a monthly basis, it is important for ISC instructors to grade assignments and supply feedback within two weeks of submission.

- Adult students have a variety of learning styles (Dunn et al., 2009; Murray, 2011) and differing learning needs. Some methods of instruction are more or

less effective than other methods. Instructors should use instructional methods that accommodate a variety of learning styles.

- As described among the institutional influences on writing skill development, ISC students would benefit from clarification regarding assignment expectations. According to Wlodowski (as cited in Knowles et al., 2011, p. 199), an important characteristic of a facilitator of self-directed learning is clarity. ISC facilitators should provide clear instructions regarding assignments and expectations.

My interpretations of the findings regarding participant perceptions of student influences on writing skill development are as follows:

- Consistent with reports by several authors (Ewing et al., 2012; Knowles et al., 2011; Mueller et al., 2009; Whitley & Grous, 2009), the most commonly perceived negative influence on students' writing skill development was time constraints. Adult students have many demands for their time, such as work, family, and school. Several of the students at ISC also had time-consuming responsibilities with their churches. ISC students would benefit from informal discussions to share time management ideas and strategies related specifically to writing development.

- Participants perceived that, in addition to time management skills, self-discipline regarding study habits and consistent avoidance of procrastination were keys to developing scholarly writing skills. ISC personnel can encourage

students to develop the personal discipline required to succeed in their graduate work.

- Findings in this study indicated that ISC's students generally accepted a majority of the responsibility for their academic success. According to Knowles (Knowles et al., 2011), an adult's self-concept develops with a sense of responsibility for his or her own decisions, and adults in this study seemed to view themselves as responsible for their own learning.

The Project

The study findings suggested a need for clarification of writing expectations at ISC and continuous support for students' writing skill development. In consideration of the study findings and recommendations found in the literature, I developed a project, which I named the *Writing Suite*, to address the writing development needs at ISC (see Appendix A). The Writing Suite is an integrated, ongoing, writing instruction and assistance curriculum designed to serve all students throughout their active affiliation with ISC.

The Writing Suite curriculum includes the following:

- a student writing guide for writing at ISC,
- a strategy for conducting initial and recurrent, qualitative, diagnostic assessments of students' writing skills,
- academic writing instructional sessions available to students during their core residencies,
- extensive writing practice through disciplinary course assignments,

- individualized writing assistance, and

- resources for self-directed writing development.

Appendix A contains the proposal for implementing the Writing Suite at ISC.

Conclusion

This study addressed a local need among adult students at a West Indies graduate school: Some students were nearing the end of their respective master's programs without the necessary scholarly writing skills to complete their capstone projects. I designed the study to explore the students' writing skill deficits as well as potential influences on writing skill development at ISC. This qualitative case study included an exploration of faculty and student perceptions of writing skill deficits among adult graduate students at ISC. The study also included an exploration of participant perceptions of positive and negative influences on writing skill development at ISC. Interview and open-ended questionnaire data yielded descriptions of the participants' perceptions. To describe student writing skill deficits further, I conducted narrative assessments of student writing skills in a sample of ten archived student assignments.

Findings indicated that five themes were appropriate to describe both perceived and observed writing skill deficits. The five themes were paragraph structure deficits, sentence structure deficits, word-processing deficits, APA guideline deficits, and academic authorship deficits. Participant perceptions of influences on writing skill development fit into three themes: institutional influences, faculty influences, and student influences. The findings from this study indicated the need for a project aimed at improving students' writing skills at ISC. The project, the Writing Suite, is an integrated

curriculum for developing scholarly writing skills throughout each student's enrollment

at ISC. Section 3 includes a description of the project and its rationale.

Section 3: The Project

Following the completion of the writing skills research, I developed a project, which I named the Writing Suite (see Appendix A), to address the research findings. This section includes the project description, rationale for the project genre, a review of literature related to writing development, and plans for implementing the project. The basis for the project stemmed from the research findings and professional literature regarding writing skill development.

Description and Goals

The project for writing skill development at ISC, the Writing Suite, is an integrated, ongoing, writing instruction and assistance curriculum designed to serve all students throughout their active affiliation with ISC (see Appendix A). For the purposes of this project study, the integrated writing curriculum is a multifaceted and continuous program for writing skill development that occurs in conjunction with the institution's primary disciplinary programs. The purpose of the Writing Suite is to address the research problem identified in Section 1: At ISC, several adult students entering the master's programs were underprepared for graduate-level scholarly writing. Administrators at ISC wanted me to identify their students' most prevalent writing skill deficits and recommend measures to help the students develop their scholarly writing skills. The study, described in Section 2, provided insight into the students' writing skill deficits as well as faculty and student perceptions of positive and negative influences on writing skill development at the institution.

The Writing Suite, derived from the study findings, has two goals:

- to help ISC administrators increase the school's positive influences on students' writing skill development as well as mitigate potentially negative influences on student writing and

- to provide academic writing training for all students throughout their courses of study at ISC.

Findings from this study, together with findings from the professional literature, guided the development of the project focused on writing skill development.

The Writing Suite includes several components designed to meet the specific needs of ISC:

- a *Student Guide to Academic Writing*, which includes ISC's policies and expectations regarding academic writing, student support available through the Writing Suite, and practical guidance for student writing;

- a strategy for conducting initial and recurrent, qualitative, diagnostic assessments of students' writing skills;

- academic writing instructional sessions, each consisting of one campus-based, 2-hour writing skills instructional session for students attending their core residencies;

- extensive writing practice through disciplinary course assignments;

- face-to-face and online, individual and small group writing assistance; and

- resources for self-directed writing development.

The following subsection explains the rationale for choosing an integrated curriculum to develop students' writing skills at ISC.

Rationale

Based on the research findings in this study and information gathered from the professional literature, an integrated curriculum is the most suitable genre for this project. The research findings indicated that faculty and students at ISC perceived personal time demands as substantial negative influences on writing skill development. Simultaneously, but incompatibly, the literature indicated that training for scholarly writing takes a considerable amount of time on the part of instructors and students (Ewing et al., 2012; Jalongo, Boyer, & Ebbeck, 2013; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Mueller et al., 2009; Singleton-Jackson & Colella, 2012; Wellington, 2010). Additionally, the study findings and current literature indicated that higher education students need to develop their writing skills throughout their educational programs regardless of the students' disciplines (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Flaherty & Choi, 2013; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Julien, Lexis, Schuijers, Samiric, & McDonald, 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Sharif & Ibrahim, 2014; Wellington, 2010; Willis et al., 2012). The plausible solution for adding time-consuming training into time-constrained schedules is to integrate the writing training into the existing curricula wherein faculty and students already invest their time.

The Writing Suite integrated curriculum is also well suited for adult education methods that align with Knowles's (as cited in Knowles et al., 2011) assumptions of andragogy. The Writing Suite will address adult students' learning needs by relating new

writing skills to students' previous experiences with writing. Students will learn the differences between master's level scholarly writing and writing they have experienced for other purposes. As the adult students understand a need for additional writing skills, they should also understand the need to learn the new skills. Also consistent with Knowles's andragogical assumptions, student participants in this study mentioned the following needs:

- to receive training at the same time that they need to apply new skills,

- to access and use self-directed skill development resources, and

- to engage their personal motivations to learn.

The Writing Suite will include instruction, resources, and assistance aimed at meeting students' identified needs. Furthermore, the Advanced Academic Writing instructional sessions, which are part of the Writing Suite curriculum, will include an emphasis on scholarly writing skills as means for academic and career advancement and as tools to effect positive social change.

Prior to designing the integrated curriculum project, I consulted scholarly literature that addressed writing development needs of adult graduate students. The literature review that follows focuses on integrated curricula for writing development as well as recommended instructional methods and curricular content. Additionally, the literature yielded recommendations regarding resources for self-directed writing development.

Review of the Literature

The literature reviewed in this section focused on potential solutions to writing deficits among higher education students and especially adult graduate students. To explore potential solutions for writing skill deficits, I searched Google Scholar and the Education Research Complete database for relevant literature. Search terms included *writing skills development*, *scholarly writing*, *adult writing*, and *teaching writing skills*. I also found several sources by examining reference lists in recent articles and by using Google Scholar to locate sources in which authors had cited some of the most relevant articles I had found. The literature provided support for an integrated curriculum to train students in scholarly writing skills. Professional works provided evidence to support several strategies and methodologies for developing scholarly writing.

Widespread Need for Writing Development

The literature provided strong evidence that writing skill development is a widespread need for students in all levels of education (Cho, Cho, & Hacker, 2010; Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, 2011; Fergie et al., 2011; Horton & Diaz, 2011; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; McDonald, 2011; Sharif & Ibrahim, 2014). According to several authors (Bastalich, 2011; Cho et al., 2010; Craig & McKinney, 2010; Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Willis et al., 2012), the problem with poor writing skills has triggered pressure from government and employer organizations for higher education institutions to produce graduates with stronger skills for effective communication in multiple professions. Although many institutions, including the one in this study, offered writing instruction to

their students, students continued to need writing development. Kellogg and Whiteford (2009) contended that developing advanced writing skills required training, not just instruction. Kellogg and Whiteford explained that writers develop their writing expertise through training and practice in the same way musicians and athletes master their skills (p. 257). Students need continuous training, including ample practice time, to become expert writers. Faculty and student participants in this study also indicated that ISC students needed writing development throughout their programs of study. An integrated writing curriculum to help students prepare for both academic and professional writing appears to be consistent with the preferences and needs of faculty and students at ISC.

Integrated Curriculum for Writing Development

There is a considerable body of literature supporting the use of an integrated writing curriculum in higher education (Cho et al., 2010; Craig & McKinney, 2010; Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Horton & Diaz, 2011; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012). Literature supporting the integration of writing training into disciplinary programs included the following:

- Five author teams described plans for continuous writing training throughout departmental curricula (Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012).

- Four author teams described strategies for integrating writing skills training into existing single-semester courses (Cho et al., 2010; Craig & McKinney, 2010; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Horton & Diaz, 2011).

- Two author teams (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Kokaliari et al., 2012) reported statistically significant improvements in writing assessment scores among students who received integrated writing training.

- Four author teams provided detailed descriptions of integrated curricula for writing skills training (Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Horton & Diaz, 2011; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012).

The integrated curriculum strategies described in the literature involved a variety of instructional methods that could apply to training for multiple specific writing skills depending on student needs. All of the integrated curricula descriptions involved writing practice within regular course assignments in students' disciplinary programs.

Several authors (Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; McDonald, 2011; Werner, 2013) emphasized that writing skill development requires involvement from everyone in the academic community. All institutional personnel and students must understand the organization's writing standards and policies, which must be clearly stated and widely distributed. Written policies and focused instruction must address the issues of academic integrity and plagiarism (Dee & Jacob, 2012; Kirsch & Bradley, 2012; Newton, Wright, & Newton, 2014). Additionally, according to Knowles (Knowles et al., 2001), adult learners need to know why learning is important in their lives. Therefore, in the case of adult students, it is important for them to understand how their writing skills can influence their learning experiences and future success.

At the time of this study, ISC administrators published the institution's academic integrity policies in documents available to all students, but students still expressed a need for better understanding of the policies, especially regarding documenting sources. One component of the Writing Suite will be a *Student Guide to Academic Writing*, which will include the institution's policy regarding academic integrity, including its position on plagiarism. The student guide, combined with writing instruction, can help to clarify the policy and increase student understanding.

In conjunction with the necessary policies and clear expectations for writing, a mainstay of any integrated curriculum for writing development involves writing-intensive courses and assignments within every disciplinary program (Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012). Since its beginning, ISC has offered multiple writing-intensive courses within every disciplinary program. Although the Writing Suite proposal will not include requirements for course instructors to offer writing instruction within their disciplinary courses, course assignments will serve as practice arenas for skills covered in the writing courses. ISC's existing courses and assignments will provide frequent opportunities for advanced writing skills practice. If ISC administrators choose to implement the Writing Suite, there will be no immediate need for additional writing assignments.

The literature describing integrated curricula for writing skill development provided an abundance of recommendations regarding faculty and student responsibilities. The proposed Writing Suite includes several of these recommendations while other recommendations found in the literature remain beyond the scope of this

project. The following subsections include reviews of recommended writing specialist responsibilities, faculty responsibilities and training, and student responsibilities for writing skill development.

Writing specialist responsibilities. Several academic authors indicated that one or more writing specialists can benefit students who are developing their writing skills (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Martinez, Kock, & Cass, 2011; Werner, 2013). At the time of this study, ISC had some writing specialists who assisted students, but these specialists also taught several courses at the institution, maintained full-time careers outside of the institution, and managed several additional time-consuming responsibilities in the community and abroad. ISC should benefit from an institutional writing specialist whose primary focus would be writing skill development for students. Some writing specialist responsibilities recorded in the literature were as follows:

- implementing a writing development program (Liu & Murphy, 2012),

- facilitating faculty training on writing-related topics (Liu & Murphy, 2012; Werner, 2013),

- speaking to students about an institution's strategy for writing skill development (Liu & Murphy, 2012; McDonald, 2011),

- providing resources for self-directed writing development (Liu & Murphy, 2012; McDonald, 2011),

- managing institutional writing centers (Werner, 2013), and

- providing individual writing assistance to students (Gazza & Hunker, 2012; McDonald, 2011; Werner, 2013).

An additional task related to writing skill development frequently appeared in the literature: conducting diagnostic assessments of writing skills. Published authors did not assign this responsibility to a writing specialist specifically, but in the project developed to address writing needs at ISC, a writing specialist will be responsible for the assessments. Authors explained diagnostic writing assessments in a variety of ways:

- Two author teams reported that they used diagnostic writing tests to determine students' writing development needs before beginning writing instruction (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Liu & Murphy, 2012).

- McNair and Curry (2013) categorized writing assessments as direct and indirect assessments. Direct assessments involve students generating original written documents for assessment. Indirect assessments involve answering questions about writing skills. For the purposes of this project study, indirect assessments of writing skills could provide some information regarding students' understanding of specific writing skills, but complete direct assessments will be necessary to help students develop expert writing skills.

- Knoch (2011) described two classes of writing assessments: holistic and analytic assessments. Holistic writing assessments are less detailed than analytic assessments. Knoch stated that analytic assessments were most appropriate for diagnosing writing strengths and weaknesses, because holistic assessments would not provide detailed descriptions of writing skills.

- Rating scales for writing assessments differed among the assessment instruments that Knoch (2011) reviewed. Some rating scales were graphic scales for choosing a point on a scale. Other rating scales were numerical scales for assigning point values to specific skills, and some scales only included labels for general descriptors of specific skills. Another type of rating scale provided detailed descriptors from which a rater could choose.

- After reviewing various types of writing assessments, Knoch (2011) explained that the best assessments for diagnostic purposes would yield detailed descriptions of skills in different categories. Writing instructors could use the detailed descriptions of skills to develop writing development strategies to meet specific needs.

Based on the professional literature, the most beneficial diagnostic writing assessments yield detailed descriptions of students' writing skills. Direct, analytic assessment of writing mechanics and communicative effectiveness appears to be the optimal choice.

Faculty responsibilities and training. Most of the literature regarding writing skill development in higher education settings emphasized that all faculty members share the responsibilities for student writing development. Commonly described faculty responsibilities included the following:

- Course instructors must provide clear, detailed assignment guidelines (Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Horton & Diaz, 2011; Julien et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Nicol, 2010; Singhal, 2004). Findings in this study indicated that some students did

not understand institutional expectations for writing. Likewise, some students indicated a need for clarification regarding some course assignments. Although the Writing Suite will not address assignment guidelines within its initial writing development strategies, ISC students would likely benefit from assignment clarification.

- Clear and precise assessment rubrics that explain grading procedures must accompany all assignment guidelines (Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Gibbons, 2012; Horton & Diaz, 2011; Hoyt et al., 2010; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Nicol, 2010). Although the literature emphasizes the benefits of detailed grading rubrics, the Writing Suite will not include rubric development within its initial structure. However, ISC faculty and administrative personnel might increase their positive influence on writing skill development by reviewing and revising grading procedures to ensure clarity.

- In programs that require students to follow APA guidelines, Kokaliari et al. (2012) and McDonald (2011) advised that instructors must practice and model APA style in their own writing, especially in their citations and references.

- Multiple researchers indicated that instructor feedback on writing assignments was fundamental to the development of student writing skills (Bean, 2011; Can & Walker, 2011; De Kleijn, Mainhard, Jeijer, Brekelmans, & Pilot, 2013; Duijnhouwer, Prins, & Stokking, 2012; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Gibbons, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Jalongo et al., 2013; Kellogg &

Whiteford, 2009; Martinez et al., 2011; McDonald, 2011; Nicol, 2010).

Findings in this study indicated that ISC instructors already provide students

with writing feedback that positively influences students' writing skill

development. Faculty professional development training in specific types of

writing-related feedback could improve the quality of instructor feedback.

- Writing development literature indicates that course instructors are

  responsible for helping students develop professional writing within a

  discipline (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Flaherty &

  Choi, 2013; Jalongo et al., 2013; Julien et al., 2012; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu

  & Murphy, 2012; Remley, 2014; Sharif & Ibrahim, 2014). Career-related

  writing requirements vary widely among disciplines, and students should

  graduate with the necessary skills for employment in their respective

  disciplines. Disciplinary writing needs likely vary among the three master's

  programs at ISC. Course instructors can incorporate professional writing skills

  training into course assignments.

- Several authors recommended a writing enhancement strategy of draft-revise-

  submit (Bean, 2011; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012). Students

  were more likely to improve their writing skills when instructors required

  students to submit drafts of writing assignments for review prior to

  submission of the assignments for grades. The instructors provided feedback

  on the drafts, and the students revised their work before submission. Some

  instructors at ISC indicated that they allowed but did not require students to

submit drafts for review, but few students took advantage of the opportunities. According to faculty participants, ISC students who submitted drafts for review performed better on the assignments than students who did not submit drafts. Students' writing skills should improve if faculty members require drafts for review and subsequent revisions.

Although this project study will not involve faculty requirements, ISC administrators may consider incorporating faculty responsibilities for student writing development in the future. When all course instructors begin participating in writing development initiatives, faculty training can prepare them to carry out their responsibilities (Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Werner, 2013). Nevertheless, when an institution's administrators, writing specialists, and faculty members commit to helping students develop their scholarly writing skills, the final responsibility for improvement belongs to the students.

Student responsibilities. Naturally, students carry ultimate responsibility for developing their own writing skills. A writing specialist or course facilitator may provide instruction, but students must practice writing (Hudd, Sardi, & Lopriore, 2013; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; McDonald, 2011). Jalongo et al. (2013) and Hudd et al. (2013) emphasized that skill development takes time. Although students, in the Jalongo et al. study and at ISC, struggled with time demands, becoming a skilled scholarly writer requires time. Integrating writing training into residency schedules and writing practice into existing disciplinary writing assignments will require less institutional, faculty, and student time than separate,

additional writing assignments would add. However, it is of paramount importance for students to commit the time needed to improve their writing skills through practice.

Strategies for Writing Development

      Instructor feedback. Instructor feedback was a common topic of focus in the writing development literature. According to Gazza and Hunker (2012), continuous feedback is fundamental to writing skill development. Gazza and Hunker, along with several other authors (Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Hudd et al., 2013; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Liu & Murphy, 2012), indicated that instructor feedback is most effective when students must respond to feedback by revising their work before submitting it for a grade. In contrast, when students receive feedback simultaneously with their assignment grades, they may not review or apply the feedback to their writing skill development (Hudd et al., 2013).

      Authors addressing academic writing described several characteristics of effective feedback. The authors described the most effective feedback as

- clear (Can & Walker, 2011; Nicol, 2010);

- specific (Duijnhouwer et al., 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; McDonald, 2011; Nicol, 2010);

- thorough, detailed, and explanatory (Can & Walker, 2011; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; McDonald, 2011; Nicol, 2010);

- suggestive rather than directive (Can & Walker, 2011); and

- timely (Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Nicol, 2010).

Additionally, findings in the Can and Walker (2011) study indicated that students appreciated feedback aimed at improving the students' work without requiring major changes in direction. In the same study (Can & Walker, 2011), students wanted feedback regarding clarity, overall consistency, and organization of their writing (p. 526).

Nicol (2010) further proposed that students would likely respond well to feedback framed as a dialogue with the student. Nicol suggested instructors could ask students to include a note describing their preferred types of feedback when they submit written assignments. Nicol proposed the instructor would then address the students' preferences clearly, but he or she might provide other detailed feedback as well. In addition to instructor feedback, students can receive valuable insight about writing skills by engaging in peer reviews.

Peer review. Authors described various types of peer-review activities during which students review drafts of other students' assignments. Peer-review methods included the following:

- Students review assignments that have the student-author names removed (Cho et al., 2010; Likkel, 2012; Nicol, 2010).

- Students conduct peer reviews by following the instructor's grading rubric or other instructor specifications (Barst, Brooks, Cempellin, & Kleinjan, 2011; Cho et al., 2010; Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, 2011; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Horton & Diaz, 2011).

- Students conduct peer reviews with only the assignment instructions to guide them (Nicol, 2010). The instructor can follow up by examining the peer reviews to better understand the types of feedback students value.

- As an introduction to peer reviewing, instructors can examine peer-reviewed documents and provide feedback on the feedback prior to returning a draft to its writer (Nicol, 2010).

- Students collaborate on both a writing assignment and a peer-review of the assignment concurrently (Maden, 2011; Nicol, 2010).

- Students conduct peer reviews online using specialized programs for writing skill reviews (Cho et al., 2010; Cho & Cho, 2011; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Likkel, 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Park, Crocker, Nussey, Springate, & Hutchings, 2010).

- Instructors oversee classroom-based peer reviews (Barst et al., 2011; Horton & Diaz, 2011).

In addition to describing methods for conducting peer reviews, several authors reported benefits to using peer review strategies.

Educational researchers proposed a number of advantages to using peer review strategies for writing development:

- reduction in faculty workload (Barst et al., 2011),

- improvement in students' critical thinking and analysis skills (Barst et al., 2011),

- increase in students' confidence (Barst et al., 2011),

- improvement in students' writing skills (Barst et al., 2011; Cho et al., 2010; Cho & Cho, 2011; Gazza & Hunker, 2012),

- reduction in course drop/fail rates (Barst et al., 2011),

- increase in students' ratings of their instructors' availability and helpfulness (Barst et al., 2011), and

- improvement in students' abilities to self-evaluate their own writing skills (Barst et al., 2011; Cho et al., 2010; Likkel, 2012).

Academic literature on writing skill development emphasized that feedback from both instructors and peers were key strategies for improving student writing. Although this project study will not address course instructor responsibilities regarding student writing, ISC students might benefit from an institutional emphasis on faculty involvement in writing skill development.

Content of Writing Curriculum

Multiple authors discussed specific writing skills that higher education students needed to develop. When authors sorted writing skills into categories, they used different methods for classifying the variety of skills that are essential in scholarly writing. For example, Hudd et al. (2013) found that instructors approached writing development as *cognitive* development *or* as *skill* development. Hudd et al. concluded writing requires *both* cognitive and skill development. In another article, Hoyt et al. (2010) used three skill categories on a rubric they developed. The categories were *writing mechanics*, *content mastery*, and *critical thinking* (pp. 29-30). The plethora of specific skills used in scholarly writing could supply researchers with many possibilities for grouping the skills

into categories. As I listed specific skills mentioned in the literature, I found that the majority of the skills identified by other authors would fit within the same categories I used to describe themes that emerged from the findings in this study: paragraph structure, sentence structure, APA guidelines, word processing, and academic authorship.

Writing mechanics. In this literature review subsection on writing mechanics, I include skills related to four themes: paragraph structure, sentence structure, APA guidelines, and word processing. Among these four themes, paragraph structure and word-processing skills received less attention than the other two themes received. Several authors (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Knoch, 2011) identified paragraph structure as an important skill to develop and assess, but the authors did not discuss paragraph structure in detail. Few authors mentioned word-processing skills specifically; however, I did find some references to technology skills as important for academic writing (Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Remley, 2014; Sweeny, 2010). Both paragraph structure and word-processing emerged in the study findings as challenging to some ISC students. For this reason, the Writing Suite will include instruction and resources to help students with paragraph structure and word processing.

Several articles contained references to sentence structure as an important writing skill to include in writing assessments and instruction (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Hoyt et al., 2010; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Willis et al., 2012). Additionally, many authors mentioned specific skills within the sentence structure category; these included the following:

- grammar (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Hoyt et al., 2010; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Knoch, 2011; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Maden, 2011; Wellington, 2010; Willis et al., 2012),

- parts of speech (Craig & McKinney, 2010),

- tense (Craig & McKinney, 2010),

- subject-verb agreement (Craig & McKinney, 2010),

- singulars and plurals (Craig & McKinney, 2010),

- articles (Craig & McKinney, 2010),

- syntax (Knoch, 2011; Kokaliari et al., 2012),

- word order (Craig & McKinney, 2010),

- placement of modifiers (Craig & McKinney, 2010), and

- punctuation (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Knoch, 2011; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Maden, 2011; Samson, 2014).

Although spelling is a standalone writing skill and not necessarily a sentence structure skill, I included spelling in this group because it is analogous to several of the listed sentence structure skills. Spelling was an important and frequently problematic writing skill identified by several authors focusing on scholarly writing (Flaherty & Choi, 2013; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Knoch, 2011; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Maden, 2011; Wellington, 2010; Willis et al., 2012).

Capitalization also emerged in literature (Knoch, 2011) and in this study as problematic for some students. Capitalization errors might relate to word-processing

skills, sentence structure skills, or knowledge of APA guidelines. Regardless, the Writing Suite will include instruction and resources to address appropriate use of capitalization.

APA guidelines were the primary focus of two articles (Kokaliari et al., 2012; McDonald, 2011). These authors and others identified specific academic writing skills related to style guidelines:

- citing and referencing other authors (Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Horton & Diaz, 2011; Kirsch & Bradley, 2012; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Remley, 2014),

- using direct quotations (Horton & Diaz, 2011),

- formatting an academic paper (Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Horton & Diaz, 2011; Knoch, 2011),

- introducing and using abbreviations (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Gersten, 2012), and

- expressing numbers as words or numerals in the body of a paper (Craig & McKinney, 2010).

Scholarly writers are responsible for proficiently applying all of the preceding skills related to writing mechanics. The following subsection will address skills related specifically to writing for academic purposes.

Academic authorship skills. The most frequently referenced writing skills challenges presented in the literature were also among those I categorized as academic authorship skills. In consideration of the numerous academic authorship skills I found in the literature, I categorized the skills into four groups:

- skills related to an academic author's responsibilities,

- skills related to a scholarly approach and presentation,

- skills related to knowledge and logical reasoning,

- and skills related to attributes of excellence in academic writing.

Academic authorship skills include writing skills that frequently differentiate academic compositions from other types of written works.

Author's responsibilities. The first group of academic authorship skills relates to authors' responsibilities. Academic authors are responsible for mastering the previously identified mechanics of writing as well as upholding standards that are specific to scholarly writing. For example, several academic authors emphasized scholars' responsibilities to use academic language consistently (Baumann & Graves, 2010; Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Frels, Onwuegbuzie, & Slate, 2010; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Musgrave & Parkinson, 2014; Ragins, 2012). Two of these author teams focused on specific aspects of academic language: Frels et al. (2010) discussed correct use of verbs, and Musgrave and Parkinson (2014) focused on appropriate use of nouns in academic writing.

An additional academic author responsibility is writing an appropriate quantity or length of text (Knoch, 2011). Along these lines, several authors emphasized that conciseness is an important feature of academic writing (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Gersten, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; McDonald, 2011; Ragins, 2012). Conciseness involves expressing ideas

with the fewest words possible. In the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, writing concisely is termed "economy of expression" (APA, 2010, p. 67).

According to several scholars, authors' responsibilities also include effectively paraphrasing and summarizing (Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Howard et al., 2010; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009) and writing accurately (Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Knoch, 2011; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Ragins, 2012). Accuracy in academic writing involves accurate use of vocabulary and grammar (Knoch, 2011) and accurate communication of ideas without distortion (Liu & Murphy, 2012). Accuracy and precision are essential in every part of academic writing.

The academic writer's responsibility for identifying his or her personal ideas and opinions relates closely to writing accurately. An important element of scholarly writing is communicating personal ideas and opinions as they relate to academic and professional literature (Du Preez & Fossey, 2012). However, Kokaliari et al. (2012) found that many students struggled to differentiate their own thoughts from their study findings. Academic authors must develop the skills to relate the ideas and findings of other authors to their own research findings and personal thoughts while carefully differentiating the sources.

Planning and organizing a manuscript's content are additional responsibilities of scholarly writers (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Hoyt et al., 2010; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Knoch, 2011; Kokaliari et al., 2012). These responsibilities require deliberate actions on the part of authors to prepare a manuscript and ensure effective communication. Some authors addressed important features of manuscript organization by emphasizing specific components of well-organized academic papers, including

introductions, conclusions, purpose or thesis statements, abstracts, reference pages, and others (Burgoine, Hopkins, Rech, & Zapata, 2011; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Horton & Diaz, 2011; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Wellington, 2010). Additionally, when the academic work is a report of research, the report must include detailed descriptions of the study design and procedures, findings, and interpretations (Julien et al., 2012).

     Scholarly approach and presentation. A second group of academic authorship skills concerns the author's scholarly approach and presentation. A frequently emphasized feature of scholarly approach was an author's attentiveness to the concept of audience (Cho et al., 2010; Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Knoch, 2011; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Ragins, 2012). Ragins (2012) described this essential concept well. He explained that academic and professional authors must maintain a strong sense of who might be interested in the content of their writing. In addition to the importance of focusing on an author's audience, scholars identified the following presentation skills as essential in scholarly writing:

- maximizing the use of active voice (Gersten, 2012),

- maintaining a professional tone (McDonald, 2011), and

- employing a skillfully developed authorial voice (Aitchison, Catterall, Ross, & Burgin, 2012; Badenhorst, Moloney, Rosales, Dyer, & Ru, 2015).

An authorial voice is characterized by an author's ability to present strong and well-supported claims that establish the author's identity as an expert in the field (Aitchison et al., 2012; Badenhorst et al., 2015). Upon mastering the forgoing author's responsibilities

and setting his or her focus on a scholarly approach and presentation, the academic writer must convey knowledge and logical reasoning concerning a stated topic.

Knowledge and reason. Academic authors must develop their written communication skills in order to demonstrate knowledge of their chosen subject matter effectively. They must communicate knowledge through fully developed concepts and ideas designed to eliminate ambiguity (Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Knoch, 2011). Additionally, authors must apply logical reasoning to the expression and organization of concepts within a manuscript (Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Knoch, 2011). Writing development scholars described several features of logical reasoning that are important in academic writing, including two that frequently appeared in the literature:

- analysis and synthesis of published literature (Bair & Mader, 2013; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Julien et al., 2012; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Sweeny, 2010; Wellington, 2010) and

- critical thinking (Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, 2011; Fanetti et al., 2010; Flaherty & Choi, 2013; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Gibbons, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Horton & Diaz, 2011; Hoyt et al., 2010; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; McDonald, 2011; Sharif & Ibrahim, 2014; Sweeny, 2010).

Although many scholars purported that critical thinking is an important element in academic writing, few authors attempted to define critical thinking. Most of the authors I reviewed simply listed critical thinking as a desirable skill that should be evident in academic writing. Donnelly and Fitzmaurice (2011) also found few definitions of critical

thinking in the literature and concluded, "There is an implicit assumption that academics have an agreed understanding of the concept of critical thinking but this tacit understanding is seldom articulated or discussed" (p. 2).

The academic literature generally related critical thinking to logical reasoning, as in Hoyt et al. (2010), who provided a grading rubric listing critical thinking characteristics. According to Hoyt et al., authors should provide evidence of critical thinking through the following practices:

- integrating knowledge from multiple sources,

- demonstrating academic insightfulness,

- applying knowledge to solve problems,

- supporting opinions and arguments,

- evaluating contradictions,

- making comparisons, and

- drawing conclusions based on logical reasoning.

According to several scholars, authors must apply additional cognitive skills when writing for academic purposes; they must

- explain the importance of their work (Horton & Diaz, 2011).

- maintain relevance of all content to a specified topic (Hoyt et al., 2010; Knoch, 2011),

- present and explain both arguments and counterarguments (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Crank, 2012; Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Horton & Diaz, 2011; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Wellington, 2010),

- identify and clearly state their claims (Horton & Diaz, 2011; Wellington, 2010),

- provide support for all claims (Horton & Diaz, 2011; Knoch, 2011),

- report research findings (Horton & Diaz, 2011), and

- conclude with implications and recommendations based on logical reasoning (Horton & Diaz, 2011; Wellington, 2010).

After an author completes a draft of an academic paper, he or she should reread the document to scrutinize the accuracy and quality of every word and sentence throughout the entire document to ensure the manuscript adheres to scholarly standards of excellence.

   Attributes of excellence. Multiple authors identified attributes of excellent scholarly writing. Evidence of excellence in scholarly writing included the following quality characteristics:

- clarity (Craig & McKinney, 2010; Gersten, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Hudd et al., 2013; Knoch, 2011; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Ragins, 2012; Remley, 2014; Wellington, 2010; Willis et al., 2012),

- fluency (Knoch, 2011; Liu & Murphy, 2012),

- cohesiveness (Knoch, 2011; Liu & Murphy, 2012), and

- coherence (Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Knoch, 2011).

Both authors and their readers would benefit from scholars taking the time to refine or polish these important attributes of excellent writing in their manuscripts (see Table 15).

Table 15

Characteristics of Excellent Scholarly Writing

Characteristic	Writer's perspective	Reader's perspective
Clarity	Communicates ideas precisely	Clearly understands the authors ideas
Fluency	Articulates ideas with language that flows throughout the manuscript	Comprehends without mentally editing the author's words
Cohesiveness	Ensures every sentence connects to the next throughout the manuscripts	Reads smoothly from one idea to the next
Coherence	Organizes ideas to build upon one another and logically support a thesis and conclusion	Understands concepts that build upon one another to arrive at a logical conclusion

Resources for Writing Development

Adult learners attempting to develop strong academic writing skills should benefit from resources for self-directed writing development (Cotterall, 2011; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Horton & Diaz, 2011; Liu & Murphy, 2012; McDonald, 2011). Some authors recommended specific types of resources, and some provided resources within their articles. Recommended resources included the following:

- Several authors recommended teaching students to self-evaluate their own writing skills (Cairns, 2013; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Nelson, Range, & Ross, 2012; Nielsen, 2012). Gazza & Hunker (2012) recommended providing students with detailed rubrics or checklists to guide them through each assignment. Similarly, Nelson et al. (2012) suggested that instructors could

provide students with a pre-submission checklist to help them locate and resolve writing errors in their assignments.

- Donnelly and Fitzmaurice (2011) provided students a worksheet to help them analyze journal articles.

- Horton and Diaz (2011) and Liu and Murphy (2012) recommended that students should use Purdue's Online Writing Lab (OWL; https://owl.english.purdue.edu/), which includes multiple resources to assist students in developing their writing skills. Horton and Diaz required their students to complete writing exercises available through OWL.

- Gazza and Hunker (2012) and McDonald (2011) recommended instructors should provide students with examples of good and unacceptable writing. McDonald provided a teaching aid in the form of an APA-formatted essay on the topic of writing in APA style.

- Gazza and Hunker (2012) recommended that instructors should provide handouts to explain how to master specific writing skills.

- In an article highlighting common difficulties that can hinder a writer's progress, King (2013) offered strategies for overcoming them. Her article could serve as a resource to help students overcome writing difficulties.

Resources for self-directed writing development abound in both the written literature and on Internet sites for writing self-help. If ISC administrators agree to implement the Writing Suite, the writing specialist will be responsible for routinely searching for high-

quality resources and recommending them to students. An additional responsibility for the specialist will be evaluating the Writing Suite and its components.

Writing Program Evaluations

A review of the literature provided insight into important considerations for evaluating writing development programs. Analysis and synthesis of these considerations brought me to the conclusion that the Writing Suite evaluation plan should include the following:

- procedures to assess actual improvement in students' writing skills (Gofine, 2012),

- methods to attain faculty and student perceptions of the Writing Suite components (Can & Walker, 2011; Gofine, 2012), and

- strategies to identify and address changing needs for writing development (Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, 2011; Knowles et al., 2011).

A summary of the contributing research follows.

Gofine (2012) wrote a review of the literature regarding writing center assessments and found a general lack of consensus regarding assessment goals. Nevertheless, Gofine identified three themes that frequently appeared in the assessment literature: annual report data, evidence of improved writing skills, and perceptions of writing center services. However, there was little consistency in data collection methods or the types of data generated. A logical method for demonstrating improvement in writing skills would be to examine students' skills before and after using writing center services. Yet, in literature spanning 20 years, Gofine located only two studies that used

pretest-posttest designs to determine whether students' writing skills actually improved. In order to determine the Writing Suite's influences on writing skill development, program assessments must include examination of students' skills both before and after receiving instruction or other services from the Writing Suite.

Gofine (2012) also identified perceptions of writing center services as a frequently assessed component of writing development programs. Correspondingly, Can and Walker (2011) found that perceptions of feedback significantly affected a student's motivation to improve his or her writing skills. An evaluation plan for the Writing Suite must include data regarding student perceptions of writing instruction, feedback, and assistance. Collecting and analyzing data regarding writing skills improvement and stakeholders' perceptions of the Writing Suite will be essential elements of the project evaluation. However, an evaluation plan must also include considerations for using the evaluation results.

Formative evaluation procedures are imperative because the Writing Suite project design has a goal to meet both current and future writing development needs at ISC. A summative evaluation would result in conclusions about the past performance of the Writing Suite components, but it would not necessarily lead to curricular improvement. When faced with a similar need to improve writing development strategies, Donnelly and Fitzmaurice (2011) used an action research strategy to assess the effectiveness of their existing writing tutorials. Action research involves a practical emphasis, a cyclical process, and a course of action (Creswell, 2012). Donnelly and Fitzmaurice described their process cycle as planning for data collection, collecting data, analyzing data, and

making recommendations. The study design allowed the researchers to determine specific elements of writing development that needed more attention. Donnelly and Fitzmaurice then designed a new module to strengthen their writing development program. Using a process similar to Donnelly and Fitzmaurice's action-research assessment strategy for the Writing Suite evaluation could lead to recurring detection of and solutions for problems, followed by curricular improvements.

Action research could be especially important in evaluating a curriculum for adult students. According to Knowles (as cited in Knowles et al., 2011, p. 202), flexibility is an essential characteristic of adult learning because of individual differences among adults. Lindeman (as cited in Knowles et al., 2011, p. 39) proposed that differences among adults increase with age. An action research strategy for assessing the Writing Suite will help the writing specialist to implement changes in writing development strategies to meet the changing needs of ISC's adult students.

Implementation of the Writing Suite

An implementation plan for a writing development curriculum must identify the following: (a) requirements for personnel, materials, and student resources; (b) existing supports and resources; (c) solutions to potential barriers; and (d) an implementation timetable. This section includes a description of each of these matters in regards to the proposed Writing Suite.

Existing Supports and Potential Resources

The Writing Suite project design maximizes the benefit of existing supports at ISC. These supports include the following:

- ISC employs a writing-intensive curriculum in all programs of study.

- ISC has an online classroom management system that can accommodate links to writing resources.

- ISC instructors regularly provide feedback on written assignments.

- ISC has several writing specialists among the teaching faculty.

In addition to existing supports at ISC, multiple potential resources are available online.

Potential resources that are available via the Internet include free writing tutorials, open access to multiple university writing centers, an APA template available for download into Microsoft Word, and, upon receipt of copyright holders' permission, resources published in academic literature.

Personnel, Materials, and Resources

Implementation of the Writing Suite will require personnel, materials, and resources to assist students in developing their scholarly writing skills. Personnel needs include the following:

- a writing specialist to implement and manage the Writing Suite;

- an administrator designated to oversee approval of writing development initiatives and materials and schedule writing instruction during residencies;

- designated office personnel to assist with student enrollment, instructional materials, and other administrative needs; and

- supportive faculty members who will recommend the Writing Suite initiatives to their students.

Roles and responsibilities of personnel and students are described in Table A1 (see

Appendix A).

The Writing Suite will require equipment and materials for campus-based

instruction and assistance. The writing specialist will require financial resources for

compensation and travel and living accommodations during campus visits. A full list of

the necessary equipment, materials, and resources is included in Table A2 (see Appendix

A).

Potential Barriers and Solutions to Barriers

Every newly developed curriculum will have potential barriers that could hinder

effective operation. For the Writing Suite, potential barriers and solutions include the

following:

- ISC's online educational management system does not allow instructors to

  attach Word documents showing track changes and comments for detailed

  feedback. Instructors provide assignment grades and brief feedback through

  the management system, but detailed feedback requires communication

  through e-mail with attached documents. Potential solutions include revisions

  to the classroom management system to accommodate detailed feedback

  through attached Word documents, if possible, or encouraging and assisting

  instructors to send detailed feedback via e-mail.

- Students expressed preferences for face-to-face writing assistance, but they

  spend only 5 days per term on campus. Potential solutions include promoting

  face-to-face feedback via Skype and encouraging students to seek feedback

through other available options, such as e-mail, instant messaging, and telephone conversations.

- Students expressed concern that they would be bothersome to faculty members if they contacted instructors or a writing specialist between core residencies. Potential solutions include providing a preferred time schedule for student contact and writing specialist outreach to encourage contact.

- Writing instruction may be difficult to schedule during core residencies. Potential solutions include fitting the two-hour writing instruction session into existing available times or adding 2 hours to the beginning or end of the schedule.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

Upon approval of the Writing Suite curriculum and designation of a managing writing specialist, the Writing Suite implementation will begin. Some Writing Suite services will be immediately available. The entire Writing Suite curriculum should be operational within 1 year. Table A3 contains a detailed plan for implementation (see Appendix A).

<center>**Project Evaluation Plan**</center>

The evaluation plan for the Writing Suite is a practical action research design involving collection, analysis, and interpretation of formative evaluation data. Creswell (2012) explained that action research involves systematically collecting and analyzing data followed by developing an action plan and implementing changes. A researcher-practitioner working in the study setting conducts action research.

Creswell (2012) described two common types of action research: practical action research and participatory action research (p. 579). Practical action research generally takes place in educational settings with teachers conducting the research. Participatory action research generally involves community settings outside of education. This evaluation will be a practical action design conducted by the writing specialist who will collect and analyze evaluation data. The collected data will include qualitative assessments of writing skills before and after writing instruction, survey data describing participant perceptions of each type of service offered through the Writing Suite, and observational data collected by the writing specialist during classroom instruction, individual writing assistance, casual conversations, and group discussions (see Table 16). Data interpretation will include reflection upon what worked well and what needs improvement. Following the data interpretation, the writing specialist will take action to make improvements to the Writing Suite.

A guiding premise in the project development was adult learners have highly individualistic needs for writing development. Writing development needs can change continuously due to several factors:

- Adult students begin their studies with different writing development needs.

- Adults develop their writing skills at different rates.

- Adult students learn in different ways.

- Changes in the student body take place each term.

Furthermore, this study involved only 14 interviews, five questionnaires, and 10 writing samples. The study findings provided insight into the writing development needs at ISC,

but I fully expect additional needs for the Writing Suite curriculum will begin surfacing

soon after project implementation. The project design must accommodate modification as

required to meet both the needs of ISC's adult students and the institutional needs for

program expansion or revision.

Table 16

Evaluation Data for Writing Suite Components

Key elements of the Writing Suite	Survey	Writing assessments	Observations
Classroom instruction	X	X	X
Individual assistance	X		X
Student Guide to Academic Writing	X		X
Diagnostic writing assessments	X	X	X
Writing practice through course assignments	X	X	X
Resources for self-directed writing development	X		X
Writing specialist	X		X
Overall curriculum	X	X	X

Note: See Appendix A: Supplement 3 for survey instruments and Appendix A: Supplement 2 for writing assessment instrument.

Project Implications

The Writing Suite project is an integrated writing development curriculum

designed to improve writing skills among adult graduate students at an institution with a

mission to stimulate positive social change. ISC offers master's degree programs in

Family Life Education; Organizational Leadership; and Assessment, Research, and

Educational Leadership (ISC, 2012). Curricular content for every program aims to fulfill

ISC's mission to build a community of scholars committed to positive social change

(ISC, 2012). Many of ISC's students work in influential positions in their communities.

Opportunities to implement social change are available to those who possess the essential knowledge, skills, and motivation to serve as change agents. Whether working in an educational institution, a community organization, a corporation, or a family service position, advocates for social change must be able to communicate through skillful writing (McDonald, 2011). The Writing Suite project has implications to both the local community around ISC and to the broader community of educators and social change advocates.

Local Community

Many ISC students work in positions with opportunities for social change as an inherent feature of their work. Here are a few of the career positions ISC students described as their work contexts:

- school principal for a government-operated school for youth in the juvenile justice system;

- supervisor of tutors who assist community members with communication skills, goal setting, and time management;

- secondary teacher for upper-level, college-preparatory students;

- forensic scientist for the government's justice department;

- occupational therapist;

- care provider in a children's home;

- school social worker; and

- secondary school teacher of business courses.

Additionally, several students mentioned they had volunteer commitments to community organizations or their churches. These are but a few of the career positions held by ISC students. As each of them gains additional knowledge and expertise in his or her professional field of work, the Writing Suite training can assist them in broadening their influence for positive social change through excellent writing. In addition to this project study's potential to improve students' professional influence, the Writing Suite's emphasis on developing students' writing skills can have important implications regarding ISC's reputation within the broader academic community.

Far-Reaching

This study and the Writing Suite project have far-reaching implications as contributions to current literature regarding graduate students' writing skills and a potential curriculum development plan to meet student needs. The study included exploration of faculty and student perceptions of writing skill deficits among graduate students, faculty and student perceptions of positive and negative influences on writing skill development, and researcher observations of actual writing skill deficits in a sample of graduate students' assignments. Prior to this study, most writing skill studies focused on particular categories of writing skills or specialized strategies for providing writing development. Few studies had included detailed descriptions of specific observed writing skill deficits. Furthermore, few studies included analysis of writing deficiencies and perceptions of influences on writing development within the same sample. Although this qualitative case study with a small sample of students and faculty in one institution is not generalizable to other populations, the study design and resultant project exemplify one

method for exploring writing development needs within a single educational setting and using the findings to develop potential strategies for improving students' writing skills.

Conclusion

The Writing Suite, an integrated curriculum for writing skill development at ISC, derived from the study findings described in Section 2 and recommendations in current literature. The study findings and the professional literature together provide clear evidence of a widespread need for ongoing writing development throughout all levels of education. Adult students in this study need writing training during each term along with ample opportunities to develop their writing skills. The Writing Suite design will provide training, assistance, and resources for self-directed writing development to maximize opportunities for timely and time-efficient learning. Students will practice newly developed skills within the context of their standard course assignments, and the writing specialist will monitor student needs and provide writing instruction, assistance, and resources as necessary. Full implementation of the Writing Suite will take place within 1 year of ISC approval.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The qualitative case study exploring writing skills among graduate students and the subsequent project to address writing development needs were both challenging and rewarding. My enthusiasm flourished when I traveled to the institution's campus and engaged with participants as they explained their perceptions during interviews. Conversely, my inspiration diminished when I encountered seemingly insurmountable difficulties with the study or the project or life events that required my attention. In this section, I present my reflections on the study, the project, and my growth as a scholar.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The proposed Writing Suite project is an integrated, writing development curriculum aimed at meeting the needs of adult graduate students. Strengths of the curriculum include the following:

- In keeping with Knowles's (Knowles et al., 2011) andragogical assumption regarding adults taking responsibility for their own learning, the writing development curriculum affords multiple learning opportunities. The curricular design allows students to choose when and how they learn and practice writing skills. In-class instruction involves only one 2-hour session per semester. Additional program elements include individual assistance from a writing specialist and online resources for self-directed writing development. The flexibility of the program design will accommodate students' diverse learning styles, schedules, and writing development needs.

- Adult students often have distinctly individual writing development needs (Mueller et al., 2009; Tran, 2010; University of Connecticut, 2010; Whitley & Grous, 2009). The curriculum includes training opportunities to develop multiple types of writing skills, including writing mechanics, critical thinking, following APA guidelines, and operating word-processing tools, among others.

- According to Creswell (2012), action research is a strategy for continually evaluating and improving an educational program. The Writing Suite project includes an action-research evaluation plan designed to assess and address the changing needs for writing development at ISC.

The Writing Suite has two limitations that ISC administrators may want to address in the future:

- Both the professional literature (Du Preez & Fossey, 2012; Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Horstmanshof & Brownie, 2013; Horton & Diaz, 2011; Julien et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Nicol, 2010; Singhal, 2004) and finding in this study indicated that clear writing assignment instructions would benefit students' writing skill development. ISC students would likely benefit from detailed reviews of and revisions to assignment instructions; however, the extensive undertaking was beyond the scope of this project.

- Professional literature also indicated that training all faculty members to participate in student writing-development strategies would likely benefit everyone in the academic setting (Gazza & Hunker, 2012; Horstmanshof &

Brownie, 2013; Kokaliari et al., 2012; Liu & Murphy, 2012; Werner, 2013).

However, the proposed Writing Suite does not include faculty development.

Most ISC faculty members travel to the campus only during students'

residencies, and many work as adjunct faculty while maintaining full-time

careers elsewhere. Further research would be necessary to determine the

feasibility of preparing all faculty members to incorporate writing-

development strategies into disciplinary courses.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The problem description in Section 1 of this study focused on writing skill deficits among adult graduate students at ISC. However, the problem description did not include assumptions regarding the causes of the writing skill deficits or explanations for the existence of these deficits among adult professionals. Even if researchers could identify the causes of writing skill deficits, the knowledge gained might not provide meaningful data that could improve writing skills among ISC students. Therefore, the study described in Section 2 focused on identifying the most prevalent writing skill deficits among the school's students and influences on writing skill development at ISC.

Based on findings from both the professional literature and this study, an integrated curriculum that would include writing instruction within disciplinary courses could be an effective approach to writing development among graduate students. To implement a fully integrated writing curriculum, ISC would need to provide training for all faculty members and develop strategies to ensure students would use the writing instruction content while writing course assignments. Assignment instructions would

need to specify which writing skills the students must master within each given assignment, and rubrics would need to provide detailed descriptions of how the writing skills would affect the students' grades. A fully integrated, faculty-implemented, writing-development curriculum could address the writing needs at ISC. I recommend that the administrators consider gradually transitioning the Writing Suite curriculum toward faculty involvement.

Scholarship

While designing and conducting the research for this project study, I expanded my understanding of academic research. I had conducted quantitative research prior to enrolling in Walden University's Doctor of Education program, but qualitative research was new to me. After learning about various qualitative methods and choosing the best method to answer my research questions, I understood many of the benefits of qualitative research. For this study, qualitative research provided in-depth understanding of student writing skills at ISC and provided insight into how ISC could address students' writing development needs.

Project Development and Evaluation

After completing the research portion of the project study, I began considering how I might develop a project to help meet the writing development needs at ISC. At first, I focused on methods to meet all of the needs that emerged from the study data. Eventually, I had to refine the project into a manageable strategic plan that could provide a significant amount of help for ISC students. The project does not address every need, but it can make a difference, both effectively and efficiently, in students' writing skills.

Reflecting on the project and subsequent evaluation procedures reminded me of an early struggle I experienced while I was designing the research study. After settling on graduate student writing skills as my study topic, I remembered learning about action research during one of my Walden courses. Action research seemed to be the best design for identifying and solving writing problems, but implementing the proposed project was not within the boundaries of this doctoral project study. I learned to constrain my eagerness to act while I completed the study and developed the project. Then, when it was time to develop the project evaluation plan, I found Donnelly and Fitzmaurice's (2011) application of an action research strategy to evaluate and modify a writing develop program. I developed a similar action research strategy for the Writing Suite's evaluation plan in order to monitor participants' perceptions of the Writing Suite, students' writing skill development, and program modification needs.

Professional Growth

Looking back on this project-study journey, I am amazed at how much I have learned about teaching writing at the graduate level. Additionally, my own writing skills continued to develop throughout my years at Walden University. Prior to completing this project study, I had already learned about scholarly writing when I wrote a doctoral dissertation for a previously earned degree, and I had taught research writing and edited dissertations professionally. I look forward to continuing in lifelong learning and helping my students to do the same. Finally, as I reflect on my own writing development, I intend to maintain patience and gentleness with my writing students as my mentors did for me while I progressed through this project study.

Implications

Findings from this study contributed to understanding a widespread problem among institutions of higher education: weak writing skills. The study findings and proposed project could significantly improve the educational experiences of students in the study institution and provide insight to other researchers exploring writing development issues in other institutions. Improving students' writing skills is of substantial importance to all involved in the affected institutions. Moreover, improving writing skills among graduate students could have far greater influence beyond the scope of educational institutions.

Social Change

When students, such as those attending ISC, improve their written communication skills, they increase their potential impact on their professional and home communities. A strong writing development strategy paired with an institutional mission to effect positive social change could have far-reaching effects when graduates begin to influence governments, businesses, and institutions in local communities and beyond.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although this project study was time consuming, the potential benefits of the Writing Suite project could warrant similar studies in other institutions. The qualitative exploration of writing skill deficits and writing development influences yielded rich data highlighting specific needs within the study setting. The literature contained many strategies for helping students develop writing skills, but ISC had some needs that I discovered only through the qualitative data. I recommend similar qualitative studies and

project development for other institutions with unique student populations or educational strategies.

Additionally, I recommend a quantitative study examining writing skill development at ISC after the Writing Suite is operational. The action-research evaluation strategy will yield ongoing qualitative data that can inform institutional management of needed changes in the Writing Suite services. However, a quantitative study could help determine the extent to which findings in this study affect the total student population.

Applications

The Writing Suite could be adapted for use in other institutions. However, I recommend that administrators who consider adapting the Writing Suite for a different population should implement the action-research evaluation procedures from the beginning. Then, the writing specialist who oversees the program should implement modifications to meet the specific needs of that institution's students.

Conclusion

Findings in this project study of graduate students' scholarly writing skills provided evidence consistent with assumptions regarding adult learners and supported findings from other studies exploring writing skills among higher education students. Regarding adult learners, findings in this study indicated these adult students assumed responsibility for their own learning. The students wanted tools to help them engage in self-directed writing skill development, some individual assistance with writing skills, and brief tutorials regarding writing skills relevant to groups of students. Study participants recognized that adult learners bring substantially diverse learning needs to

higher education programs. Consequently, these students needed a variety of writing development opportunities to meet their learning needs.

The Writing Suite curriculum includes opportunities for each of the learning options participants perceived as potentially beneficial: resources for self-directed writing development, availability of a writing specialist for individualized writing assistance, and classroom-based instructional sessions. The educational resources, instructional methods, and plans for practice and evaluation are designed to maximize learning and minimize additional demands on students' time. This Writing Suite curriculum may also improve students' abilities to manage time effectively regarding their academic writing. When students understand writing expectations and know how to access answers quickly regarding the many rules of writing, they will be able to focus on gaining and applying new learning in their disciplinary studies. Subsequently, they will be able to flourish as agents of positive social change.

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Appendix A: The Project

Findings from the study of graduate students' scholarly writing skills indicated both general and specific needs for writing development at ISC. Using the study findings and recommendations from writing development literature, I have developed a writing curriculum for ISC. The following documents and presentations comprise the proposed writing development curriculum and details regarding its implementation.

The six attachments include the following:

- Graduate Student Readiness.pptx: a PowerPoint presentation containing an overview of the study findings and the proposed project to address ISC's writing development needs;

- The Writing Suite.docx: a narrative description of the proposed writing development curriculum, including itemized lists of the curricular components and details regarding implementation;

- Supplement 1.docx: instructional plans for the classroom-based writing development,

- Supplement 2.docx: *Student Guide to Academic Writing*;

- Supplement 3.xlsx: diagnostic writing assessment instrument for qualitative assessment of writing skills; and

- Supplement 4.docx: Writing Suite evaluation surveys for faculty and students attending core sessions.

Please review the materials and consider implementing the Writing Suite at ISC. I will be

pleased to answer any questions you may have concerning the study or the proposed

curriculum.

Introductory PowerPoint Presentation

Graduate Student Readiness
for Scholarly Writing
A Project Study

Marsha Harwell, PhD, CFLE

Project Study Overview

The Research Study
- Writing skill deficits among ISC students
- Perceived influences on writing skill development at ISC

The Writing Development Project
- Based on the study findings
- Designed to meet the specific writing development needs at ISC

Research Findings

IMAGE
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(Interview)
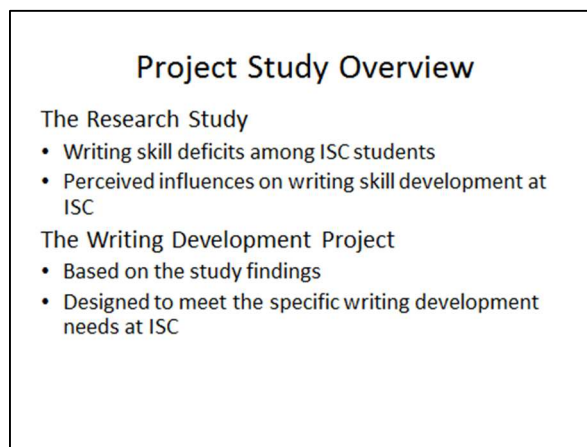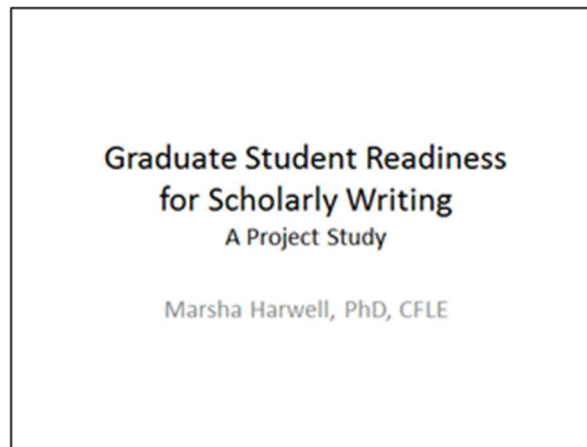
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Research Findings
Writing Skill Deficits

Five Themes
- Paragraph Structure Deficits
- Sentence Structure Deficits
- APA Guideline Deficits
- Word-processing Deficits
- Academic Authorship Deficits

Data collected from interviews, questionnaires, and qualitative assessments of student writing indicated specific types of writing skills that were problematic among ISC students. Five themes describe the categories of writing skill deficits that emerged in the study findings (listed on slide).

Research Findings
Writing Skill Deficits

Paragraph Structure Deficits
- Poor internal organization of paragraphs (e.g., introduction, body, & conclusion)
- More than one idea within a paragraph
- Lack of transitional sentences between paragraphs

Both faculty and student participants perceived that students struggle with paragraph structure, especially with limiting each paragraph to a single idea and using transitional sentences to maintain flow from one paragraph to another.
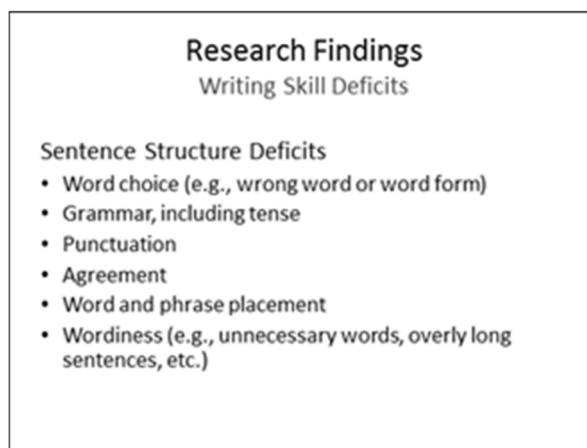
Research Findings

Writing Skill Deficits

Sentence Structure Deficits
- Word choice (e.g., wrong word or word form)
- Grammar, including tense
- Punctuation
- Agreement
- Word and phrase placement
- Wordiness (e.g., unnecessary words, overly long sentences, etc.)

Forty-seven participant comments regarded perceived sentence structure problems, and I observed sentence structure errors in all of the papers I reviewed. These findings were consistent with a report by Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) in which the authors identified sentence structure errors among the most common writing problems seen by academic editors. Several specific sentence structure problems were identified in this study, and many of them were related to

- word choice
- grammar,
- punctuation,
- agreement,
- word and phrase placement, and
- wordiness.

Research Findings

Writing Skill Deficits

APA Guideline Deficits
- Citation and reference list errors
- Format errors (e.g., titles & headings, figures & tables, indentations, spacing)
- APA special purpose identifiers (e.g., italics to emphasize special terms)
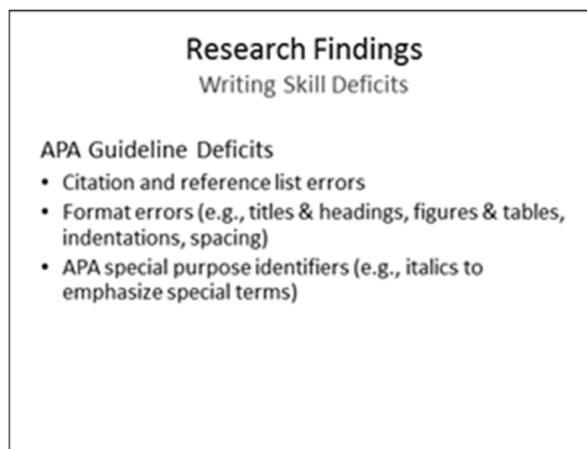
I observed APA guideline errors in most of the papers I reviewed. The majority of these errors had to do with citations and references. Several student participants acknowledged their struggles with APA formatting; however, adherence to APA guidelines was not at the forefront of faculty concerns regarding students' writing deficits.
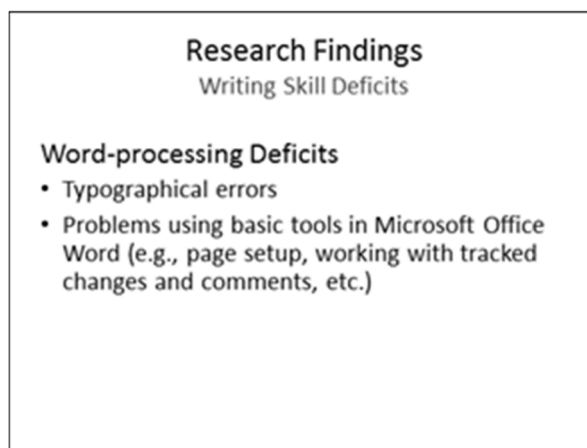
Research Findings
Writing Skill Deficits

Word-processing Deficits
- Typographical errors
- Problems using basic tools in Microsoft Office Word (e.g., page setup, working with tracked changes and comments, etc.)

Both faculty and student participants perceived that word-processing skills were problematic for some students. Correspondingly, I observed errors related to word-processing in all 10 of the papers I reviewed. Most errors involved page set up or simple typographical errors.

Research Findings
Writing Skill Deficits

Academic Authorship Deficits
- Organization, including missing or weak components (e.g., introduction, thesis statement, body, conclusions, etc.)
- Academic language (e.g., formal, precise, clear)
- Concept development (e.g., unexplained content)
- Critical thinking, including logical progression and reason
- Accuracy (e.g., paraphrasing, information sources)
- Support for claims

During the data analysis process, I found that many of the perceived and observed writing skill deficits were not matters of writing mechanics. I described them as academic authorship deficits. Some of the academic authorship deficits related to
- organization of the manuscript;
- academic language;
- concept development;
- critical thinking, including logical progression and reason;
- accuracy; and
- supporting claims.

Participant perceptions regarding academic authorship deficits were similar to my descriptions of observed deficits in the student papers. For example, most faculty participants and some student participants acknowledged student problems with organization, continuity, and cohesiveness in their written works. However, some deficits

that only a few participants identified were among the most prevalent academic authorship deficits I observed in the student writing samples. These included unexplained content, a lack of support for declarative statements, and word choice problems.

Regarding unexplained content and lack of support for statements, some students wrote statements in their papers that seemed disconnected from surrounding text. Concerning word choice problems, Lunsford and Lunsford (2008) found that the most common error in student papers was using a wrong word. Nevertheless, I was surprised at the abundance of misused words in the sample of students' papers that I reviewed. Some of the misused words obscured the meaning of the students' work, but some words were completely incorrect within the context of the sentence.

Writing development strategies for ISC must include opportunities for students to develop a wide variety of writing skills.

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Research Findings
Influences on Writing Skill Development

Three Themes
- Institutional influences on writing skill development
- Faculty influences on writing skill development
- Student influences on writing skill development

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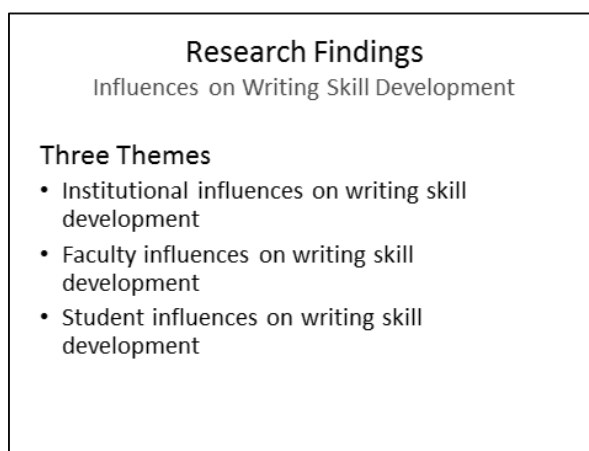
Analysis of the interview and questionnaire data yielded three themes describing perceptions of positive and negative influences on writing skill development. Initially, I intended to report positive and negative influences separately, but I found they tended to overlap extensively. For example, one participant identified a need for "clear instructions for writing assignments" as a positive influence on writing skill development while another participant stated that "unclear instructions for writing assignments" were a negative influence on writing development. Ultimately, I condensed all of the comments into three themes:
- institutional influences on writing skill development,
- faculty influences on writing skill development, and
- student influences on writing skill development.

Research Findings
Influences on Writing Skill Development

Institutional influences on writing skill development
- Writing instruction
- Writing expectations and policies
- Resources for writing development
- Writing instructor
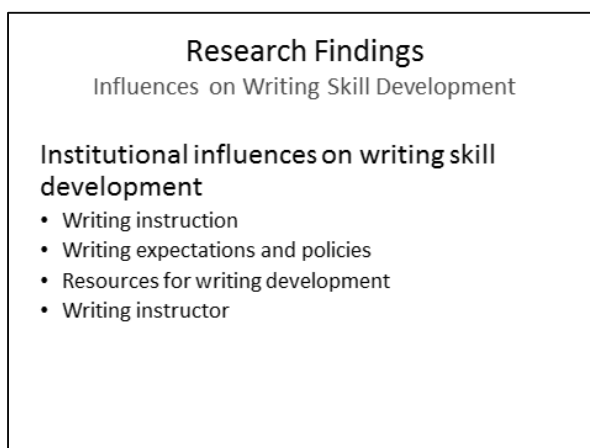
Participants perceived that the existing writing training offered at ISC positively influenced students' writing skill development, but that additional writing training would be beneficial. Specifically, several participants expressed a need for ISC students to receive writing training throughout their enrollment at ISC.

Several study participants perceived that clearly stated writing expectations and policies would positively influence writing skill development at ISC. However, at the time of this study, administrators and faculty members disagreed about some of the basic requirements in scholarly writing, especially regarding citing and references sources of information. Writing instruction at ISC will need to address writing expectations and policies, as well as the differences between personal narratives and research-based essays. Additionally, students will need to understand the expectations for each of their assignments.

Several participants suggested that a writing manual specific to ISC would help students develop their writing skills. Interestingly, few academic authors recommended institutional writing manuals, but an Internet search of university writing courses revealed that most universities or individual writing instructors provide a writing guide to students, and most of the guides contained the same elements that participants in this study requested:
- Clearly stated policies regarding academic integrity,
- Academic writing expectations,
- Resources to guide writing development, and
- Contact information for someone who could assist a student with writing development.

A writing guide for ISC students will positively influence students' writing skill development.

Participants perceived that it would be helpful for ISC to have a faculty member devoted to writing instruction.

In qualitative data analysis, a researcher must consider all of the salient data collected during the study, but he or she must also consider important factors that *do not appear in the data*. In this study, few participants mentioned the APA manual as a positive influence on writing skill development even though ISC requires students to adhere to APA standards for writing. Writing skills development among ISC students would likely improve if every faculty member and student owned and used a copy of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2010).
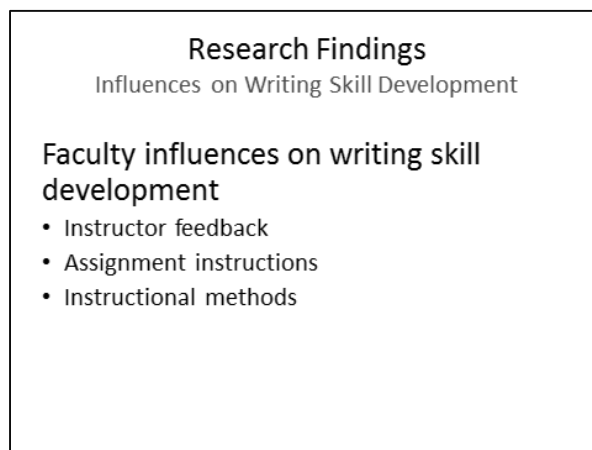
Faculty and student participants agreed that instructor feedback on assignments served as one of the more positive influences on student writing skill development. Students expected constructive feedback on their assignments. Instructors should continue to provide detailed, constructive feedback on student assignments.

Faculty and student participants acknowledged that many students applied their instructors' feedback recommendations in later assignments. Because students submit assignments on a monthly basis, it is important for instructors to grade assignments and supply feedback within two weeks of submission.

Several participants mentioned that students would benefit from clarification of assignment instructions.

Some study participants stated that instructional methods should accommodate the needs of adult learners who have a variety of learning styles and needs. Few adults learn best while sitting silently and listening to a lecture. Students would likely benefit from instructors using interactive activities, visual aids, and other opportunities to engage students with the instructional content.
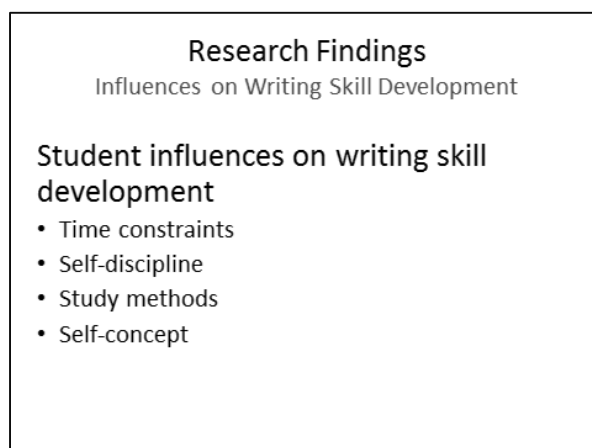
Research Findings
Influences on Writing Skill Development

Student influences on writing skill
development
- Time constraints
- Self-discipline
- Study methods
- Self-concept

The most commonly perceived negative influence on students' writing skill development was personal time constraints due to work and family responsibilities. Several students also had time-consuming responsibilities with their churches. Any writing development strategies for students at ISC must include considerations for time management.

Participants perceived that, in addition to time management skills, self-discipline regarding study habits and consistent avoidance of procrastination were keys to developing scholarly writing skills. Writing development strategies should include writing process practices that can help students use their time wisely.

Findings in this study indicated that ISC's students accepted a majority of the responsibility for their academic success. According to Knowles (Knowles et al., 2011), an adult's self-concept generally includes a sense of responsibility for his or her own decisions, and adults in this study seemed to view themselves as responsible for their own learning. Writing development strategies should include a variety of resources for self-directed writing development.
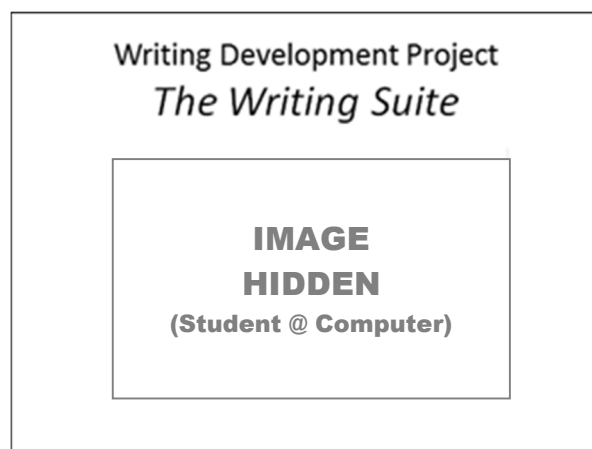
Writing Development Project
The Writing Suite

IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Student @ Computer)

The Writing Suite

The Writing Suite is an integrated, ongoing, writing instruction and assistance curriculum. It is a multifaceted and continuous writing development program to take place simultaneously and in conjunction with the institution's primary disciplinary programs.

The Writing Suite Goals

The Writing Suite has two primary goals:

- to help ISC administrators to
  - increase the school's positive influences on students' writing skill development and
  - mitigate potentially negative influences on student writing, and
- to provide academic writing training for all students throughout their courses of study at ISC.

The Writing Suite Components

- Student Guide to Academic Writing
- Diagnostic assessments of students' writing skills
- Academic writing instructional sessions
- Writing practice through regular course assignments
- Individual and small group writing assistance
- Resources for self-directed writing development

The Writing Suite

The *Student Guide to Academic Writing* will include
- ISC's policies and expectations regarding academic writing,
- student support available through the Writing Suite, and
- practical guidance for academic writing.

Student Guide to Academic Writing

The Writing Suite

Image by MAH

The Writing Suite

Diagnostic writing assessments
- Qualitative descriptions of writing skill deficits
- Initial assessment on a Core 1, 90-day essay assignment
- Recurrent assessments on 90-day essay assignments in Core 3 and Core 5
- Additional assessments upon faculty or student request

The Writing Suite

Academic writing instructional sessions
(2 hours during core residencies)
- Advanced Academic Writing 1 (Core A)
- Advanced Academic Writing 2 (Core B)
- Advanced Academic Writing 3 (Core C)
- Advanced Academic Writing 4 (Core D)
- Advanced Academic Writing 5 (Core E)
- Capstone Writing (Core F, separate sessions for each program of study)

The Writing Suite

Writing practice
- Students will practice the skills from the academic writing instructional sessions while they complete assignments for their disciplinary courses.

The Writing Suite

Writing assistance
- Face-to-face assistance during core residencies
- Online assistance between core residencies

The Writing Suite

Resources for self-directed writing development
- Writing Skill Websites with multiple resources for writing development
- Direct Internet links address specific writing skills
- Direct Internet links to writing skills practice exercises
- Tip Sheets from the Writing Suite

The Writing Suite

The Writing Suite is a six-semester, integrated, writing development curriculum designed to serve masters-level students throughout their active affiliation with ISC. This integrated writing curriculum is a multifaceted and continuous program focused on developing student writing skills in conjunction with the institution's existing programs. The purpose of the Writing Suite is to help graduate students at ISC to develop scholarly writing skills. Professional literature and findings from a qualitative study of students' writing skills at ISC guided the project development.

The Writing Suite includes several components designed to meet the specific needs of ISC and its students:

- a *Student Guide to Academic Writing*, which includes ISC's policies and expectations regarding academic writing, student support available through the Writing Suite, and practical guidance for student writing;

- initial and recurrent, qualitative, diagnostic assessments of students' writing skills;

- six academic writing instructional sessions, each consisting of one campus-based, 2-hour writing skills instructional session for students attending their core residencies;

- extensive writing practice through disciplinary course assignments;

- face-to-face and online, individual and small group writing assistance; and

- resources for self-directed writing development.

The Writing Suite has two primary goals:

- to help ISC administrators increase the school's positive influences on students' writing skill development as well as mitigate potentially negative influences on student writing and

- to provide academic writing training for all students throughout their courses of study at ISC.

Implementation of the Writing Suite should increase ISC's positive influences and mitigate potentially negative influences on students' writing skill development.

This document contains a description of the Writing Suite curriculum plan, including roles and responsibilities of personnel and students; equipment, materials, and resources needed; an implementation timetable; the scope and sequence for writing instructional sessions, and procedures for evaluating the program. Attached documents include a draft of the *Student Guide to Academic Writing*; a draft of the qualitative, diagnostic writing assessment instrument; sample survey instruments for evaluative feedback from students and faculty members; and instructional plans for Advanced Academic Writing I, II, and III.

Table A1 includes the roles and responsibilities of ISC personnel and students regarding the Writing Suite. Existing institutional personnel can fill all of the identified roles, but I recommend for ISC to hire an additional writing specialist to manage the Writing Suite, because the curriculum is designed to minimize time demands on school personnel except for the specialist. The managing writing specialist must devote

considerable time to writing instruction and assistance and diagnostic assessments of student writing, as well as to the ongoing program evaluation and subsequent revisions.

Table A2 contains itemized lists of the equipment, materials, and resources needed for implementation of the Writing Suite. Please note that the Writing Suite will not require *additional* equipment if ISC already has the equipment available. Additionally, ISC already has some of the educational resources needed, such as writing-intensive course assignments for all students in every term.

Table A3 is the implementation timetable for the Writing Suite. Some features of the Writing Suite will become available immediately following ISC approval of the curriculum. The Writing Suite should be in full operation within one year following administrative approval.

Table A4 contains the Scope and Sequence for developing writing skills throughout the curriculum. Campus-based instructional sessions will include focused work on specific skills. The Scope and Sequence table shows the focus skills for Advanced Academic Writing I, II, and III. Instructional content for Advanced Academic Writing IV and V will derive from current expressed or observed student needs. Instructional content for Capstone Writing sessions will derive from the specific capstone requirements for each program of study. In addition to the academic writing instructional sessions, students will have access to resources for self-directed writing skill development and individual writing assistance through the Writing Suite.

Table A1

Personnel and Students: Roles and Responsibilities

Personnel and Students: Roles and Responsibilities

Writing specialist
- Develop the *Student Guide to Academic Writing*.
- Select or develop a diagnostic writing skills assessment instrument to identify students' writing development needs.
- Plan and implement campus-based writing development instructional sessions during core residencies.
- Plan and implement strategies for individualized writing assistance.
- Select or develop student resources for self-directed writing development.
- Conduct program evaluations at the beginning and end of each core residency and after each student completes his or her program of studies.

Administrator
- Review and approve the *Student Guide to Academic Writing*.
- Review and approve the scope and sequence for the academic writing instructional sessions.
- Schedule one instructional period (approximately 2 hours) for each level of students in attendance during core residencies.

Office personnel
- Provide classroom-management-system access for writing specialist to post materials and review course assignments.
- Provide the writing specialist with e-mail addresses for current students, instructors, and administrators.
- Provide the writing specialist with enrollment data for upcoming core residencies.
- Publish hard copies of the *Student Guide to Academic Writing* for students and institutional personnel.
- Print handouts for instructional sessions.
- Print survey instruments for use during the first and last group gatherings of each residency.
- Make sure instructional settings are equipped with a working computer connected to a projector, a screen, and wireless Internet connections.
- Purchase two copies of the APA manual for the Writing Suite (to be used for instruction and writing assistance).
- Coordinate travel and accommodation plans with the writing specialist.

Course instructors
- Provide students with clear assignment instructions.
- Provide students with clear grading procedures, such as detailed rubrics that include values of required components.
- Provide students with feedback on written assignments.

Students
- Read and apply skills presented the *Student Guide to Academic Writing*.
- Attend writing instructional sessions.
- Practice writing skills while completing course assignments.
- Self-evaluate and "polish" written works prior to submission.
- Apply instructor feedback.

Table A2

Equipment, Materials, and Resources

Equipment: Administrative office

- Office computer
- Printer

Materials: Administrative office

- Printer ink
- Paper
- Binders or folders suitable for adding pages to the *Student Guide to Academic Writing*
- Staples for handouts

Equipment: Classroom

- Portable computer, connected to
- PowerPoint projector
- Screen
- Whiteboard
- Wireless Internet access
- Electrical connections for laptop computers
- Comfortable seating with desks or tables for all students

Materials: Classroom

- Whiteboard markers
- Whiteboard eraser

Equipment: Writing assistance area

- Comfortable seating with table
- Wireless Internet access
- Electrical connections for laptop computers

Materials: For the Writing Suite program

- APA manuals, at least two copies to remain on campus and designated for the Writing Suite

Resources: Financial

- Writing specialist compensation per agreement
- Travel and living accommodations for writing specialist's campus visits

Resources: Educational

- Writing-intensive course assignments for all students during every term
- Writing specialist access to students' submitted assignments
- Online platform to host Writing Suite self-help resources

Note. ISC may already have some of the equipment, materials, and resources listed. The Writing Suite will not need additional resources if existing resources are available.

Table A3

Implementation Timeline

Implementation	Writing Specialist Task
Immediately following Writing Suite approval	Contact office personnel to request the following: • access to the classroom management system • instructions for posting documents and links to student resources • e-mail addresses for current ISC affiliates
Within 1 week of receiving access to the classroom management system	Post links to resources for self-directed writing development
Immediately following the addition of resources to the system	Email ISC affiliates to inform them of the following: • individual writing assistance is available upon request • resources for self-directed writing development are available in the online classroom
Within 3 weeks of Writing Suite approval	Submit a draft of the instructional scope and sequence of all writing courses for administrative review and feedback
Within 1 month from administrative approval of scope and sequence	Finalize instructional plans for Advanced Academic Writing I
Within 1 year from administrative approval of scope and sequence (approximately 1 month each for Advanced Academic Writing II, III, IV, & V; approximately 2 months each for each program's capstone writing course)	Finalize instructional plans for all courses
Within 3 months of Writing Suite approval	Submit a draft of the *Student Guide to Academic Writing* for administrative review and feedback.
Within 1 month of receiving feedback on the guide	Finalize and publish the guide as a PDF document
Immediately following publication of the writing guide	Submit a request to the administrative office to print copies of the writing guide
Opening day of the first core residency with the Writing Suite	Introduce the Writing Suite to faculty and students Brief survey regarding needed assistance during the residency
Closing day of each core residency	Survey students and instructors regarding perceptions of and experiences with the Writing Suite
Opening day of subsequent core residencies	Introduce or promote the Writing Suite Survey students and instructors regarding • perceptions of and experiences with the Writing Suite between core residencies • needed assistance during the residency
Immediately following each residency	Organize and analyze data collected from surveys and observations Revise the Writing Suite to improve effectiveness

Table A4

Scope and Sequence for Writing Instructional Sessions

Skill	SS	IA	1	2	3	4	5	CW
Introduction to Academic Writing								
Academic Integrity	X	X	X					X
APA Manual	X	X	X					
Student Responsibilities	X	X	X	X	X			X
Writing Support	X	X	X					
Types of Writing	X	X	X					
Writing Process	X	X	X	X				
Planning	X	X		X				
Drafting	X	X		X				
Revising	X	X		X	Needs-based content	Needs-based content		
Editing	X	X		X				
Publishing (Submitting)	X	X		X				
Writing Words								
Word Choice	X	X	X					X
Clarity	X	X	X					
Meaning	X	X	X					
Thesaurus problems	X	X	X					
Word Mechanics	X	X	X					
Capitalization	X	X	X					
Italics	X	X	X					
Spelling	X	X						
Sentence Structure								
What is a sentence?	X	X	X					
Sentence clarity	X	X	X					
Run-on sentences	X	X	X					
Sentence fragments	X	X	X					
Punctuation	X	X	X	X				
Commas	X	X	X	X				
Colons	X	X		X				
Semicolons	X	X		X				
Hyphens	X	X		X				
Dashes & slashes	X	X		X				

(*table continues*)

Skill	SS	IA	1	2	3	4	5	CW
Sentence Structure								
Grammar	X	X	X					
Articles	X	X	X					
Prepositions	X	X	X	X				
Verbs	X	X	X	X				X
Nouns	X	X						
Placement of modifiers	X	X	X					
Parallel construction	X	X		X	X			
Agreement: singulars and plurals	X	X	X					
Agreement: pronouns and antecedents	X	X	X					
Agreement: anthropomorphisms	X	X	X	X	X			
Paragraph Structure								
What is a paragraph?	X	X	X					
Transitional sentences	X	X		X				
Word-Processing								
Typing skills	X	X	X					
Spelling and grammar checker	X	X	X					
Microsoft Word tools	X	X		X	X			X
APA guidelines								
Citations	X	X	X					
References	X	X	X					
Quotations	X	X		X				
Abbreviations	X	X			X			
Numbers as words or numerals	X	X			X			
Formatting	X	X			X			
Title page	X	X		X				
Margins	X	X			X			
Paragraphs	X	X			X			
Indentations	X	X			X			
Headers and footers	X	X			X			
Running head	X	X			X			

(*table continues*)

Skill	SS	IA	1	2	3	4	5	CW
Academic Authorship								
Organization	X	X	X	X				X
Introduction	X	X		X				X
Purpose	X	X		X				X
Purpose statement	X	X		X				X
Thesis statement	X	X		X				X
Problem statement	X	X		X				X
Content	X	X		X				X
Summaries	X	X		X				X
Conclusions	X	X		X				X
References	X	X	X	X				X
Required elements	X	X						X
Approach	X	X		X				X
Audience	X	X		X				X
Voice	X	X		X				X
Active vs. passive	X	X		X				
Authorial voice	X	X		X				X
Academic Language	X	X	X					X
Formal	X	X	X					
Clear	X	X	X					
Literal/precise	X	X	X					
Concise	X	X	X					
Accuracy	X	X	X					
Paraphrasing	X	X	X					
Summarizing	X	X	X					
Vocabulary	X	X	X					X
Accurate communication of ideas	X	X						X
Identify sources of ideas (self or other)	X	X		X				X
Knowledge	X	X	X					X
Clearly stated concepts	X	X	X					X
Fully developed concepts	X	X	X					X
All content must be relevant to the topic	X	X	X					X
Present both arguments and counterarguments					X			X

(*table continues*)

Skill	SS	IA	1	2	3	4	5	CW
Academic Authorship								
Literature	X	X		X				X
Analysis (quality of sources)	X	X		X				X
Synthesis (combining information)	X	X		X				X
Critical thinking	X	X	X	X	X			X
Integrate knowledge from multiple sources	X	X			X			X
Demonstrate academic insightfulness	X	X			X			X
Apply knowledge and insight to solve problems	X	X			X			X
Support opinions and arguments	X	X		X				X
Evaluate contradictions	X	X			X			X
Make comparisons	X	X		X				X
Draw conclusions based on logical reasoning	X	X	X	X	X			X
Close with implications and recommendations	X	X						X
Attributes of Excellence	X	X		X	X			X
Clarity	X	X		X	X			X
Fluency	X	X			X			X
Cohesiveness	X	X			X			X
Coherence	X	X			X			X

Note. SS = self-study (with resource provided); IA = individual assistance (available through the Writing Suite); 1-5 = Advanced Academic Writing instructional sessions; CW = Capstone Writing instructional sessions.

Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan for the Writing Suite is a practical action research design involving collection, analysis, and interpretation of formative evaluation data. Creswell (2012) explained that action research involves systematically collecting and analyzing data followed by developing an action plan and implementing changes. A researcher-practitioner working in the study setting conducts the action research.

Practical action research generally takes place in educational settings with teachers conducting the research (Creswell, 2012). The writing specialist assigned to oversee the Writing Suite will conduct this evaluation by collecting and analyzing the following types of data:

- qualitative assessments of writing skills before and after writing instruction,

- survey data describing participant perceptions of each type of service offered through the Writing Suite, and

- observational data collected by the writing specialist during classroom instruction, individual writing assistance, casual conversations, and group discussions (see Table 16).

Data interpretation will include reflection upon what worked well and what needs improvement. Following the data interpretation, the writing specialist will take action to make improvements to the Writing Suite.

A guiding premise in the project development was adult learners have highly individualistic needs for writing development. Writing development needs can change continuously due to several factors:

- Adult students begin their studies with different writing development needs.

- Adults develop their writing skills at different rates.

- Adult students learn in different ways.

- Changes in the student body take place each term.

Furthermore, this study involved only 14 interviews, five questionnaires, and 10 writing samples. The study findings provided insight into the writing development needs at ISC, but I fully expect additional needs for the Writing Suite curriculum will begin surfacing soon after project implementation. The project design must accommodate modification as required to meet both the needs of ISC's adult students and the institutional needs for program expansion or revision.

Table A5

Evaluation Data for Writing Suite Components

Key elements of the Writing Suite	Survey	Writing assessments	Observations
Classroom instruction	X	X	X
Individual assistance	X		X
Student Guide to Academic Writing	X		X
Diagnostic writing assessments	X	X	X
Writing practice through course assignments	X	X	X
Resources for self-directed writing development	X		X
Writing specialist	X		X
Overall curriculum	X	X	X

Note: See Supplement 3 for survey instruments and Supplement 2 for writing assessment instrument.

Supplement 1

Instructional Plan

Advanced Academic Writing I

Methodology: Advanced Academic Writing I will consist of one 2-hour instructional session during the Core A residency. Core A students will meet with the writing specialist and participate in an interactive seminar.

Level: Master's level graduate students

Learners: Adult learners who are attending the Core A residency for any of ISC's master's programs:

- Master of Education in Assessment, Research, and Education Leadership
- Master of Science in Organizational Leadership
- Master of Arts in Family Life Education

Materials: *Student Guide to Academic Writing*, APA Manual, handouts of the PowerPoint presentation, and handout on capitalization

Objectives: By the end of the instructional session, students will have gained a basic understanding of

1. academic writing and the institution's policy on academic integrity;
2. the APA manual and how to use it;
3. student responsibilities regarding academic writing;
4. the availability of writing resources and assistance;
5. the differences between research-based essays and personal narrative essays;
6. how to choose clear and precise words to communicate in writing;

7. general and APA-specific rules for capitalization;

8. APA rules for using italics;

9. the significance of sound sentence structure, including punctuation, grammatical correctness, and internal agreement;

10. the guidelines for writing paragraphs;

11. characteristics of academic language; and

12. basic content of academic writing, including presentation of knowledge and evidence of critical thinking.

Lesson Plan:

1. Introduce participants and the writing specialist.

2. Use the PowerPoint presentation with talking points to discuss academic writing.

   a. Use the APA manual and student guide to show key contents of the books.

   b. Provide contact information for students to reach the writing specialist.

3. Demonstrate how students can access resources for self-directed writing development.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Note. All visible images are public domain unless otherwise indicated.

At ISC, we follow the writing guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010). You will need to purchase a copy of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition.*
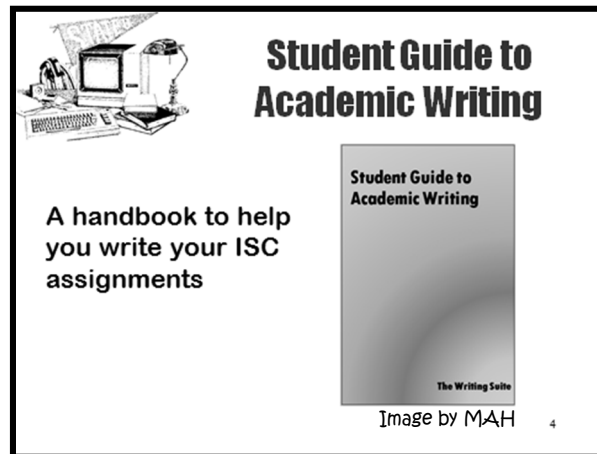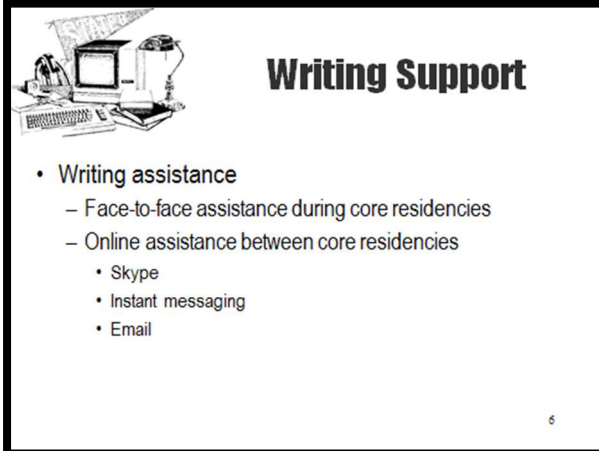
Review Table of Contents in the Student Guide
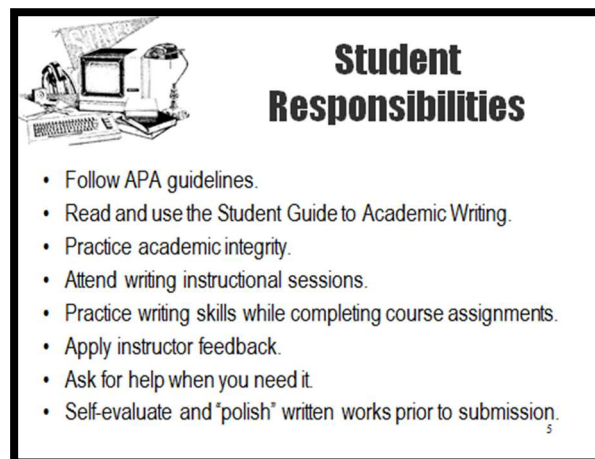
Discuss the list.

Review Academic Integrity – Student Guide, pp. 2-3
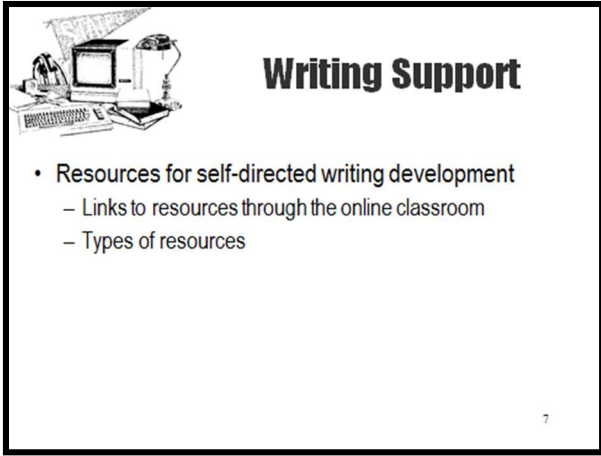
Refer to the writing specialist's contact information in the guide, p. 7.

Some resources are listed in the student guide.

Types of resources include
- university writing center websites,
- online explanations of specific writing skills,
- printable writing exercises and answers to compare with your work,
- interactive writing exercises, and
- audio and video instructions.

Talk about the first two types of essay assignments (Student Guide, p. 8).

Direct attention to the Writing Process (Student guide, p. 10).
Emphasize that writing takes time!

Discuss terms (Student Guide, p. 11)

Show example of poor choice from thesaurus

Show capitalization rules from OWL at Purdue
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/592/01/

Use APA Manual index to find capitalization and italics rules

Show English Club, "What is a sentence?"
(https://www.englishclub.com/grammar/sentence-what.htm)

Show Purdue OWL on sentence clarity
(https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/600/01/)

Show Grammarly Handbook: Punctuation
(http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/punctuation/) & explore links

Discuss the serial comma

Show Basic English Grammar at YourDictionary
(http://grammar.yourdictionary.com/grammar-rules-and-tips/basic-english-grammar-rules.html) and Grammarly Handbook (http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/)

Show Purdue OWL Articles (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/540/01/)

Show Purdue OWL Prepositions (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/974/1/)

Show Grammarly Handbook: Verbs
(http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/grammar/verbs/)

Mention English Club: Verbs; advise to explore each link

Show Grammarly Handbook: Modifiers
(http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/sentences/modifiers/)
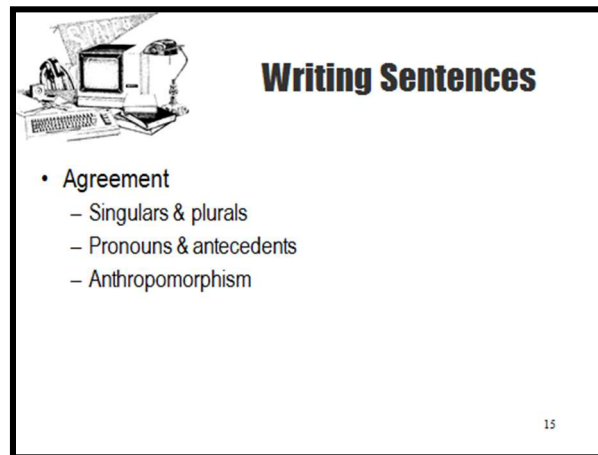
Show Writing Commons on singulars and plurals
(http://writingcommons.org/index.php/open-text/style/grammar/706-subject-verb-agreement)
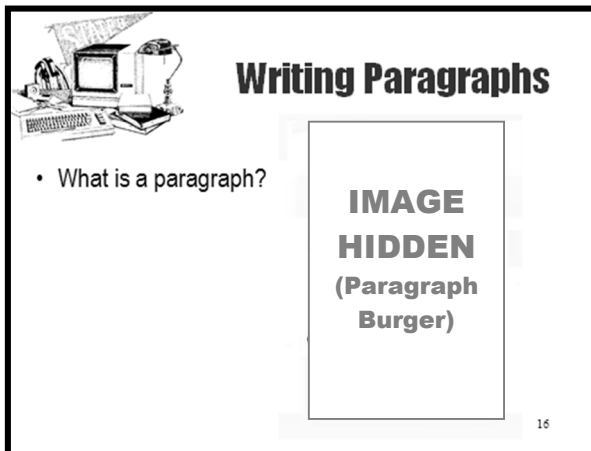
Show Guide to Grammar & Writing on pronouns
(http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/pronouns.htm)

Show Walden Writing Center on anthropomorphism
(http://writingcenter.waldenu.edu/Documents/Scholarly-Writing/Anthropomorphisms.pdf)
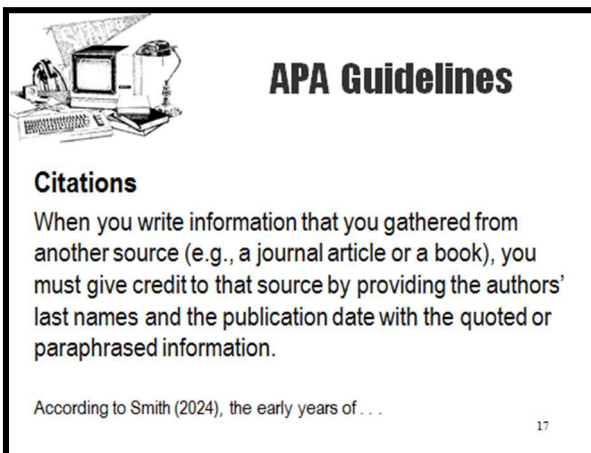
Show Purdue OWL: Paragraphs and Paragraphing
(https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/01/)

Mention Guide to Grammar & Writing paragraph page with examples and explanations

After discussing paragraphs, mention word-processing and using the spelling and grammar checker in Word.

There are variations in how you write your citations depending on the number of authors, whether you have paraphrased or quoted the source, and the type of source (e.g., it is not necessary to list the Bible in your reference list, but you must provide the version of the Bible in the citation).

APA Guidelines

References
- Title the page "References"
- Place the references in alphabetical order
- Use double spacing throughout the list

Smith, A. A. (2024). The early 21st century. *Journal of Future History, 12*(1), 1-10. doi.1000000000000

You must create a reference list with publication details for sources you have cited in your paper. Place the reference list at the end of your paper on a new page.

Again, there are many variations in how you must write your references depending on the number of authors, type of source, and method for accessing the source. Use the APA manual diligently, and pay attention to details such as punctuation, parentheses, capitalization, italics, and spaces.

Beyond Mechanics
ACADEMIC AUTHORSHIP

Academic Language

Academic _language_ is _formal…_

IMAGE HIDDEN (Formal Dress)

Academic language is not _informal_.

IMAGE HIDDEN (Text Message Acronyms)

20

Show Purdue OWL: Appropriate Language at
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/608/01/

Discuss the subtopics

Academic Language

Academic language is _clear…_
It is not _ambiguous_.

IMAGE HIDDEN (Optical Illusion)

21

Accuracy & Precision

Academic Writing requires _Accuracy_ and _Precision_

IMAGE HIDDEN (Accuracy & Precision Matrix)

22

Discuss accuracy and precision

Accuracy & Precision

Academic writing requires accuracy & precision when
- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing
- Selecting vocabulary

23

Accuracy & Precision

NO Distortion

IMAGE HIDDEN
(Distorted Mona Lisa)

24

Knowledge

- *Know* about your topic
- Clearly *communicate* knowledge
- Fully *develop* each concept
- Keep all content *relevant* to the purpose of your writing

25

Discuss literature, original research, and examples as the support columns for opinions, claims (declarative statements), and arguments.

Critical Thinking

Draw conclusions. . .

IMAGE HIDDEN (Drawing)

29

Critical Thinking

Don't *jump* to conclusions!

IMAGE HIDDEN (Jumping)

30

Reference

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

31

Advanced Academic Writing II

Methodology: Advanced Academic Writing I will consist of one 2-hour instructional session during the Core B residency. Core B students will meet with the writing specialist and participate in an interactive seminar.

Level: Master's level graduate students

Learners: Adult learners who are attending the Core B residency for any of ISC's master's programs:

- Master of Education in Assessment, Research, and Education Leadership

- Master of Science in Organizational Leadership

- Master of Arts in Family Life Education

Materials: *Student Guide to Academic Writing*, APA Manual, and handouts of the PowerPoint presentation

Objectives: By the end of the instructional session, students will have gained a basic understanding of

1. the writing process, including planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing;

2. punctuation rules for commas, semicolons, colons, hyphens, dashes, and slashes;

3. how to choose prepositions;

4. appropriate verb tenses;

5. parallel construction in sentences and lists;

6. transitional sentences for linking paragraphs;

7. APA guidelines for writing direct quotations;

8. APA guidelines for title pages;

9. how to use Microsoft Word tools for fonts, find and replace text, spelling and grammar checker, and the thesaurus;

10. manuscript organization;

11. academic approach and presentation (audience and voice);

12. accurate identification of sources (self and others);

13. analysis and synthesis of literature;

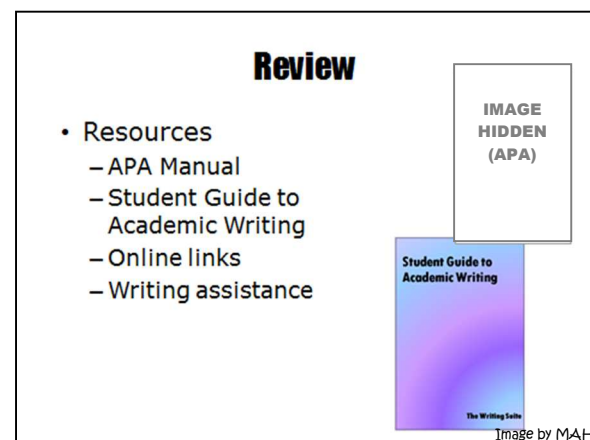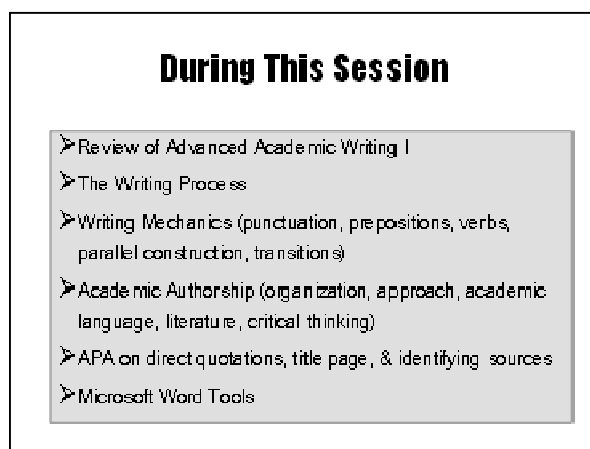14. making comparisons as part of critical thinking; and

15. reviewing a manuscript to ensure clarity.

Lesson Plan:

1. Introduce participants and the writing specialist.

2. Use the PowerPoint presentation with talking points to discuss academic writing.

    a. Use the APA manual and student guide to show key contents of the books.

    b. Provide contact information for students to reach the writing specialist.

3. Demonstrate how students can access resources for self-directed writing development.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Note. All visible images are public domain unless otherwise indicated.

> **Advanced
> Academic Writing II**
>
> **From The Writing Suite**

Introduce participants & facilitator

> **During This Session**
>
> ➢ Review of Advanced Academic Writing I
>
> ➢ The Writing Process
>
> ➢ Writing Mechanics (punctuation, prepositions, verbs, parallel construction, transitions)
>
> ➢ Academic Authorship (organization, approach, academic language, literature, critical thinking)
>
> ➢ APA on direct quotations, title page, & identifying sources
>
> ➢ Microsoft Word Tools

> **Review**
>
> IMAGE HIDDEN (APA)
>
> • Resources
>   – APA Manual
>   – Student Guide to Academic Writing
>   – Online links
>   – Writing assistance
>
> Student Guide to Academic Writing
>
> The Writing Suite
>
> Image by MAH

Review

- Student responsibilities
  - Follow APA guidelines.
  - Read and use the Student Guide to Academic Writing.
  - Practice academic integrity.
  - Attend writing instructional sessions.
  - Practice writing skills while completing course assignments.
  - Apply instructor feedback.
  - Ask for help when you need it.
  - Self-evaluate and "polish" written works prior to submission.

Review

- Completing assignments
- Writing Words
  - Word choice – clarity, precise meaning, thesaurus problems
  - Word mechanics – capitalization, italics
- Writing Sentences
  - Sentence clarity
  - Punctuation and the serial comma
  - Grammar (articles, prepositions, verbs, & modifiers)
  - Agreement
- Writing Paragraphs

Review

- APA Guidelines
  - Citations
  - References
- Academic Authorship
  - Academic language (formal, clear, literal/precise, & concise)
  - Accuracy & Precision
  - Knowledge (clear, relevant, & fully developed concepts)
  - Critical thinking (support, logical reasoning)

Discuss list

We will review critical thinking later in the session.

The Writing Process

- **Planning** (outlining & alternatives)

Image by MAH
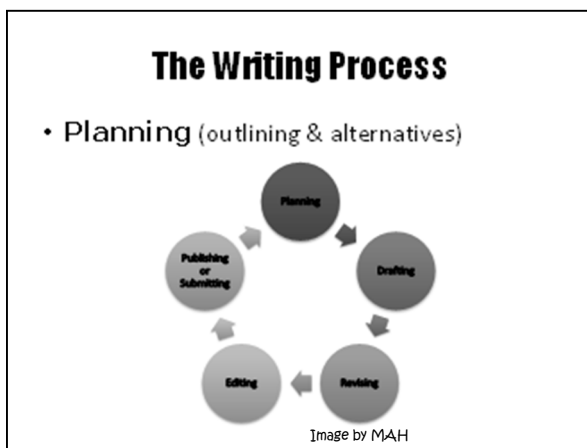
There are many versions of The Writing Process. This is the example I chose for the Student Guide, because it covers the main steps you need to follow before submitting your work. Planning, for some, means writing an outline to organize the concepts you want to include in your paper. I have never been very good at outlining a paper before I write it, but if you cannot outline your paper after you have written it, then it is not written well. In other words, you have one topic for the entire paper. Then you have main ideas related to that topic and details explaining the main ideas. The main ideas are sections or paragraphs, depending on how much you are writing. The explanatory details are the sentences in the paragraphs. If you are skilled with outlining your thoughts before writing your paper, that's great. If not, here are some other planning ideas.

The Writing Process

- **Planning** (outlining & alternatives)

IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Spider Chart)
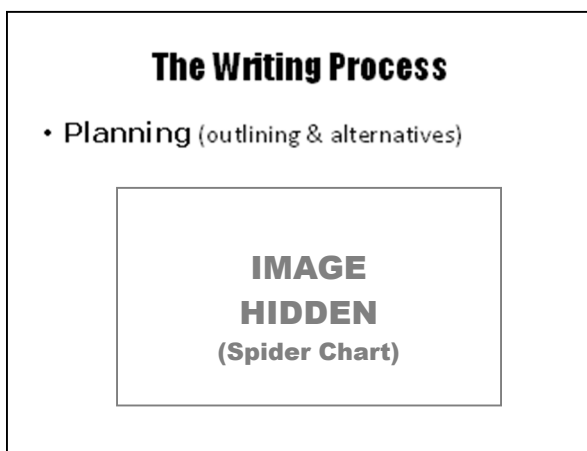
Here's one idea: Write your topic in the middle of a sheet of paper and then write ideas related to that topic around the edges. Once you have your main ideas, number them in a logical order.
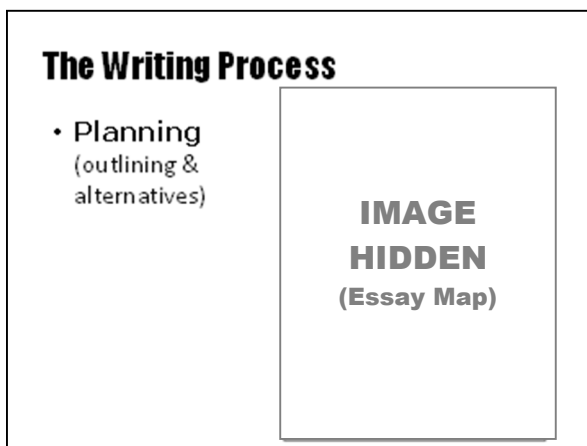
Another way to plan an essay is using an essay map. Write your topic at the top of a page. Underneath the topic, you can write thoughts about your introduction, but be aware your introduction will likely change as you work on your paper. Write your main ideas in columns underneath the introduction, and write explanatory details under the main ideas. Finally, at the bottom of the sheet, put your thoughts about a conclusion.
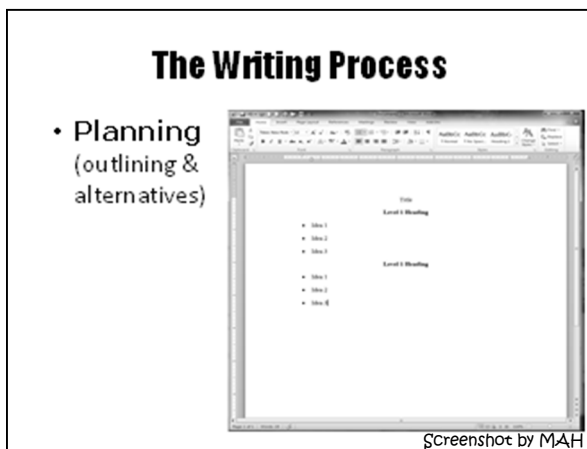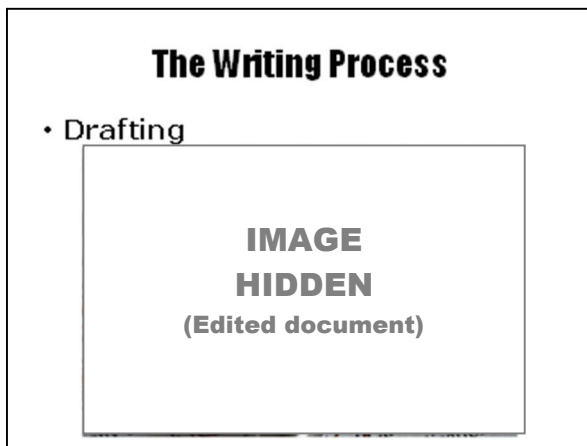

And here is one more planning technique. This is my personal method for planning a written work, whether it is a short essay or a dissertation or a project study. I start with the title or topic at the top of the page. Then I type in my Level 1 headings which are my main ideas. Next, I type my details into a bullet list. Sometimes I will group the smaller ideas into subtopics related to a main idea. One reason I really like to plan this way is I can quickly note my ideas before I forget them. I can develop them into sentences and paragraphs and add citations after I have noted the ideas. You will need to find a planning strategy that works for you.

The Writing Process
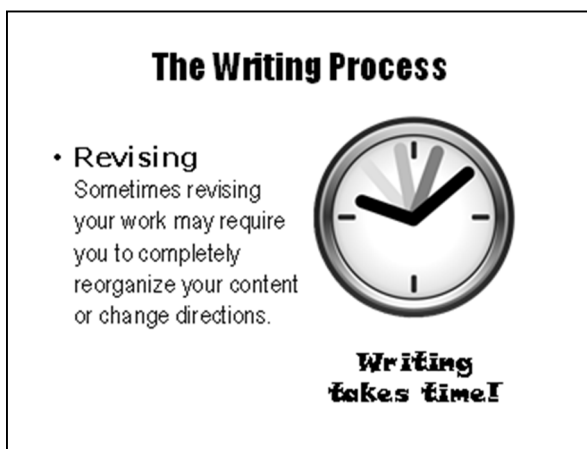
• Drafting

IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Writer)
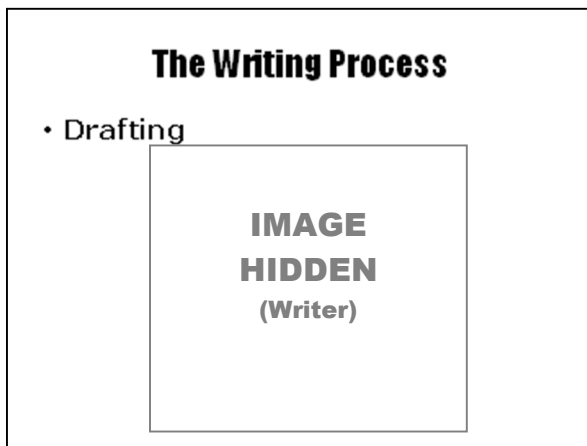
The second step in the writing process is drafting, or writing a rough draft. Write. This is not the draft you will submit for a grade. When you have completed your first draft, it is such a relief! You look at all your hard work and you see it like…

The Writing Process

• Drafting

IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Perfect document)
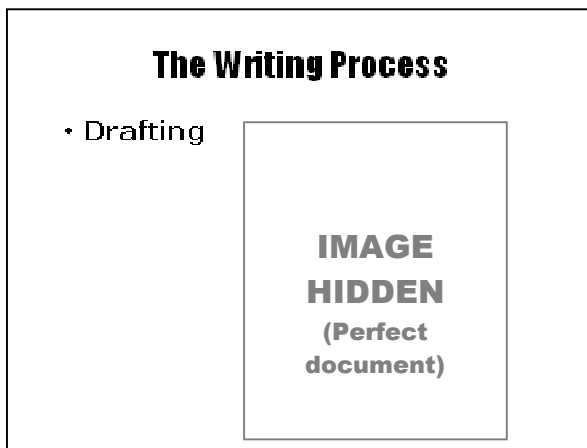
This! Then, you have someone else take a look, and it comes back looking like…

The Writing Process

• Drafting

IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Edited document)

This! Expect to make major revisions. If I review a rough draft, it will look a lot like this one…even if it is my own rough draft.

The Writing Process

• Revising
Sometimes revising your work may require you to completely reorganize your content or change directions.

Writing takes time!

Plan to spend time developing your writing skills, and plan to spend time writing and rewriting your assignments.

After you revise and rewrite your paper, usually several times, you will then need to edit or polish the final draft.

Allow enough time for you to click "submit" when your paper is finished and polished instead of clicking on submit because you are out of time. Master your time management.
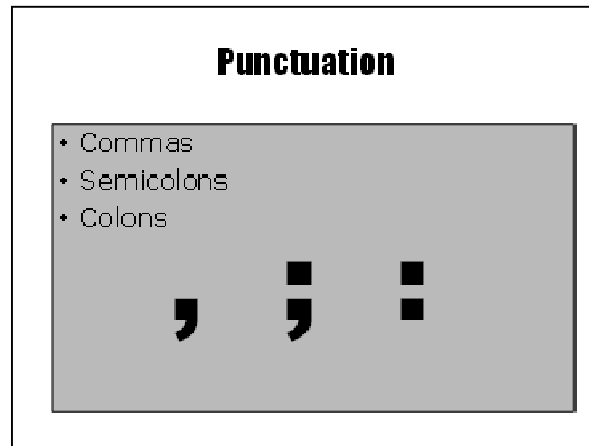
Show Purdue OWL: Conquering the Comma,
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/692/01/, and click on the link to the
Conquering the Comma PowerPoint Presentation

Purdue OWL: Commas, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/607/01/, and click
through the links by clicking the "Next Resource" button at the bottom

Purdue OWL: Sentence Punctuation Patterns,
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/604/01/

Grammarly Handbook: Comma,
http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/punctuation/comma/

Show Purdue OWL: Sentence Punctuation Patterns,
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/604/01/, Pattern 3 & Pattern 4

Grammarly Handbook: Semicolon,
http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/punctuation/semicolon/

Show Grammarly Handbook: Colon,
http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/punctuation/colon/
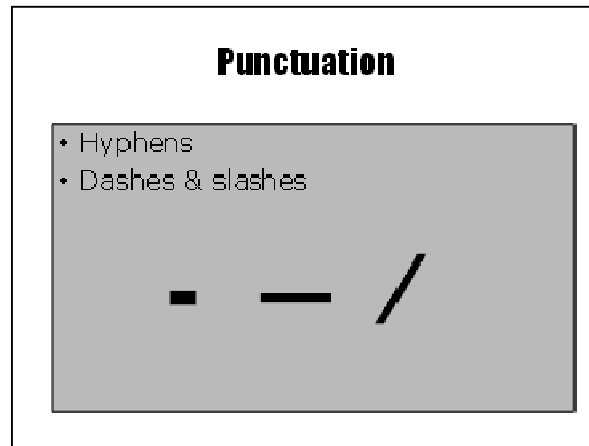
Hyphens (see Grammarly Handbook: Hyphen,
http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/punctuation/hyphen/)

Dashes (see Grammarly Handbook: Dash,
http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/punctuation/dash/)
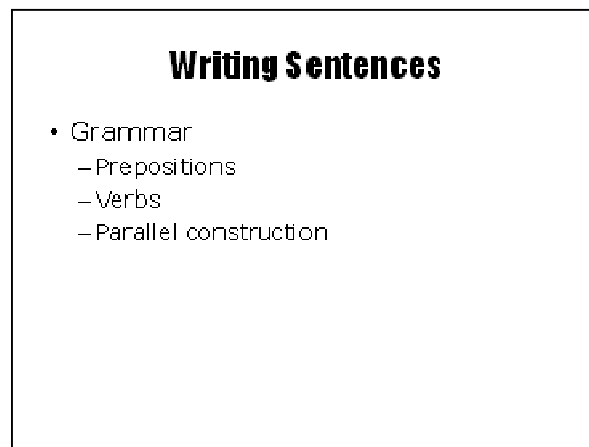
For basic grammar, show YourDictionary on Basic English Grammar,
http://grammar.yourdictionary.com/grammar-rules-and-tips/basic-english-grammar-rules.html

For prepositions, show Prepositions (see Purdue OWL pages at
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/974/1/
Also recommended, you may purchase a downloadable English preposition book at
https://www.englishclub.com/download/english-prepositions-list.htm

For verbs, show Grammarly Handbook: Verbs,
http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/grammar/verbs/ and

English Club: Verbs, https://www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/verbs.htm; click through the various links

For parallel construction, show Guide to Grammar & Writing: Parallel Form, http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/parallelism.htm

Transitions

- Connect paragraphs with transitional sentences.

IMAGE HIDDEN
(Paragraph Burger & Connect Button)

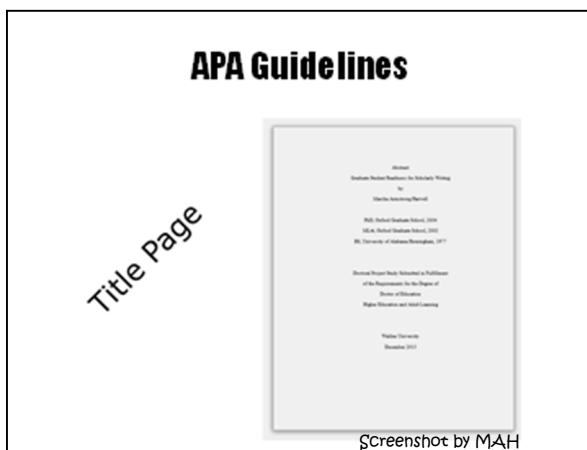Show Purdue OWL: Transitions & Transitional Devices, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/574/1/, and click next resource

APA Guidelines

Direct Quotations

IMAGE HIDDEN
(APA Manual)

Quotations (see APA, 2010, pp. 92-93, 171-174)

APA, 2010, p. 229

Show Home Tab
On the Home Tab:
      In the Clipboard box:
            Format Painter
      In the Font box:
            Change upper and lower case (Aa)
            Note: APA recommends Times New Roman 12
      In the Paragraph box (also see Student Guide, p. 5)
            Numbered and Bulleted lists
            Reduce or increase indentation
            Sort
            Show/Hide (¶)
            Borders
      In the Editing box
            Find → Advanced Find

Replace
Select

On the Review Tab
On the Review tab
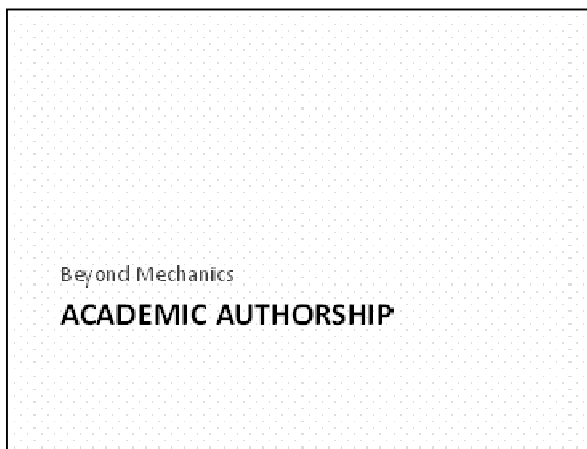   In the Proofing box
        Spelling & Grammar
        Thesaurus
    In the Comments box
        New comment, etc.
    In the Tracking box
        Track Changes (see Student Guide, p. 4)
    In the Changes box (Accept, reject)

Beyond Mechanics
ACADEMIC AUTHORSHIP

Organization

• Introduction

IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Introducing)

Show Guide to Grammar & Writing: A Proper Introduction at
http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/intros.htm

Organization

- Purpose
  - Purpose statement
  - Thesis statement
  - Problem statement

Show Guide to Grammar & Writing: The Thesis Statement,
http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/composition/thesis.htm

Organization

- Content
  - Content, or the body of your paper, differs depending on the genre or type of writing you are doing.
  - Logical progression: In every type of writing, it is important to organize the content to progress logically from the introduction to the conclusion.

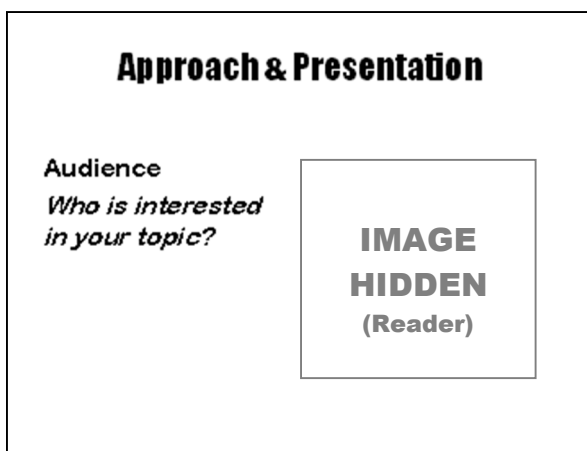**Organization**

- Summaries & Conclusions
  - Two common types of summaries
    - Literature summaries
    - Content summaries
  - Conclusions are not summaries
    - A conclusion might *include* a summary
    - Conclusions infer meaning

Two common types of summaries
• A summary of the literature regarding your topic
• A summary of the content of your paper

Conclusions are not the same as summaries
• When you write your conclusion section or paragraph, you might include a brief summary of your content, but the summary alone is not a conclusion.
• You draw conclusions by applying logical reasoning to the content you have written, reported, explained.
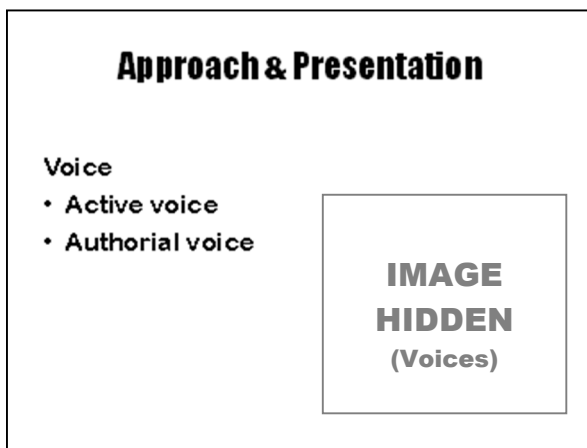• We will discuss this further in a few minutes.

Approach & Presentation

Audience
Who is interested in your topic?

IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Reader)

OWL on Identifying and Audience at
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/658/04/

Walden Writing Center on Scholarly Voice: Audience at
http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/scholarlyvoice/audience

Approach & Presentation

Voice
• Active voice
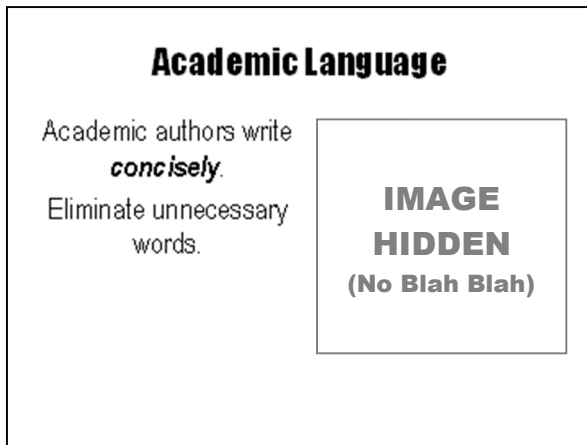• Authorial voice

IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Voices)

Grammarly Handbook: Passive Voice at
http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/organization-and-development/text-level-
measurements-adequate-writing/3/passive-voice/

Purdue OWL on Active and Passive Voice at
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/539/1/, click through several pages
explaining active and passive voice

Authorial voice: characterized by an author's ability to present strong and well-supported
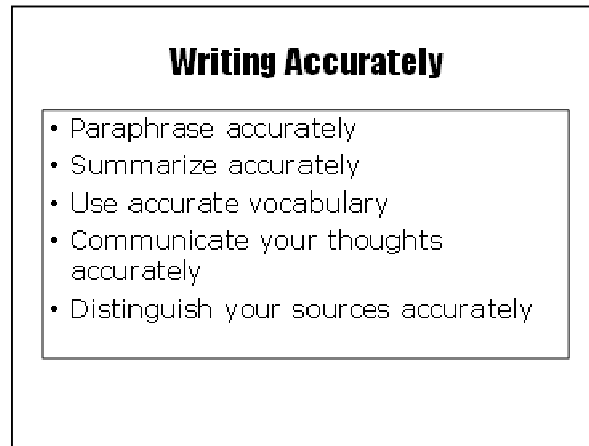claims that establish the author's identity as an expert in the field

Academic Language

- Formal
- Clear
- Literal/precise

IMAGE

HIDDEN

(Dress, Illusion, Precision)
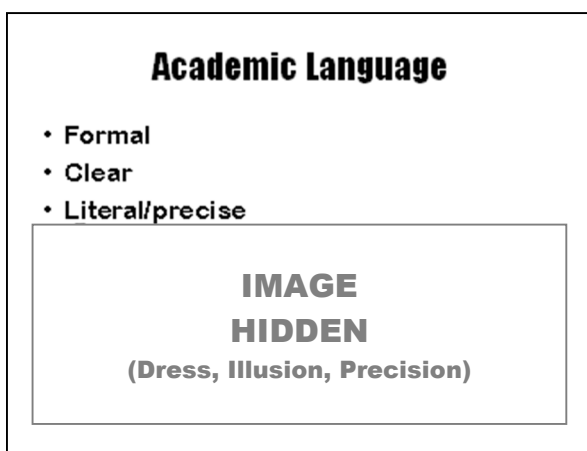
We discussed these features of academic language in Advanced Academic Writing I.
Discuss briefly.

Academic Language

Academic authors write *concisely*.
Eliminate unnecessary words.

IMAGE

HIDDEN

(No Blah Blah)

Today, I want to emphasize conciseness in academic writing.
APA, 2010, p. 67, "economy of expression"

Purdue OWL: Conciseness, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/572/1/, click through the conciseness pages

Writing Accurately

- Paraphrase accurately
- Summarize accurately
- Use accurate vocabulary
- Communicate your thoughts accurately
- Distinguish your sources accurately

Show Purdue OWL on Paraphrase: Write it in Your Own Words at https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/1/
        OWL also has a practice exercise for paraphrasing

Purdue OWL: Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/01/
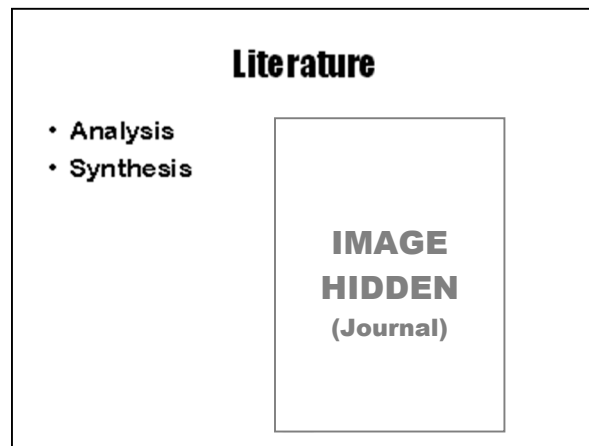
Purdue OWL: Summarizing, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/976/03/

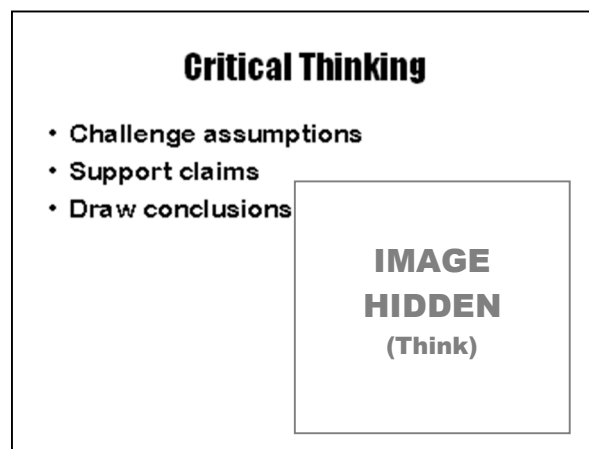We have already discussed using accurate vocabulary.

Accurate communication of ideas: Make sure your audience understands the ideas you intended to communicate. One way to check this is to ask someone else to read your writing and tell you what he or she understands.

Identify sources of ideas (self or other): When integrating your own thoughts and ideas you learned from other sources, clearly differentiate the information sources.
- When citing a source, place the citation to indicate clearly which information came from that source.
- Do not credit a source with an entire idea if only a portion of that idea came from that source.
- Integrate your own thoughts and interpretations regarding the topic in a way that clearly differentiates which ideas are your own.

Literature

- Analysis
- Synthesis

IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Journal)

Using English for Academic Purposes: Doing the Research: Evaluating Sources, http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm

Critical Thinking

- Challenge assumptions
- Support claims
- Draw conclusions

IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Think)

Critical thinking is important throughout academic writing, from planning to polishing.

In Advanced Academic Writing I, we discussed three elements of critical thinking:
- Challenge your own assumptions (did anyone have any memorable experiences with challenging your assumptions since then?)
- Support claims, opinions, and arguments with literature, original research, and examples.
- Draw conclusions—don't jump to conclusions.
  We talked about conclusions a few minutes ago when we were discussing organization of your manuscript. Your conclusions should showcase your critical thinking skills.
    - Conclusions might include your position regarding an issue (again, derived logically from what you have already written).
    - Conclusions often include personal insight into an issue (e.g., two seemingly opposing positions, perhaps both or neither are correct)

- Conclusions often indicate how one might apply knowledge and reason to solve a real life problem.

Critical Thinking

CONCLUSIONS

First	Then
IMAGE HIDDEN (In the box)	IMAGE HIDDEN (Out of the box)
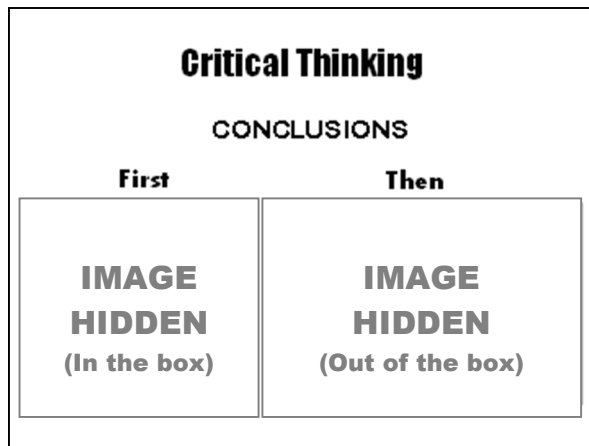
Let's look a little further into drawing conclusions.

We have all heard references to "thinking outside of the box."

Perhaps there are several meanings to the phrase, but I want to talk about "the box" that's important when you are writing conclusions.

The box is the content of your paper. The box contains all that you have written about your topic: all your citations, all your explanations, everything you have written—nothing more.

So, first, you must think *inside* the box. All you have to work with is the content of your paper thus far. Think about that.

Then, get your thinking out of the box. Open the box. You still must work with the content of your paper, but now you can explain the meaning. Given all that you have written about the topic, what does it mean? What insight do you have that none of the other writers mentioned?

Critical Thinking

- Make comparisons

IMAGE HIDDEN (Apple & Orange)
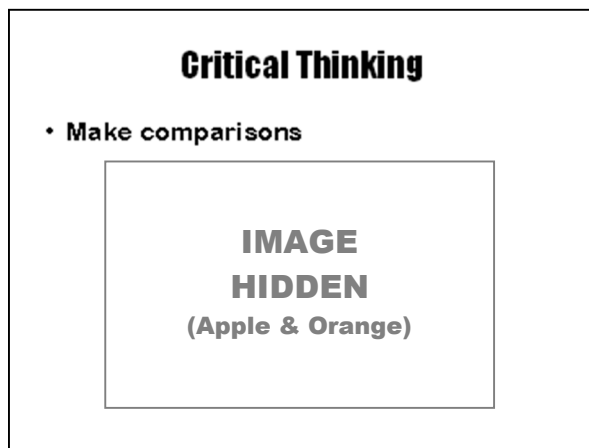
Today we are going to look at one more tactic for applying critical thinking in your writing.

Make comparisons. Compare and contrast.

- Resources
- Theories
- Past, present, future
- Perspectives

Comparing and contrasting ideas is one form of critical thinking:

- Complete the comparison
- Complete the contrast
- Make sure the comparisons and contrasts are logical.

Polishing

IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Clarity)

In the Student Guide, you will see a list that I call "Attributes of Excellence."

I want to close today by talking about one of these qualities: clarity.

We have talked about clarity in regards to choosing words and the importance of clear language for academic writing.

We have talked about sentence clarity.

We have talked about clearly explaining your ideas and clearly differentiating your sources.

And you can see two quotes on page 12:

- "Clear writing takes a substantial amount of time and effort."
- "If the paper is not clear and concise, content will not matter."

So, let's talk, why is clarity so important?

[Discussion]

When you are "polishing" your paper for submission, you should scour every detail to ensure clarity.

- As the writer, have you communicated your ideas precisely?
- When someone else reads your paper, will he or she clearly understand your ideas?

Reference

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Ragins, B. R. (2012). Editor's comments: Reflections on the craft of clear writing. *Academy of Management Review, 37*(4), 493-501. doi:0.M65/amr.2012.0165

Advanced Academic Writing III

Methodology: Advanced Academic Writing III will consist of one 2-hour instructional session during the Core C residency. Core C students will meet with the writing specialist and participate in an interactive seminar.

Level: Master's level graduate students

Learners: Adult learners who are attending the Core C residency for any of ISC's master's programs:

- Master of Education in Assessment, Research, and Education Leadership
- Master of Science in Organizational Leadership
- Master of Arts in Family Life Education

Materials: *Student Guide to Academic Writing*, APA Manual, handouts of the PowerPoint presentation, and handout on capitalization

Objectives: By the end of the instructional session, students will have gained a basic understanding of

1. APA guidelines for using abbreviations;
2. APA guidelines for expressing numbers as words or numerals;

3. APA guidelines for margins, indentations, and spacing;

4. Microsoft Word tools for formatting margins, orientations, paper size, page and section breaks, paragraphs, and indentations;

5. components of an argumentative essay;

6. characteristics of critical thinking, such as integrating knowledge from multiple sources, demonstrating academic insightfulness, applying knowledge to solve problems, and evaluating contradictions; and

7. attributes of excellence in academic writing, including clarity, fluency, cohesion, and coherence.

Lesson Plan:

1. Introduce participants and the writing specialist.

2. Use the PowerPoint presentation with talking points to discuss academic writing.

   a. Use the APA manual and student guide to show key contents of the books.

   b. Provide contact information for students to reach the writing specialist.

3. Demonstrate how students can access resources for self-directed writing development.

PowerPoint Presentation:

Note. All visible images are public domain unless otherwise indicated.
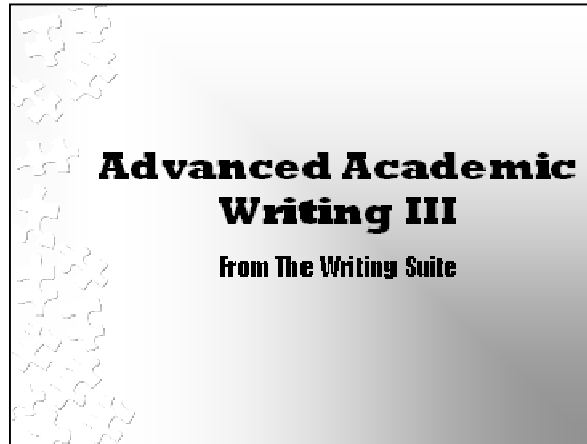
Introduce participants & facilitator
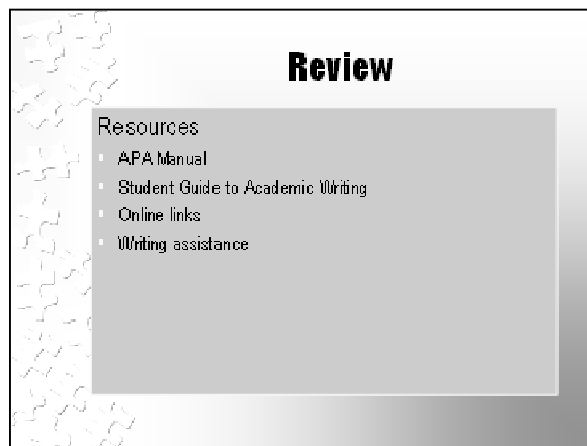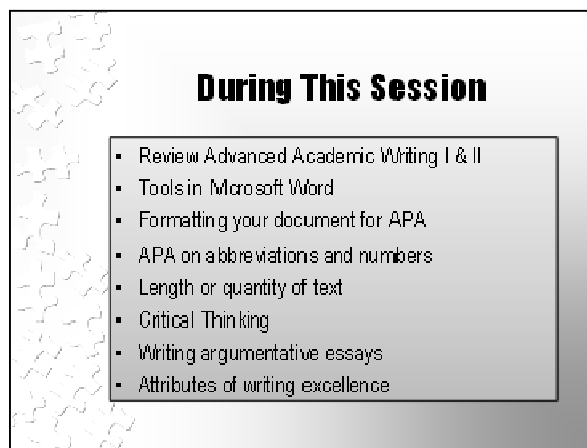
Review

Student responsibilities

- Follow APA guidelines.
- Read and use the Student Guide to Academic Writing.
- Practice academic integrity.
- Attend writing instructional sessions.
- Practice writing skills while completing course assignments.
- Apply instructor feedback.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Self-evaluate and "polish" written works prior to submission.
- Completing assignments

Review

The Writing Process
- Planning
- Drafting
- Revising
- Editing
- Publishing/Submitting

Writing Words
- Clarity
- Precision
- Capitalization
- Italics

Review

Writing Sentences

- Punctuation
  - Commas
  - Semicolons
  - Colons
  - Hyphens
  - Dashes & Slashes
- Grammar
  - Articles
  - Prepositions
  - Verbs
  - Modifiers
  - Agreement
  - Parallel construction

Review

Writing Paragraphs

IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Paragraph Burger &
Connect Button)

Transition

Review

APA Guidelines
- Citations & references
- Direct quotations
- Title page

Tools in Microsoft Office
- Home tab
- Review tab

Review

Academic Authorship
- Organization (introduction, purpose, content, summaries, & conclusions)
- Approach & Presentation (audience & voice)
- Academic language (formal, clear, literal/precise, & concise)
- Writing accurately (paraphrasing, summarizing, choosing words, communicating, identifying sources)

Review

Academic Authorship (continued)

- Knowledge (clear, relevant, & fully developed concepts)
- Literature (analysis & synthesis)
- Critical thinking (support, logical reasoning, making comparisons)
- Clarity – an attribute of excellence

APA Guidelines

- Abbreviations
- Numbers

i.e.	two
et al.	24

Abbreviations: See APA, 2010, pp. 106-111
Numbers: See APA, 2010, pp. 111-114

APA Format

- Margins
- Indentations
- Exact double-spacing

¶

Margins: APA, 2010, p. 229
Indentations:
- Abstract (see APA, 2010, p. 27)
- Paragraphs (see APA, 2010, p. 229)
- Block quotations (see APA, 2010, p. 171)

Double-Spacing: APA, 2010, p. 229
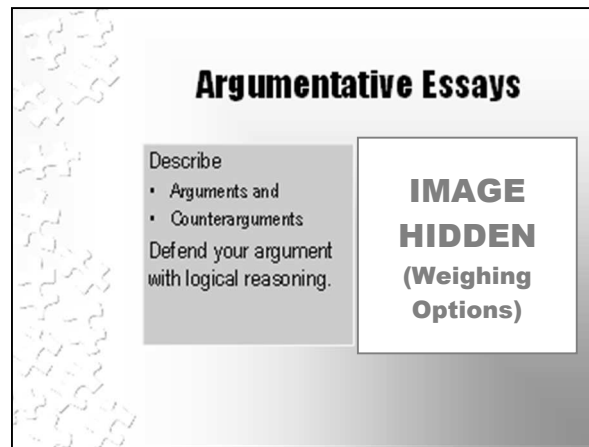
Show Page Layout Tab
- Margins (Student Guide, p. 5)
- Orientations
- Size
- Breaks
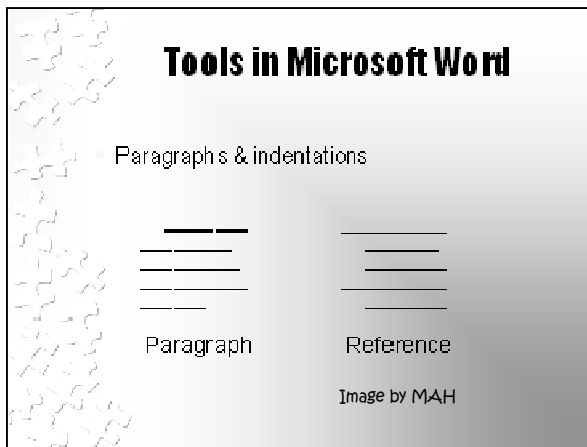
Show Home Tab
- Paragraph (Student Guide, p. 5)
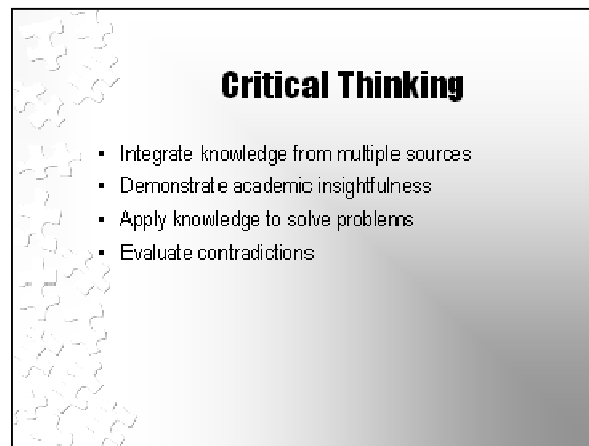
Argumentative Essays

Describe
- Arguments and
- Counterarguments
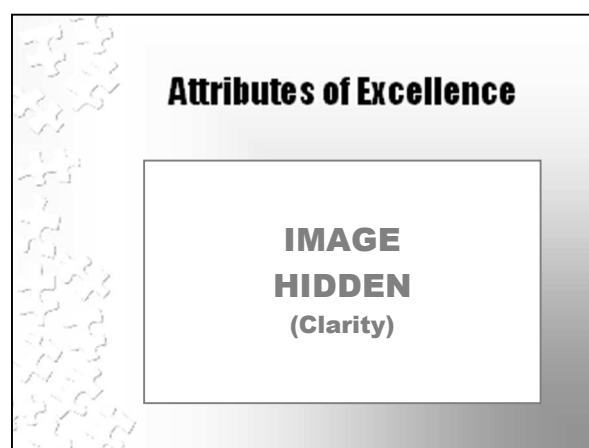
Defend your argument with logical reasoning.

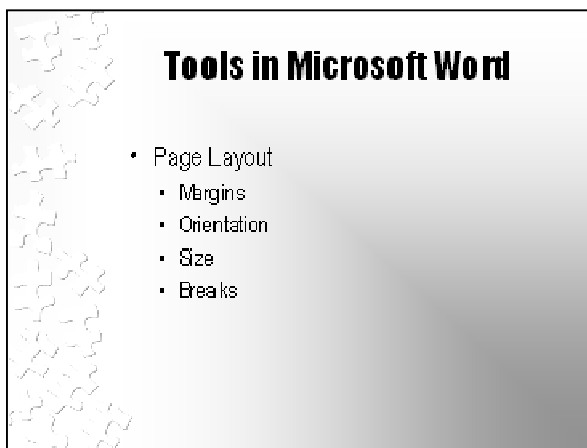IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Weighing
Options)

Critical Thinking

- Integrate knowledge from multiple sources
- Demonstrate academic insightfulness
- Apply knowledge to solve problems
- Evaluate contradictions

Attributes of Excellence

IMAGE
HIDDEN
(Clarity)

In Advanced Academic Writing II, we talked about clarity as the first of four attributes of excellence that should be evident in your academic writing.

Can anyone share an experience when you really started to understand the importance of clarity and that it isn't always easy to accomplish?

[Discuss briefly]

Now we are going to look at the other three attributes of excellence in writing.

Attributes of Excellence
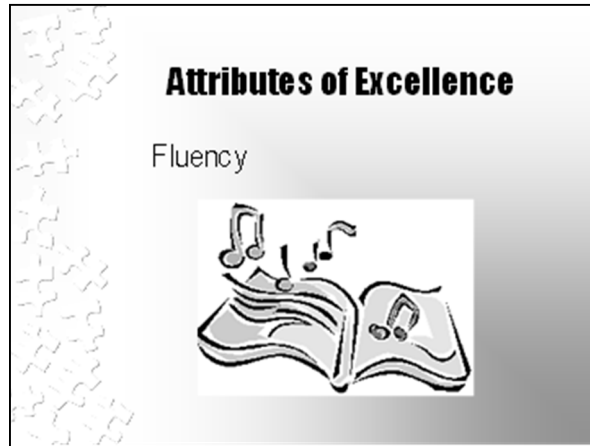
Fluency

Fluency is sometimes referred to as "flow," but fluency is only one aspect of flow. Fluency has to do with how your writing would sound if you read it aloud. It may be a stretch, but I want to talk about fluency as if it is the musicality of your writing. Is there a rise and fall in how the sentences "sound"? Do the sentences and paragraphs seem to be part of the same piece? Do the words in the sentences fit together like notes in a musical chord, or do some sentences seem "off key"?

Is it possible for your writing to be clear, but not fluent?
Is it possible for your writing to be fluent, but not clear?

Let's look at another important part of "flow."

Attributes of Excellence

Cohesiveness

IMAGE
HIDDEN
**(Twisted Wires
Jigsaw Puzzle)**
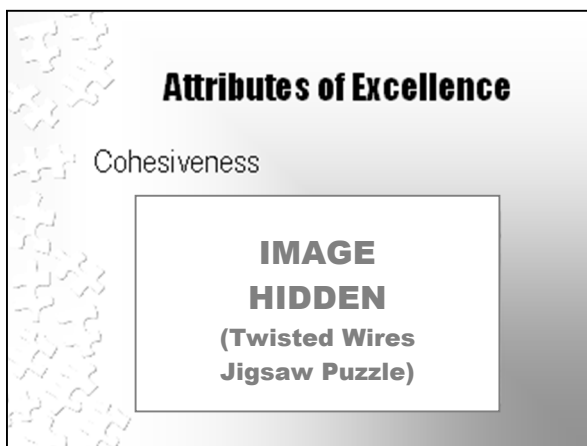
Cohesiveness has to do with how sentences tie together. Does each sentence tie to the next as a thread running through the entire paper? Have you applied "glue" where it was needed? Or back to the musical reference, have you pressed the sustain pedal to carry one chord into the next? The picture on the slide shows pieces of a puzzle with the yellow line connecting to form a loop through the whole puzzle. The yellow line is an example of cohesiveness.

Is it possible to write clearly, but without fluency or cohesion?
Can writing be fluent, but not cohesive? Think of music, beautiful chords, rise and fall, but a pianist might stop frequently until he or she practices the piece many times. Then the pianist can play the entire piece clearly, fluently, and cohesively.

Still, when I look at the puzzle in the picture, something isn't quite right. It has no meaning. What is it supposed to be? Surely, this is not a complete picture of something.

Attributes of Excellence

Coherence

IMAGE
HIDDEN
**(Landscape
Jigsaw Puzzle)**
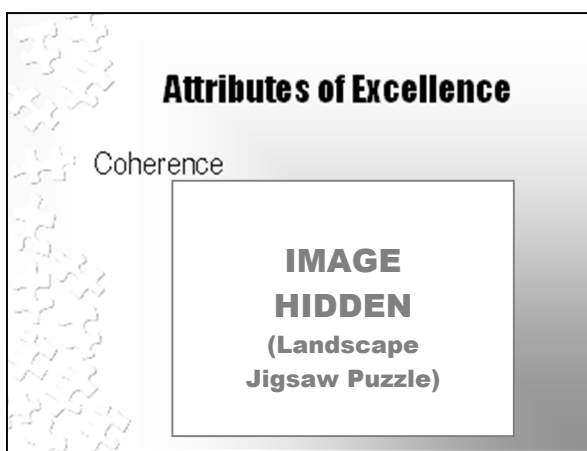
This is a complete picture. All of the puzzle pieces are arranged correctly. No pieces are missing. Each piece connects to the next. Small pieces of the picture flow together to

form a clear, fluent, cohesive picture. When we see the image, we can admire the details: the field of flowers, the lone tree in the forefront and the two trees in the background, the colorful cloudy sky. This completed jigsaw puzzle represents a finished work of academic writing with clarity, fluency, cohesion, and, now, coherence. Coherence refers to all of the details working together to form a complete work.

No pieces are missing, and there are no extra pieces that don't belong.

Reference

American Psychological Association. (2010).

Publication manual of the American

Psychological Association (6th ed.).

Washington, DC: Author.

Supplement 2

Student Guide to Academic Writing

Table of Contents

The Writing Suite

The Writing Suite is an integrated, ongoing, writing instruction and assistance curriculum designed to serve all students throughout their active affiliation with ISC. This integrated writing curriculum is a course of study that focuses on writing skill development and occurs in conjunction with the institution's primary disciplinary programs. The purpose of the Writing Suite is to help graduate students at ISC to develop scholarly writing skills. Professional literature and findings from a qualitative study of students' writing skills at ISC guided the development of the Writing Suite.

The Writing Suite includes several components designed to meet the specific needs of ISC and its students:

- the *Student Guide to Academic Writing*, which includes ISC's policies and expectations regarding academic writing, student support available through the Writing Suite, and practical guidance for academic writing;
- a strategy for conducting initial and recurrent, qualitative, diagnostic assessments of students' writing skills;
- academic writing instructional sessions, each consisting of one campus-based, 2-hour writing skills instructional session for students attending their core residencies;
- extensive writing practice through disciplinary course assignments;
- face-to-face and online, individual and small group, writing assistance; and
- resources for self-directed writing development.

Academic Integrity

The ISC Code of Responsibility represents high standards of personal conduct and academic integrity. As part of your Academic Performance Agreement, you signed the following *Integrity Promise* (ISC, 2012, p. 75).

Integrity Promise

I do solemnly commit myself, from this day forward, (a) to abide by all pertinent rules of academic scholarship as I engage the program of ISC [This commitment affirms the integrity of all my academic work submitted for graduate credit.] and (b) to conduct myself in conformity to the school's social policies and administrative regulations.

As a community of scholars, ISC is committed to advancing scholarship, academic pursuits, and service to society. Certain rights and obligations flow from membership in any academic community:

- the right to personal and intellectual freedom,
- respect of the equal rights and dignity of others, and
- dedication to the scholarship pursuits that assure academic quality and credibility of the institution.

Students are responsible for observing the established policies as listed in the Catalog, Course of Study Handbook, and official notices from ISC. In addition, students must comply with the legal, ethical, and moral standards of the institution as well as those of their profession. All members of the community shall inform the Chief Academic Officer of any violation of conduct or academic regulations.

The graduate school expects all students to manifest a commitment to academic integrity through rigid observance of standards for academic honesty. Assignments, exams, projects, papers, practice, and all research must be the original work of the student. Work is not original that has been submitted previously by the author or by anyone else for academic credit. Work is not original that has been copied or partially copied from any other source, unless such copying is acknowledged at the time the work is submitted for credit. Original work may include the thoughts and words of another author, but this fact must be indicated in a manner consistent with a recognized form and style manual. Violations of the requirements of original work constitute plagiarism and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination from the institution. (ISC, 2012, p. 75)

The Integrity Promise as it Relates to Writing at ISC

- All written manuscripts submitted for credit *must* be the original work of the student, and it *must not* have been submitted previously for credit at any time, in any institution, or by any person.
- Students must properly format, cite, and reference any work that is excerpted or paraphrased from another source.
- Students must accurately represent, cite, and reference any ideas or concepts that are not the student's original thoughts (i.e., paraphrased from another source).
- Failure to give credit to other authors when using their ideas constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is committed when a writer includes any of the following in his or her paper without properly acknowledging the source of the material:
  o material that is copied directly from another source,
  o paraphrased material from another source,
  o paraphrased material that too closely matches the original work,
  o an author's own writing that has been previously published or submitted for credit (i.e., self-plagiarism; see APA, p. 16), and
  o unpublished ideas that are not the author's original thoughts (i.e., personal communication, classroom lectures, etc.).
- According to the APA (2010), "The key . . . principle is that authors do not present the work of another as if it were their own work" (p. 16). Furthermore, the APA manual states, "Authors may not know where an idea for a study originated. If authors *do know*, however, they should acknowledge the source; this includes personal communications" (APA, 2010, p. 16).

Writing at ISC

Form and Style

The recognized form and style manual for all programs at ISC is the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2010). Many alternative sources claim to simplify the process of learning APA form and style. Many of these sources may be helpful, but they also may contain errors.

The official recommendation from the Writing Suite is for every student and faculty member to purchase and diligently utilize a copy of the authentic *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th edition* (APA, 2010).

> "The APA manual is the comprehensive standard for which there is no substitute."
> --Elizabeth McDonald (2010)

Technology Requirements

Each student at ISC must own or have access to a laptop computer equipped with Microsoft Office software, 2003 or later. Among the available Microsoft Office programs, students should have **Word**, **Excel**, and **PowerPoint** installed on their computers. Additionally, students will need an installed **PDF reader**.

Note: Some courses, including the writing courses, may require students to bring computers to class.

Tools you may need in Microsoft Word.

To find online instructions for Microsoft tools that are not listed, you can find the instructions online by conducting a specific search in Google using the name and version of your Office program, the tool or task you want to find, and the word *instructions*. For example, to find instructions for using track changes in Word 2010, you would search for "Word 2010 track changes instructions."

Working with track changes. If you receive feedback from an instructor who used track changes to recommend changes, follow the following instructions to accept or reject the changes. In Word 2007 or 2010, follow the listed steps until no vertical black lines remain in the left margin and no comment boxes remain in the right margin.

- Click on the Review tab
- Find the box labeled "Tracking"
- Before doing anything else, make sure Track Changes is turned off (orange means "on," white means "off")
- Find the box labeled "Changes"
- Click on "Next;" this will highlight a suggestion or comment

Screenshots by MAH

- Click on the drop down arrow under Accept or Reject (depending on your choice)
- Then click "Accept and Move to Next" or "Reject and Move to Next"

Setting margins. In Word 2007 or 2010, follow the listed steps.
- Click on the Page Layout tab
- Find the box labeled "Page Setup"
- Click the dropdown arrow under Margins
- Select the option that has 1" for all four settings (Top, Bottom, Left, Right)
- *Note: If that option is not listed, select "Custom Margins" at the bottom of the dropdown box → Enter 1" into the setting boxes for all four margins*

Formatting paragraphs and indentations. In Word 2007 or 2010, follow the listed steps.
- Click on the Home tab
- Find the box labeled "Paragraph"
- Click the arrow in the bottom right corner of the Paragraph box to open the paragraph formatting box
- Set the alignment to Left and both indentation settings to 0"
- For *paragraphs*, set Special to "First Line" By 0.5"
  For *reference lists*, set Special to "Hanging" By 0.5"
- Before and After should both be set to 0 pt
- Line spacing should be "Double"
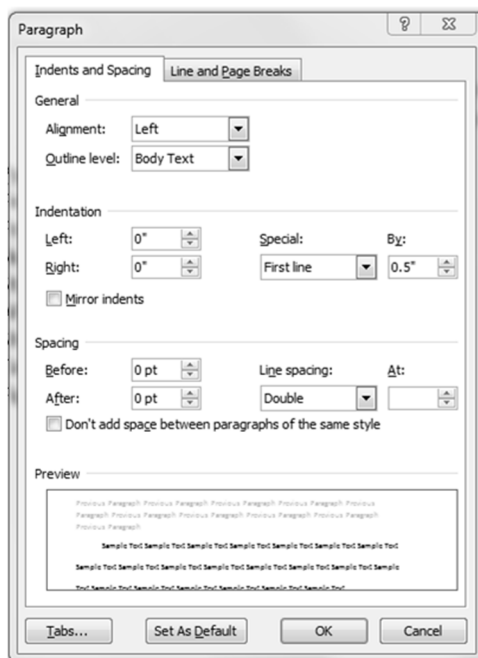
Screenshot by MAH

Spelling & Grammar. In Word 2007 or 2010, follow these steps to set the strongest options for the spelling and grammar checker.

- Click on the File tab
- Click "Options"
- Click "Proofing"
- Click "AutoCorrect Options." Go to each of the autocorrect tabs and check each item you want the program to correct automatically. When you finish with the autocorrect tabs, click OK, which will close the autocorrect settings.
- In the section "When correcting spelling in Microsoft Office programs," select the items you want to include. (I have the 1st, 3rd, & 4th items checked on my computer).
- In the section "When correcting spelling and grammar in Word," select the items you want to include. (I have the first four items checked.)
- In the dropdown box next to "Writing Style," select "Grammar & Style." Then click "Settings," which will open the Grammar Settings box.
  - In the Grammar Settings box, select your options in the "Require" section as follows:
    - Comma required before last list item: select "always"
    - Punctuation required with quotes: select "inside"
    - Spaces required between sentences: select your choice until instructed otherwise
  - In the "Grammar" section, check the items you want the program to check. (I have everything checked except "Use of first person")
  - When you finish your selections, click OK, which will close the Grammar Settings box.
- In the Word Options box, click OK.
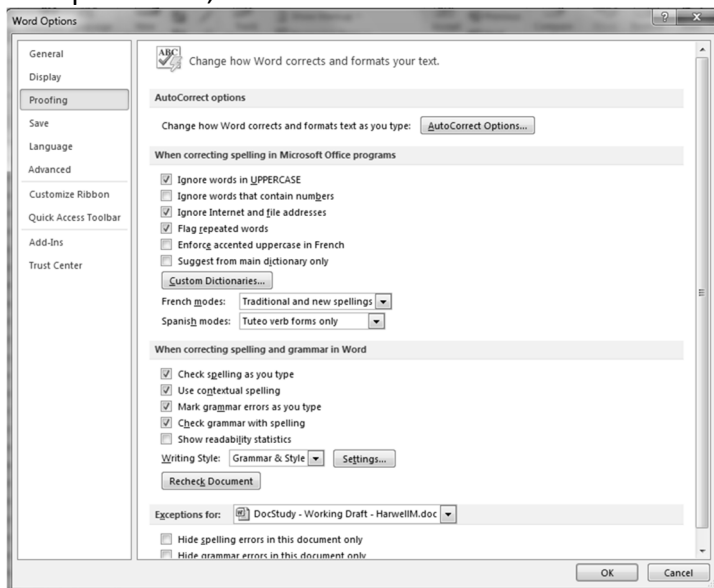
Screenshot by MAH

Other tools in Microsoft Word that you should learn.
- On the Home Tab:
  - In the Clipboard box:
    - Format Painter
  - In the Font box:
    - Change upper and lower case (Aa)
    - Note: APA recommends Times New Roman 12
  - In the Paragraph box
    - Numbered and Bulleted lists
    - Reduce or increase indentation
    - Sort
    - Show/Hide (¶)
    - Borders
  - In the Editing box
    - Find → Advanced Find
    - Replace
    - Select
- On the Insert tab
  - In the Tables box, click the drop down arrow and highlight the number of columns and rows you want in your table. After the table appears on the page, click on the table and then on the Table Tools tab. Familiarize yourself with the Design and Layout tabs for tables.
- On the Page Layout tab
  - In the Page Setup box
    - Breaks
- On the Review tab
  - In the Proofing box
    - Spelling & Grammar
    - Thesaurus

Note: There is a free APA style template available through Microsoft online (https://templates.office.com/en-us/APA-styles-TM00002099).

Writing Support at ISC

Writing support is available through the Writing Suite:

- *Student Guide to Academic Writing*,
- in-class writing instruction,
- face-to-face and online individual writing assistance,
- face-to-face small group writing assistance, and
- printed and online resources for self-directed writing development.

Writing assistance. The writing specialist will provide assistance on an individual basis between core residencies.

For assistance contact:

[Name of specialist]
[Office hours]
[Telephone number; voice or text]
[Skype contact information]
[Email address]
[Facebook contact information]
[Instant messaging contact information]

Online resources are available through DIAL. Resources for self-directed writing development are available through DIAL. To access the resources . . . *[Instructions for accessing writing resources through DIAL]*

Online Resources

- English Club (https://www.englishclub.com/)
- Grammar Girl (http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl)
- Grammar Slammer (http://englishplus.com/grammar/)
- Grammar-Monster.com (http://www.grammar-monster.com/)
- Grammarly Handbook (http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/)
- Grammarly Words: Dictionary & Thesaurus (http://www.grammarly.com/words/)
- Guide to Grammar & Writing (http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/)
- Liberty University's "Introduction to Graduate Writing" (https://www.liberty.edu/media/2030/Intro_to_Grad_Writing_text_edited.pdf)
- Plagiarism.org (http://www.plagiarism.org/)
- Using English for Academic Purposes (http://www.uefap.com/)
- Walden University Writing Center (http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/home)

Types of Writing You May Be Assigned

Research-based essay. A research-based essay includes a review of academic literature related to your topic along with your own well-developed interpretations and conclusions. Examples of research-based essays include the following:

- a persuasive essay in which you synthesize information from the literature to persuade the reader to take an action or accept a position regarding the topic,
- an argumentative essay in which you present both sides of an argument and apply logical reasoning to take a position on one side of the issue,
- an application essay in which you analyze and synthesize information from the literature and apply logical reasoning to show how that information might apply in a specific context, such as your place of work or within family relationships.

Personal narrative essay. A personal narrative essay describes your own perspective regarding a topic. A personal narrative essay generally requires few, if any, citations from other sources. However, the same rules apply: You must designate the source of any ideas that are not your own original ideas. Examples of personal narratives include the following:

- a personal philosophy essay, such as your own philosophy of education, or
- a descriptive essay about your personal experiences within a specific context.

Illustrated narrative. An illustrated narrative is manuscript made up of figures or pictures and explanatory narrative captions. An example of an illustrated narrative might be a pictorial autobiography.

Developmental readings. Developmental readings consist of excerpts from the literature regarding a specific subject. At ISC, you must complete developmental readings for most of your academic courses. You must follow specific guidelines for these assignments.

Core Learning Journal. *[This explanation will derive from the assignment instructions.]*

Core Content Comprehensive Review (CCCR). *[This explanation will derive from the assignment instructions.]*

Capstone Projects. *[This explanation will derive from the assignment instructions.]*

Professional writing. Your instructor may assign professional writing assignments that resemble the types of writing you will need to use for professional communication. These assignments may include business letters, interoffice memos, e-mail messages, case reports, and the like. Your instructor will provide details regarding these assignments.

Annotated bibliography. An annotated bibliography is similar to your developmental readings assignments. An annotated bibliography includes a properly formatted reference for a source followed by a description of the source's contents. A common format includes the description directly after the reference, in italics, and all lines indented 1 inch.

Academic Writing Instructional Sessions

- Advanced Academic Writing I
- Advanced Academic Writing II
- Advanced Academic Writing III
- Advanced Academic Writing IV
- Advanced Academic Writing V
- Capstone Writing for Assessment, Research, and Educational Leadership
- Capstone Writing for Organizational Leadership
- Capstone Writing for Family Life Education

Writing Process

If you search the Internet to learn about the "Writing Process," you will find an abundant supply of step-by-step directions for writing. Common elements of these processes include the following:

- Planning: Make notes, either by hand or on the computer. Either way, take a notebook with you all day so you can write down any thoughts that you do not want to forget.

> Primary Writing Process: Students use the elements of the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) to compose text.
> --Typical Elementary School Skills

  - o Topic (identify your topic)
  - o Main ideas about your topic
  - o Purpose (What is the purpose of the paper? To inform? Persuade?)
  - o Thesis statement (see Writing Skills: Academic Authorship: Organization)
  - o Audience (see Writing skills: Academic Authorship: Approach)
  - o Make an outline or list main ideas and put them in order
  - o Type headings into your paper and add bullet lists of main ideas under the headings.
- Drafting (writing)
  - o Write
  - o Don't get attached to this draft.
- Revising (making major changes)
  - o Print it
  - o Read it aloud
  - o Mark errors
  - o Note ideas for improving it
  - o Reflect on it
  - o Think
  - o Reorganize, cut and paste
  - o Eliminate unnecessary words
  - o Develop unclear concepts further
  - o Redraft (rewrite)
  - o Repeat all
- Editing (making minor changes)
  - o Check spelling and grammar
  - o Peer review (have someone else read it)
  - o Polishing (see Writing Skills: Academic Authorship: Attributes of Excellence)
- Publishing (submitting)

Image by MAH

Note: For another perspective on the writing process, see Purdue OWL: The Writing Process, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/1/

Writing Skills

> **"Clear writing takes a substantial amount of time and effort."**
> --Belle Rose Ragins (2012, p. 16)

Writing Words

Word Choice

- Clarity: Choose words that *clearly* express what you want the reader to understand.
- Meaning: Choose words that mean precisely what you are trying to communicate. Avoid words with ambiguous meaning or multiple definitions that could lead to misunderstanding.

> "If the paper is not clear and concise, content will not matter."
> --Belle Rose Ragins (2012, pp. 7-8)

- Thesaurus problems: Use a thesaurus with **caution**! A thesaurus often provides multiple options for replacing one word with another word that has a *similar* meaning. The word choices *rarely* have identical meanings to the word you want to replace. A common error among novice writers is to insert a word from a thesaurus list without checking the word's definition. In such cases, the writer may assume he or she has written an impressive sentence when, in fact, the author has written a series of words that make no sense at all.

Word Mechanics

- Capitalization: Use capital letters only as specified in basic grammar rules or APA guidelines. (See Purdue OWL: A Little Help With Capitals, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/592/01/ and the APA manual [APA, 2010])
- Italics: Use italics only as specified in APA Guidelines (see APA, 2010).
- Spelling: Always use the spelling and grammar checker in Microsoft Word, but do not accept every suggested change. Sometimes Word will suggest an incorrect spelling, and sometimes the spelling and grammar checker will not flag a misspelled word. Ultimately, correct spelling in the writer's responsibility.

Sentence structure

- What is a sentence? (See English Club: What is a Sentence?, https://www.englishclub.com/grammar/sentence-what.htm)
- Sentence clarity (See Purdue OWL: Improving Sentence Clarity, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/600/01/)

- Complete sentences, run-on sentences, and sentence fragments (see Purdue OWL: Sentence Structure, practice exercises, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/5/)

Punctuation

- Overall (see Purdue OWL: Punctuation, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/6/ & Grammarly Handbook: Punctuation, http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/punctuation/) Explore links to the following:
  - o Commas (see the following resources)
    Purdue OWL: Conquering the Comma, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/692/01/, and click on the link to the Conquering the Comma PowerPoint Presentation
    Purdue OWL: Commas, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/607/01/, and click through the links by clicking the "Next Resource" button at the bottom
    Purdue OWL: Sentence Punctuation Patterns, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/604/01/
    Grammarly Handbook: Comma, http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/punctuation/comma/
  - o Semicolons (see the following resources)
    Purdue OWL: Sentence Punctuation Patterns, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/604/01/, Pattern 3 & Pattern 4
    Grammarly Handbook: Semicolon, http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/punctuation/semicolon/
  - o Colons (see Grammarly Handbook: Colon, http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/punctuation/colon/
  - o Hyphens (see Grammarly Handbook: Hyphen, http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/punctuation/hyphen/)
  - o Dashes (see Grammarly Handbook: Dash, http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/punctuation/dash/)

Grammar

- Basic Grammar (see YourDictionary on Basic English Grammar, http://grammar.yourdictionary.com/grammar-rules-and-tips/basic-english-grammar-rules.html)
- Articles: definite (the) and indefinite (a/an) articles (see Purdue OWL: Using Articles, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/540/01/)
- Prepositions (see Purdue OWL: Prepositions and click through the pages, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/974/1/)
  Also recommended, you may purchase a downloadable English preposition book at https://www.englishclub.com/download/english-prepositions-list.htm

- Verbs (see Grammarly Handbook: Verbs,
  http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/grammar/verbs/ and
  English Club: Verbs, https://www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/verbs.htm; click
  through the various links
- Nouns (see Grammarly Handbook: Nouns,
  http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/grammar/nouns/)
- Modifiers (see Grammarly Handbook: Modifiers,
  http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/sentences/modifiers/)
- Parallel construction (see Guide to Grammar & Writing: Parallel Form,
  http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/parallelism.htm)
- Agreement: Singulars and plurals (http://writingcommons.org/index.php/open-
  text/style/grammar/706-subject-verb-agreement)
- Agreement: Pronouns and antecedents (explanations and exercises:
  http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/pronouns.htm)
- Agreement: Anthropomorphisms
  (http://writingcenter.waldenu.edu/Documents/Scholarly-
  Writing/Anthropomorphisms.pdf)

Paragraph Structure

- A *paragraph* is a group of sentences that are grouped together to develop one
  idea (see the following resources).
  - o Purdue OWL: On Paragraphs,
    https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/01/
  - o Guide to Grammar & Writing: Paragraph Development and Topic Sentences,
    http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/paragraphs.htm
  - o Using English for Academic Purposes,
    http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm, then click *Paragraph*
- *Transitional sentences* are sentences that link one paragraph to the next (see
  Purdue OWL: On Paragraphs,
  https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/01/).

Word-Processing

- Typing skills: Improve your typing skills with one of the many free typing tutorials
  available online
- Spelling and grammar checker: Set the options for your spelling and grammar
  checker to improve your writing (see Spelling & Grammar, p. 6)
- Word-processing tools

APA Guidelines

- Citations (see APA, 2010, Chapters 6 & 7)

- References (see APA, 2010, Chapters 6 & 7)
- Alphabetical order: Place citations and references in alphabetical order
  - when you cite multiple sources within one set of parentheses, and
  - when you list references on your reference page.
- Quotations (see APA, 2010, pp. 92-93, 171-174)
- Abbreviations (see APA, 2010, pp. 106-111 among others)
- Numbers as words or numerals (see APA, 2010, pp. 111-114)
- Formatting
  - Title page (see APA, 2010, p. 229)
  - Margins (see APA, 2010, p. 229)
  - Headings (see APA, 2010, pp. 62-63)
  - Paragraphs (see APA, 2010, p. 229)
  - Indentations
    Abstract (see APA, 2010, p. 27)
    Paragraphs (see APA, 2010, p. 229)
    Block quotations (see APA, 2010, p. 171)
  - Headers and footers (see APA, 2010, p. 230)
  - Running head (see APA, 2010, p. 230)

Academic Authorship

Organization
- Introduction (see Guide to Grammar & Writing: A Proper Introduction, http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/intros.htm)
- Purpose
  - Purpose statement (see Thesis statement)
  - Thesis statement (see Guide to Grammar & Writing: The Thesis Statement, http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/composition/thesis.htm)
  - Problem statement
- Content: Content depends on the type of paper you are writing, but in all types of writing, the content should progress logically from beginning to end.
- Conclusions (see Purdue OWL: Conclusions, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/724/04/ and Guide to Grammar & Writing: Concluding Paragraphs, http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/composition/endings.htm)
- References (see APA, 2010, Chapters 6 & 7)
- Required elements (study design, procedures, findings, interpretations, etc.)

Approach
- Audience (see Purdue OWL: Identifying an Audience, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/658/04/ and Walden Writing Center: Scholarly Voice: Audience, http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/scholarlyvoice/audience)

- Voice
  - o Active and passive voice (see Grammarly Handbook: Passive Voice, http://www.grammarly.com/handbook/organization-and-development/text-level-measurements-adequate-writing/3/passive-voice/ and Purdue OWL: Active and Passive Voice, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/539/1/, click through several pages explaining active and passive voice)
  - o Authorial voice: characterized by an author's ability to present strong and well-supported claims that establish the author's identity as an expert in the field

Academic Language

- Academic language (see Purdue OWL: Appropriate Language, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/608/01/; explore the links on the page)
  - o Formal
  - o Clear
  - o Literal
  - o Concise (see APA, 2010, p. 67, "economy of expression" and Purdue OWL: Conciseness, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/572/1/, click through the conciseness pages)

Accuracy

- Paraphrasing (see Purdue OWL on Paraphrase: Write it in Your Own Words, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/1/ and Paraphrasing Exercise, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/2/)
- Summarizing (see Purdue OWL on Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/563/01/ and Summarizing, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/976/03/)
- Vocabulary (see Purdue OWL: Appropriate Language, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/608/01/; explore the links on the page)
- Accurate communication of ideas: Make sure your audience understands the ideas you intended to communicate. One way to check this is to ask someone else to read your writing and tell you what he or she understands.
- Identify sources of ideas (self or other): When integrating your own thoughts and ideas you learned from other sources, clearly differentiate the information sources.
  - o When citing a source, place the citation to indicate clearly which information came from that source.
  - o Do not credit a source with an entire idea if only a portion of that idea came from that source.

o Integrate your own thoughts and interpretations regarding the topic in a way that clearly differentiates which ideas are your own.

Knowledge

- Background information and context
- Definitions
- Concepts
  - o Clearly stated
  - o Fully developed
  - o Relevant to purpose, thesis, or problem
  - o Present both arguments and counterarguments

Literature

- Analysis
- Synthesis
- See Using English for Academic Purposes: Doing the Research: Evaluating Sources, http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm
- See Purdue OWL: Literature Reviews, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/994/04/

Critical thinking

- *Think*. Challenge your own assumptions. Everyone you know may believe the earth is flat, but that does not make it true.
- Integrate (tie together) knowledge from multiple sources
- Demonstrate academic insightfulness
- Apply knowledge, reasoning, and insight to solve problems
- Support opinions, claims, and arguments with literature, research, and examples
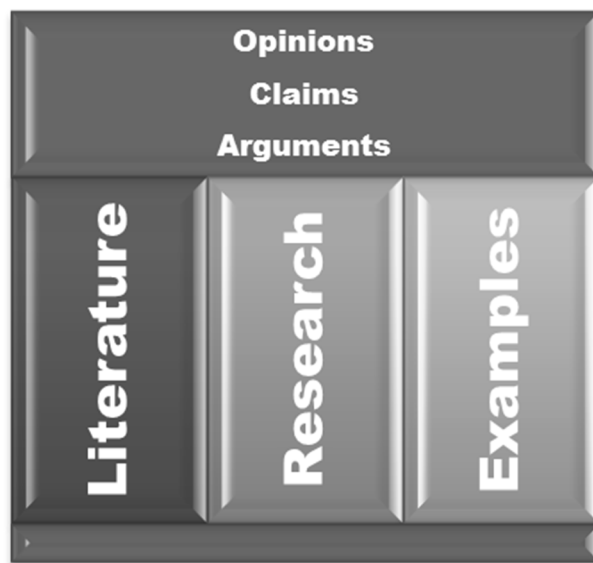
Image by MAH

- Evaluate contradictions
- Make comparisons
- Draw conclusions based on logical reasoning
- Close with implications and recommendations
- See "What is Critical Thinking?" at
  http://www.criticalreading.com/critical_thinking.htm

Attributes of Excellence (see Table 1)

- Clarity (see "How to Write Clear Sentences" at
  http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/how-to-write-clear-sentences)
- Fluency (see Purdue OWL: Strategies for Variation,
  https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/573/01/)
- Cohesiveness (see Purdue OWL: Revising for Cohesion,
  https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/561/04/)
- Coherence (see Purdue OWL,
  https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/01/.)

Table 1

Excellent Scholarly Writing From Two Perspectives

Characteristic	To the reader	To the writer
Clarity	Clearly understands the authors ideas	Communicates ideas precisely
Fluency	Comprehends without mentally editing the author's words	Articulates ideas with language that flows throughout the manuscript
Cohesiveness	Reads smoothly from one idea to the next	Ensures every sentence connects to the next throughout the manuscripts
Coherence	Understands concepts that build upon one another to arrive at a logical conclusion	Organizes ideas to build upon one another and logically support a thesis and conclusion

Reference List

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Institute for Social Change (ISC; pseudonym). (2012). Institute for Social Change catalog/prospectus 2012. Unpublished manuscript.

McDonald, K. E. (2011). Teaching the 6th edition of APA style of writing in counselor education. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision, 3*(2), 124-145. Retrieved from http://repository.wcsu.edu/jcps/

Ragins, B. R. (2012). Editor's comments: Reflections on the craft of clear writing. *Academy of Management Review*, *37*(4), 493-501. doi:0.M65/amr.2012.0165

Supplement 3

Diagnostic Writing Assessment Instrument

This assessment instrument is for recording narrative descriptions of writing skill

deficits observed in student assignments. The assessment instrument is an Excel

worksheet document, which will allow evaluators to describe writing skills in detail and

add rows for additional comments as needed. The first portion of the instrument includes

brief descriptions of writing skills to consider during the evaluation process. The second

portion of the instrument includes space to record examples of writing errors and their

corrections. The instrument is designed for evaluator use only. The detailed evaluations

can inform instructional plans and plans for individualized assistance. However, to avoid

overwhelming and discouraging developing writers, evaluators should provide the

student with (a) positive reinforcement, (b) feedback summarizing his or her progress,

and (c) recommendations for additional work on writing skills the student should be

practicing currently.

Skill	Errors	Description
Manuscript Organization		
Accurate & effective introduction		
Purpose or thesis statement		
Summary and/or conclusion		
APA Guidelines		
Manuscript Components		
Title page		
Abstract		
Method: research design, participants, & procedures		
Results: descriptive statistics & findings		
Discussion: interpretations, conclusions, limitations, & recommendations		
References: new page		

(*table continues*)

Skill	Errors	Description
Formatting		
Title of manuscript		
Headings		
Margins		
Indentations		
Exact double spacing		
Formatted page breaks		
Justify on left only		
Special Rules		
1st, 2nd, 3rd Person		
Abbreviations & acronyms		
Ellipsis points		
Italics		
Capitalization (APA specific)		
Numbers as words or numerals		
Quotations: punctuation & blocking		
Lists: set up & punctuation		
Tables: numbers		
Tables: titles		
Tables: headings		
Tables: citations		
Tables: notes		
Tables placement		
Tables: gridlines		
Figures: numbers		
Figures: captions		
Figures: legends		
Figures citations		
Figures: placement		
Citations & references match		
In-text Citations		
Citations: authors		
Citations: last name only		
Citations: et al.		
Citations: date		
Citations: page number		
Citations: parentheses		
Citations: placement		
Citations: punctuation		
Citations: spaces		

(*table continues*)

Skill	Errors	Description
Citations: biblical abbreviations (books and versions)		
Citations: personal communication		
Citations: secondary		
Citations: web address		
References		
References: heading		
References: APA style		
References: hanging indent		
References: alphabetical order		
References: author names and initials		
References: spaces		
References: ampersand		
References: punctuation		
References: publication date		
References: capitalization		
References: italics		
References: book edition		
References: publisher location		
References: publisher name		
References: state/country abbreviations		
References: Retrieved from		
References: DOI or web address		
Approach and Presentation		
Audience		
Active voice		
Avoid repetitive beginnings to sentences		
Professional tone		
Authorial voice (expertise)		
Word choice		
Academic language (formal)		
Word form		
Precision (correct meaning)		
Clarity (unambiguous)		
Sentence Structure		
Complete sentences		
Commas before conjunctions		
Commas in compound sentences		
Commas to set off nonrestrictive clauses		
Commas to set of year		
Commas in numbers with four or more digits		

(*table continues*)

Skill	Errors	Description
Semicolon: placement and spacing		
Colon: placement and spacing		
Hyphens: placement and spacing		
Dashes: placement and spacing		
Slashes: placement and spacing		
Other punctuation		
Appropriate length of sentences		
Agreement: anthropomorphism		
Agreement: singulars and plurals		
Agreement: pronouns and antecedents		
Agreement: complete comparisons		
Parallel construction		
Placement of modifiers		
Split infinitives		
Tense		
Paragraph Structure		
Introductory sentence		
One idea		
Appropriate length		
Transitional sentence		
Content		
Background information and context		
Logical organization and progression		
Concept development		
Relevance of all content		
Logical reasoning		
Differentiate sources (self and others)		
Literature analysis		
Literature synthesis		
Paraphrasing: accuracy and effectiveness		
Opposing perspectives		
Support for claims		
Examples		
Clear and accurate communication of ideas		
Attributes of Excellence		
Manuscript clarity		
Manuscript conciseness		
Manuscript cohesiveness		
Manuscript coherence		
Manuscript fluency		

(*table continues*)

Student wrote this:	Student should have written this:

Supplement 4

Writing Suite Evaluation Surveys

All students and faculty members who attend the opening session for each core residency should complete Writing Suite Survey A. All students and faculty members who attend the closing session for each core residency should complete Writing Suite Survey B.

The Writing Suite
Core Residency Opening Day Survey A

I am a
_____ Student in Core __
_____ Instructor/Administrator

I am affiliated with the following program(s) (click all that apply)
_____ Family Life Education
_____ Education: Assessment, Research, and Educational Leadership
_____ Organizational Leadership
_____ None of the above

Which writing skills do you (your students) need help with?
_____ Word Choice
_____ Sentence Structure
    _____ Basic sentence structure
    _____ Punctuation
    _____ Grammar
_____ Paragraph Structure
_____ Word Processing
_____ APA Guidelines
    _____ Citations and references
    _____ Document formatting
    _____ Other
_____ Academic Authorship
    _____ Organization
    _____ Approach (audience, voice)
    _____ Academic language
    _____ Accuracy (summaries, paraphrasing, etc.)
    _____ Knowledge (content)
    _____ Literature (analysis & synthesis)
    _____ Critical thinking
    _____ Attributes of excellence (clarity, fluency, cohesion, coherence)
_____ Other (please specify) _____
    _____

Since your last core residency, how helpful were the following Writing Suite services?

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful	Did not participate/use
Writing instruction received during last core				
Individual writing assistance				
Online writing resources				
APA Manual				
Student Guide to Academic Writing				

Can you recommend additional resources that might help with writing development? (e.g., more resources with sound, more videos, more text-only resources, resources to develop a specific skill, etc.)

_____
_____
_____

Describe how your (your student's) writing skills have changed since the last core.

_____
_____
_____

Do you need an appointment with a writing specialist during this core session?
_____Yes   _____No

If yes, please provide your name and the best way to reach you for an appointment. If you prefer, you may provide this information on separate paper.

Name: _____
Please contact me (mark all that apply)
_____ By cell phone _____
_____ By e-mail _____
_____ During meals on campus

The Writing Suite
Core Residency Closing Day Survey B

I am a
_____ Student in Core __
_____ Instructor/Administrator

I am affiliated with the following program(s) (click all that apply)
_____ Family Life Education
_____ Education: Assessment, Research, and Educational Leadership
_____ Organizational Leadership
_____ None of the above

During this core week, how helpful were the following:

	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful	Did not participate/use
Writing Suite instructional session				
Individual writing assistance				
Online writing resources				
APA Manual				
Student Guide to Academic Writing				

Please comment on the following regarding the classroom instructional session.
What was most helpful? _____
What was not really helpful? _____
What could improve the classroom instructional sessions? _____

Please comment on the following regarding the online resources.
Which resources have been the most helpful? _____
_____
Which resources are confusing or not helpful? _____
_____
What other resources would you like to see listed in the Writing Suite? _____
_____

Please comment on the following regarding individual writing assistance.
What was most helpful? _____
What was not really helpful? _____
What could help you more during individual writing assistance? _____
_____

Have you had a writing skills assessment review with a Writing Suite staff member?
_____Yes   _____No

Describe your perceptions regarding the review in terms of helpfulness and encouragement. _____
_____
_____

What can best help you (your students) with developing academic writing skills?
_____
_____
_____

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation

███████████████████████ █████████
█████████████

January 18, 2014

Dear Marsha Harwell,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled *Graduate Student Readiness for Scholarly Writing* within ███████ ████████████████████. As part of this study, I authorize you to

- access all current students, faculty members, and administrators of ████████ ██████████████████████ via email to recruit participants for the study;
- collect qualitative data from participants via an online questionnaire;
- interview students, faculty members, and administrators about their experiences and perceptions regarding scholarly writing;
- conduct qualitative assessments of archived student writing samples;
- contact study participants to clarify responses and to conduct member checking procedures;
- report results of the study in your doctoral project study for Walden University; and
- report research results to study participants and █████████████████ ███████.

Individual participation will be voluntary and at the discretion of the participants. No compensation will be made to any participants or ████████████████████████████.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include the following:

- granting access to the institution's students, faculty members, and administrators by email;
- providing a quiet space on campus for interviewing without interruption or threat of being overheard; and
- providing accommodations (access to kitchen and bath facilities, private bedroom) for the researcher during any research-related campus visits.

It is understood that the researcher will provide ████████ with personal emergency contact information.

We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Appendix C: Recruitment Email Message

Dear ▉▉▉▉ student,

I would like to ask you to take part in a research study of scholarly writing skills among students at ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉. The research will include exploring common writing skill deficiencies among the students, as well as perceptions of positive and negative influences on writing skills development. As the researcher in this study, I am inviting current students, faculty members, and administrators of ▉▉▉▉▉▉ to be in the study.

My name is Marsha Harwell, and I am working on a Doctor of Education degree through Walden University. I am not a member of the ▉▉▉▉▉▉ community, but some of you may know me as an alumnus and former faculty member of ▉▉▉▉ ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉. I served as a guest lecturer at ▉▉▉▉▉▉ during one term in 2004, and I have contributed to some of the Family Life Education curriculum used at ▉▉▉▉▉▉This study is not related to any of the roles mentioned here. This study is the final capstone project study for the completion of a Doctor of Education degree in Higher Education and Adult Learning at Walden University.

The purpose of this message is to request your participation in my doctoral project study. I contacted ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉ early in 2012 about the possibility of conducting a qualitative study about scholarly writing skills among adult graduate students at ▉▉▉▉▉▉. ▉▉▉▉▉▉ granted permission for me to conduct this study at ▉▉▉▉▉▉, and, in return, I will use the study results to recommend a plan for improving writing skills development at ▉▉▉▉▉▉. Although some of you might not benefit directly from this study, your participation could result in a direct benefit to ▉▉▉▉▉▉.

The attached Informed Consent document contains more information about the study, how you can participate, your rights as a participant, and measures taken to protect your identity and maintain your confidentiality.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do one or more of the following:
- complete and submit an online questionnaire,
- participate in an interview with me,
- permit me to review one or more student papers you have submitted to ▉▉▉▉▉▉, and/or
- allow me to contact you after an interview to verify that I have interpreted your comments accurately

If you have any questions after you have read the study information on the attached consent form, you may contact me at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. Additionally, contact information for a Walden University representative is included on the consent form.

If you agree to participate in this study, please print a copy of the consent form for your records.

To participate in the writing skills questionnaire, please go to [link to survey]. You will indicate your consent to participate in the questionnaire portion of the research through the survey link.

To participate in an interview and/or consent to the review of your student work, please indicate your consent by following the instructions at the end of the attached consent form.

Thank you,

Marsha Harwell, DPhil, CFLE
▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Appendix D: NIH Certificate of Completion

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Marsha Harwell** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 10/18/2012

Certification Number: 1009076
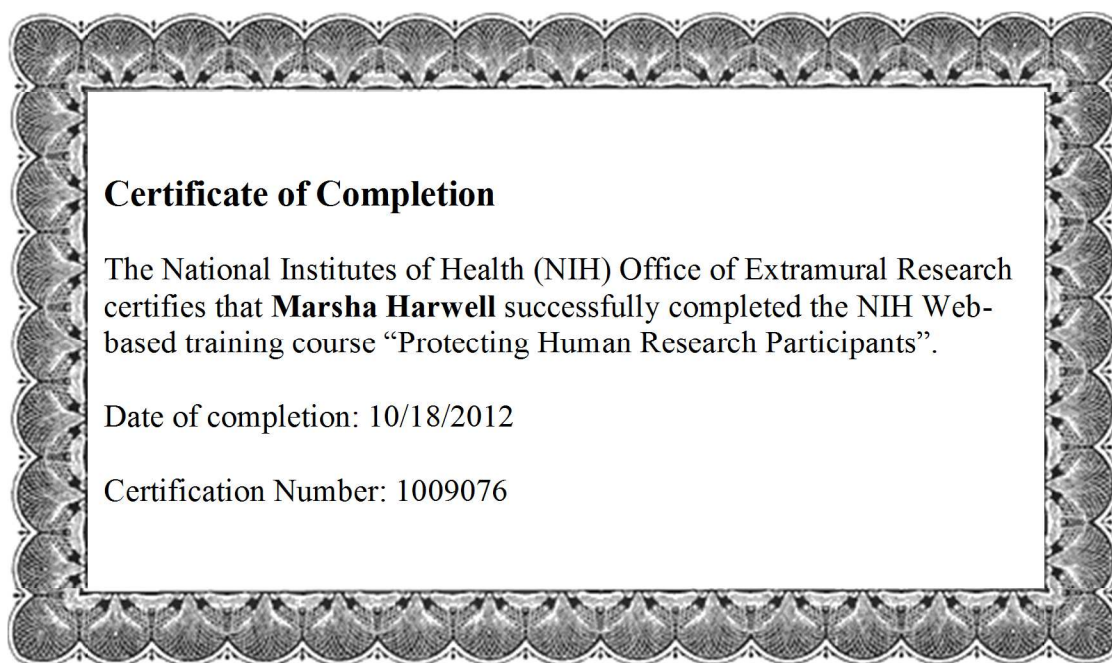
Appendix E: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of scholarly writing skills among students at ███████████████████████████. The research will explore common writing skill deficiencies among the students, as well as perceptions of positive and negative influences on writing skills development. The researcher is inviting current students, faculty members, and administrators of ████████ to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

A researcher named Marsha Harwell, DPhil, CFLE, who is a doctoral student at Walden University, is conducting this study. Dr. Harwell is not a member of the ████████ community, but you may already know her as an alumnus and former faculty member of ████████████████████████. Dr. Harwell served as a guest lecturer at ████████████ during one term in 2004, and she has contributed to some of the Family Life Education curriculum used at ████████. This study is not related to any of the roles mentioned here; the study is the final capstone project study for the completion of a Doctor of Education degree in Higher Education and Adult Learning at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to identify the most common types of writing skill deficits among students at ████████ and to determine the pervasiveness of those deficits among students. Additionally, the study will explore the perceptions of students, faculty members, and administrators about various positive and negative influences on writing skills development. I will not be collecting any personal information regarding age, gender, ethnicity or race, financial status, or health-related issues. Additionally, any personal information volunteered by a participant will be purged from all research documents.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you may choose to do any or all of the following:
- complete and submit an online questionnaire (approximately 30-60 minutes),
- participate in an interview of 45 minutes to 1 hour with Dr. Harwell,
- permit a review of one or more student papers submitted to ████████ (students only), and/or
- permit follow-up contact to verify accuracy in the interpretations of your comments and findings of the research (approximately 15-30 minutes).

Dr. Harwell will digitally record your interview with your permission. The recordings will not be heard by anyone other than the researcher. All recordings and subsequent transcripts will be maintained in a secure file on Dr. Harwell's personal computer. She will purge your name, along with any identifying data from all transcripts. Pseudonyms will be used to replace participant names in all research documents. Dr. Harwell will be

asking a colleague, not associated with ████████, to review the transcripts (minus any identifying names or personal information) in an effort to check the progress of the analysis. The colleague who will review the transcripts and analyses has signed a confidentiality agreement indicating a commitment to refrain from sharing any information about the study with others.

Here are some sample questions:
____ What scholarly writing skills elements cause [you/your students] the most difficulty?
____ What has helped [you/your students] the most in developing scholarly writing skills?
____ What has hindered [your/your students'] writing skills development?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at ████████████████████████ or Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress, or becoming upset. Being in this study will not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. There may be no direct benefits to individuals as a result of participating in the study, but there may be benefits to ████████████████████████ if the findings help the institution to increase the effectiveness of writing skills training.

Payment:
There will be no payment to individuals or to ████████████████████████████ as a result of participating in this study.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. Dr. Harwell will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, Dr. Harwell will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure. Digital data will be stored in password-protected computer files on Dr. Harwell's personal computer. Non-digital data will be stored in a locked case to which Dr. Harwell will maintain sole access. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by Walden University.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have questions, you may contact Dr. Harwell at ████████████████████. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call ████████████. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is ████████████. Walden University's approval number for this study is **06-26-14-0261935** and it expires on **June 25, 2015.**

If you agree to participate in this study, please print a copy of this consent form for your records.

To participate in the questionnaire portion of the study, please go to [link to survey]. You will indicate your consent to participate in the questionnaire portion of the research through the survey link.

To participate in an interview or consent to the review of your student work, please copy and paste the Statement of Consent below into an email message to Dr. Harwell. Email your Statement of Consent to ███████████████████ .

Statement of Consent:

I have read the consent form, and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described in the Consent Form. I consent to participate in this research by (check all that apply)
- ____ Allowing Dr. Harwell to interview me
- ____ Allowing Dr. Harwell to review one or more of my student papers submitted to █████.
- ____ Allowing Dr. Harwell to contact me after an interview to verify that she has interpreted my comments accurately

Name of Participant:

Date of consent:

Participant's Email Address:

Appendix F: Writing Skills Questionnaire

Writing Skills Questionnaire

Before beginning this questionnaire, please read the Consent Form attached to the email message that contained the link to this questionnaire. When you click the "Consent" button, you are confirming that you understand and agree to the terms described in the Consent Form.

[Consent button]

This questionnaire contains several open-ended questions allowing for your written descriptions. Please note that your written responses *will not* be analyzed for writing skills. Please feel free to write as much as you like. If you must leave the survey before you complete it, you may save it and return to it later.

[The online survey will have fill-in boxes in the place of blank lines and click buttons in the place of bullet points. Only the first two items will be required items. All other survey items will be optional.]

1. My role at ██████████████████████████ is (click all that apply)
   • Student
   • Instructor
   • Administrator
2. I am affiliated with the following program(s) (click all that apply)
   • Family Life Education
   • Education: Assessment, Research, and Educational Leadership
   • Organizational Leadership
   • None of the above _____
3. In addition to my role at ████████, I work
   • Full time
   • Part time
   • Other _____
4. My professional field of work is (current and/or anticipated)
   _____

[At this point, the online survey will route the participant to the correct section based on his or her response to the first question.]

Student Questions:
1. Briefly describe your educational background prior to enrolling in ████████. Include your early education, undergraduate studies, and other adult education. _____

2. Describe any learning experiences with academic writing prior to or during your enrollment at ▇▇▇▇▇. _____

3. Select the scholarly writing elements that cause you the most difficulty (select all that apply):
   - **Punctuation** (commas, semicolons, colons, parentheses, quotation marks, italics, etc.)
     Specific examples or comments: _____
   - **Paragraph structure** (beginning, body, ending, transition to next paragraph)
     Specific examples or comments: _____
   - **Sentence structure** (modifiers, complex and compound sentences, etc.)
     Specific examples or comments: _____
   - **APA Citations** (citing in the text, reference lists, etc.)
     Specific examples or comments: _____
   - **Word processing** (typing skills, document formatting, APA headings, indentations, page breaks, Track Changes, etc.)
     Specific examples or comments: _____
   - **Grammar and tense** (past and present tense, passive and active voice, consistency, etc.)
     Specific examples or comments: _____
   - **Other** (capitalization, use of italics, summarizing, statistical notations, tables, figures, etc.) _____

4. Please describe what you think has helped you the most to develop your scholarly writing skills (e.g., classroom instruction, one-on-one tutoring, writing manuals, worksheets, instructor feedback, study groups, online resources, etc.). _____

5. Describe anything that has hindered your writing skills development (e.g., personal study habits, reading ability, computer skills, time constraints, other personal factors, lack of learning opportunities, difficulty understanding expectations, etc.). _____

6. What suggestions would you have for a plan, program initiatives, or learning tools to help you develop your scholarly writing skills?
   _____

7. Do you have any other comments about developing scholarly writing skills? _____

Instructor and Administrator Questions:

1. Briefly describe your educational background prior to working at ▇▇▇▇▇.
   _____

2. Briefly describe your involvement with student writing at ▇▇▇▇▇ (e.g., teaching or coaching writing skills, grading narrative papers, editing student writing, etc.). _____

3. Select the scholarly writing elements that cause █████████ students the most difficulty (select all that apply):
   - **Punctuation** (commas, semicolons, colons, parentheses, quotation marks, italics, etc.)
     Specific examples or comments: _____
   - **Paragraph structure** (beginning, body, ending, transition to next paragraph)
     Specific examples or comments: _____
   - **Sentence structure** (modifiers, complex and compound sentences, etc.)
     Specific examples or comments: _____
   - **APA Citations** (citing in the text, reference lists, etc.)
     Specific examples or comments: _____
   - **Word processing** (typing skills, document formatting, APA headings, indentations, page breaks, Track Changes, etc.)
     Specific examples or comments: _____
   - **Grammar and tense** (past and present tense, passive and active voice, consistency, etc.)
     Specific examples or comments: _____
   - **Other** (capitalization, use of italics, summarizing, statistical notations, tables, figures, etc.) _____

4. Please describe any techniques that have helped students improve their writing skills at █████████ (e.g., writing assignments, one-on-one tutoring, small groups work, worksheets, feedback on course papers, etc.).
   _____

5. What hinders the development of scholarly writing skills among █████████ students (prior education, other education factors, student personal issues or educational deficiencies, faculty writing skills training, etc.)?
   _____

6. What other comments do you have regarding the development of student scholarly writing skills at █████████? _____

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Before logging out of the survey, please make note of the participant number provided by the website and keep the number for you records.

Marsha A. Harwell, DPhil, CFLE

Appendix G: Interview Protocols

Student Interview Protocol

Opening Remarks (paraphrased)

1. Hello, I'm Marsha Harwell. I am working on a Doctor of Education degree in adult education at Walden University, and I am conducting a research study on graduate students' writing skills.
2. The study results will be used to develop a plan for the ▆▆▆▆ administration to consider for helping students with writing. Creating the plan for improvement is a required portion of my doctoral study.
3. The purpose of the study is to understand the types of writing difficulties that are prevalent among ▆▆▆▆ students and describe positive and negative influences on writing skills development at the institution.
4. You have already signed a consent form to participate in the study, but let's go over some of the important points.
    a. You may excuse yourself from the interview at any time and for any reason.
    b. You may withdraw from the study at any time.
    c. I will not use your name or any identifying characteristics in any of my notes, conversations, or publications related to the study.
    d. I would like to record our interview today if it is acceptable to you.
    e. If you would like a copy of your interview transcript, I am happy to send it to you and allow you to comment further on anything from the interview or otherwise related to the research.
    f. Do you have any questions so far?
5. I will keep the interview to approximately 1 hour. Are you ready to begin?
6. **[Start recording.]**
7. Demographic questions:
    a. What is your program of study?
    b. Professional responsibilities:
        i. Type of work
        ii. Full time or part time
        iii. Hours per week
    c. Your home
        i. How many people share your home?
        ii. Dependents?
    d. Educational background:
        i. Early schooling
        ii. Undergraduate studies
8. I am looking for your perceptions about two issues concerning student writing skills.
    a. First, I want to know your perceptions about the types of struggles you have or have had in the past with scholarly writing.
    b. Second, I want to learn your perceptions about what has influenced your writing skills development positively or negatively, whether the influences are people, beliefs, habits, circumstances, or anything else that might help or hinder your writing skills development.

Research Questions (Interview questions are indicated by lower case alphabet letters.)

1. What are the perceptions of the institution's students, faculty members, and administrators regarding the most pervasive writing skills deficits among the institution's adult graduate students?
    a. Would you please take a minute and look over the list of writing skill categories (see below)? Pick the item from the list that has been the most problematic for you and tell me about it. Describe why you think it is a problem.
    b. Whether or not it is on the list, tell me about your second most problematic skill category. Describe your specific problem within the category.

2. What are the perceptions of the institution's students, faculty members, and administrators regarding positive and negative influences on student writing skills development?
    a. Describe your perceptions of the scholarly writing expectations at ▮▮▮▮▮▮
    b. Describe what has helped you the most in developing your scholarly writing skills.
    c. Describe what has hindered your writing skills development.
    d. How would you advise a writing instructor to help you develop your scholarly writing skills?
    e. Do you have any other thoughts about students developing good writing skills?

Prompts for clarification or further information:
- You mentioned _____. Would you tell me more about that?
- Let me make sure I understand what you mean. (Paraphrase interviewee's response with my understanding explained)

Writing Skills Categories

- **Punctuation** (commas, semicolons, colons, parentheses, quotation marks, italics, etc.)

- **Paragraph structure** (beginning, body, ending, transition to next paragraph)

- **Sentence structure** (modifiers, complex and compound sentences, etc.)

- **APA Citations** (citing in the text, reference lists, etc.)

- **Word processing** (typing skills, document formatting, APA headings, indentations, page breaks, Track Changes, etc.)

- **Grammar and tense** (past and present tense, passive and active voice, consistency, etc.)

- **Other** (capitalization, use of italics, summarizing, statistical notations, tables, figures, etc.)

Faculty/Administration Interview Protocol

Opening Remarks (paraphrased)

1. Hello, I'm Marsha Harwell. I am working on a Doctor of Education degree in adult education at Walden University, and I am conducting a research study on graduate students' writing skills.
2. The study results will be used to develop a plan for the ███████ administration to consider for helping students with writing. Creating the plan for improvement is a required portion of my doctoral study.
3. The purpose of the study is to understand the types of writing difficulties that are prevalent among ██████ students and describe positive and negative influences on writing skills development at the institution.
4. You have already signed a consent form to participate in the study, but let's go over some of the important points.
   a. You may excuse yourself from the interview at any time and for any reason.
   b. You may withdraw from the study at any time.
   c. I will not use your name or any identifying characteristics in any of my notes, conversations, or publications related to the study.
   d. I would like to record our interview today if it is acceptable to you.
   e. If you would like a copy of your interview transcript, I am happy to send it to you and allow you to comment further on anything from the interview or otherwise related to the research.
   f. Do you have any questions so far?
5. I will keep the interview to approximately 1 hour. Are you ready to begin?
6. **[Start recording.]**
7. Demographic questions:
   a. Roles in the institution
      i. Program affiliation?
      ii. Grade writing assignments?
   b. Professional responsibilities beyond the institution
      i. Type of work
      ii. Full time or part time
      iii. Hours per week
   c. Educational background
      i. Undergraduate
      ii. Graduate
8. I am looking for your perceptions about two issues concerning student writing skills.
   a. First, I want to know your perceptions about the types of struggles your students have with scholarly writing.
   b. Second, I want to learn your perceptions about what has influenced your students' writing skills development positively or negatively, whether the influences are people, beliefs, habits, circumstances, or anything else that might help or hinder their writing skills development.

Research Questions (Interview questions are indicated by lower case alphabet letters.)

1. What are the perceptions of the institution's students, faculty members, and administrators regarding the most pervasive writing skills deficits among the institution's adult graduate students?
    a. Would you please take a minute and look over the list of writing skill categories (see below)? In order of importance, describe the skills that have been the most problematic in your students' writing skills.
    b. Are there any skills that are not listed with which your students need writing skill development?

2. What are the perceptions of the institution's students, faculty members, and administrators regarding positive and negative influences on student writing skills development?
    a. What do you see as most helpful in developing students' writing skills?
    b. What do you see as the hindrances to writing skill development at this institution?
    c. How would you describe the institutional expectations for student writing at ██████████?
    d. Do your students generally understand the scholarly writing expectations at ██████████? Please explain.

Prompts for clarification or further information:
- You mentioned _____. Would you tell me more about that?
- Let me make sure I understand what you mean. (Paraphrase interviewee's response with my understanding explained)

Writing Skills Categories

- **Punctuation** (commas, semicolons, colons, parentheses, quotation marks, italics, etc.)

- **Paragraph structure** (beginning, body, ending, transition to next paragraph)

- **Sentence structure** (modifiers, complex and compound sentences, etc.)

- **APA Citations** (citing in the text, reference lists, etc.)

- **Word processing** (typing skills, document formatting, APA headings, indentations, page breaks, Track Changes, etc.)

- **Grammar and tense** (past and present tense, passive and active voice, consistency, etc.)

- **Other** (capitalization, use of italics, summarizing, statistical notations, tables, figures, etc.)

Appendix H: Writing Sample Analysis Worksheet

Category	Narrative Assessment [In this column, I described my observations concerning the subtopic.]
Punctuation (commas, semicolons, colons, parentheses, quotation marks, italics, etc.)	
Paragraph structure (beginning, body, ending, transition to next paragraph)	
Sentence structure (modifiers, complex and compound sentences, etc.)	
APA Citations (citing in the text, reference lists, etc.)	
Word processing (typing skills, document formatting, APA headings, indentations, page breaks, Track Changes, etc.)	
Grammar and tense (past and present tense, passive and active voice, consistency, etc.)	
Other (capitalization, use of italics, summarizing, statistical notations, tables, figures, etc.)	

Appendix I: Confidentiality Agreement

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Name of Signer: ████████████**, Ph.D.**

During the course of my activity in auditing the data analysis for this research, "Graduate Student Readiness for Scholarly Writing," I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. Although the data will be purged of personal identifiers, I acknowledge that all of the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participants.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.

2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.

3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.

4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification, or purging of confidential information.

5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.

6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.

7. I will only access or use systems or devices I am officially authorized to access, and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: **Date:**