



CNA-Q's Advanced

Writing Centre



CNA-Q / AWC Community Outreach – What's the point?

Consider this...

Praxis, Spring 2011 issue "welcomes articles that describe existing efforts to carve out a broader purview for writing centers, as well as speculative essays about how writing centers help host institutions realize their pedagogical and cultural missions.

"We are concerned that when writing centers are perceived only as writing hospitals, places ... that "fix" student writing, they are more susceptible to budget cuts and funding crises. This makes it difficult for centers to sustain non-directive, non-evaluative consultation practices and to serve large, diverse communities of writers.

"Praxis believes that non-directive consultation practices, outreach initiatives, and extracurricular writing-center work can be powerful and economically savvy ways to bring accolade to universities, colleges, and high schools."

The editors of Praxis in their invitation for articles for Spring 2011 issue of Praxis, the University of Texas' Writing Center Journal. From: <http://projects.uwc.utexas.edu/praxis/?q=node/342>

"...the roles that writing programmes, writing centres, writing initiatives and writing research projects play within institutions are broadening and becoming more complex".

Lisa Ganobcsik-Williams, "Abstracts: The Roles of Writing Development in Higher Education and Beyond." European Assoc. for Teaching of Academic Writing, EATAW Conference 2009, Conference brochure, p. 4.

"Outreach programs for the community may include workshops for local businesses, grammar hotlines, writing contests, training of tutors for other settings, and conferences on writing. Recognizing that their tutors also learn about writing and gain professional experience in tutorial instruction, writing centers also offer credit courses for tutor training and acknowledge their role in the preparation of future teachers."

Muriel Harris, "Writing Center Concept", International Writing Centers Association. From: <http://writingcenters.org/resources/writing-center-concept/>

"...unless the writing centre provides an alternative to the classroom, unless writers experience something there that is qualitatively different from what they find elsewhere on their journey through the curriculum, then justifying the center's existence and budget seems problematic."

D. Healy. "A Defense of Dualism: The writing center and the classroom" Landmark Essays on Writing Centers. C. Murphy and J. Law (Editors), 1995, Hermagoras Press, Davis, CA.



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CNA-Q / AWC Community Outreach

Outreach Initiatives (2008 – present)

Writing Workshops

- creative journaling
- short story
- university entrance essay
- business proposals
- writing as gift art
- Flash fiction
- Flash fiction for youth
- Novella
- Novel
- Scriptwriting for documentary films
- Writing dramatic screenplays

School presentations (Intermediary)

- Plagiarism: what it is/avoiding it
- APA citation guidelines

Collaborations

- Doha Writers Workshop
- Qatar Foundation for Protection of Women and Children
- Doha Arab Museum of Modern Art (preliminary discussions)
- Doha Film Institute (preliminary discussions)

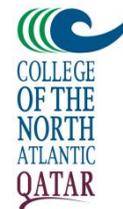
Publications

- Mosaic I & Mosaic II (print writing magazines)
- Mosaic 2.0 (online writing e-zine)



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Writing Centres – the scope, benefits & hazards of outreach initiatives

Discussion points:

FUNDAMENTALLY...

1. Should writing centres be non-directive?
2. Should writing centres offer non-evaluative consultation practices?
3. Should writing centres serve large, diverse communities of writers?

More concretely....

If we accept that community outreach initiatives have a place with institutional writing centres...

- How tightly focused should be the scope of those activities?
 - Should they simply mirror the services offered within their host institutions?
 - Could they take a broader scope of purpose and delivery?
 - ...supported by what rationale?
- Should the consumers of these outreach initiatives be 'targeted' (e.g., secondary schools, EFL and/or immigrant groups, etc.), or should they be wide open?
- Can such outreach initiatives stimulate insights for research opportunities?
- Is there a risk that outreach activities could dilute the main function of institutional writing centres?
 - ...introduce conflicts over staff availability, material resources, funding?
- Does such a role create a challenge to staffing writing centres?
 - ...introduce problems related to skill development?
 - ...is there a role for peer tutors in community outreach?
- What might be the affect of outreach initiatives on the perception of teachers whose classroom instruction writing centres are intended to supplement?
 - ...perceived/actual conflicts?

- **PRESENTATION PROPOSAL:**

- **Writing Centre Outreach Initiatives: purpose, scope, risks**

- **Abstract**

- The presentation will provide background on CNAQ Advanced Writing Centre's experience with its Community Outreach Program and then invite the audience to: 1) offer their observations/critique as to its efficacy vis. the Centre's core mission; and 2) to explore in open discussion the potential for such programs in the institutional and community contexts that the individual participants represent.

- **Background**

- The Advanced Writing Centre of the College of the North Atlantic – Qatar is designated by the College to develop and deliver a slate of Community Outreach Workshops that expand on the traditional idea that writing centres are internal resources for student/faculty. The workshops are advertised in mass media inviting people to register at no cost. The kind of workshops offered range from how to write letters of application for employment and university application letters to short novel writing and film scriptwriting. CNAQ's Writing Centre even produced and published a literary magazine representing the output of workshop participants. At CNAQ, the workshops are proving an unqualified success, both in community response and in the way they seem to engender and promote, particularly in an EFL context, a wider validation of the importance of writing and its potential for professional and personal development.
- Are these merely “frill” activities for the Writing Centres or are they legitimate extensions of its core mission? Are certain topics more relevant than others to writing centre goals? What are the implications for writing centres that undertake such programs in terms of necessary physical resources and adequate staffing? Is there a ‘gain’ for the traditional clientele when a writing centre turns its efforts beyond the host institution? What is the ‘gain’ for the writing centre mentors?
- **Presenter**
- Kevin Pittman, Writing Mentor
- Advanced Writing Centre

- College of the North Atlantic – Qatar