

SOSW Writing Support

The School of Social Work is committed to providing writing support to MSW students because

- **clear, concise writing is a professional skill required in every aspect of social work,**
- **the MSW program has a demanding writing load, and**
- **social work writing uses a scientific writing approach that differs substantially from the types of writing with which most students are familiar.**



What types of writing support are available?

The School offers a variety of online and personal writing support at no charge to students. The first resource you should check out is the **Writing Resources** page on the School's website (under the Current Students tab in the left sidebar: <http://ssw.unc.edu/students/writing>). This page has links to a wealth of resources such as the *Quick Reference Guide to APA*; PowerPoint tutorials on outlining, grammar, and efficient study habits; and archives of *The Portable Editor*, the School's monthly writing tip sheet.

The School provides individual writing support through the **Writing Support Team**. The Writing Support Team consists of the School's two editors (a.k.a. Susan White and Diane Wyant), who provide student support as part of their larger scope of responsibilities. Individual support is available to **all** MSW students through **face-to-face appointments, e-mail, or phone consultations**. Susan and Diane can help students with any aspect of their writing, from organizing information to general writing skills to mastering APA citation formats. Students can e-mail quick questions, but appointments are recommended for students with several questions or those who want in-depth support.

To set-up a writing support appointment, e-mail the Writing Support Team at SOSWwritingsupport@gmail.com Be sure to include the following information in your e-mail request:

- **type of appointment** – face-to-face, phone (include your phone number), e-mail
- **your program** (e.g., Triangle Distance, Chapel Hill full-time, Winston-Salem 2nd year)
- **2-3 specific preferred days & times** (e.g., "May 1, 3:00 p.m." **not** "any time Tuesday")
- **a draft of your paper** (if applicable; attach to e-mail as Word document)
- **a copy of the assignment or rubric** (if applicable)

The Portable Editor

The Portable Editor is a monthly e-newsletter prepared by the Writing Support Team with writing tips that range from APA rules for numbers to how to use the features built into Microsoft Word. To receive the free tip sheet, send an e-mail to sewhite@email.unc.edu with "Subscribe to Portable Editor" in the subject line.

UNC Writing Center

The online resources of the UNC Writing Center (handouts, video tutorials) are available to all students at <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/> Individual appointments with Writing Center tutors are available only to full-time on-campus students.

In addition, the UNC Writing Center has special programs and support for English as Second Language (ESL) students. Some ESL programs are limited to full-time students, whereas others are open to all UNC students.

Note: The UNC Writing Center is **not the same** as SOSW Writing Support.

FAQs about Writing Support

What's the turn-around time for the Writing Support Team to correct and revise my paper?

Sorry, writing support is intended to be an educational experience, not an editorial service. Writing support consultations enable a team member to help you identify areas of your writing that need improvement and to develop strategies to help you improve not only the paper you are working on today but also your future papers.

I'm not failing any classes. Why would I want to meet with the Writing Support Team?

The members of the Writing Support Team are trained to read academic papers critically with an eye toward reducing wordiness, improving flow, increasing clarity, and strengthening an argument. They can talk with you about strategies for “reading to write” that will help you manage the MSW workload and get the greatest benefit from your program of study.

I haven't written an academic paper in many, many years. How much help can I get from the Writing Support Team without violating the UNC Honor Code?

Writing support helps you develop or strengthen skills and does not violate the UNC Honor Code because **YOU** are responsible for the substantive content of your work, not the Team member. For example, a Team member might provide an example sentence to model how you could more clearly express your ideas—but the idea and information in the example will be what you have provided. The Writing Support Team members are not social workers, have not taken MSW classes, and do not correct or add content to students' papers.

Will you proofread my paper? Will you review my paper and tell me what grade I'll get?

No. Although we strongly recommend proofing every paper, the two-person Writing Support Team has to serve 175+ students and the faculty, so they cannot proofread or review entire papers for students. However, they can review selected sections of a paper and answer questions about specific issues, such as, “How can I make a smooth transition from the background section to the literature review?” or “I've revised my Conclusion section several times, but it still ends the paper with a whimper instead of on a strong note. Any suggestions as to how I can make the section stronger?”

Examples of an unacceptable request would be questions that are too broad or require a review of the entire paper, such as “Have I included all the required elements for the assignment?” “Have I adequately answered all the questions for this assignment?” or “Do I present a convincing argument?”

Will you tell my instructor I asked for writing support?

Writing support is confidential. The Writing Support Team will not discuss your writing or your appointments with anyone without your permission.

I want to try writing a grant application for the agency where I am doing my field work, but the grant isn't part of my coursework. Can I ask the Writing Support Team for help with extracurricular writing?

Absolutely. Although the grant application is not for a specific course, that effort will certainly contribute to your education and career preparation. Writing support is also available for students working on other types of written materials for extracurricular activities such as articles, guides, op-ed pieces, or press releases.

I got excellent grades on my college papers. But, I haven't gotten good grades on my MSW papers. What gives?

Writing for graduate-level courses in general requires more refined writing skills and greater synthesis of information than undergrad work. In addition, social work writing is a type of scientific writing that few, if any, students are taught in undergrad courses. Don't panic. Scientific writing is not rocket science; this writing approach is merely a skill that you can learn. The Writing Support Team can help you improve your writing by adapting to the scientific style and strengthening your skills in communicating clearly and concisely using simple, straightforward language.