

Content Tutor Handbook

The Center for Teaching and Learning



Lawrence University
2009-2010

Welcome

Welcome to the CTL team! Your role as a content tutor is vital to the academic success of many Laurentians. You were hired because of your experience with subject matter in your discipline(s), and you will help students through their coursework, empowering them to succeed.

This handbook is a basic guide for your role as a content tutor and will serve as a reference for both the administrative process of tutoring through the Center for Teaching and Learning and the interpersonal process of tutoring an individual student. Please realize that the information in this handbook is general in nature and that additional resources for tutors are specialized and available from the CTL Program Assistant.

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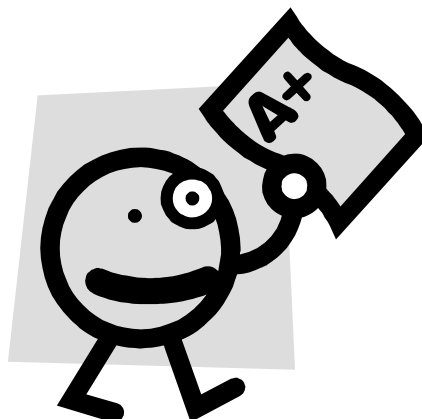
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The Tutoring Process

- I. LU student contacts the CTL by phone, email or in person.**
- II. A Tutor Request Form is filled out by or for the student.**
- III. The coverage tutor lets the student know that a tutor will be contacting him/her soon to set up a tutoring appointment. If we don't have a tutor for that course, Brandon and Julie will work with the professor to get a tutor hired.**
- IV. The coverage tutor contacts an available tutor, typically via email, and gives the tutor the contact information of the student. The tutor request form should be included in the email as an attachment.**
- V. The tutor has 24 hours to accept or decline the request; however we hope that you will respond as soon as possible.**
 - a. If you decline, you must alert the CTL within 24 hours. The original request should be re-attached and sent back to the coverage desk via email.**
 - b. Students rely on tutors in order to succeed; therefore, requests should only be turned down by a tutor if absolutely necessary and that reason should be included in the email declining the request.**
 - c. If a tutor is leaving town or is unavailable to tutor because of illness, his/her own coursework, etc, he/she should let Brandon or Julie know so they can prevent that tutor from being assigned while they are unavailable.**
- VI. The tutor contacts the student as soon as possible and arranges a time and location for the tutoring session.**
- VII. The tutoring session occurs. (If the tutoring session is canceled or if the student fails to show up, and this happens repeatedly, please let Brandon know so he can follow up with the student).**
- VIII. After the session is finished the tutor completes the on-line session log within 24 hours.**
- IX. A copy of the session log is sent to the professor from the coverage desk after it has been proofread by a CTL staff member.**
- X. Tutors record hours worked via Voyager. Please be aware of the pay period deadline as hours need to be submitted to Brandon for approval by midnight on Sunday after the pay period ends.**
- XI. Time sheets are submitted to Brandon for approval**
- XII. Tutor gets paid! Cha – ching!**

Benefits of Peer Tutoring

While classroom instruction from members of the faculty is an essential part of the college academic experience, learning from peers is also an important component of the enterprise. The label “peer learning” often refers to contexts such as in-class discussion or group projects, but peer learning can refer to any situation in which students engage each other academically.



In the case of content tutoring, students requesting assistance are paired with experienced students to reinforce classroom learning. The peer tutoring relationship can be similar to a teacher-student relationship in that the tutor is more familiar with the material and is charged with the task of helping the student understand and apply concepts to solve problems, learn material, etc. However, the peer tutoring relationship is also different:

Benefitting from tutoring sessions, a student:

- receives one-on-one help not always possible in the classroom setting
- develops more intensive relationships by tailoring techniques, explanations, and style to students' needs and personalities
- often can look up to the tutor as a positive role model
- has a relationship with someone who can share in the academic experiences at the institution (and often within a particular department or course)
- learns in an environment often less intimidating or more approachable than the classroom or a professor's office hours

Benefitting from the tutoring sessions, the tutor:

- by teaching a subject, learns the material in a new and deeper way
- develops and enhances interpersonal skills in a positive way
- is able to take part in making a difference in someone's life



Meeting the Student

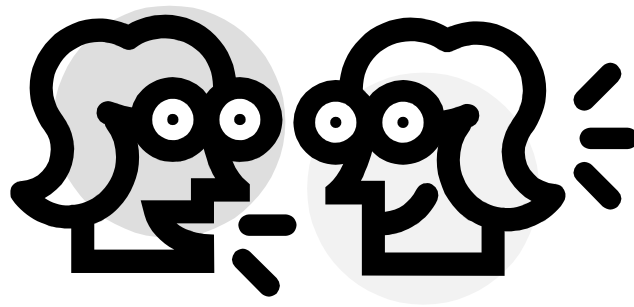
You've been assigned a student. After making contact with the student and arranging a time and place, you embark on the first session.

At the outset, the student may approach the tutoring experience with a number of different feelings and attitudes as well as beliefs about what tutoring should accomplish or involve. Consider that the student may:

- be anxious or nervous
- question your ability/knowledge
- possess a negative attitude either about the course or seeking tutoring
- feel discouraged about the material, his/her ability, etc.
- be concerned only with a grade, an exam, passing the course, etc.
- blame the professor for “being a lousy teacher” or “expecting too much”
- blame himself/herself for being a “bad student”
- expect all problems to be solved in half an hour (the “Brady Bunch” mentality)
- expect you to solve difficulties single-handedly to or “do for” rather than “do with”
- feel intimidated by you
- feel overwhelmed
- be preoccupied with personal issues
- resent needing to seek help in the first place
- be confident in your ability, eager to learn, and determined to succeed 😊

Of course, some of the above positions can be seen obstacles or challenges for the tutor, especially because these feelings may not manifest themselves immediately, if at all. “Reading” your students can be difficult, particularly if you jump immediately into concepts or practice difficult problems during the first meeting.

Tips for a Successful 1st Session



The following suggestions may help you during your first session:

- Make some initial small talk. Find out where the student is from, where s/he lives on campus, what other courses s/he is taking, etc.
- Tell the student more about your own experiences with the material. You may talk about your major, courses/professors you've taken before, etc. While you don't want to appear overconfident, talking briefly about your background may help the student trust your ability.
- Find out why the student is in the course. Maybe s/he is taking French solely to fulfill a distribution requirement – or maybe because it's relevant to the art history major. Maybe s/he is taking Logic because it's required for a Philosophy major – or maybe just because a friend or advisor recommended the class. Understand your student's academic position, goals, reasoning, etc.
- Ask the student to talk about the course and subject matter you will be tutoring. How does s/he feel about the professor? Is s/he aware of the areas needing attention, or is s/he totally "lost"? Try to gauge the student's comfort level with the material, his/her degree of preparation, and his/her strengths and weaknesses.
- If possible, find out more about the student's learning style. S/he may be able to tell you under what conditions or with what approach s/he usually learns best.

Tips for a Successful Session

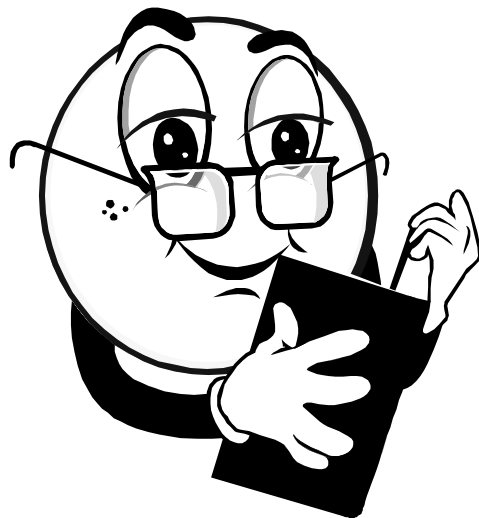
- At the start of a session, find out how things have been going since the last time you met. How'd the quiz go? Which new concepts were introduced in class? Is there a new assignment?
- Set an agenda for your session. What specifically do you want to cover? How much time can you both devote? Do you want to devote the first half to explaining the material and the second half to practice? Is there a particular assignment to go over?
- You may wish to begin with a review to reinforce what the student already knows and to start with a point of confidence.
- Focus on one concept or idea at a time. Sometimes, a student may need help understanding several complex and/or interrelated ideas. Help the student identify and separate steps in a process, different skills/ideas, etc.
- Try leading by example. You may wish to do a practice problem or two and then ask the student to do one himself/herself, using you only as a reference.
- Ask the student to verbally explain the concept or problem--conjugating the verb, completing the proof, etc.
- In general, ask questions. Especially if the student is starting to get stuck regularly, make sure you ask enough questions so he/she figures it out him or herself.
- Be patient, giving the student adequate time. Remember that silence is okay, as it allows the student time to think/analyze.
- Be flexible in your approaches. Try visuals, flow charts, analogies, mnemonic devices, repetition, etc.
- End the session with a short summary of what you've covered. This not only helps the student review concepts but also instills a sense of accomplishment.
- End on a positive. If you're working on the most difficult concepts last and the student is struggling, return to areas with which s/he feels more confident.
- Talk about scheduling your next session. During this conversation, set some goals or ask the student to work on specific concepts before the next session.
- Offer the student a chance to give you feedback.

Tutor Expectations

- 1. Respect.** Please be sensitive to the needs and concerns of the students that you work with as a tutor. Often times, it is difficult for someone to ask for help; especially from a peer. Keep session matters confidential and demonstrate respect for the student. Remember when meeting with a student you are a reflection of the Center for Teaching and Learning as well as Lawrence University. Be professional.
- 2. Patience.** Practice patience when tutoring a student. Sometimes it will not be easy to do this, but remember you are already fluent in a particular subject. The student you are tutoring is not, but s/he is working to understand.
- 3. Communication.** Be sure to keep Brandon or Julie informed of any and all matters that are pertinent to a student's academic success or that may be damaging to the student. When in doubt – talk to a supervisor.
- 4. Honor Code.** As a tutor, you are expected to follow and abide by the Lawrence University Honor Code.
- 5. Administrative Duties.** You must submit all paperwork within a timely fashion. Please make sure that session logs are submitted within 24 hours of a tutoring session. In addition you should submit your time sheets on the due date every pay period.
- 6. Attendance.** Be sure to attend all tutoring sessions that you have scheduled with a student. Students rely on you to show up when you say you will be there. Please be on time as well. Occasionally, there may be an extenuating circumstance that prevents you from meeting with a student. In this instance, be sure to contact the student and reschedule or contact the CTL so that a coverage tutor can contact the student and locate a new tutor to help them.
- 7. Term Meetings and Continuing Education.** Near the end of first and second term you will be required to meet with Brandon to discuss your role as a tutor. These meetings will be used to determine what is working well and ways to improve your tutoring. Furthermore, you will be required to attend at least one of the continuing education workshops each term.

Sessions will run between half an hour to forty-five minutes and cover a wealth of topics. You will be able to select whichever topic interests you the most.

- 8. Class Introductions.** At the beginning of each term I expect that you will go to your respective class or classes (if possible) and introduce yourself as a content tutor for that particular course. Be sure to work closely with the professor or professors to determine a good time for you to do this. If you are unable to introduce yourself in person, you may write an email explaining how to request a tutor. In order to send it to the class, send it first to the professor and ask him or her to pass it along to the students.
- 9. Utilize the CTL.** My expectation is that you will hold as many of your tutoring sessions in the CTL as possible. The CTL is a great space on campus because it is free of many of the typical campus distractions. Don't be afraid to inform students of the other aspects of the CTL as well. This will help our resources to grow.
- 10. Take Care of Yourself.** It is hard to learn from someone who is irritable, overwhelmed, and removed. Be sure to do what you need to do for yourself to remain healthy and upbeat. There will be certain times of the year when things will be exceptionally busy for you with your own classes, outside activities, and relationships. Don't be afraid to take time for you to remain sane. If you ever feel so overwhelmed with your own schoolwork or other responsibilities that you cannot tutor, please talk to Brandon or Julie. They will be happy to give you a leave of absence from tutoring.
- 11. Ask Questions.** If there is something that you do not know or understand about the CTL, or your role as a tutor, please ask. I'm here to help.



Honor Council and Honor Code

The Honor Code is a central part of Lawrence life. The Honor Code helps to promote a more trusting and open environment by fostering honest behavior.

No Lawrence student will unfairly advance his or her own academic performance or in any way limit or impede the academic pursuits of other students of the Lawrence community.

Overview of the Code

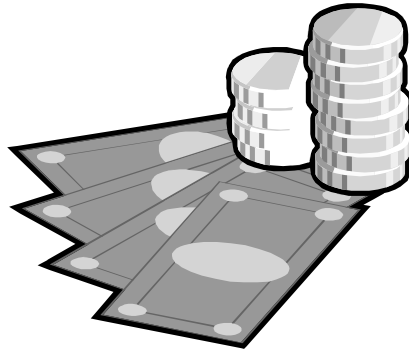
Established at Lawrence in 1962 (and amended in 1970 and 1998), the Honor Code reflects a central value of our college - academic integrity. Only about 400 colleges and universities in the U.S. have such an honor system. Unlike many other honor systems which are run by administrators, or a panel of faculty members, Lawrence's system is overseen by an Honor Council comprised entirely of students. The faculty at Lawrence entrust the students to oversee the Code on behalf of the Lawrence academic community

The Honor Code is a great privilege and a great responsibility. The Faculty trusts that students will do honest academic work and this trust allows students certain privileges. For example, exams are frequently unproctored, or sometimes given as take-home exams. This privilege brings with it responsibility. Lawrence faculty and students, as members of our community, are expected to report all potential honor code violations, for example, cheating on exams or plagiarism on papers and assignments. This is our responsibility.

Application to Tutors:

The Honor Code plays a different role in its application to tutors than to the general student population. Tutors are put in situations where they must act responsibly to preempt infractions of the Honor Code. In practice, this means that sometimes students will come to a tutor with an assignment that should be worked on alone. Infrequently, the tutor may notice that the student has plagiarized parts or all of an assignment. In either case, the tutor must stand by and uphold the principles of the Honor Code. Remember, you can always talk to Julie about any concerns you have regarding the Honor Code and tutoring. Tutors can help avoid this situation by asking the student if the professor gave any guidelines regarding the amount or type of assistance allowed with a specific assignment.

Payroll Information



Tutors are paid every two weeks. In order to be paid you must make sure to do the following:

- I. Confirm with Julie or Brandon that the appropriate information has been submitted to the payroll office to set up your time sheets.
- II. Submit time sheets through Voyager.
 - a. Be sure to select the appropriate job if you have more than one on-campus job.
 - b. When submitting hours for training or meetings, you will log your hours under the “Student Assistant, CTL” time sheet.
 - c. When submitting hours for actual tutoring, you will log you hours under the “Student Tutor, CTL” time sheet.
 - d. **YOU ARE PAID AT DIFFERENT RATES FO.R DIFFERENT TASKS**
- III. Submit all your hours by Sunday at 5pm after the pay period ends. You may enter hours at the end of each day or at the end of each week... Just make sure you hit the “SAVE” button.
- IV. At the end of the pay period, once all your hours are submitted, click “SUBMIT.”
 - a. Only hit “SUBMIT” when **ALL** of your hours have been logged.
- V. If there is anything unusual about your time sheet, please leave a note in the “Comments” section of the time sheet.
- VI. Detailed instructions can be found on the CTL website under *For Tutors: How To: Get Paid*.
- VII. If you find errors or have questions, contact Brandon.
- VIII. You must submit your session logs and time sheets on time to get paid on time!

Contact Information

Brandon Parrott-Sheffer

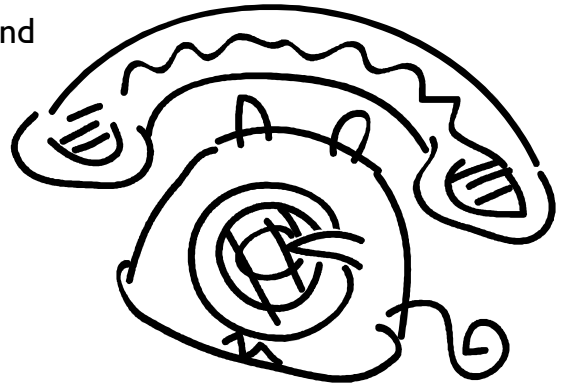
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