



## **Increase the Value of Your Writing Assignments: Create Research Support Teams**

When my Writing in Psychology course switched to Canvas during Covid, I missed the in-class interactions students had with each other to discuss the progress of their papers.

The following semester, in an effort to “compensate” for the lack of students’ interactions, I assigned students into Research Support Teams of 3-4 students. I was pleasantly surprised with the improvement in student papers!

### **What are Research Support Teams?**

Research Support Teams are one way to deepen your students’ experiences with assigned writing and research – without adding to your workload.

Instead of assigning a paper at the beginning of the semester, collecting it at the end, and having no intervention with students’ papers in-between, consider assigning students into “Research Support Teams” of 3-4 students. All team interactions can take place outside class.

### **What would Research Teams do? Types of help that research groups could give:**

- Facilitate early progress on the paper
- Give students feedback at multiple stages of their papers; Consistency of feedback – same group for the whole semester
- Review the organization of the paper:
  - Review the prompt to see if all team members understand it
  - Review thesis statements (do they fit the prompt?)
  - Review Introductions & Conclusions
  - Review 3-5 p. draft to check the paper’s structure – thesis, headings, subheadings, paragraphs, transitions; argument stability; synthesis of multiple scholarly sources
  - Review final draft for correct use of documentation style, for small errors, & for help in eliminating excessive wordiness
- Broaden students’ views of the discipline; Discuss ideas, research, and current conversation in the field on the topic:

For example, to guide students in writing in your discipline, you could provide a handout with your expectations for a persuasive thesis and include some good and poor examples (they could even be annotated); each group could then discuss the

handout and verify that each thesis in their group meets the guidelines [side note – Writing Lab advisors would be happy to help create the handout]

### **Other benefits to using research groups:**

- To approximate the submission of a journal article
- To help students improve their own writing by seeing the writing that others do

### **Where do I begin?**

- Consider your pet peeves about past papers and/or identify characteristics of the paper (based on the prompt & rubric) that would be useful to emphasize in the research groups [e.g., thesis, structure of paper w/ transitions, conclusion, etc.]
- Consider at which points students could benefit most
- Prepare guided direction for each team “assignment” [again, the FHSS Writing Lab advisors would be happy to help!]

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