

## Seeking Peer Feedback: A Guide for Academic Writers

### Briefly contextualize the work

- **This should only take 2 minutes.** You want to maximize the time spent discussing your ideas and your writing.
- Where are you in the writing process? Is this a first draft, a later draft, an outline, something you've already gotten feedback on and revised, etc.?
- Where is this work situated within your larger project? What role does this chapter or section play in your overall analysis or argument?
- Who is the audience for this work? Who are your anticipated readers?

### Set guidelines and priorities for feedback

- Near the beginning of your feedback session, tell your reader what kinds of feedback you are looking for. If there are areas that you do not want feedback on, clearly state those up front.
  - "I'm hoping to clarify my argument, so I'd like us to focus on my introduction. I don't want to worry about grammar or word choice now."
  - "I can't quite write the conclusion for this piece, so I'd like help figuring out how to sum things up. I know that I still have to work on setting up my evidence/case studies but I don't want to focus on that today."
- If you are working with a longer piece, you might also help your reader prioritize by indicating sections they should read closely and sections they can skim.
- You could also set 2-3 questions to guide the feedback session, such as:
  - What do you read as my main argument here?
  - After reading the introduction, what do you expect this to be about?
  - Is this section offering you sufficient background information to understand the evidence?

### Different types of readers can offer you different types of feedback

- Your advisor and your committee can read your work for a sense of your content mastery and your skill in the methods of your discipline. They are well-placed to offer feedback on these areas.

- Someone in your department might read your work for new theoretical or methodological contributions, or to learn more about a new area in your shared scholarly field. They can help you understand how your work interacts with other, related work in your field.
- A fellow academic in a different department may read your work with a general understanding of academic inquiry and research, but with no background on content in your specific field. They can help you make sure your writing is well-organized, clear, and compelling.
- Your family and friends are reading your work as a lay reader would. If they are able to clearly understand some part of your writing, you likely have a strong grasp on the idea and how to communicate it effectively.
- A peer consultant reads your work as a fellow academic in a different department does. They can't provide feedback on whether or not what you are doing is best practice in your discipline or if the information you are presenting is correct. Instead, they can help you to clarify what you want to say in your writing, and to offer feedback about the effectiveness of your communication.
  - They can also suggest questions that other readers are likely to ask. While only you can answer those questions, thinking them through with a peer can help you anticipate how your committee or other high-stakes readers might approach your work.

### Writers retain agency

- As you collect feedback, remember that each reader provides one perspective on your work. Seeking a diversity of readers can strengthen your ability to reach different audiences.
  - If you find yourself struggling to work with feedback that you are receiving from different readers, you might ask: "What was this reader prioritizing as they read my work?" Then, decide whether or not you share that reader's priorities in order to determine how you might integrate or respond to that feedback.
- Ultimately, this is *your* work: your choices, your desires, your needs, your writing.