**Evolving Multimodality in Contexts: Defining an Online Writing Center**

Hello Everyone,

Thank you for joining this roundtable conversation on “evolving multimodality in context: defining an online writing center.” Here is a quick overview of our time together. I will spend the first 10 minutes introducing myself and presenting my project. We will spend the next 30 minutes on interactive group activities. I will spend the last 5 minutes wrapping up.

My name is Oluwayinka Arawomo. I go by Yinka. I am currently a PhD candidate in the Department of English (the Composition and Rhetoric Program) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I’m also the TA assistant director of the UW-Madison writing center. Today, we will be reflecting on and discussing how multimodality evolves based on exigencies; in this instance, covid. I define my use of multimodality, and I examine it in three contexts: pre, during and post covid. Ultimately, I’m paying attention to how an exigency like covid foregrounds the evolving nature of multimodality, and also helps to define the online elements of our writing center even though we are a brick and mortar one. I also highlight lessons we can transfer as multimodality responds to exigencies other than covid.

Often, we think of multimodality in terms of student writing assignments and tutoring in multiple modes. For this presentation, I use multimodality broadly to include the multiple modes of our spaces, tools, and activities, which highlight multimodality as integral to our writing center and not an addendum. Defining our writing center spaces as such can propel us to embrace the demands of working with students’ multimodal projects. Also, it helps us see how our multimodal writing centers are evolving and adapting to exigencies.

I created a [Multimodality in Contexts Template](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1iq9aBrz-pVqmADzzMkkvaivrdQgQYycyjK_hGh29mUk/edit?usp=sharing) and shared it with some members of my writing center. In the template, I provided three contexts (pre-covid, during-covid, and post-covid) in the left column and elements of multimodality in the upper row. Choosing a template makes it easy to observe this at a glance even though it may be limiting in terms of fitting texts into the grids. The follow up questions were to help me understand participants’ reflection and lessons we could transfer to other identified exigencies.

I synthesize participants’ answers here. It will also give us a sense of what is expected when we work on our own template. I will highlight significant points so that I don’t overwhelm us with a lengthy data commentary.

**Type of Writing Center**

Pre-covid, we had a brick and mortar writing center within a 4 year-college. The online elements of our identity were limited. For instance, terms such as ‘optional’, ‘some elements of online’ described this. During covid, we became a fully online writing center with the shutdown. Post-covid, we are still brick and mortar but with more vibrant online components: in-person, virtual meetings and written feedback.

**Scheduling Tools**

Before covid, scheduling involved emails for distributing drafts to instructors, WCOnline, telephone scheduling, chat services. With covid, it became strictly WCOnline. Post-covid, WConline remains the main tool for scheduling, but students can walk-in for drop-in sessions in satellite locations, call the receptionist, and send emails. We see that the online element is constant for scheduling but has evolved with WConline as the staple, which makes it a more effective way to avoid conflicting schedules and track session notes/reports.

**One-to-One Services**

Before covid, one-to-one instruction took place in physical spaces: the main center and different satellite locations. Students could schedule in advance for the main center and walk-in at satellite locations. We had some online one-to-one services which include: skype and email feedback. However, during covid, an online writing center emerged to replace in-person instruction, mainly virtual meetings and written feedback. Post-covid, we have in-person services and more online options than pre-covid, especially offered by instructors with remote-work agreement. Also, online instruction looks different with virtual meetings and written feedback on WCOnline, and zoom as a back-up.

**Group Services** (e.g. workshops, writing groups, outreaches)

Before covid, group sessions took place in physical spaces: outreach locations in and out of campus, and designated workshop locations. Participants registered online but attended in-person. For evaluations, we used both papers and online surveys. During covid, workshops moved online, and we see some elements of multimodality in terms of presentation materials and audience participation, e.g.virtual claps, and raising hands. Some services such as outreaches and working with community members were canceled. Post-covid, we now have in-person sessions, and more online only and hybrid sessions.

**Instructors’ Trainings**

Before covid, some of our instructors’ training which include ongoing education (OGEs), pro-seminars, and staff meetings, were completely in-person. During covid, we initially started with in-person and with the shut down training became online. Post-covid, it’s been hybrid.The first in-person meeting happened on March 3. Instructors with remote work agreement, instructors who traveled or called in sick joined online. The March 31 meeting moved completely online due to the weather forecast. We see more online modality for instructors’ training.

That’s a summary of participants’ templates. I emphasized how our multimodality is evolving and how our online identity has been more defined.

**Transition to Interactive Session**

Now we will transition to the second part of the roundtable discussion - small and large groups activities. When we return, I will share some concluding remarks on some highlights of participants’ comments and lessons we can transfer.

**Part B**

**Individual Activity (10 minutes)**

The purpose of this activity is to give each participant time to reflect on how multimodality is evolving in their writing center spaces and practices based on the covid exigency. It also gives you time to prepare your talking points for the group conversations.

**Instructions**

Please make a copy of this document.   
1. Fill your template based on your own experience in your writing center. Highlight the different multimodal elements in terms of your scheduling tools, one-to-one tutoring/meeting, group sessions and instructional training.

2. Respond to the discussion questions.

Note: You could share it with me at [arawomo@wisc.edu](mailto:arawomo@wisc.edu) to have a visual sense of your responses.

You can also choose to handwrite, type, map. Again any multiple mode that works for you.

**After 10 minutes…**

**Small Group Activity (10 minutes)**

I hope you found it helpful and insightful, reflecting and taking notes. Now we will transition to small group activity for another 10 minutes to share how multimodality was evolving in our different contexts. I will put you in breakout rooms.

**Some talking points in our small groups include:**

* Any general observations from doing this activity
* Any common or different experiences
* Any point that stood out to you
* The usefulness of the activity

Please let me know if you’ve questions or I need to clarify any information.

I will send us to the rooms now.

Happy conversation!

**After 10 minutes …**

Large Group Discussion

I hope we had enriching conversations. We will spend the last 10 minutes sharing together in the large group to identify lessons learned and implications for our writing centers. I’m also happy to answer any questions. But before then, I would like us to share some important points that emerged from our small group discussions.

Please let’s share some highlights from your small group discussions.

Group 1:

Group 2:

Group 3:

(Add groups as necessary)

**Concluding Part**

**Reflections and Lessons**

* Generally, multimodality was present even in our face to face sessions before covid, but the virtual/online component of our writing center became more prominent during and post-covid.
* Our practices have significantly been impacted by covid.
* Other exigencies identified include: students traveling abroad, weather, sickness, accessibility.
* With these shifts come creativity and flexibility.
* There's a need to consciously approach multimodality as an integral part of our writing center and not just a back-up.
* Students’ needs should inform multimodality for more accessibility.
* Multiple ways of communicating is necessary because of the changes involved.

# **Q & A?**

You can reach out to me via [arawomo@wisc.edu](mailto:arawomo@wisc.edu). I’m happy to answer any questions.

I appreciate your time and insightful conversations. I encourage us to continue to center reflection and discussions around our writing center practices generally to understand how they evolve and respond to exigencies.

Thank you so much for your time and participation.