# Developing Curated, Accessible Course-Specific Resources in the Writing Center

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ABSTRACT: Creating an ever-accessible, multimodal, course-specific resource is essential to meeting the evolving needs of students and has synergistic benefits: clarity of course-related concepts, expectations, and outcomes for both tutors during tutoring sessions and students working on their own. Our process to develop this type of resource for faculty, tutors, and students will be outlined. Our presentation aims to inspire other writing center administrators to consider the creation of course-specific, curated resources to support writers at their institutions.

Keywords: curated, accessible, multimodal

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## Introduction [Slide 1--Ruth and then Barbara]

Hi. My name is Ruth Grove, one of the collaborators on this project.

And I’m Barbara Seasholtz. Both Ruth and I work as professional tutors in the York College of Pennsylvania Writing and Communications Studio.

Our presentation, “Developing Curated, Accessible Course-Specific Resources in the Writing Center,” aims to encourage writing center administrators to consider how they might create a multimodal, curated resource that is course-specific based on institution needs as well as fully accessible to tutors and student writers.

Figuring out your rationale for the resource is key. Ruth will begin to explain the rationale of our course-specific resource.

## Our Philosophy [Slide 2--Ruth]

We believe it’s important to teach students by example. Gaining knowledge is the ultimate student goal, and knowing where and how to find answers to build knowledge was the underlying inspiration for our resource.

This slide contains a quotation from Samuel Johnson, a 17th century scholar. He said, "Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it."

Meeting the evolving needs of students by creating an accessible, multimodal resource has synergistic benefits: it facilitates clarity of course-related concepts, expectations, and outcomes for tutors during tutoring sessions and for students working on their own.

During this presentation, we’ll outline our process for developing this type of resource for faculty, tutors, and students.

Barbara will begin by discussing the important first component: institutional relationships.

## Background [Slide 3--Barbara]

Making sure we had the capability in terms of technology and the buy-in from faculty was our critical first pre-design step.

Based on feedback from tutors, we reached out to select faculty of a specific course that all students must take and obtained the course curriculum and teaching guide for faculty.

We also reached out to the IT department to enquire about creating a shell in our learning management system.

We then familiarized ourselves with course assignments, concepts and outcomes and gleaned areas in which we thought students would benefit from support.

Further, we developed a timeline to carry out the project during half a summer semester.

## [Slide 4--Ruth]

York College of Pennsylvania uses Canvas as its LMS. Prior to our work on this project, we had created a general writer’s resource page in Canvas available to all students across the college on a 24/7 basis. Given the success of that page, our director’s vision was to provide course-specific resources that also were always accessible.

This slide displays the interface of the general resource available to all students. The class we developed the course-specific page for is FCO 105, which is easily visible in the list and accessed from the general page options.

Barbara will explain why we chose the word "curated" to describe this presentation.

## Curated [Slide 5--Barbara]

One concept we focused on as part of the design of the resource was “Curation.” While this word has become a buzzword to describe everything from clothing collections to household goods, it perfectly describes the process we employed.

Creating a curated resource was important to us because our content goals included avoiding the inclusion of too many resources, which could be overwhelming, and ensuring the resources we selected had a clear connection to the coursework.

Further, students who search on the Internet for writing help often encounter essay writing services, subscription solicitations, and information that may not be pertinent to their course. We wanted to help students avoid this frustrating search for information.

Our experience in tutoring for the FCO105 class has given us insight into the roadblocks students most often face, so we searched carefully for resources that squarely met each course objective.

Where we could not find resources that lined up with course objectives, we created them or asked student tutors for samples of their work since they had already completed the course.

## [Slide 6--Ruth]

Not only did we need to curate the slides to be narrow enough for our focus, but we also needed to make the resource inclusive enough to encompass a variety of sources.

Materials needed to be multimodal to touch on the variety of ways students connect to content.

We also wanted to include student samples as models. Since peer tutors had already taken this class, their own work could serve as a resource.

Another goal of this resource was to help students easily access links to campus resources such as the tutoring center and the library.

Additionally, we wanted our peer tutors to have a reference so they could answer course content questions.

Layout and formatting of the information are important elements that Barbara will provide details on next.

## Layout and Format [Slide 7--Barbara]

Once a student or tutor accesses the FCO 105 page, they first arrive at the rationale for the class.

The units covered in the course are made salient through bold lettering, a larger font size and wording that matches what faculty are using in class.

The order of the links follows the concepts presented within a unit, as laid out in the instructors’ guide for the class.

Each link has a brief description with the goals of making navigation simple and clearly showing connections to coursework.

We also use visual cues like bullets to help move students intentionally through the information. Our objective here was for students to look at the page and easily identify resources matching course assignments and concepts because we employed their course vocabulary.

Finally, we added an invitation for students to make an appointment with a tutor and included a live link to our tutoring schedule.

## Multimodal [Slide 8--Ruth]

As mentioned before, the resources we included on the page are multimodal. Looking at this image, there are links to university websites, quick guides, YouTube videos, and other scholarly sites as well as our own in-house materials and resources like our library website, videos, citation workshops with Voicethread, and student-produced samples.

We also assessed resources for level-appropriate language to ensure they were at a reading level for freshman students.

Further, it’s suggested to determine if your institution has an accessibility checklist to meet accessibility standards for materials. If the institution doesn’t use a specific checklist, one can be found online.

## [Slide 9--Barbara]

As we mentioned earlier, we included student-produced samples coming from our peer tutors.

These samples represent successful production of our institution’s signature assignments.

For assignments unique to an institution or a particular course, samples like this are extremely valuable to a resource of this kind since they provide a model for successful completion of the work.

## Accessible [Slide 10--Ruth]

Our director determined that to have 24/7 student access, this resource would need to live in the Canvas LMS and within the Academic Success Center module, in particular. As such, the resource was set up as a course students can add to their LMS dashboard. With only two clicks, students arrive at the resource.

Now the question becomes: did students actually make use of our resource?

## Impact [Slide 11--Barbara]

This course-specific resource was piloted in the Fall semester of 2022, so has only been used for one complete semester. At this time, we don’t have specific data yet on student use. That said, anecdotal feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, both from students and tutors.

Further, outreach to faculty inviting them to include the resource in their class and tutor training to familiarize tutors with the purpose and content of the resource have both been successful in driving an ever-growing number of clicks on the page.

## References [Slide 12--Ruth]

To wrap up our presentation, we invite you to consider creating a similar resource to address course-specific student needs at your institution. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact us.

We thank you for your time.