



HGSE Writing Center and Communications Lab

Peer-to-Peer Learning Community Initiatives

Annual Report 2022

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS REPORT:

Simone Fried, Lead TF, HGSE Writing Center

MG Prezioso, TF, HGSE Communications Lab

Ning Zou, Associate Director for Student Academic Services and Learning Design | Research Librarian
617.495.1465

<https://communicate.gse.harvard.edu/>

Table of Contents

HGSE Writing Center	2
Our Mission.....	2
What We Believe	3
Our Team.....	3
Student Feedback.....	4
On the Horizon - Our Future & Your Support.....	4
HGSE Communications Lab.....	5
Our Mission.....	5
Our Team.....	6
What Students Experience	6
On the Horizon - Our Future & Your Support.....	8
Appendix A: Writing Center Appointments by Status	9
Appendix B: Writing Center Appointments by Topic.....	9
Appendix C: Communications Lab Appointments by Status	10
Appendix D: Communications Lab Appointments by Topic.....	10

HGSE Writing Center

Highlights

The Writing Center continued to operate virtually in AY21-22 and conducted 559 appointments with 193 students in total. In addition to our core model of one-on-one writing coaching, we offered two online modules for all students, sent out during orientation: Using Evidence in Academic Writing, which addresses paraphrasing and writing with academic evidence; and Using APA Style: Citing and Referencing. We also taught Introduction to Academic Writing, a hybrid Canvas course broadly addressing all aspects of the writing process including critical reading, interpreting prompts, writing for different genres, structure and organization, using evidence, analysis, and citation. In addition to the Canvas content and materials, which can be taken as a complete asynchronous course, TFs taught eight live workshops to review materials with students.

We continue to expand the resources available on our website, such as handouts, tutorials, and recommended external links.

Lastly, we offered summer coverage for the first time in 2021 to support the How People Learn course, allowing us to begin working with students in need of extra writing support before they are presented with an overwhelming full slate of courses in the fall.

Our Mission

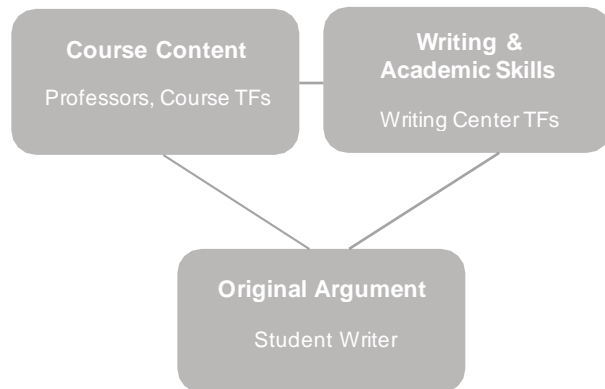
- Provide personalized writing support to all HGSE students with quality one-on-one appointments at any stage of the writing process.
- Strengthen writing instruction and education at HGSE through other forms such as workshops, online tutorials, discussions, and panels, or support groups.

- Collaborate with other offices on campus (Communications Lab, Research Librarians, OSA, Teaching and Learning Lab, Academic Affairs, etc.) to help students navigate the HGSE support network, and to design programs that meet evolving student needs.

What We Believe

- Our approach is generalist and interdisciplinary; all of our TFs are capable of adding value to all students' papers regardless of their own specialization within education research.
- We may offer critique, ask for evidence, or question an interpretation, but we are not ultimately responsible for content. The course teaching team is expert on the material; the student is the authority on their own argument, ideas, and analysis; and the writing TF focuses on the craft of academic writing. We take care not to become collaborators or allow our own content knowledge to supplant the students.
- Writing is vulnerable, and as peer tutors, we provide a safe, non-evaluative space for HGSE students. We support students who may feel more comfortable with us than with a professor or course TF.
- We advance students' academic writing skills through course assignments. While this includes language mechanics and style, we are not an editing service, nor do we have a curriculum. Our service is not designed to offer a comprehensive foundation in academic writing, but rather to improve writing through collaborative editing.

Area of Expertise during a Writing Center Appointment



Our Team

- Our staff are senior HGSE doctoral students in their dissertation phase. Nine work primarily as tutors, while one coordinates and oversees the program in conjunction with the Association Director for Student Academic Services and Learning Design in Gutman Library.
- All took HGSE courses as students and later worked in other course TF positions, making them intimately familiar with both faculty expectations and the student experience.
- Writing TFs have also served on academic editorial boards, coached thesis writers, tutored writing at both HGSE and other institutions, and taught secondary English. Several have published in academic journals or for professional organizations.
- Our TFs include international students, U.S. students from multilingual homes, scholars of language and literacy, and other backgrounds that contribute diverse perspectives on writing instruction.
- At the beginning of the year, TFs participate in a half-day training on inclusive pedagogy, common scenarios, and strategies for supporting HGSE students. Collectively, our staff

represent many years of experience, which they use to tailor each conference to the student's goals and concerns.

Student Feedback¹

- I think the writing center is one of the best resources at HGSE. It truly is a scaffolding learning environment created to help the learner (at all levels) with practical, hands-on learning. The combination of attending the workshops (I've signed up for everything) and making weekly appointments to improve writing and editing has propelled me to become a better learner overall. The writing center experience buffers the other "not so positive" ones that one undoubtedly faces in any learning environment, even here at HGSE. So grateful to have the Writing Center in my corner.
- The TF started by just genuinely asking me how I was and checking in that manner which I greatly appreciated from him. Additionally, he actually helped me better my writing by offering exemplary forms of responding, and just his overall approach or method in how he edited my paper helped me so much.
- It was my first assignment at HGSE or at an American university in general and I found it so helpful to get a profound understanding of what is needed and wanted from me!
- The TF looked through my outline and provided very thoughtful and helpful feedback about how my argument could be more nuanced. I appreciated the way he articulated how to set up the strongest argument possible. He gave me great tips about how to step back and ask myself, "ok, if my boss told me I had to defend this counterpoint to my argument, what would I say?".

On the Horizon - Our Future & Your Support

Next year, our plans for the center include:

- Work with the summer How People Learn course to support for this year's master's students
- Implement and support students in navigating Achieve English, an online adaptive tool that students can use to self-diagnose and improve their English writing skills
- Improve the accessibility of our post-consultation feedback survey for students
- Continue to offer 1:1 virtual writing tutoring, workshops, and other opportunities for students to refine their writing skills.

¹ Comments pulled from student feedback, a total of 130 1:1 appointment feedback received for AY 21-22.

HGSE Communications Lab

Our Mission

The HGSE Communications Lab, founded in Fall 2019, is an educational program within the Harvard Graduate School of Education. We exist to cultivate and sharpen HGSE master's and doctoral students' oral, written, and visual communication skills, emphasizing academic and professional presentations, posters, and career readiness. Our core offerings include a series of workshops and webinars, in addition to one-on-one and small group appointments. Throughout the academic year, we strive to equip HGSE students with communication skills essential for both academic and career success in the 21st century.

Our program is collaborative, leveraging and connecting students to the rich set of cross-discipline educational resources at HGSE. We partner with other organizations on campus (e.g., Writing Center, Research Librarians, Office of Students Affairs, Teacher and Learning Lab, and Academic Affairs) to help students navigate the HGSE support network and to design new communications-based programming to meet evolving student needs inside and outside the classroom.

What We Believe

- We are generalists who embrace an interdisciplinary approach. All our CommLab TFs, independent of their expertise as education researchers, can add value to the CommLab through content creation and direct support of every HGSE student's communication needs.
- We provide constructive criticism, positive feedback, suggest frameworks, and define action steps, but we are not responsible for created content. The course teaching team is expert on the material; the student is expert on their argument, ideas, and analysis; the CommLab TF is an expert on oral, written, or visual communication skills. We take care not to become collaborators or allow our content expertise to supplant that of the students.
- We are peer tutors who provide a welcoming, safe and non-evaluative space for HGSE students to practice and improve their oral, written, and visual communication skills.
- We are responsible for meeting students where they are, listening to their needs, and aligning our support to their communication tasks and deadlines.
- We focus on the craft and technique of oral, written, and visual communication. While our assistance is varied and dynamic across multiple mediums, we are not an end-to-end service offering. We do not create from start to finish a student's or group's final deliverable, including oral scripts, presentation slides, posters, and pitches.
- We direct students to other HGSE academic supports and resources as needed.

Quick Facts (2021-2022)

- 1 CommLab TF and 1 HGSE Faculty advisor
- 46 Consultations
- 8 Webinars
- Provided doctoral students with consultations on doctoral defenses
- Coached Ed.L.D. students on their Capstone presentations
- Offered coaching sessions for the HGSE commencement student speaker
- Implemented online exit surveys to collect student feedback on consultations

Our Team

- Our team is composed of an HGSE doctoral student and an HGSE faculty advisor. Both are responsible for creating all HGSE CommLab programming materials, hosting CommLab workshops/webinars, and holding private one-on-one or small group appointments. We are led by Ning Zou, the Associate Director for Student Academic Services & Learning Design, who manages our week-to-week operations and strategic planning.
- All CommLab TFs have participated both as students and TFs for numerous HGSE courses resulting in familiarity with the HGSE student experience and a firm understanding of course expectations. CommLab TF's experiences as students and TFs help the CommLab identify and strategically target courses with oral, written, or visual communication deliverables.
- Our CommLab TFs have coached Ph.D. and Ed.L.D. Candidates on their defenses and have advised academic and non-academic clients on oral, written, or visual communication skills. CommLab TFs have featured their academic work at leading education policy journals and university colloquiums, including *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *EdWorkingPapers* at Annenberg Institute at Brown University, HGSE EPPE Doctoral Colloquium, HGSE HDLT Doctoral Colloquium, HGSE Measurement Lab, and HGSE Literacy Lab. Our TFs have also featured their work in *Research Minutes*, an award-winning education research and policy podcast from The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) at The University of Pennsylvania, and *The Boston Globe*.
- Some of our TFs received professional training on oral, written, and visual communication skills during their time as a management consultant. Another TF spent time training staff for presentations at an investment management firm.
- Our team collectively houses professionals with many years of experience preparing and providing professional-grade oral, written, and visual communication deliverables. Our team's set of rich experiences and communication-based expertise makes our lab home for student-centered, career-facing, quality programming that meets the diverse communication needs of the HGSE community.

What Students Experience

Our dual offerings of webinars and private one-on-one or small group appointments give students a diverse set of programming they can choose from to best meet their needs. Our webinars provide broad exposure to introductory communication skills and frameworks in an approachable, welcoming environment where HGSE students can meet and interact with their peers. These sessions serve to shore up the foundation of HGSE students' oral, written, and visual communication skills and act as a launching pad for students to explore more advanced topics in one-on-one or small group appointments. Relative to our webinar offerings, our private appointments provide greater flexibility to adapt and differentiate our support to meet the individualized needs of HGSE's diverse student community.

In 2021-2022, the CommLab TF was an advanced HGSE doctoral student, representing many years of professional teaching and communication experience, which they use to both curate workshop programming and tailor appointments to each student's goals and

concerns. The following profiles and quotes draw on real student experiences to represent some common ways students use our services.

Ed.L.D. Candidates @ HGSE

Student 1

"I scheduled a session at the CommLab to prepare for a five-minute talk focused on my core values. MG helped me practice my presentation several times during our call and helped me clarify and express my message. I will absolutely be returning to the CommLab for support with future presentation assignments."

Student 2

"I was so nervous about my defense and MG calmed those nerves by giving me the space to practice and refine my slides and message. Thanks for the support MG!"

Ed.M. Candidates @ HGSE

Student 1

"I got a link for feedback for a COMM Lab appointment that I had and just wanted to say that Mary [MG] was phenomenal, so empathetic and great at guiding me in the process of writing the speech I was working on - so so thankful for her and the services provided!"

Student 2

"MG was really helpful! Knowledgeable and enthusiastic, she led me through the process and helped me learn how to present my ideas more clearly and effectively. Thank you! "

On the Horizon - Our Future & Your Support

Next year, we strive to continue our efforts in the following areas:

Greater offerings

- Develop new workshop/webinar series based on curriculum needs
- Recommend relevant free/open source tutorials from Harvard Communication and beyond (e.g. LinkedIn Learning, MOOC, etc.)

More focused outreach and marketing

- Revisit the marketing plan
- Conduct more targeted program outreach activities

Appendix A: Writing Center Appointments by Status

Status	# of Appointments
HGSE Masters	533
HGSE Doctoral Ed.L.D.	11
Other Harvard/HGSE cross-registrant	8
HGSE Doctoral Ph.D.	4
HGSE Doctoral Ed.D.	3
Total Count	559

Note: Includes all attended appointments Fall 2021 – Spring 2022. Any cancellations were removed from the data.

Appendix B: Writing Center Appointments by Topic

Topic	# of Appointments
Polished/near-final draft	188
Rough draft	169
Outline	52
Rough draft, Polished/near-final draft	40
Outline, Rough draft	31
Brainstorming	24
(blank)	24
Brainstorming, Outline	21
Brainstorming, Outline, Rough draft	4
Brainstorming, Rough draft	3
Brainstorming, Outline, Rough draft, Polished/near-final draft	2
Brainstorming, Polished/near-final draft	1
Total Count	559

Note: Includes all attended appointments Fall 2021– Spring 2022. Any cancellations were removed from the data.

Appendix C: Communications Lab Appointments by Status

Status	# of Appointments
HGSE Masters	38
HGSE Doctoral Ed.D.	6
HGSE Doctoral Ed.L.D.	2
Total Count	46

Note: Includes all attended appointments Fall 2021–Spring 2022. Any cancellations were removed from the data.

Appendix D: Communications Lab Appointments by Topic

Topic	# of Appointments
Class presentation	32
Elevator pitch	5
Dissertation defense	3
Capstone defense	3
Digital portfolio	2
Poster	1
Total Count	46

Note: Includes all attended appointments Fall 2021 – Spring 2022. Any cancellations were removed from the data.