

Audience

The audience for your event--who your attendees are--will affect not only the content of the event but also some of the logistics. For instance, attendees who are the primary caregiver for children may find it more difficult to attend an all-day event or to attend an event when the local schools are not in session. The material in this handout will help you choose a particular audience, identify the most useful topics for that audience, decide on an appropriate size for your program, and think about how your staff members may be an additional (usually unrecognized) audience.

Choosing a Particular Audience

The term *graduate student* covers a wide range of individual needs and concerns. Use the lists below to identify the population(s) best suited to make progress by attending the event you are proposing. You may choose attendees from a single category below, or you may choose attendees who fit in multiple categories (e.g., women in engineering writing dissertations).

Note that there are benefits to attendee similarity, and there are benefits to attendee dissimilarity. The focus you choose for your event will depend partially on your objectives. For example, a program for only philosophy students allows interactions with others who are working within the same disciplinary values and conventions, which is good for content feedback. In contrast, a mixed-discipline event allows students to be the expert in their field and to explain their work to outsiders, which is good for confidence and for improving clarity.

Note also that it is beneficial to understand *why* you chose a particular population. You may need to explain your rationale to various stakeholders. For more on stakeholders, see the *Assessment* handout.

Group by Cohort

- Discipline-specific
- Lab-specific (i.e., a cohort all from the same research lab)
- Identity-specific (e.g., women)
- Progress in a degree (e.g., new grad students or those who are ABD)
- Language-specific
- Country-specific

Group by Document Type

- Dissertations
- Masters' theses
- Journal articles
- Grant proposals
- Conference presentations
- Prelims/dissertation proposals
- Job documents (e.g., Statement of Teaching Philosophy)

Choosing a Topic for Your Audience

Use the table below to identify the needs of your specific audience related to various categories of topic. Note that the bulleted points are just a few examples of what might fit under that category, so do not limit yourself to just these topics. In the right-hand column, jot notes about the particular needs your audience has around the different topics. If you will definitely not offer an event for a particular category, just skip that cell. If you are unsure of what your audience needs with respect to a particular category, think about how you might collect that information (e.g., survey them, talk with advisors). After you have identified needs, take some time to turn that information into an advertisable topic for an event.

Categories of topics	Needs of my particular audience
Global writing concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Specific genres <input type="checkbox"/> Disciplinary conventions <input type="checkbox"/> Logic & flow <input type="checkbox"/> Organization <input type="checkbox"/> Indicating research gaps <input type="checkbox"/> Specific sections of papers 	
Local writing concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sentence structure <input type="checkbox"/> Word choice <input type="checkbox"/> Grammar <input type="checkbox"/> Proofreading skills 	
Process concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Goal-setting <input type="checkbox"/> Revision <input type="checkbox"/> Writer's block <input type="checkbox"/> Getting started 	
Socio-emotional concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Confidence <input type="checkbox"/> Developing a voice <input type="checkbox"/> Motivation <input type="checkbox"/> Independence 	
Life concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Writing while parenting <input type="checkbox"/> Writing with a disability 	
Advertisable topic(s) for my event:	

Staff Members as Additional Audience

If your event will be staffed by people who are also themselves graduate students, you'll want to consider the staff members as one of the audiences of the event. They will be the audience of the event in the sense of learning more about writing through working with the materials, lessons, and attendees of the event, but they will also be an audience of the meta-event. In other words, they will be learning from you to develop and administrate events of this type. You'll want to see your work with graduate student staff on this event as mentoring with a capital M, in addition to offering support for the advertised audience.

When choosing your staff members, you'll want to think about logistics for the event itself and also the logistics of staff professional development. For instance, using the same staff for an entire event (event logistics) provides consistency which then contributes to rapport and writer productivity. At the same time, using consistent staff who may not yet possess necessary qualities will hinder the success of the event unless you think carefully about how to mentor them over the course of your event. For instance, a graduate teaching assistant with very little experience in the classroom may not yet have developed an instructor persona. You may want to work with that person on qualities such as confidence as well as discussing with them aspects of teaching that contribute to student learning (e.g., don't speak while facing the board to write).

If you have multiple staff members working together, you'll want to think about how the various staff skills and personalities might complement one another. For instance, a staff composed entirely of extroverts might result in an event where the staff members are competing with one another to be the star of the show. A staff composed entirely of introverts might result in an event where whole-group rapport is slow to develop. Ideally, staff personalities will mesh well and result in an event that develops a cohesive, interactive, engaged group of graduate students.

The chart below lists a number of staff qualities that contribute to well-developed and well-delivered programming. Use the chart to think about whether staff for your proposed event already possess various important qualities and, if not, how you might mentor them throughout the event to develop those qualities.

Staff Qualities	Possesses this quality?	Ideas for how to help develop the quality during your event
Subject-matter competence: <i>knowledge of the material</i>		
Interpersonal skills: e.g., <i>rapport-building</i>		
Meta-cognitive awareness about writing		
Question-framing competence: e.g., <i>about writing or process</i>		
Pedagogical competence: <i>how best to help people learn</i>		
Administrative competence: <i>work habits, organization, etc</i>		
Instructor persona: <i>expert, knowledgeable peer, etc.</i>		

Choosing a Maximum Audience Size

There is no correct maximum attendance for a writing-related event. We have run successful multi-day writing events for as few as six people and as many as thirty. The optimal attendance size depends on several different factors. Use the chart below to consider what the optimal audience size might be for your event.

Questions to consider	Answers for your context (<i>Where possible, include specific numbers of attendees that might work.</i>)
How is your event structured in terms of lesson material, types of activities, etc.? What size of group does that presuppose?	
How many staff members do you have? What ratio of staff to attendees will work best?	
How confident are your staff at presenting in front of large groups? At administrating group events? At conducting a hands-on activity?	
How much space do you have? For a writing-retreat-style event, people need to spread out while working.	
What is your goal for the event? Dissemination of information? Development of skills? Time to write? Community-building?	
Regardless of overall goal, how will you shape the program to encourage at least some interaction? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accountability buddies ● Lunch tables ● Small groups for hands-on activities ● One-on-one consulting sessions ● Other? 	
Optimal size for my event:	

Communicating with the Audience

Once you have an audience in mind, you'll spend a fair amount of time communicating with them. Below are several different reasons for communicating followed by suggestions for things to consider for each reason. Note that these are pulled from our experiences conducting this sort of event, so any particular item on the list may or may not be relevant in your context. Feel free to ignore anything that is irrelevant and to add anything you think is missing.

Initial Advertising

- Writing center visitors
- Directors of Graduate Studies
- Graduate School listserv
- Graduate student government listserv
- Flyers in relevant places
- Previous attendees
- Registrar email to all grad students
- Enlist stakeholders to help advertise

Application/Registration

- Attendee information (easily collected by Qualtrics or other survey platform)
 - Name
 - Email
 - Department/field of study
 - Advisor's name and email
 - Citation style
 - Accessibility needs
 - Allergies or other food issues, if serving food
- Email from the advisor
 - Aids applicant retention & ensures no one gets into trouble for missing 3 days in the lab.
 - Provide text for the attendee to use in requesting the email confirmation from their advisor (ensures they actually talk to their advisor about the program).
 - Include relevant questions
 - Is the applicant in good standing with the academic program?
 - Will the applicant have completed all data collection/research by the time of the [EVENT]?
 - Has the applicant met with you to discuss the current status of the [WRITING PROJECT]?
 - Is the applicant in a position to progress in the [WRITING PROJECT] through this [EVENT]?
 - Include a signature message: By submitting this email, you consent for this advisee to participate in the [EVENT].

Acceptance Letter

- Steps to confirm attendance
 - Complete a pre-session survey if using one (e.g., collect details of their project, their process, their goals for the event, etc.)
 - Create the online-schedule account (e.g., WCOOnline) if using one
 - Email a reply confirming plans to attend the full event
- Links to relevant surveys
- Deadlines for completing acceptance steps
- Room location (in person) or link (virtual)
- Details for accessing materials (e.g., if an LMS is used to house everything)
- Dates & times
- Materials to bring (in person) or have ready (virtual)
 - ID card
 - Laptop and charger
 - Headphones, if you plan to listen to music, or if the session is virtual
 - Any research materials, articles, documents, books, etc. that you will need for your work
 - Printed copies of anything you need in hard-copy (e.g., if you plan to revise on paper)
 - Pens or pencils for workshop activities
 - A sweater or jacket in case the room is chilly
 - A water bottle—there are refilling stations located in the building
 - Additional food or beverages that you want (e.g., coffee or tea)

If you use these handouts to help plan your event, we would love to get feedback from you on how useful they were. You may email any comments to Vicki R Kennell at vkennell@purdue.edu.

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