

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

Fieldwork Journal Entries | Eliana Duran



On-Campus Writing Lab Tour.....	3
Purdue OWL Website Search.....	4
Interview with OWL Tutor.....	5
Tutoring Session #1	6
Tutoring Session #2	7
Tutorial Observation #1.....	8
Tutorial Observation #2.....	9
Tutorial Observation #3.....	10
Co-tutoring Session #1.....	11
Co-tutoring Session #2.....	12
Co-tutoring Session #3.....	13
Final Independent Tutoring #1	14
Final Independent Tutoring #2.....	15

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

On-Campus Writing Lab Tour

Full name (pronouns): Eliana Duran (she/her/hers)

Tutorial date/time: 1/17/2023, 3pm

Tutor: Rachel R.

The first things I noticed when I came up to the OWL floor were the new signs on the tables. They were “We don’t want to ruffle feathers” notices that the chairs were reserved for OWL appointments. They each had a picture of an owl and the cute pun was a friendly addition to the atmosphere.

When my tour actually began, there were many other things that contributed to the OWL’s friendly atmosphere. Although it was almost as quiet and bookish as a library, there was a whiteboard “soda tournament” on the wall, and Rachel talked about the open communication between the OWL staff, the tutors’ “book club,” and other fun activities they would do together.

Additionally, I learned about the tutoring schedule (and its color coding), the alternative OWL locations, and what a typical day looks like for a tutor. The information built off of what I had read in the OWL consultant manual. It was helpful to hear about the broad selection of services the writing lab offered, from group programs to video calls to e-tutoring.

I know I’ll be learning a lot during ENGL 390, but the tour also made me excited for the on-going learning opportunities afterward. The tutors have ongoing formal training, and Rachel shared how she had learned more about writing even as she tutored other students.

My key insight from the tour was that the OWL is a pleasant, flexible, peaceful, low-pressure environment both for those working and those coming for a consultation. The vision behind it seems to be a lab where students can come and focus and learn stress-free.

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

Purdue OWL Website Search

Full name (pronouns): Eliana Duran (she/her/hers)

When I open the OWL website, I find a simple, intuitive, user-friendly layout with helpful buttons and icons and a color theme that makes me think of a coffee shop. I have had experience watching my dad build websites for his clients, so I wouldn't consider the OWL website super elegant or modern, but it is functional and laid out to help the user access the right information.

As I open the main pages, I also appreciate that the OWL has so many video resources. I am amazed by the never-ending Site Map listing pages and pages and pages. (The website nerd in me wonders if it needs more of an accordion layout to make it less overwhelming.) All this content could be an 4-year high school curriculum!

Page #1: "Job Acceptance Letter Presentation"

This page catches my eye because its subject is very specific. It offers a slideshow with effective **dos and don'ts**. I make a mental note to reference the OWL any time I have a career-related email to write. (The "Where to Find More Help" slide at the end does have an outdated address for the on-campus writing lab, though.)

Page #2: "Tutoring a Résumé"

Purdue OWL has an entire course about résumés that I'll need to check out later, but for now I focus on this page. It gives me a few ideas for tutoring my own resume! The **examples** are helpful because I can see how one might format the "Education" section professionally, something I hadn't been sure about.

Page #3: "Exercise: Eliminating Wordiness Exercise 1"

This page, along with its sequels, further prove my theory that the OWL could be an entire curriculum. It also shows how **application** is helpful in learning a concept.

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

Interview with OWL Tutor

Full name (pronouns): Eliana Duran (she/her/hers)

Tutorial date/time: 1/27/2023, 1pm

Tutor: Noah P

I had the opportunity to interview Noah, a Professional Writing Specialist on the OWL staff. We covered a variety of topics, from his education and work experience to the common conversations tutors have with their clients.

Noah shared two of the biggest challenges he had when starting out as a tutor. The first was that he would second-guess the writing advice he offered to clients and hedge his suggestions. This is a challenge that I could imagine myself experiencing, so it was encouraging to hear that the struggle is normal and it goes away over time.

The second challenge was working with writers who were not open to feedback. Noah walked me through the process of negotiating with stubborn writers, emphasizing that sometimes you just need to go back to square one. Rather than trying to force the writer to take his suggestions, he would explain that the first try didn't work and they needed to try something new. He would put aside the document and ask the writer bigger questions, like "What do you value in a finished paper?" and "What part would you like to discuss?"

Additionally, I learned about how Noah manages client expectations and the "no proofreading" policy, the different strategies that different tutors will use, and how he worked with grad and ESL students. Although every session is different, all sessions share that they are writing-focused and client-focused at the Purdue OWL.

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

Tutoring Session #1

Full name (pronouns): Eliana Duran (she/her/hers)

Tutorial date/time: 2/10/2023, 4-4:45pm

Tutor: Olivia D.

Type of session: The tutorial focused on the revising stage of the writing process, specifically for a 5-page scholarly article analysis.

My writing consultation with Olivia D. left me with many takeaways, both as a writer and a tutor-in-training. The session began with her asking a few questions about the project, including an inquiry about the deadline. She mentioned how she always asked this question, and told a story about a writer who had come in with a paper due at midnight. It reminded me of how Ghada had recommended the same question, “When is it due?” as a question for us to ask our future clients.

As Olivia asked me about where I was at with my paper, I explained that it was pretty much finished, but “it’s not my best paper,” because I was nervous what she would think about me as a writer.

Olivia asked, “What makes you say that it’s not your best paper?” which was a very effective follow-up. As I answered, it made me think about the specific things I didn’t like about the essay.

Over the course of the session, my anxieties about my work’s quality melted away. I volunteered to read the paper out loud, and as I did, I found parts I liked. Olivia was very encouraging, affirming the components I had written well. We spent a lot of the session working on the order of the first few paragraphs and making them fit into the overall structure of the paper. These discussions left me with ideas I will be able to apply to other papers in the future.

I appreciated how Olivia would deflect some of my questions back to me, keeping me actively involved in the process. I also appreciated Olivia’s flexibility. She did an excellent job acknowledging that there are many ways to solve a problem, not just a right way and a wrong way.

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

Tutoring Session #2

Full name (pronouns): Eliana Duran (she/her/hers)

Tutorial date/time: 2/13/2023, 7-7:45pm

Tutor: Erin W.

Type of session: The tutorial focused on both brainstorming and revision for a short literary review proposal and several citations and annotations.

As a marketing major and tutor-to-be, I love that the OWL is open to writing tutors from all majors. I was able to experience the benefits of this policy for myself as Erin brought her psychology expertise to my project.

The consultation with Erin was a little more scrambled than my other consultation, mostly due to the nature of the project. I had honors contracted an introductory PSY class, so I had to write a 1-page proposal for 8-to-12-page literary review I would write as my final project. Since I had brought a proposal for a bigger project, we did a bit of more general brainstorming for the literary review, but we also did some more detailed editing for the proposal itself, to make sure that it met the instructions.

Erin is a psychology major, and this came in handy as she offered good wording suggestions for me to work with as I described my list of psychology studies. Her psychology studies probably also translate to other scientific papers that students bring in.

This diversity of tutors is beautiful and makes so much sense. Whether students finds that their writing consultant shares the same area of interest or the same heritage and homeland, there is so much potential for OWL tutors to bring unique insights to their sessions.

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

Tutorial Observation #1

Full name (pronouns): Eliana Duran (she/her/hers)

Tutorial date/time: 2/14/2023, 12-12:45pm

Tutor: Meghan W.

First name of student only: Reilly

Type of session: The tutorial focused on revision for an ENGL 304 essay.

Meghan started the session by introducing us and then asking Reilly some follow-up questions about the information she had provided on the appointment. I appreciate how Meghan admitted that she's not familiar with "forwarding," even though that was a large topic in Reilly's essay.

Then, in typical OWL fashion, Meghan asked whether she should read Reilly's work or if Reilly would like to read it out loud herself. Reilly was open to either option, so Meghan suggested that it can be helpful to hear your writing read back to you, and Reilly let Meghan read.

I was impressed with the essay. It covered its topic in a way that pulls the reader in, filled with illustrations that made both me and Meghan laugh. As the consultation went on, it was clear that Reilly was very motivated not to get a good grade, but to write a truly excellent essay. As far as her paper, her main concerns were the introduction and conclusion.

I noticed that body language and tones in the tutor-client interactions made the consultation felt casual and friendly. Meghan talked with her hands a bit and used intentional phrasing for her suggestions: "Just as a possibility to play with..." "What if..." She also kept Reilly involved: "Tell me a little bit more..." "How are you feeling about..."

At 12:35, Meghan hinted at wrapping up: "We have about 10 minutes left. Want to talk about orientation?" During the last couple minutes, she checked in with how Reilly is feeling about the essay overall, and reviewed some of the "game plan" they came up with over the course of the session.

As a writer, my main takeaway was that sometimes your paper's conclusion works better as your introduction! The consultation was filled with interesting discussion and valuable advice.

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

Tutorial Observation #2

Full name (pronouns): Eliana Duran (she/her/hers)

Tutorial date/time: 2/22/2023, 12-12:45pm

Tutor: Meghan W.

First name of student only: Chris

Type of session: Revising personal statement for med schools

Due to timing and logistics, I had a second tutoring observation with Meghan W., but although I was observing the same tutor, I had the opportunity to a new writer and a new genre. This writer, Chris, was coming to the lab for the first time, and he brought in a personal statement for applying to medical schools.

It was interesting to compare how Meghan approached this writing compared to last week's essay, and also to find concepts I had learned crossing over into a real writing consultation. For example, in ENGL 390, we discussed how tutors should avoid sharing their email addresses with clients. In the writing session, Chris had not attached his statement to the OWL form, so Meghan had to find a way for him to share it with her. Rather than giving him her own email address, she gave him the OWL email address, and then asked the front desk to forward it to her and me.

Like with the essay, Meghan read Chris's work out loud, and encouraged him to share his own thoughts on his work. Chris was very engaged and knew the specific things that bothered him about the statement. Both the consultation for the essay and for the personal statement highlighted organization.

Unlike the essay, the discussion that followed involved medical school application practices and recommendations for concision and verb tense. Chris also mentioned that he was getting multiple perspectives on his statement, and that he might work on it over the coming months and bring it back to the lab.

Since I haven't had much experience with personal statements, this observation makes me feel more equipped for future sessions, when I tutor clients with personal statements myself.

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

Tutorial Observation #3

Full name (pronouns): Eliana Duran (she/her/hers)

Tutorial date/time: 2/28/2023, 3-3:45pm

Tutor: Noah P.

First name of student only: Oluwafiresola (Desiree)

Type of session: Revision of personal statements for transfer application

After watching Meghan help a student with a personal statement last week, it was interesting to see the way a different tutor would tackle a writing in the same genre. The session was also interesting since it was a follow up to many prior sessions with this same client.

Noah opened the session very quickly by naming one of the main focuses and asking the writer what she thought they would be focusing on. Desiree opened up her laptop to show Noah what she had added and Noah read it silently before commenting on it.

Desiree was quiet but gradually got more involved. She was casual, fiddled with chapstick, scrolled on her phone sometimes when Noah was working silently. Noah talked with his hands, kept his own laptop closed but worked on Desiree's, writing comments on her Google Doc, and making eye contact when he spoke to her. They were each comfortable and clearly had a system worked out after many writing sessions together.

What this observation showed me is that writing consultations are very flexible. Writers and tutors may work on their own laptops or each other's, in Google Docs or Word, and either one may take notes. They may pass a single laptop back and forth, or potentially work with pen and paper. They may work on one piece or touch on two pieces.

Tutors work to develop a system that best serves the client. Repeat clients are special because expectations have already been established, and tutors can jump straight into sessions, sharing an existing relationship.

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

Co-tutoring Session #1

Full name (pronouns): Eliana Duran (she/her/hers)

Tutorial date/time: 3/22/2023, 9-9:45am

Tutor: Eric J.

First name of student only: Yuanxin/Amy

Type of session: Revising a professional email to a member of research faculty

I was excited to have my first co-tutoring session today! At the beginning, it was a challenge to move beyond a tutoring observation and actually speak up, and also balance my suggestions out with Eric's as we critiqued a professional email. If I had the chance, one thing I would have changed was the session's opening. In hindsight, I should have started on the right foot by introducing myself to the client, instead of expecting someone else to do it for me or trying to be as quiet and invisible like I would for an observation. It would also help to have a co-tutor with whom I'm already acquainted.

Doing that session over again, I would have asked the client for clarification on her preferred name (and pronunciation, if necessary), so that I could use it and be more personal. This was a point that Eric and I were a little confused on when I wrote the client report, since she had two preferred names listed.

Finally, if I were independently tutoring this appointment, I would have read the client's email outloud or let the client read it out loud. Eric read the email silently, which is just a small difference in our tutoring preferences. In my opinion, a read aloud would have been helpful for spotting choppy sentences and working on transitions in this particular piece.

Overall, the consultation was an excellent experience, and I enjoyed working with Eric and the writer. We were able to help her organize her email more effectively, write with more confidence, and catch a couple typos. I also had the experience of writing the client report form. It took me more than 10 minutes, but I know I'll get faster and better at it as I go, and I'll learn to take better notes during sessions.

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

Co-tutoring Session #2

Full name (pronouns): Eliana Duran (she/her/hers)

Tutorial date/time: 3/28/2023, 3-3:45am

Tutor: Rachel R.

First name of student only: Joshua

Type of session: Outlining a research paper

I tried to co-tutor an online consultation with Rachel B. yesterday, but I started off utterly confused and settled on observing the consultation instead. So today I decided to give the co-tutoring another shot with a different tutor named Rachel and an in-person client named Joshua. Compared to yesterday's experience, this session was much more enjoyable.

Rachel R. let me take the lead, so it was almost an independent tutoring session, with the benefit of Rachel chirping in occasionally. I liked this arrangement, since it felt smoother than doing a tango with another tutor. I also had met this Rachel once before, so I felt less overwhelmed compared to Monday's online consultation.

Joshua was not necessarily the most receptive and engaged client, as Rachel mentioned afterward, and the session was a bit slow and disorganized. He seemed frustrated by the professor's instructions, so the conversation wasn't always pleasant. However, we were able to touch on some important points, especially about how to do research for this longer paper. My favorite part was the client report form, where I shared four key takeaways from the session. I felt better prepared for this step than I had with my first co-tutoring session.

It was a good experience for me to work on an outline with a writer. Typically I focus on tutoring techniques for rough drafts, but writers bring outlines to the OWL too, and it is important to know some of the ways that I can approach these. Depending on the tutor or the writer, a session could focus on research techniques, discuss each bullet point, add focus to a topic selection, reorganize the main points, or any other number of things. The important thing is to stay flexible and listen to the writer's concerns.

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

Co-tutoring Session #3

Full name (pronouns): Eliana Duran (she/her/hers)

Tutorial date/time: 4/4/2023, 10-10:50am

Tutor: Jacqueline B.

First name of student only: Ayla

Type of session: Smaller revisions for a dissertation

Coming into this consultation, I was not sure how much I would be able to participate, or even if my presence would be appreciated. Jacqueline and Ayla were already talking before the session had officially started, and I learned that they were good friends and both had much more experience and many more years of education beyond what I have had. As the two chatted about personal plans, Jacqueline mentioned several times that this was not a good representation of a “normal” consultation. Since Ayla had brought in a dissertation and I was only an undergraduate, Ayla was not comfortable with me leading the session, but we arranged that I could help without leading. I was still unsure how much I would have to offer, but we proceeded with the consultation.

However, when the session actually started rolling, I found myself easing into the group and being helpful. The dissertation’s deadline was the next day, so we each took turns reading paragraphs and looking for small issues, such as misplaced punctuation and incomplete paragraphs. Reading aloud seemed to be an effective strategy for bringing these errors to light, and Ayla was active in finding and correcting mistakes as we went along. Occasionally we would ask about a more debatable change that could be made to a sentence, a word, or a hyphenated phrase. Ayla would either agree with our suggestions or push back and leave it as it was, and we respected her choices and moved on.

Although OWL training emphasizes big picture ideas rather than proofreading, I took Jacqueline’s lead on what kinds of issues to look for in this unusual session. I enjoyed this work and found it satisfying to find typos that Jacqueline and Ayla would have missed, and my help seemed to be appreciated.

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

Final Independent Tutoring #1

Full name (pronouns): Eliana Duran (she/her/hers)

Tutorial date/time: 4/7/2023, 1-1:40pm

Tutor: Erin W.

First name of student only: Lauren

Type of session: Revising a reflection

Lauren was the perfect client for my first independent tutoring. She was fully engaged and very specific about where her reflection needed help, pointing out things to work on as she read through it out loud. We cut repetitive sentences, checked the APA citations, and talked about her introduction and conclusion. Her project was not high-stakes, but she appreciated having a second pair of eyes on it. It was a productive and efficient session and we even ended a bit early.

Since it was a reflection about privilege, Lauren mentioned the phrase *coming out* in one of her points, and she asked us whether she should keep quotation marks around it or not. We discussed this a bit, since I could see merits to keeping the quotation marks there if it wasn't formal language, but Erin was concerned it might be seen as a quote from another source.

Then, Maxwell, a tutor at the table next to us, shared his thoughts. From his personal experience, *coming out* was the most formal way it could be said, and putting quotation marks around would run the risk of minimizing the action's legitimacy. Maxwell wasn't technically a part of that session, but I was thankful that he spoke up and offered his input. Lauren was quick to remove the quotation marks.

Other than that memorable moment, the consultation was laid back, and it was very enjoyable to work with Lauren. I look forward to my next opportunity to tutor independently, also knowing that the tutor at the next table could always have something valuable to add.

ENGL 390: Practicum in Tutoring Writing

Final Independent Tutoring #2

Full name (pronouns): Eliana Duran (she/her/hers)

Tutorial date/time: 4/13/2023, 3-3:45 pm

Tutor: Olivia D.

First name of student only: Sameeran

Type of session: Revising a resume

For my final fieldwork assignment, I helped a grad student named Sameeran revise a resume, accompanied by writing consultant Olivia D. The consultation was not challenging in the typical sense, as when there is too much work to do, but it was challenging because there was not a lot to point out. Sameeran did an excellent job describing his experiences and skills in detail and highlighting why his work mattered. Olivia and I needed to tell him to take our suggestions with a grain of salt, since what suggestions we come up with were small and somewhat subjective.

Resumes can be a bit of a pain, but it was a helpful project for me to work through, recognizing the important components. Whenever I'm presented with a piece of writing that is already pretty good, I feel some pressure to come up with suggestions anyway, but I reminded myself not to give feedback just for the sake of giving feedback. When I didn't have helpful, well-thought feedback to share, I tried to be intentional about pointing out the things that Sameeran had done well. I took Olivia's lead, as she has a very thoughtful, encouraging tutoring style.

Thinking back on all my field hours I've spent in the OWL this semester, I have learned so much about writing and working with writers. I am so grateful for this class and all these opportunities, and I can't wait to join the team at the Writing Lab. It is a remarkable and wonderful experience to meet the different people who walk in and hear their unique voices expressed through their writing.