

**Coauthor Strategies
for Non-Peer Writing
Collaborations:**

Mentors & Mentees

**TAA
Workshop
Resource
Supplement**

Dr. Kristina Quynn
Founding Director, CSU Writes



CSU WRITES
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

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For more information, contact Kristina Quynn at: quynn@colostate.edu or csuwrites@colostate.edu

Dear TAAA Colleagues,

This resource supplement includes materials in use in the “Collaborative Writing: Mentoring through Writing” workshop at Colorado State University. The CSU workshop has, itself, been a two-year collaboration between Dr. Kristina Quynn, Director of CSU Writes (CSUW) and Dr. Carol Wilusz, Director of Cell and Molecular Biology (CMB).

Our work recognizes a pressing need among research and scholarly writers to understand, practice, and fine-tune writing collaborations. Scholarly careers are no longer built on sole-authored publications. Currently, more than 90% of STEMM publications have two or more authors and the majority of those include graduate students as authors (Bozeman & Youtie, *Strength in Numbers*). Writing challenges (process, style, format, expectations, timeliness) reside at the heart of many of stressed or negative collaborations. The increasing pressures to streamline graduate student research writing into successful publications and proposals places unique pressures on the mentor/mentee relationship.

This supplement accompanies Quynn’s presentation at the 2021 Textbook & Academic Authors Association conference, “Coauthor Strategies for Non-Peer Writing Collaborations: Mentors and Mentees” and is designed to serve both as presentation and post-workshop resource.

I appreciate your participation in this workshop. Please reach out if you have additional coauthoring questions, thoughts, and interests. I am happy to connect and share (email below).

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Kristina Quynn, Founding Director CSU Writes

quynn@colostate.edu

csuwrites@colostate.edu

GUIDES for Community & Writing

COMMUNITY WRITING GUIDE

Develop a community guide (aka community agreement" as a unit, a team, or collaborators that sets guidelines for the values of the group coming together, how you will interact with one another, and how you wish to work together.

Sample Guide

- Be present, honest, authentic
- Listen actively and with respect
- Be open to and considerate of other perspectives
(race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, gender, age, discipline, appointment, rank)
- Share speaking time (avoid dominating)
- Encourage others as participants
- If uncertain, ask clarifying questions
- If challenged, respond with grace
- After our time together, share only what is yours to share

This sample is in use at CSU Writes and developed in collaboration with the CSU Office of the VP for Diversity. We use the following to open all workshop, retreat, speaker, and writing group sessions.

More Information Community or Group Agreements

Agreements are an aspiration, or collective vision, for how we want to be in relationship with one another. They are explicitly developed and enforced by the group, not by an external authority, and as such must represent a consensus.

Norms are the ways in which we behave and are currently in relationship to each other, whether consciously and explicitly or not.

Relational community agreements are about how we want to be in relationship with each other (eg. stay present; listen fully; seek out multiple perspectives; speak your truth using "I" statements...)

*National Equity Project, "Developing Community Agreements"
Seeds for Change, "Group Agreements for Workshops & Meetings"*

CLARIFY what you mean by “writing” with the 5P of Writing

Bucket terms help contain and hold some of the various meanings of “writing” as we work with and build our expertise alongside others. We have found it crucial to break down about professional research writing into practical, non-jargon terms that highlight its features as a complex thing, action, and way of becoming:

The 5P of professional research writing operate across most fields of academic study. In my work with researchers and scholarly writers, I have found that a lack of clarity about the writing task at hand is the greatest underminer of our progress and the creator of most of our stumbling blocks. Using down-to-earth and clarifying terms such as Practice, Process, Product, and Project can help demystify for yourself and others what you mean when you talk about “writing.” It is helpful to reflect systematically on what element of the writing contains an obstacle or blockage.

Product	what you produce: the document (multiple genres, iterations, and qualities)
Process	what you do to draft, arrange, gather feedback, revise, edit, proof, and submit
Practice	what you do regularly to improve your skills and build expertise.
Project	what you build out through the relationship between your lab or bookwork and your conversations with other experts in the field
Persona	who you believe you are as a writer and the various ways you craft who you are on the page

(from: Kristina Quynn, *Write Together: A Practical Guide to Collaborating and Coauthoring for Researchers*, manuscript under review)

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS: Terms of Collaborative Writing

Collaborative Writing

can denote 1) the production of a single text by two or more writers and 2) the production of multiple texts by writers occupying the same writing time and space. The first definition is most commonly used. When we hear “collaborative writing,” we tend to think “a single text with plural authors.” It describes most professional research and scholarly writing relationships today, and it is the primary definition shaping the advice in this guide. May also be known as *team writing*, *collaborative composing*, *cooperative writing*, *collaborative authoring*, *group authoring*, *group drafting*, *group editing*.

Synchronous Writing

refers to the processes by which two or more writers work on the same document, section, or sentence at the same time. Writers may be engaged in drafting, editing, adding data and figures, tinkering with a bibliography, or any other tasks typical of building a manuscript. The document phase does not define *synchronous writing*, rather the definition hinges on writers working on document at the same time.

Asynchronous Writing

refers to the process by which two or more writers work on the same document at different times. Writers will pass a document back and forth (for pairs) or sequentially (for a team) to build, revise, and edit. Historically, the document would be generated and passed in hardcopy. Today, we commonly add to a digital document, use track changes and comments in the margins, and forward by email to our collaborator(s). Asynchronous is common to collaborative writing among academics, faculty mentors and their student mentees.

Collegial (or Lead Author) Method

refers to a mode of collaborative writing in which one research writer takes the lead on generating and compiling a working document for the group. The partner or rest of the team will provide editorial and field expertise in the shaping of the final document.

Sequential Method

refers to an asynchronous process of document drafting and revising in which each writer contributes their section(s) before forwarding to the next to add or edit (Lowry, et al. 2004).

Parallel Method

refers to the arrangements of synchronous or asynchronous processes for document generation in which writers produce designated sections of a document. When writing synchronously, collaborators may gather in a room (physical or virtual) to speak and write sections while one member (lead author, scribe, or a subgroup acting as lead) compiles (Ede and Lunsford 1990, Lowry et al. 2004).

Reactive Method

refers to an arrangement of synchronous generative and revision processes through which writers create a document in “real time” (Lowry et al. 2004).

Mixed Mode (for Collaborative Writing)

refers to the strategic use of more than one of the collegial (lead author), sequential, parallel and reactive methods during the phases of drafting and revising their document.

REFLECTING on Professional Writing Experiences--Together

Research and scholarly writing are highly constructed and their production, demanding. As experts or becoming experts in a field of study, we gradually hone our skills through a variety of writing-related experiences with our mentors, instructors, editors, and colleagues. Rarely, however, do we reflect on who we are and how we operate as “writers.”

When we reflect on the professionalizing process of writing, we build awareness (meta-cognitive skills) and illuminate our oft hidden processes, assumptions, or expectations about the writing process, product, and practice. The better we know ourselves as field experts who are, thus, also professional writers, the better we can support the professional growth of early-career writers.

When we reflect, we can also communicate more clearly with our collaborators.

The following questions encourage collaborating mentors and mentees to talk openly about their thoughts about and experiences with writing tasks, styles/genres, life-constraints, and approaches to time/project management. Each collaborator should craft their responses and then practice listening actively by being present, honest, and authentic. May the following questions help you better understand something new about you as a writer and help set a course for a smooth collaborative writing relationship. May this be the first of multiple, strategic conversations in the future:

1. What kinds of writing do you most like to do and/or most appreciate reading?
 - Can you identify a preferred style? (may help to think of authors or specific texts to share with each other)
2. What are your top 3 writing pet-peeves? (It's better to talk about peeves upfront than to have them repeatedly surface in unexpected and challenging ways down the line.)
3. When do you typically have projects or assignments complete?
 - Well in advance
 - Early—usually before deadline
 - At deadline
 - Often need extensions
4. How would you describe your current workload and the place of this collaborative project within your schedule?
5. How comfortable are talking about writing as a practice? a process? a product?
6. What do you understand to be the consequences of not having enough time to improve the quality of research or scholarly writing?
7. What do you see as the consequences and/or outcomes of “fixing” another person's writing?
8. What one thing can I, as your collaborator, do that would best support you in making our collaboration a success?

COMMUNICATING about Writing: Considerations

When collaborating, both mentor and mentee need awareness about what type of feedback will best suit the current writing project and purpose. Thus, the feedback a mentor (or reviewer) provides on a document is best when matched to:

- stage of manuscript (early, mid, late)
- stage of the mentee writer's professional development
- constraints of time (submission due dates) as well as reviewer energy and knowledge

Types of feedback

- **Corrective**—Reviewer makes corrections on the page; writer does little.
- **Directive**—Reviewer points out specific problems and offers specific suggestions for correcting but does not make the corrections personally; writer must apply the suggestions.
- **Interactive**—Reviewer talks to the writer about the text, offers commentary, asks questions, discusses areas of confusion and personal preferences for resolving them; writer does much, including deciding how to address areas of concern and then addressing them.
- **Evaluative**—Reviewer makes a judgement call and indicates that something in the text is good or bad; writer may learn from comments, may do much to address negative comments, or may ignore comments. (modified from: Purdue, *Writing Lab*)

At Purdue's Writing Lab, they encourage writers to "code" the comments they receive so they might become aware of the types of comments best suit their learning and discipline and develop skill in providing appropriate feedback to other writers (peers, collaborators, students).

Cover letters

When submitting a draft to a mentor, mentees can help facilitate a smooth feedback process with their reader/advisor by sending the draft with a brief cover letter (three sentences or a concise 3-sentence paragraph) that outlines:

- 1) what you think the draft is about
- 2) what you think went well, and
- 3) what you still require help with.

Cover letters can be as formal or as informal as you decide. This quick, three-part description supports writers taking ownership of their writing and can greatly limit the time an advisor/mentor or other colleague spends giving feedback. For example, if you ask for feedback on clarifying the relationship between the concepts described in two paragraphs, your readers can provide feedback on the elements of the manuscript that relate specifically to those concepts. Instead of providing extraneous feedback on other sections you are not yet ready to revise or plan to get to on your own.

CULTURE & FEEDBACK Strategies for Mentors

Whenever we talk writing strategies, we do well to remember Peter Drucker's quip that "culture eats strategy for breakfast, lunch, and dinner." Meaning that the best strategy is to create a writing-focused culture in which students or mentees are continually writing and receiving low-stakes regular feedback on their work (weekly or bi-weekly, if possible). Such a culture CANNOT situate the faculty mentor in the position of being the only advisor or reader to provide feedback. Who has that much time?!

INSTEAD, offer connect regularly (whatever "regular" means to your team/partnership)

Foster a culture in which your lab group, your postdocs, your graduate students, your mentees:

- Consider writing as process-oriented, not necessarily product-oriented--all are especially crucial for developing graduate writers.
- Value and promote protected space and time to write.
- Display a willingness to share writing at any stage, knowing collaborators will consider and respond thoughtfully and in a timely fashion.
- Understand that every writer has different capacities for production and quality.
- Consciously choose to think about writing as a necessary aspect of early-career professionalization that may or may not be enjoyable, but should not be fearsome, daunting, or debilitating.
- Nurture a culture where seeking assistance and feedback is normal and aligns with best writing and mentoring practices. (modified from: Purdue, *Writing Lab*)

Identify writing plans (projects) & agreements (process) early on:

- Writing plans and agreements between senior- and early-career writers need not be elaborate, but they should be understood, mutually agreed upon, and written down for quick reference. What is due, when and to what quality standard?
- Keep plans simple. Clear. Flexible.
- Check in regularly and as agreed (*biweekly, weekly, bimonthly, monthly*--anything more than a month is probably too long for collaborators to build or maintain momentum on a project).

DESIGNING a Collaborative Writing Plan and Agreement

Agreements that support collaborative relationships are best generated through consensus on the needs and goals of each person in the collaboration. As writers in collaboration, you can create agreements to support your work together.

The following two types of writing-focused agreements can offer significant support for collaborative writers on projects from initial stages through publishing:

1) Mentor/Mentee Collaborative Writing Agreement--a relational and operational set of guidelines that supports the vision and processes of your mentor/mentee writing relationship and 2) Co-Author Agreement--a formal legally binding agreement of co-authorship.¹

Mentor/Mentee Collaborative Writing Agreement

Your responses to the following questions can assist you in crafting a mutually agreed upon set of writing-related objectives and guidelines to support your mentoring relationship. If you already have a broader mentoring agreement, select topics--for instance, when and how often to meet--may already be covered by your prior agreement. Even then, you may find it helpful set separate meetings dedicated to the writing project itself. Please adjust and add questions to suit your individual needs.

1. **How often will we meet to discuss the writing project?** *(Some options: weekly, bimonthly, monthly, as needed)*
2. **How long should we plan to meet?** *(Some options: 10-15 minutes, 30 minutes, 60 minutes, 2 hours, as long it takes)*
3. **Who is responsible for setting the meeting?**
4. **How far in advance should writing be submitted to receive mentor/advisor feedback?** *(Some options: 24 hours, 2 days, 1 week, 2 weeks, more)*
5. **How often should writing be submitted to the mentor/advisor for feedback? And In what state should writing be submitted?** *(Some options: weekly loose drafts; monthly polished sections; multiple months polished manuscript/proposal, depends on the project and context)*

¹ The authors of this workbook are not lawyers nor are they dispensing legal advice. To assure the legality of an co-author agreement, seek the advice of legal counsel.

6. **What is the preferred method for submitting writing?** *(Some options include: Email, Googledoc, Dropbox, OneShare, Other)*
7. **When should revised documents (based on feedback) be returned?** *(Some options: 24 hours, 2 days, 1 week, 2 weeks, more)*
8. **Grad Student Mentee: What mutual conversations or support would most support you as a writer** *(practice, process, product, project)?*
9. **Faculty Mentor: What will mutual conversations would best support you as a writer** *(practice, process, product, project)?*
10. **How might we create a meeting space of trust, authenticity, and clear communication?** *(Some options: be present; listen actively; keep feedback directed at task and document quality [not personal]; be open to multiple perspectives--particularly those that arise from differences across race, national origin, ethnicity, sex/gender identity, orientations, rank, appointment; if uncertain, ask clarifying questions; if challenged, respond with grace.)*
11. **What shall be kept confidential?** *(Some options: all information disclosed within the mentoring relationship and personal disclosures about writing challenges; Exceptions include "legal exceptions" that might require information about a participant to be disclosed to a third party in situations where a participant is believed to be a danger to self or others, where a participant is in need of immediate medical attention, or where a court order or subpoena requires disclosure.)*
12. **What will communicate our commitment to this writing collaboration of mentor and mentee?** *(Option: print and sign 2 copies your responses to the questions comprising this "Mentor/Mentee Writer's Agreement." Add a statement of commitment: "I understand the effectiveness of this writing relationship is dependent upon my commitment to doing my part in drafting, revising, providing feedback, and in meeting regularly about our writing project[s]. I commit myself to doing so, barring illness or emergency.")*

Name (print): _____ Signature: _____

Name (print): _____ Signature: _____

SAMPLE Co-Author Agreement (*from: APA.org*)

Contract Regarding Publication Intent

We hereby enter into an agreement, as outlined below, regarding the publication of the project *tentatively* titled: _____

FIRST AUTHOR

Name (print): _____ Signature: _____

Percent effort: _____ Activity Score: _____

Brief description of basic responsibilities/role on project:

SECOND AUTHOR

Name (print): _____ Signature: _____

Percent effort: _____ Activity Score: _____

Brief description of basic responsibilities/role on project:

THIRD AUTHOR

Name (print): _____ Signature: _____

Percent effort: _____ Activity Score: _____

Brief description of basic responsibilities/role on project:

It is agreed that authorship order may be renegotiated should an individual's responsibilities substantially change, or should an individual fail to perform their role as stated above. Furthermore it is agreed that if the project involves a student milestone, the manuscript (MS) or poster must be submitted for possible publication no later than 12 months from the date of the successful defense of the project. Should the manuscript not be submitted within 12 months time, it is agreed that the faculty supervisor will take primary responsibility for submission of the manuscript and will become first author.

Date contract signed: _____

Expected date of data completion: _____ Date project actually complete: _____

date of MS/poster submission: _____ Date MS/poster submitted: _____

Expected

SELECTION of Useful Resources

Books

Barbara Kamler and Pat Thomson, *Helping Doctoral Student Write: Pedagogies for Supervision*.

Christine Pearson Casanave, What Advisors Need to Know about the Invisible 'Real-Life' Struggles of Doctoral Dissertation Writers." *Supporting Graduate Student Writers: Research, Curriculum, and Program Design*.

Laura Gail Lunsford, *A Handbook for Managing Mentoring Programs*

Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*.

Patricia Goodson, *Becoming an Academic Writer: 50 Exercises for Paced, Productive, and Powerful Writing*.

Useful web-based materials

Bradley Hughes, "Mentoring Research Writers" American Physical Society website
<https://www.aps.org/programs/minorities/nmc/upload/Mentoring-Research-Writers-Reading.pdf>

CSU Writes, "Mentoring Grad Writers" <https://csuwrites.colostate.edu/mentoring-grad-writers/>

Frank Carrano and Timothy Henry, "Top 5 Tips for Creating and Maintaining Successful Coauthoring Relationships" <https://blog.taaonline.net/2019/12/what-are-your-top-5-tips-for-creating-and-maintaining-a-successful-coauthoring-relationship/>

Noelle Sterne, "When Your Professor Muscles In: Your Topic and Co-Authorship" TAAA Blog.
<https://blog.taaonline.net/2019/12/when-your-professor-muscles-in-your-topic-and-coauthorship/>

Purdue Writing Lab. *Working with Graduate Student Writers*
https://owl.purdue.edu/writinglab/faculty/documents/Writing_Lab_Faculty_Guide_Summer_%202018.pdf

SCOARE: Scientific Communications Advances Research Excellence,
<https://www.scoareresources.com>

TAAA, *Tips for Successful Coauthoring*. eBook. TAAonline.net.

University of Minnesota. "Guide for working with Non-Native English Writers." (not grad-specific, but techniques are relevant.)

<http://writing.umn.edu/sws/assets/pdf/WorkingNonnativeSpeakers.pdf>