

BRANDON UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

NEWSLETTER

Issue 4 | February 2021

THE WRITING CENTRE

Fernanda Batista and Karen Skinner look forward to presenting the following workshops this semester. All workshops are open to BU students and staff. No pre-registration is required. Each workshop is 50 minutes long and can be accessed by clicking the Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/94541645899?pwd=YXFPaRySzRWY0J1dUtmR2hncEQzUT0g>. This link also appears in the Workshop section on the Writing Skills Moodle page.

Academic Integrity: Preventing Plagiarism

This workshop addresses plagiarism and ways students can prevent it to be in accordance with the university's academic integrity policy. The focus is on useful techniques for paraphrasing.

- Wednesday, January 20 11:00 – 11:50 a.m.
- Thursday, February 25 3:00 – 3:50 p.m.
- Friday, March 19 1:00 – 1:50 p.m.

APA 7 Citation Basics

This workshop provides an overview of formatting papers in APA (7th edition) with particular attention to in-text citations, references and style notes. Students will be shown examples of in-text citations using direct quotes and paraphrasing techniques, and examples of how online resources are cited in the reference section. The instructor will also highlight helpful online resources and discuss the link between proper citation and academic honesty.

- Monday, January 25 10:40 – 11:30 a.m.
- Tuesday, February 9 11:40 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 10 1:40 – 2:30 p.m.

How to Write a Good Essay

Students will learn how to develop research, pre-writing, and writing techniques that will help them write good essays. The workshop will also discuss ways to avoid plagiarism.

- Wednesday, January 27 11:40 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, February 2 11:40 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
- Monday, March 8 10:40 – 11:30 a.m.

Essay Basics

After this workshop, students should be able to identify the basic parts of the essay (introduction, body, conclusion) and describe how they function. Along with the basic structure, this workshop will cover the following: purpose of the essay, selecting and narrowing a topic, levels of English and use of scholarly language, formulating a thesis statement (brief introduction), evidence and how it is used, and how to access additional resources both on campus and online.

- Thursday, January 21 11:00 – 11:50 a.m.
- Friday, February 26 3:00 – 3:50 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 17 1:00 – 1:50 p.m.

Grammar Basics

After this workshop, students should be aware of the most common grammar errors students make, and have strategies for how to address these errors. The areas covered will include comma splice errors, pronouns, subject-verb agreement, active vs passive voice, and proper use of apostrophes. The instructor will also provide links to additional grammar resources.

- Tuesday, January 26 11:40 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, February 10 10:10 – 11 a.m.
- Monday, March 3 11:40 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Thesis Statement Basics

This workshop will cover basic aspects of thesis construction, placement, and development. Students will be encouraged to evaluate sample thesis statements to determine their potential effectiveness.

- Friday, January 22 11:00 – 11:50 a.m.
- Wednesday, February 24 3:00 – 3:50 p.m.
- Thursday, March 18 11:00 – 11:50 a.m.

LEARNING SKILLS

All workshops are free, open to all BU students and are repeated. Just click on the link for the slot that matches your availability. Then you can attend any one or all three sessions in that time slot. Set up an individual time if none of these times work for you.

Feb. 3 - IMPROVING MEMORY 9:30 – 10:20am
Click on this Zoom link or go to <https://tinyurl.com/y57talry>

Feb 8 - IMPROVING MEMORY 4:00 – 4:50pm
Click on this Zoom link or go to <https://tinyurl.com/y4dydy4c>

Feb 9 - NOTE-TAKING in 56/90/156 10:10 – 11:00am
Go to <http://tiny.cc/crimeandcommunity>

Feb 11 - EXAM PREP in 42/163 10:10-10:50am
Go to <http://tiny.cc/thisoldearth>

UPCOMING KEY DATES

February 15

University Closed: Louis Riel Day.

February 22

Last day for voluntary withdrawal from Term Two After Degree Education and M.Ed. courses.

February 16 – February 19

Winter Study Break:

February 22

Last day for voluntary withdrawal from Term Two After Degree Education courses.

February 23

Convocation (no ceremony).

PERSONAL COUNSELLING

Many students report experiencing test anxiety throughout the year, and at this time of year report having anxiety about the test anxiety! Test anxiety looks and feels different to everyone. Some people experience physical symptoms like an upset stomach, shaky hands, or headache, while others experience cognitive symptoms like racing thoughts, inability to concentrate, or going blank – forgetting everything they worked so hard to study. The following are few strategies to help combat test anxiety:

Before the test/exam:

- Be prepared! Be sure to spend enough time preparing for the test. You might even get support in creating a study schedule.
- The night before the test, be sure to get enough sleep. Your brain needs to be rested in order to perform at its best. This might seem counterproductive, but cramming before a test might not be helpful.
- The night before the test set out all of the supplies that you will need, complete any computer updates, and make a plan of what you will eat and prepare your meals if possible.
- Engage in positive self-talk. At this time some people will review all of the mistakes they have made in the past on exams. Try to avoid doing this by saying kind words to yourself – as if you were speaking to a close friend.
- Be realistic about this test/exam. Some people will create a narrative in their minds that this test/exam has much more meaning than it actually does. Challenge these "catastrophic" thoughts with more accurate or truthful thoughts.

During the test/exam - Take a minute to ground yourself. You might do a progressive muscle relaxation, a grounding activity, or a breathing activity. This will help you settle. Once you are settled it is easier to access all of the material you studied. If you find your anxiety is escalating again, take another moment to settle. On timed exams this might seem silly to "waste" time settling but many people find this helpful to their final performance.

After the test/exam:

- Try to make time do something kind for yourself and reward yourself for your hard work.
- Review your test/exam and make an appointment to meet with your professor to review any areas you struggled with.
- Make note of what worked well for you and what you would like to do differently.

Counsellors at BU can meet with you individually to work on specific skills in combating test anxiety. If you would like to book an appointment, please contact Vodonc@brandonu.ca

CAREER SERVICES

Networking

The basic definition of networking is meeting new people and forming contacts within your chosen profession or academic direction. Ultimately, you want to form relationships and connections that will benefit your career, and also help others if you can. This means that you might even find out about job opportunities through your networking contacts.

If it's hard to talk to strangers, make it easy for them to talk to you by asking good questions. Ask questions about their career, education or other areas you find interesting. Be more interested in them than in yourself. This is your opportunity to listen and learn. Use your active listening skills to hear what they are saying, as opposed to just waiting for your turn to talk.

Be engaging enough that they wish to follow up and make it easy for others to find you, especially online with a great profile, on LinkedIn for example. The COVID pandemic has eliminated almost all in person networking events for the time being but hone your networking skills as they will be useful both virtually and in person when things open up.

Here are a few tips to make networking easier. Virtually attend events such as those through the Chamber of Commerce or other organizations that interest you. Volunteer to help with needs in your community. There are many community and student groups that are still remaining active virtually. Have a great "elevator pitch" or "one minute talk" prepared. This is just a brief presentation, about one minute in length that is basically your response to anyone asking who you are and what you do.

But what can you do right now to start networking? Join the all-new BU Café mentoring and networking platform, powered by Ten Thousand Coffees!

What is BU Café?

- Our virtual networking space to connect BU students with alumni, faculty and industry partners
- A safe and supportive environment to build community when people can't come to campus

Registering is easy, just go to <https://www.tenthousandcoffees.com/schools/brandonu>

THE MATH CENTRE

Math Skills Services offers free services for students by the learning skills specialist and peer tutors who are knowledgeable and eager to help. We offer: *Workshops online, via Zoom; Individual appointments online, via Zoom; Peer assistance (Math peer tutors); Online assistance available through Zoom*. On January and February, each Thursday from 1:00pm to 2:00pm (Zoom Meeting ID: 717 140 8005, Passcode: 935200). For more information contact Nicoleta Babutiun by email at babutiun@brandonu.ca or online at <https://www.brandonu.ca/academic-skills/math-skills/>

Free Math Workshops

Workshop	Date	Time	Room
Intro to Statistics	Tue., Feb. 9	12:40 - 1:30 pm	Online
Calculus I	Tue., Feb. 16	12:40 - 1:30 pm	Online
Intro to Stats Inference	Tue., Feb. 23	12:40 - 1:30 pm	Online
Linear Algebra	Tue., March 2	12:40 - 1:30 pm	Online
Intro to Statistics	Tue., March 30	12:40 - 1:30 pm	Online

Join Zoom Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/7171408005?pwd=MFhhUUcvNUUejBhM2gKUnZnYUJ5UT09>

Meeting ID: 717 140 8005 Passcode: 935200

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES (SAS)

TIPS FOR MANAGING SCREEN FATIGUE IN ONLINE CLASSES

Excessive screen time can dampen productivity and cause headaches or eye strain. Consider these tips for avoiding screen fatigue while keeping up with your online classes.

TAKE BREAKS

- It is important to **break up screen time** to allow your eyes (and mind!) a chance to rest.
- Try the **Pomodoro method**: set a timer for 25 minutes and concentrate on a task without interruption. When the alarm goes off, reset the timer for a 5-minute screen break. Repeat this cycle 4 times, then take a longer break (20-60 minutes depending on your energy and work load).
- If you find that these time increments do not work for you, **adjust as necessary**, maintaining the principle of taking **frequent breaks** from looking at your screen.

PLAN SCREEN TIME STRATEGICALLY

- While your class schedule and personal commitments may dictate when you are able to do your work, try to design your study schedule to **reduce screen time at the end of the day** when your eyes are more tired.

ADJUST YOUR SCREEN SETTINGS

- The default **display settings** on your computer can sometimes be straining.
- On a PC: check out the **Night Light feature**, which allows you to display "warmer" colors at certain times of day to reduce blue light.
- On a Mac: try switching to **Dark Mode** to reduce screen brightness.
- Try downloading f.lux, which **adapts your screen brightness to the time of day**.
- Increase your **scale settings** to enlarge all text that appears on your screen.

USE DICTATION AND READ-ALOUD

- By **speaking aloud rather than typing**, you reduce the need to concentrate intensely on the screen (just make sure to go back later to make edits). Dictation is available on Microsoft Word and Google Docs.
- There are also options to have **text read aloud to you** to give your eyes a break. Check out read-aloud options for pdfs and Word documents.
- Brandon University also has a license for TextHelp Read & Write software using your BU email.

CONSIDER LIGHT-BLOCKING PRODUCTS

- Some students benefit from products like **blue light screen overlays, tinted lenses, or simply wearing sunglasses** while looking at screens.
- We recommend you **consult with an eye doctor** before using any new products.

DISCUSS YOUR NEEDS WITH STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

- Students with diagnosed conditions that impact screen usage (such as migraines) may qualify for accommodations. Contact SAS for more information.