



2015 ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS

Ashford University is always working to enhance your student experience and support you as you reach your academic goals. We have outlined a few areas of ongoing improvement below.

STUDENT SERVICES

Student Services is working diligently to strengthen the base of our advising team. We continue to fine-tune the Individualized Advising Model to provide more timely and personalized proactive advisement to each of our students. We now have teams of advisors specifically trained to effectively advise students within each of Ashford University's four Colleges. College Advisors are well-versed in the requirements and outcomes related to their respective College. These Advisors are familiar with all degree enhancement options, such as specializations, or a minor. They are also highly connected with additional resources in Career and Alumni Services.

In some areas, such as Corporate and Community partners, advisement is assigned based on the intricacies of the financial options available to students. As the Learning Development Grant has grown, the University has trained a subset of advisors on the finer points of these agreements to provide a seamless experience for students utilizing these benefits. The military Student Services teams also specialized operations in 2015, with Student Advisors assigned to groups based on the type of military student benefits. Veteran Assistance teams are well-versed in the utilization of the various VA benefits. Tuition Assistance teams are broken down by branch of military to be able to speak to the most recent updated information impacting our active duty students. Teams also specialize in spouse and dependent assistance, including Department of Defense civilian employees.

Additional efforts have been made in the department to ensure that a larger portion of incoming calls are answered and a first call resolution is attained. These efforts include cross-departmental collaboration to ensure the right knowledge base exists and ensuring advisors are simply available to answer incoming calls. We understand the need to be available when our students are available – this primary focus of our military student services teams has allowed internal processes to be streamlined to ensure that availability. Further, consistent reporting and coaching allows us to ensure each advisor is providing the high level of service our students expect and deserve.



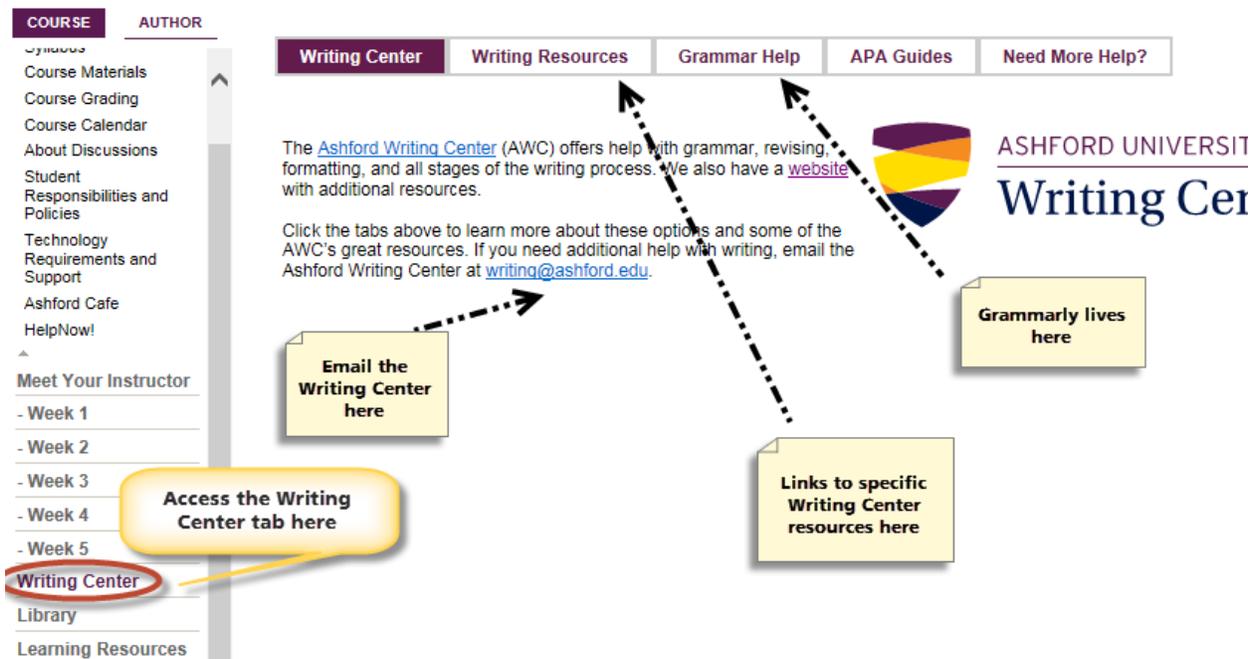
WRITING CENTER

As an open enrollment institution, Ashford University recognizes that many of its newly-enrolled students may not have completed a writing assignment in some time. The Writing Center provides targeted resources and support to improve students' writing, grammar, and citing skills.

The Writing Center provides two tiers of service:

Writing Center Services for **all** students:

- Email questions about writing-related topics to writing@ashford.edu
- Downloadable resources from the [Writing Center website](#) featuring grammar usage, avoiding plagiarism, APA style, and more.
- Grammarly, an automated grammar-check tool that students can use on their own, 24 hours a day.
- Webinars – occur on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:00 pm PST and are accessible through the Student Portal.
- Paper review – students can email the Writing Center for paper review any time.



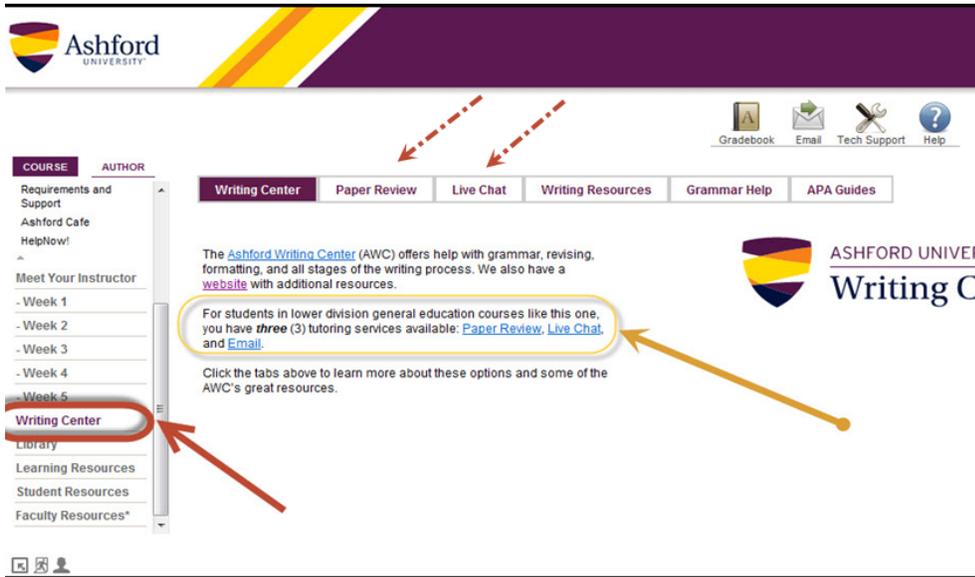
The screenshot shows the Ashford Writing Center website interface. On the left is a navigation menu with tabs for COURSE and AUTHOR. The COURSE tab is active, showing a list of course-related items, with 'Writing Center' circled in red. A callout box points to this item with the text 'Access the Writing Center tab here'. At the top of the main content area are five navigation tabs: 'Writing Center', 'Writing Resources', 'Grammar Help', 'APA Guides', and 'Need More Help?'. A callout box points to the 'Writing Center' tab with the text 'Email the Writing Center here'. Below the tabs is a paragraph of text: 'The [Ashford Writing Center](#) (AWC) offers help with grammar, revising, formatting, and all stages of the writing process. We also have a [website](#) with additional resources. Click the tabs above to learn more about these options and some of the AWC's great resources. If you need additional help with writing, email the Ashford Writing Center at writing@ashford.edu.' A callout box points to the 'Writing Resources' tab with the text 'Links to specific Writing Center resources here'. To the right of the text is the Ashford University logo and the text 'ASHFORD UNIVERSITY Writing Center'. A callout box points to the logo with the text 'Grammarly lives here'.

For students in select courses:

- Paper review via a submission link in the online classroom.
- LiveChat, 20-minute tutoring sessions via a link in the online classroom.
- Online classroom writing resources, including a link to Grammarly, a free grammar revision software.

In 2014, the Ashford Writing Center expanded its tutoring staff to accommodate more students and provide additional resource material and tutorials. More than 13,000 tutoring sessions were recorded by the AWC staff over the past year.

The AWC aims to help all Ashford students improve their writing skills, gain confidence, and achieve success throughout their college careers—and beyond.



The screenshot shows the Ashford University online classroom interface. At the top left is the Ashford University logo. Below it is a navigation menu with 'COURSE' and 'AUTHOR' tabs. The 'COURSE' tab is active, showing a list of items: 'Requirements and Support', 'Ashford Cafe', 'HelpNow!', 'Meet Your Instructor', and a list of weeks from '- Week 1' to '- Week 5'. The 'Writing Center' item is highlighted with a red oval and a red arrow. To the right of the menu is a horizontal navigation bar with tabs: 'Writing Center', 'Paper Review', 'Live Chat', 'Writing Resources', 'Grammar Help', and 'APA Guides'. The 'Writing Center' tab is active. Below the tabs is a text area with the following content: 'The Ashford Writing Center (AWC) offers help with grammar, revising, formatting, and all stages of the writing process. We also have a [website](#) with additional resources.' Below this is a yellow callout box with the text: 'For students in lower division general education courses like this one, you have **three (3)** tutoring services available: [Paper Review](#), [Live Chat](#), and [Email](#).' Below the callout box is another line of text: 'Click the tabs above to learn more about these options and some of the AWC's great resources.' To the right of the text area is the Ashford University logo and the text 'ASHFORD UNIVERSITY Writing Center'. At the top right of the interface are icons for 'Gradebook', 'Email', 'Tech Support', and 'Help'. Red dashed arrows point from the 'Writing Center' tab to the 'Paper Review', 'Live Chat', and 'Email' links in the callout box. A yellow arrow points from the callout box to the 'Writing Center' tab. A red arrow points from the 'Writing Center' item in the left menu to the 'Writing Center' tab.

Visit the [Writing Center](#) website, located within your online classroom to learn more about how we can help you.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

In the spring of 2015, the Faculty Student Engagement (FSE) Report was rolled out to all faculty, both full-time and Associates, and is sent twice a week. The FSE report provides faculty with aggregated course activity data, which has been designed to allow faculty to observe their previous interactions and current engagement behaviors with students in their courses. Report data includes both faculty student interaction metrics and indicators of instructor behaviors, which allows for faculty self-reflection. These behaviors include the number of responses an instructor made across discussion forums in a class, the number of times assignment feedback was given to students, and the number of times a student received a reply in the *Ask Your Instructor* forum. The FSE report is not evaluative, but rather seeks to provide faculty with an in-depth view of their course through an easy-to-read static report. It may also be helpful for interacting with students who may not be as engaged as others and may need extra support. Faculty has visibility to the amount of time students spend in the various areas within the online classroom. This information allows faculty to reach out and encourage those students who may be meeting the bare minimum, and point them toward valuable resources which may not have been explored.



The Discussion Board Taskforce (DBTF) was originally formed in 2013 and includes subcommittees of faculty, staff, and administrators that focus on rigor and relevance in discussion boards at the University. At the end of 2013, a new discussion board policy was implemented across all courses. Throughout 2015, the DBTF has created new rubrics, discussion questions, and with the support and collaboration of the Discussion Board Task Force Student Success group, has focused on elevating students' ability to think critically, learn important content, improve written communication, and encourage participation and interaction with faculty and other students.

Through the Instructional Quality Review process and just-in-time classroom support by Faculty Support and Development Associates (formerly known as Instructional Specialists), faculty are also receiving information on best practices in discussion board facilitation. A discussion board module is being created by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) with the support of the DBTF to ensure a better understanding of the requirements, the positive impact on student success, and the practical application of facilitation within discussion forums. This module will be a required training for all faculty with resources housed on the CETL site, a web-based resource library and information center for all instructors.

In addition to the focus on discussion boards, the CETL, in conjunction with other University groups, identified an opportunity to enhance the [Instructor Issues Review Process](#). Effective with the July 1, 2015 catalog updates, the Instructor Issues Review Process is outlined within the Student Rights and Responsibilities portion of the [Ashford University Catalog](#). The creation of the Academic Issues Administrator (AIA) and the centralization of the Instructor Issues Review process has been adjusted to not only help ensure student success, but to also provide students with opportunities for more in-depth communication and discussion of future strategies to help resolve similar situations. The transition was completed to assure the consistency at which issues were investigated and resolved, and to expand upon the services offered to the students and student-facing staff. The AIA is the sole student - facing staff member in the CETL, and available to students by email and phone to advise on formal student processes available, instructor issues, and investigation findings. Through the remainder of 2015, the AIA will conduct presentations to the student-facing staff to provide transparency and understanding of this formal process.

CAREER SERVICES

Career Services are available to active Ashford University degree-seeking students and alumni. In order to meet the needs of students located in geographically diverse areas and with unique scheduling constraints, the department provides a variety of options for students to access services, including delivery by:



- Telephone, email, and virtual appointments, as well as through online workshops, such as webinars and teleconferences, asynchronous self-directed resources, virtual hiring events, and networking opportunities.
- Career Services Specialists who provide one-on-one coaching in alignment with the various stages of the career development process. Serving a diverse population, coaching is tailored to meet the unique needs, experiences, and goals of individuals.

In addition to resources and services designed for general career development, the department designs programming to meet the needs of specific populations (e.g., college and program-specific, military and veteran, disabled, multigenerational, stay-at-home parents, career transition, criminal background, etc.).

To further expand the Career Services resources provided to Ashford students and alumni, the Career Services Office offers an online career management system called *My Career*. The *MyCareer: Career and Professional Development Center* is available 24/7 through the Ashford University Student Portal, providing a robust center of self-directed resources and tools. In *My Career*, students have access to an individualized career planner, a resume builder, Optimal Interview, the TypeFocus self-assessment, and a job board. Students and alumni can also engage with each other, as well as with staff, faculty, and employers using blogs, discussion boards, and live chat for professional networking and advice.

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT & ENGAGEMENT

After several pilots to launch [CHAMPS peer mentoring](#) in 2015, CHAMPS (Collaborative, Holistic, Academic Mentoring, for Peer Success) was made available to all Ashford University online learners. The mission of CHAMPS Peer Mentoring is to promote success by providing support and guidance and being positive role models for new students. This program also provides leadership development opportunities and transferable skills to high-achieving, upper-division students serving as student mentors. For more information about this online peer mentoring program, or to request a mentor, please visit http://www.ashford.edu/student_services/champs.htm.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

In 2015, Ashford University continued its partnership with IonTuition (formerly Loanlook), a free tool to help foster financial literacy and responsibility. IonTuition provides students with



easy access to loan information including balances, repayment options, and estimated repayment amounts. IonTuition also provides free budgeting calculators, financial literacy training, and important messages that are pertinent to you. Additionally, the content of the Institutional Aid Application, one of the core financial aid documents, was reorganized to assist students in making a knowledgeable determination of the amount of aid they wish to borrow. Students are now presented with clear costs for attending Ashford and are given several options on their borrowing selection. A detailed description of each selection option is now presented next to the checkbox where students indicate their selection, so they can make an informed decision.

LIBRARY SERVICES

We've added some new topics to **LibraryU**, the series of live online courses taught by AU librarians. These courses are offered on the first and third Tuesdays of every month, and they last about 30-45 minutes. You can attend a course by clicking on the registration link on the right side of the library homepage through your student portal. Some of the new courses are:

- Research: Beyond the Basics
- Common Research Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them
- Understanding Research As a Process
- Ebook Basics

These courses are recorded, so you can watch the recordings if you can't make it to the live sessions. You can access the recordings on the Library homepage.

Our Library website through your student portal also offers numerous **tutorials** that will teach you how to use the Library's resources and do research for your assignments. You can find these, and many more, on the Library homepage. Some of the tutorials include:

- Why Can't I Just Google? (3-minute video)
- Choosing Articles & Revising Results (4-minute video)
- Picking Your Topic IS Research (3-minute video)
- Internet Research (slideshow)

We also continue to add content to our **electronic collection** that you can use for your assignments:

- Children's Literature Comprehensive Database (CLCD) - offers reviews and critiques of a broad selection of children's books

- The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods - provides facts and techniques to perform qualitative research

Elsevier accounting journals, including:

- Accounting, Organizations and Society
- The British Accounting Review
- The International Journal of Accounting
- Journal of Accounting and Economics
- Journal of Accounting and Public Policy
- Journal of Financial Economics

New Education journals such as:

- Early Childhood Research Quarterly
- The Reading Teacher
- International Journal of Online Pedagogy and Course Design

We want to remind you that it's easy to get in touch with a librarian when you need help using the Library's resources. Visit the Library's website through your student portal to see when our librarians are available - we offer live chat office hours, a Library phone number, and email address.

You can also find our **QuickAnswers** service on the website to get research help and to contact the librarians. Don't be shy about contacting us. We're here to help!