

The Writing and Communication Center

Ashley Squires, Director

The Writing and Communication Center (WCC) turned four years old in 2015. The WCC is a free and voluntary student support service that assists students with their written and oral communication skills and promotes best practices in writing pedagogy in the curriculum. The primary service offered in the WCC is individual consultations (in both English and Russian), which give students the opportunity to seek independent feedback from someone who is not their instructor. Representatives from the WCC also offer workshops and master-classes, consult with faculty on writing assignments and edit faculty publications.

Consultants are required to submit reports on all sessions, and the Director uses these to analyze trends in student use. Total usage for the past three academic years, starting with Fall 2013 is as follows:

Academic Year	Fall Term	Spring Term	Total
2013-2014	179	124	303
2014-2015	139	125	264
2015-2016	211	167	378

The 13% drop from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015 can be attributed to a number of factors: student reluctance to come to Skolkovo as well as unanticipated budgetary and staffing issues late in 2014. We adapted to the changes, however, and saw a 43% year-over-year increase in usage during 2015-2016.

32% of students across all programs made use of the WCC during the 2015-2016 school year (compared to 21% and 31% in the two previous years), and the rate of return averages around 50% for all three years, meaning that half of all students who visit the WCC once during a school year return that same year for another visit. BAE student Valeria Nurieva offers the following insight into why she uses the WCC on a regular basis: “I always attend the WCC because it’s a unique opportunity to improve my English skills. Here I can practice my English with native speakers for free (while usually you have to pay lots of money for it), meet new people and develop my communication skills. After one year of regular practice, I enormously improved my English from upper-intermediate to advanced/fluent.” Alexander Dorofeev adds, “It has become a part of my learning habits, to come to WCC for consultations about all the important writings I do, be it is a term paper or a motivation letter. For me, it is a final stage of writing process, and I feel that my work is incomplete if none of the Center’s staff reads it.”

47% of consultations concern issues directly relevant to students’ futures after graduation: applications for jobs, internships, graduate school and study abroad programs as well as interview preparation. 17% of consultations are related to course or thesis work, and 27% are spent helping students improve their English language abilities and prepare for standardized tests.

The WCC is also involved in outreach. In December of 2015, NES hosted the three-day professional development conference, “Building Effective Writing Centers,” in cooperation with the US Embassy, MISiS, and HSE. The event brought in future writing center administrators from all over Russia and solidified the WCC’s place as a true national leader in this field. At present, NES has the only writing center in the country that prioritizes the development of student writers and speakers.