

DESIGNING A WRITING CONSULTANT’S HANDBOOK

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

How does both the creation and the initial implementation of a peer-designed handbook by consultants across different disciplines prepare current and future consultants for common obstacles in tutoring sessions?

METHODS:

- ◆ Corpus-based research using 2.5 years worth of data logs that consultants record regarding the cause and success for the consultation.
- ◆ These logs were then combed through by various consultants to compile a list a seven common struggles students experience in terms of writing that evidently cause their appointment.
- ◆ The content of the chapters was decided based on both existing research regarding writing centers as well as indivudal consultants’ reflection on previous appointments, and that advice of other consultants regarding those scenarious.
- ◆ While chapters were written independently, the research and content of the chapters were done weekly in collaboration with other consultants.

RESULTS:

- ◆ A finalized handbook printed and implemented into Rutgers University-Camden’s writing center.
- ◆ **7 chapters** written by individual consultants based on existing research, their personal consulting experience, and their respective disciplines.
- ◆ **4 Skill Sheets** designed to break down larger topics into approachable pieces to use during consultations. Ex. Fig. 3
- ◆ A downloadable, online edition that lives on the Writing and Design Lab website for other writing centers to refer to and print Skill Sheets from.

CHAPTER TOPICS:

- ◆ What It Means To Be A Writing Consultant & Common Concerns
- ◆ Formulating A Strong Thesis
- ◆ How To Handle AI
- ◆ The Golden Rule Of A Good Outline
- ◆ Voicing Your Opinion
- ◆ How To Write An Essay When You Haven’t Read The Book
- ◆ Thinking Maps

SIGNIFICANCE OF RESULTS:

The actual creation of these chapters were significant for this project because they allowed consultants to work collaboratively on research, using one another’s range of experience to strengthen the material discussed in the handbook. It was important that the consultants came from a variety of disciplines, such as English, Gender Studies, Math, Human Resources, Digital Studies, and Sociology. This unique, multidisciplinary collaboration diversified not only the actual content of the handbook, but the approaches, implementation, and overall creation of the handbook too. The range of content and perspectives will evidently transfer positively into, allowing consultants to not only bring their own perspective and knowledge into a consultation, but to bring that of other consultants too in the form of chapters and Skill Sheets. Additionally, this handbook is significant to the future function of Rutgers University writing center as well as other national writing centers, because it provides preparatory content for future consultants, alleviating a lot of the stress and lack of training writing consultants receive.

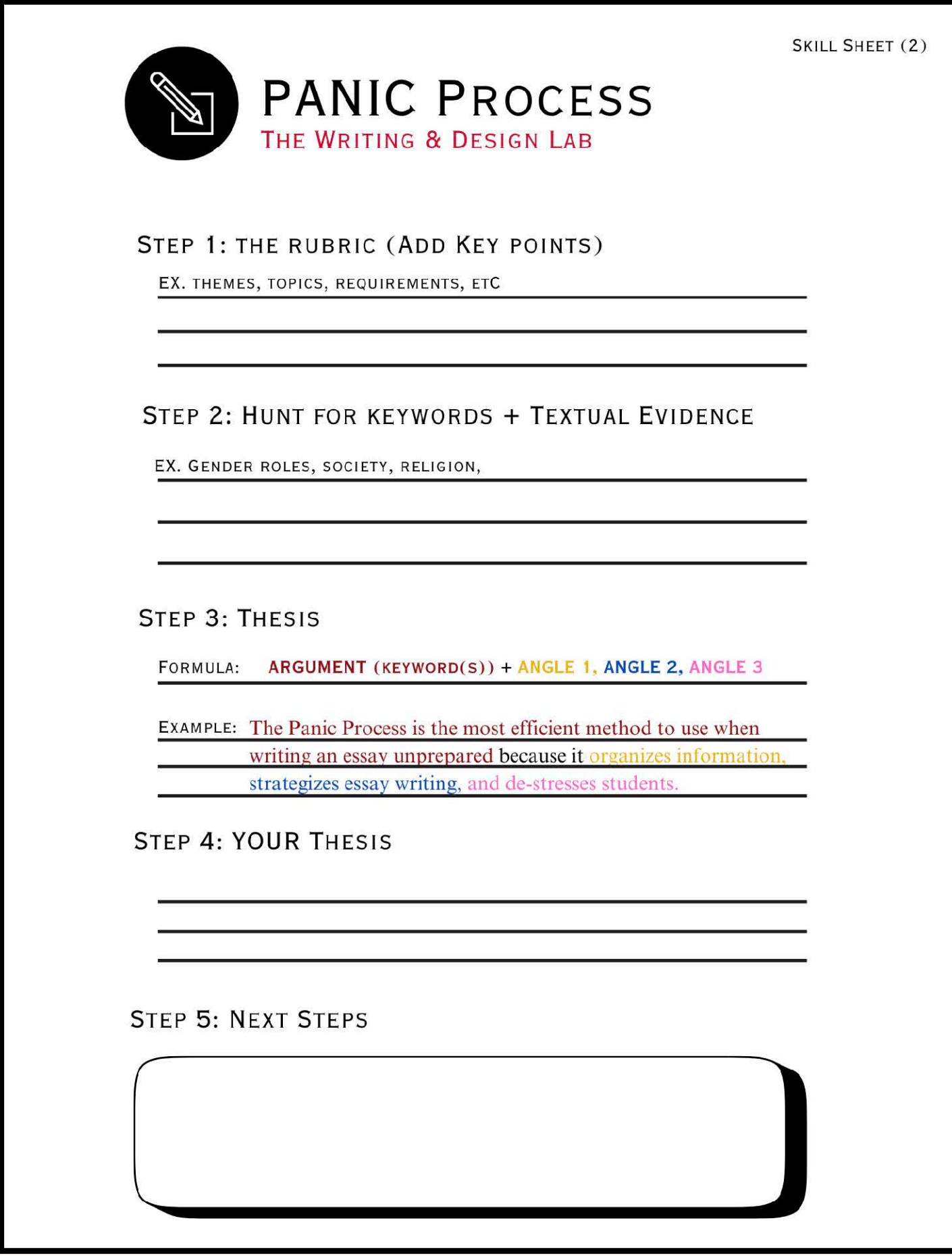


Fig.3 Skill Sheet, *How To Write An Essay When You Haven’t Read The Book*

LIMITATIONS:

- ◆ Only 2.5 years worth of data logs to use as research materials
- ◆ Lack of time to implement the actual handbook into appointments
- ◆ Research concluded at the beginning of the Spring semester when few appointments occurred.
- ◆ Limited time to write the handbook, leading to fewer chapters being included than originally intended.

CONTINUED RESEARCH:

- Contributing authors use the handbook in consultations moving forward and record the success and usefulness of the handbook on the overall consultation.
- Use the handbook as preparatory material for newly onboarded consultants moving forward.

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Link to Handbook