

## Considerations for Working with Multilingual Writers

- **Stop thinking about multilingual students through a deficit lens.** They bring a host of capabilities and perspectives that other students may not. They may have studied English as a school subject before coming to AU. Therefore, they may have a lot of differences in the English language which can lead us to be biased about their command of the subject. The majority of student writers really have complex language identities and nuanced relationships to English.
  - Some students may speak three languages at home, and universities may not acknowledge the other languages that these students speak.
  - Languages are not boxes. You don't turn off one language to work in another or you don't leave it at the door.
  - Measure student success through their ability to adhere to the directions in the prompt and the learning objectives of the course. Avoid nitpicking on every error and instead provide overarching feedback on repeated errors, while focusing most of your attention on substantive feedback related to the quality of their ideas.
- **Make sure that international students feel seen!** We need to acknowledge students' complex language identities. We might also investigate intersection analogies between international English and U.S. efforts, and diversity, equity inclusion. After all, in large part, English, as its status as a global language, has imperial and colonial roots.
  - Remember that everything takes longer when it is not your first language. Allow additional time for multilingual writers to complete their work.
  - Remember that writing for professional communication fields can vary significantly from academic writing so we need to explain the conventions of particular genres and particular types of the writing assignments in an American context. This may be different from how that genre looks in their native countries.
  - Provide students with detailed assignment sheets, rubrics, examples of previous student work, and detailed feedback as much as possible on one written assignment, preferably early on in the semester. It is crucial to establish the first assignment as the baseline in terms of grading expectations.
  - Consider giving them the opportunity to submit drafts for review to you first to help improve their writing.
  - Other considerations: put international students together with others who speak the same language in the class, cohort, or by connecting them to the International Faculty and Staff Affinity Group. These individuals can be potential liaisons for communications between faculty and staff.

## University Resources for Multilingual Writers:

1. The Writing Center: <https://www.american.edu/provost/academic-access/writing-center.cfm>

Neisha-Anne S. Green  
Director, Academic Student Services and the Writing Center  
Bender Library, 1<sup>st</sup> floor

2. International Student and Scholar Services: <https://www.american.edu/ocl/iss/>

ISSS office walk-in advising hours: Monday - Friday: 9:00a.m. - 5:00p.m.  
Int'l Student & Scholar Services  
410 Butler Pavilion

3. International Accelerator Program: <https://accelerator.american.edu/>

4801 Massachusetts Ave, NW  
Suite 532  
202-885-6986 (This would be only for first semester first year students. After that period, they no longer have IAP advisors)

Lastly, faculty can send early warning notices with specific comments about what the struggles are (organization, grammar, structure, etc.). When the EWN is sent, it goes to the advisor. If the student is in the IAP, the advisor will work with the student to get the academic support they need using IAP resources. For all students, this can help spark a conversation that may help get students the resources they need.