A Small Silver Lining: Adapting Support for the Pandemic

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In this article, we discuss a writing support strategy called Writing Office Hours (WOHs), which has been one of the offerings provided by the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre (RGASC) at the University of Toronto Mississauga since the beginning of the COVID 19 pandemic in March 2020. These WOHs evolved out of an earlier approach to course support known as Dedicated Drop-ins (DDIs); when DDIs were made impossible due to the pandemic, we developed the WOH approach. In this article, which is adapted from our presentation at the 2022 CWCA/ACCR’s annual conference, we argue that these WOHs have had enthusiastic uptake by students (at least in part) because they help to break down some of the barriers—physical, logistical, psychological, and/or cultural—that can dissuade students from seeking out writing support. It is widely recognized that students do not always see writing centres as safe and welcoming spaces (e.g., Bond, 2019; Denny, 2010; Grutsch McKinney, 2013; Pregent, Williams, Marcyk, & Haywood, 2021). As we discuss below, because WOHs take writing support out of the centre and into students’ course shells, through its learning management system (LMS) (e.g., Brightspace), they help us reach students who might not see (or might not yet see) the writing centre as the “cozy” (Grutsch McKinney, 2013) place that we as writing centre faculty would like it to be.