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**Title** Developing writing identities amongst early career researchers and widening participation practitioners

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### **Developing writing identities amongst early career researchers and widening participation practitioners**

The global HE sector is being profoundly reshaped by neoliberalism, marketisation and institutional stratification, driven by the pressures of market competition, world rankings, and the dominance of prestige culture. Within this increasingly competitive higher education sector, much has been written about the pressures on academics to publish in order to demonstrate both research and teaching excellence (MacLeod, Steckley and Murray, 2012; Clegg, 2008; McGrail, Rickard and Jones, 2006). It is unsurprising therefore that HE institutions have invested heavily in the sorts of strategic interventions which can help academics to develop their writing - such as mentoring, writing workshops and writing retreats (MacLeod, Steckley and Murray, 2012; Moore, 2003). At the same time academic writing is deemed to play a fundamental role in developing both academic communities (Murray, 2012) and academic identities (Lee and Boud, 2003). Indeed: *'writing is a matter in which concerns about who we are, and how we matter to others, are entangled with what we write about'* (Author 1, 2017). Many of those on 'professional' or 'support services' contracts, including a number of early career researchers, are also involved in writing, in relation to, for example, the evaluation of outreach and widening participation activities, or of retention and success initiatives. Despite this, developing the writing capabilities of those who are not on academic contracts has been largely overlooked. In response to *'our desires to give voice to the 'view from below', that is, to enable research to engage with voices not normally heard in the mainstream academy and those whose voices are undervalued or misrecognized and misreported'* (Author 1) over the last year we have delivered a writing programme for widening participation practitioners, supported by academic mentors from across the UK. The same programme has been delivered in Australia and both initiatives will result in the special editions of two journals. The programme has comprised a structured programme of writing activities, and practitioners who have been supported by their mentors to produce and present a research poster, have delivered their paper at an academic conference, and have submitted a journal paper to a recognized refereed journal. In this discussion we - one funder, one tutor, one mentor and one mentee - share our experiences of delivering the programme, describe how our individual identities as writers and mentors have been shaped by participation in the programme, and outline the broader benefits of participation on ourselves and our institutions. Drawing on two of the papers produced as part of the project we chart how the papers evolved, and why, the tensions and struggles experienced by the authors as they wrote, and how this has shaped both their writing and their practitioner identities. We also explore the relationship between mentor and mentees and the shifts and turns

that happen in such dialogic relationships (Author 1). We close the session by highlighting the importance of supporting non-academics to write and making recommendations as to how similar programmes could be implemented in individual Higher Education Institutions.

## References

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