

Poster Abstract Book (All Poster)

0462

Does membership of an institution-based peer led writing group with online support engender an effective community of practice for academic writing?

Kate Mawson, Mairi Macintyre, Celine Martin

Abstract: The poster demonstrates reasons for, and the stages of creating an academic writing group that quarantines time for not urgent self-determined writing activity. Building on work of Dr Kate Carruthers-Thomas (BCU, SRHE) and principles of effective writing groups established by O'Dwyer *et al.*, (2016) and Olszewska, K. and Lock, J. (2016) 'A Write Space' exists as a 6 weekly cyclic initiative at the University of Warwick. The group is peer led by Kate Mawson and Mairi Macintyre hosted by Organisational development with qualitative research methods employed to speak to the participatory research questions generated across multiple iterations. The intention is to run 'A Write Space' for one academic year. A Participatory approach to action research will be harnessed including participant validation of findings and as such generate robust findings reporting on the benefits, challenges and best practices for hosting staff led academic writing spaces in research intensive UK Universities.

Poster Outline: 'A Write Space' is based on the 'Writespace' and 'Thirdspace' programmes by Dr Kate Carruthers-Thomas (BCU, SRHE), the academic writing retreat bootcamp run through University of Warwick's Organisational Development department, and the Pomodoro principles.

An academic is required, as a feature of academic life, to engage in writing and it has been described as a fundamental, crucial, and core activity; (Maher et al., 2008); (Weller, 2011)). Despite this, writing "continues to be marginalized and squeezed out of the everyday academic practices of researchers and academics" (Aitchison and Guerin, 2014 p.4)

The initiative sets aside 2 hours a week for six weeks enabling participants to prioritise writing up important, not urgent, self-determined work. The participants record intent and reflect throughout the process with a view to analysing and sharing findings of the benefits and best practice for hosting academic writing spaces.

Building on the work of O'Dwyer *et al.*, (2016) and Olszewska, K. and Lock, J. (2016) a successful pilot ran in Spring 2021, establishing 'A Write Space' now running on an ongoing 6-week cyclical basis. Hosted by Organisational Development, University of Warwick and run on MSTeams (to enable access), it is open to a wide self-selecting community and the participants come from across the wider community at Warwick as well as several academics from outside the University of Warwick.

The methodological approach is action research with a participatory action research opportunity where the Research Questions are decided upon by the participants and are fluctuating across the life of the project. The pilot programme saw 8 participants with the new iteration having 18. We

intend to continue rolling 6 week programmes for the 2021/22 academic year. The only pre-requisite is a commitment to progressing written work. As part of the process the participants are asked to state at the beginning of each session their intention and, at the end of two hours, to reflect.

Using this purposive sample, this research will analyse these intention and reflections to identify any themes that may emerge that will help to formalise better practice and share with the wider higher education community. The format is explained each week to the participants. Follow up interviews after thematic analysis of the secondary data has been carried out are planned. Data analysis will be conducted by PIs however validation of data will be carried out by sharing the analysis with participants for comment challenge and validation.

Poster References:

AITCHISON, C. & GUERIN, C. (2014). Writing groups, pedagogy, theory and practice. *Writing groups for doctoral education and beyond*, 27-54.

MAHER, D., SEATON, L., MCMULLEN, C., FITZGERALD, T., OTSUJI, E. & LEE, A. (2008). 'Becoming and being writers': The experiences of doctoral students in writing groups. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 30, 263-275.

O'DWYER, S., MCDONOUGH, S., JEFFERSON, R., GOFF, J. AND REDMAN-MACLAREN, M. (2016) 'Writing Groups in the Digital Age: A Case Study Analysis of Shut Up & Write Tuesdays', in Esposito, A. (ed.) *Research 2.0 and the Impact of Digital Technologies on Scholarly Inquiry (Advances in Knowledge Acquisition, Transfer, and Management)*, pp. 249–269. Available at: <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/writing-groups-in-the-digital-age/167447>.

OLSZEWSKA, K. AND LOCK, J. (2016) 'Examining Success and Sustainability of Academic Writing: A Case Study of Two Writing-Group Models', *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 46(4), pp. 132–145.

WELLER, M. (2011). *The digital scholar: How technology is transforming academic practice*, A&C Black.