

ACADEMIC WRITING RETREAT 'BOOTCAMP' -
THURSDAY 14 AND FRIDAY 15 MARCH 2019,
COLLATED FEEDBACK WITH RESPONSES FROM ORGANISATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
FACILITATOR: SANDY SPARKS

1. What did you find useful and how will you implement your learning?

- Time and space
Create more of this in day to day.
- I find it very useful to be in an environment with other academic writers: during breaks people bring up their own work and I feel that I'm less alone in the struggle for academic writing.
- Having the chance to think about my writing, plan it and actually did it was invaluable. After a very busy term, full of teaching and admin duties, having the opportunity to get back to my research made me feel refreshed, happier, more productive and ready to continue my writing over the spring break. Thank you for providing us with this protected space!
- Protected time
atmosphere - quiet and busy
- I really appreciated the 'official' time out to progress my own research and writing. I managed to start a paper I have had on my desk for two years, and complete revisions for another journal submission.
- I really took advantage in a productive way of this protected time.
- I found having the specific time and space dedicated to writing away from my usual office space incredibly useful for focussing. It was useful that we were asked to identify a goal before we came - gave time to focus.
- Good to have a dedicated space and a concentrated time to devote to this. Helped me take a step back and look at the paper overall.
- Having the time and space to think, be creative and focus on projects that I otherwise won't be able to do.
- The group setting works well. The fact that all of us are in one room. The longer desks is an absolute plus! It gives you 'your' space. The fact that you can focus on one thing and do not have to bother about simple stuff like packing food. I will ask the IAS for once a month or 1½ days writing session where they provide a room and refreshments.
- Having the space to write and think. I was able to make progress on a chapter I have been putting off writing for a long time and to implement new research which has given me new enthusiasm for my project.
- The setting away from the main hustle and bustle of campus life was very useful and gave me the mental space to focus properly on my writing. In order to implement lessons learnt here about my specific writing needs when it comes to settings, I will seek quiet spaces with people that deter procrastination.
- Being able to block out a period of time for my own writing and to feel OK to tell people that I am busy on those days and not available for other work eg: meetings. I will try to be more ruthless about setting time aside for writing from now on.

2. What else do you feel should have been included?

- As it is, it's perfect. I wish one happened more often.
- More structure. I was next to two people with mobiles on and going off - very distracting.
- Access to printing equipment would be useful
[Organisational Development Response:](#)
[Printers are available in Argent Court using your staff access card.](#)

- I think being given relaxed space, outside of central campus, where we could focus only and independently on our writing was great and worked very well for me. I was wondering whether adding a non-compulsory 1 hour session for debriefing, sharing writing practice and tips for productivity could be useful.
[Organisational Development Response:](#)
[Great suggestion](#)
- May have benefitted from 'How did you get on at end of the day' - but no big deal.
[Organisational Development Response:](#)
[Great suggestion](#)
- General writing tips would be useful eg: how to reduce words/sticking to journal word limits etc, but this may be covered in other writing courses.
[Organisational Development Response:](#)
[Will include this in Academic Writing workshops and add to the AW Resource Bank page](#)
- A little more guidance about writing/writing tips at the start (especially POWER - writing strategy) would possibly been useful - maybe a guidance sheet.
[Organisational Development Response:](#)
[Thanks for your good suggestion](#)
- Not sure, generally found it useful, especially the comments from Rochelle (1:1 Academic Writing specialist).
- Maybe some useful websites/links with writing tips?
[Organisational Development Response:](#)
[Good suggestion to add to Academic Writing Resource Bank page.](#)
- Nothing - this is just what I needed. The only thing I would like is for these 'bootcamps' to be more regular (eg: term 1) and perhaps post-Christmas.
- It was great as it was, and the catering was excellent to keep the brain going. I just wish there were more writing bootcamps during the year.

3. What other learning and developing opportunities / courses do you need?

- More writing days
- I wish the academic retreat 'bootcamps' were more frequent so that they were not hampered by unforeseen events (illnesses, unforeseen tasks)
- Further tips, outside bootcamp opportunities, on boosting writing productivity.
[Organisational Development Response:](#)
[Noted](#)
Further online up-to-date resources on academic writing and writing productivity.
[Organisational Development Response:](#)
[Good suggestion to add to Academic Writing Resource Bank page.](#)
- Nothing specific.
- PhD supervision training
[Organisational Development Response:](#)
[Contact the Academic Development Centre \(previously Teaching and Learning Unit\) for support on PhD supervision training](#)
Grant proposal writing
[Organisational Development Response:](#)
[Contact Research and Impact Services \(R&IS\) for support on writing grant proposals](#)
- More of these bootcamps
- More writing retreats - maybe focussed to different sorts of writing (pedagogy) research (impact) etc.
- I haven't been to any of the writing workshops yet so I can't comment - but I am really keen to know.
- Maybe some specific workshops on how to structure a journal article, how to write an introduction/conclusion.
- Managing my career - I have already signed up to a related course.

- More workshops like this would be excellent. One addition may be to have a bootcamp specifically targeted at supporting book manuscripts, with an expert available for personal 'break-out' sessions.
- I would benefit from a course on how to be a more effective writer. I think I am a very slow writer, but maybe I am just like everyone else but believe I am not as good...

Noted: Requested to increase the number of writing retreat/bootcamp days, I will propose up to four for 2019/20)

4 Additional Comments

- Brilliant to have space to prioritise writing.
- This writing retreat helped me take time to make final corrections on a fellowship application and incorporate co-author comments into a research article that I would like to submit soon.
- I think that all research and teaching staff should be strongly encouraged by their own department to attend these 'retreats' which should happen more often, at least once a term and I would say twice a term at the very least and on Monday/Tuesday of week 11, so people can choose. It can also be just one day of protected time, and to keep the cost down it can be 'bring your own food'. What really worked for me was that I knew nobody, so had no distractions and the competition was more healthy than within a department, where people can feel judged. That's why I'd suggest departments should encourage people to attend, but these events should be organised by LDC (now called Organisational Development).
- Really valuable
- Really useful two days - it was valuable for meeting others in the University too and sharing research plans and identifying/sharing common problems in academic writing. Very motivating.
- Very helpful discussion with Sandy!
- Fantastic!. This has been a brilliant experience which has really helped me move forward with my research and writing - thanks Sandy!
- Could be have fruit instead/as well as pastries when the teas/coffees arrive.
[Organisational Development Response: Good suggestion – will ask for LDC/OD order to include fruit and pastries](#)
- Thank-you! This has been really helpful.
- Thank you
- This 'bootcamp' and others I have attended in the past have been really important to my publication portfolio - I hope they continue.
- It was great that the start of the workshop was early (8.30) and the finish late (5.30pm) but with enough flexibility to accommodate caring responsibilities, etc.
- It was also very motivating to be in a space with other people who were also writing. I enjoyed having breaks and being able to socialise in-between writing blocks. The refreshments and food were very nice. I also really liked the venue – it had lovely toilets, a rare find on campus.

Post Event

- 'I submitted the article on Monday (18/3/19)'
- 'I enjoy a lot this course. It made me think more at my values and my objectives and try to clarify them. I have experienced the benefit of planning, gathering information for my next steps in my career. The most useful so far!'

Angelo Gallo, PDRA (FA6), Department of Chemistry

- 'I'd like to add that I found the bootcamp incredibly useful. I cannot believe that two days of work in this setting enabled me to finish an article I first presented at an international conference in spring 2013. Once proof-read, I submitted it last Monday. I still cannot get over it, and I cannot wait for the next bootcamp'.
- Alexandra Homolar, Associate Professor, Politics and International Politics**