

# ACADEMIC WRITING RETREAT 'BOOTCAMP'

4 AND 5 JULY 2019

## EVALUATION FEEDBACK WITH RESPONSES FROM ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FACILITATOR: SANDY SPARKS

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

- The space to devote to writing and opportunity to pick up a project I would otherwise have ignored, since it has no fixed deadline for submission. This writing retreat has given me a renewed focus on my writing, which is easy to put off when the wider research informing the chapter feels overwhelming and never-ending. I regularly attend these writing retreats and think they are the most useful type of course/training activity I have ever attended.
- Protected / managed space for concentration
- Will attempt to create such spaces for self
- This is the second year I have been at the bootcamp, and really enjoy it. It's so good to have a quiet space where support is available, dedicated to research. Sometimes when on campus you almost feel guilty working on your research between admin and student needs, and this is a great space to really allow yourself to fully focus on writing.
- In addition to having two full days of uninterrupted writing time in an excellent environment for this undertaking, the general advice on how to tackle distractions and how to create space for writing during the busy periods of the academic year was excellent.
- The exclusive focus on writing in a safe environment with no distractions, which also had a time limit set by others, helped me focus even more on what I wanted to do, and achieve more than I expected. It was helpful to have colleagues around having the same goal as me, and both the mutual silent respect and their presence were motivational. It made me feel that we are in this together, but most importantly that we will all face the same challenges and our reactions to them are often similar.
- I liked the 'feel' of the space and the 'hands off' approach, whilst being inspired by the productiveness of others was helpful. Having a clear desk to work on is something I definitely need to implement in my study at home (especially as I will have to leave my Uni office at the end of the summer).
- Having access to coffee and food was also helpful!
- I think it is an excellent idea to offer a "neutral space" (that is, silent and away from office distractions) where people who share similar goals get together "to get their writing done". While each one of us was working on a different project, the fact that everyone had a clear task to perform within a clear deadline really helped to maintain a healthy environment where we could focus on our work.
- The time and task management tips were very useful, and helped me stay focused for longer than what I thought I was capable of. The informal assessment in the beginning of the second day was also useful. It forced me to reflect on what I had accomplished, and I realized I did not do that bad on the first day after all...
- I understood the importance of taking real pauses and to be aware of how much time I needed to complete specific sections or tasks. That will certainly help me defining feasible work plans in the future.

- I found the workshop really useful for giving me the space to sit down and concentrate on an article that I wasn't especially looking forward to writing, but that is important for expanding my profile as a pedagogic researcher. I now have an almost complete first draft of the 8,000 word article! The 'check in' at the beginning of the day is good for focus.
- I attend the Writing Retreat every time I have the chance to and I am always surprised by how productive two days can be. The main learning point that I take away is therefore to have two consecutive, well-focused days to complete big pieces of writing. This is something that, for as simple as it sounds, in my experience is difficult to embed in normal working routines. In this case, the time of the entire workshop was dedicated to revising comments to a paper and re-reading the draft two times once completed. Now this paper is ready to submit.
- Protected time, chats with people at lunch and in breaks

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

- I can't think of anything – I continue to view these as perfect for my academic needs.
- Nothing
- Nothing, for me this is ideal setting.
- It was great as it was. Thanks very much for this fantastic and much-needed opportunity.
- I think you had everything I needed.
- This was my first writing bootcamp, I cannot think of anything else that could have been included. I thought the format was excellent, and that the facilitator did an amazing job to encourage us to move forward with the work. It was excellent in my opinion.
- It was perfect 😊
- I really found it useful in the past to have an academic writing consultant to give advice on pieces of writing. This time such support was not available and I felt it could have been a great help.
- Not sure if we had one to one feedback planned this time around but that has been useful in the past – not something I wanted this time though

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

- More of these bootcamps please – there is a very long break between this retreat in July and the next one in March. I feel I would be more productive with my research outputs and able to stay on top of my writing projects if they were held more frequently.

[Organisational Development Response](#)

[OD/Sandy are aware of the demand for additional Retreat 'Bootcamp' and, budget permitting, it is planned to run an additional bootcamp in the Autumn term](#)

- Occasional repeats of ‘prolific writing’ workshop  
[Organisational Development Response](#)  
 OD/RAS plan to run this workshop in Term1 and Term 3 of the next academic year (2019-2020).  
 Dates are likely to be released early September – do keep an eye on the OD/RAS [website](#).
  - More academic writing bootcamps  
[Organisational Development Response](#)  
 OD/Sandy are aware of the demand for additional Retreat ‘Bootcamp’ and, budget permitting, it is planned to run an additional bootcamp in the Autumn term
  - I have been to other courses organised by LDC, and found all of the useful. The next one on my list is being a prolific writing.
  - More of these boot-camps throughout the year would be amazing. They really help to tackle long-overdue research tasks that keep being pushed away because of the more mundane administrative and teaching tasks.  
[Organisational Development Response](#)  
 OD/Sandy are aware of the demand for additional Retreat ‘Bootcamp’ and, budget permitting, it is planned to run an additional bootcamp in the Autumn term.
  - I hope to manage to recreate this academic writing retreat in my future institution, and find similar learning and development opportunities there. I tend to forget how beneficial they can be, and also that we academics also need to care for our future development.
  - The RSSP equivalent to this Writing Retreat includes motivational ideas/ brief interludes from Katie Mahoney, which I’ve always boosts my motivation (but other more experienced researchers might find this irritating)
  - Media training session, already scheduled to 30 July
  - More on one-to-one coaching/mentoring. MORE BOOTCAMPS!!!! I love them and they help me move forward my written work and safeguard my time in a way that is otherwise impossible with the other commitments I have in my job. If there was one bootcamp a month - I would be there once a month! Maybe it would be good to have a variety of bootcamp length options – 1 day etc. These should obviously be on top of the current provision though, as the 2 day is the best!  
[Organisational Development Response](#)  
 OD/Sandy are aware of the demand for additional Retreat ‘Bootcamp’ and, budget permitting, it is planned to run an additional bootcamp in the Autumn term.
- I know there have been sessions on being a “prolific writer”. I couldn’t attend that time and I hope that there will be more similar initiatives in the future.  
[Organisational Development Response](#)  
 OD/RAS plan to run this workshop in Term1 and Term 3 of the next academic year (2019-2020).  
 Dates are likely to be released early September – do keep an eye on the OD/RAS [website](#).
- I think as regards writing some really specific feedback on developing Interdisciplinarity – would benefit most from being part of a group

#### 4. Additional Comments

- I appreciated the addition of fruit to the morning selection of food!
- I succeeded in completing editing of a journal special issue and improving my own article – which I now believe will be a 4\* submission for REF 2021 (Education Unit of Assessment). I sent off the completed special issue, which had been delayed, mid-afternoon on the second day. This would not have been possible, and the quality of my own article would not have been as high, without the Bootcamp.
- I used the time to work on an article that I reviewed as part of the Raising your article quality workshop. That workshop was very useful, and I had made tons of notes for edit then, and used this to implement those changes.
- Thank you so much again.
- I was working much faster than I thought I would, and I achieved more than I had planned to do. I sent off that article I had to complete, and also prepared and send off a description of the practical side of my current research project to a director of an institute in my future institution. I believe I could not have started working on a new written piece at the retreat, but maybe structure something new for which I had done the reading already. The circumstances are ideal for completing or revising, I believe.
- Thanks for organising the Writing Retreat – only sorry I got interrupted by insect bites! I have already recommended it to other colleagues.
- I find the hardest part of writing is getting started – and then end up leaving it too close to a deadline! This really helped me get going. I am hoping to have the first draft of my article ready for my Mentor to have a look at on Monday.
- Excellent session. The fact that it took place once the exams and marking are over was also a great idea.
- I just wanted to thank the facilitators and the University, I think this is a great offer to less prolific writers. The facilitators provide a very friendly, relaxed but well-focused and supportive environment which I think contributes positively to the productivity.
- Small thing: the air conditioning was mildly distracting in terms of noise and it was either a tad too hot or for some a tad too cold, I wonder in general if there is a more writerly space away from central campus – nothing to do with the staff who were very welcoming.

