WRITEfest 2017

WriteFest: Supporting the University of Sheffield’s (TUoS) Academic Writers

Context: November is Academic Writing Month, an academic write-a-thon that happens every November. It’s hosted by PhD2Published, as an online space where the global academic community can pledge their writing projects, record progress, and share thousands of writing tips via the #AcWriMo hashtag on Twitter. WriteFest brings together people from across the university to recognise and celebrate Academic Writing Month. All academic staff, research staff, and research students were invited and encouraged to join in the write-a-thon.

This year the University of Nottingham also joined us for WriteFest!

Festival Format: The festival offers structures and events that support engagement with Academic Writing Month by providing protected time and space for writing that helps participants to:

- Create new good habits and strategies for managing academic writing;
- Take a proactive approach to overcoming writing blocks with the support of the writing community;
- Make and protect short blocks of time for writing as a normal part of the working day;
- Write socially, leaving offices and departments to meet and write with others.

Now in year three the festival comprised:

- 10 Writing Retreats
- 5 bespoke WriteFest workshops*
- 7 Think Ahead workshops
- a Scoopit curation and a Twitter campaign (#AcWriFest2017) to share writing resources
- Volume 3 of the Journal of Imaginary Research
- A sticker campaign

Links to expertise in Writing Technologies (Andy Tattersall) Choosing Music to Write to (Dr Victoria Williamson) and Creative Writing (Dr Matt Cheeseman) were strengthened.

Workshop 1 -- Beating Digital Distractions (Andy Tattersall, ScHARR)
Workshop 2 -- Writing Without Discipline (Matt Cheeseman, English)
Workshop 3&4 -- Get Your Thesis Off Your Back (Kay Guccione, Research Services)
Workshop 5 -- Supervising Doctoral Writing (David Hyatt, Education)

Headlines:

#324 PEOPLE ATTENDED
#185,105 WORDS WRITTEN

WriteFest engagement grew in 2017, and bested the 2016 festival by 65,000 words and 101 people.
**Evidence of development:**

**Writing Retreats**: 100% of respondents would recommend a retreat to others.

**What did you gain from attending the retreat (selected):**

- "I got some writing done! I also achieved my writing goals so I think the retreats are helping me get better at setting realistic goals for writing in small chunks."
- "8015 words redrafted - the whole data section of this bloody article!"
- "I got back into a writing project I've been neglecting for months."
- "Protected time to redraft three sections of a thesis chapter. Managed to restructure these and added 800 words to the word count (not including the parts that were deleted and redrafted), so really useful!"
- "I got a lot more done than I thought I would - I think I'm getting faster! I exceeded my goal for the second hour and managed to complete another section of work, with a bit of time at the end to write some notes for an upcoming presentation. Really helpful!"
- "I wrote!"
- "I managed to focus on the issues that needed solving in my writing, not carried away by checking references, revisiting articles, etc."
- "A feeling of moving the work on, plus solidarity with other PhD students."

**What will you try out or do differently as a result of attending the retreat (selected):**

- "I would try to plan first before I start writing, and I think that focusing on 2-3 hours in the morning is sufficient rather than forcing myself to stare at the computer screen the whole day."
- "I'm really struggling to carve out writing time at my desk. I'm wondering about maybe booking a meeting room or some other space for those times because I think moving to a different space is really powerful. I'll also definitely be signing up to more of these types of things."
- "I am thinking if we can instigate something like this for staff and PhD students at the department level."
- "I may encourage the practice internally with my staff."
- "Continue to carve out time in my week for focused writing where possible."
- "Setting 1 hour timers, and not feeling guilty about taking a 30-min break after an intense bit of work. 30 mins is about right to feel refreshed and want to get back to it."
- "Productive writing needs preparation -- plan a few hours beforehand to gather some material."
- "Go to more writing retreats!!! I'm on a postdoc and it's so hard to make time for writing my own papers while driving forward another project. If I could go to a writing retreat every fortnight, I'd be churning out papers! I'm even thinking of finding meeting rooms to book out when there's not an organised retreat happening because writing just does not happen in my own office."

**Workshop 1 -- Beating Digital Distractions** (Andy Tattersall, ScHARR)

"I like the idea of going dark digitally (i.e. leaving the phone behind) when you know you have a task like reading papers for which you have no need to be connected to the internet! I'll be trying this at the weekend."

**Workshop 2 -- Writing Without Discipline** (Matt Cheeseman, University of Derby)

"I will try to do more free writing to 'unleash' my subconscious and to try to get words out as a way of thinking and developing ideas!"

**Workshop 3&4 -- Get Your Thesis Off Your Back** (Kay Guccione, R&IS)

"As an international student, I felt more comfortable, because I found that writing problems are not just for me but also for a native speaking students as well. Which gave me this happiness to say we are all the same."

**Workshop 5 – Supervising Doctoral Writing** (David Hyatt, Education)

"The activities were useful, around editing and thinking about the link between content and writing skills."