

Research Writing Group kit

Introduction

Welcome to the Study and Learning Centre's Research Writing Group kit, a set of guidelines and resources for use in setting up and maintaining Research Writing Groups across the University.

The kit gives advice about:

- setting up a group, including establishing guidelines for coordination and operation
- deciding on routines and activities for effective writing production
- identifying and addressing key research writing issues, from the level of genre to that of sentence structure and grammar.

The Study and Learning Centre (SLC) also facilitates some Research Writing Groups each semester. Information about these is on the SLC website.

For comment or further information please contact:

The Study and Learning Centre

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For other research-related issues, contact the School of Graduate Research.

Who is it for?

The kit can be used by:

- research candidates
- early career researchers
- supervisors.

While primarily intended for Research Writing Groups (RWG), the resources will be useful for anyone currently writing up research, whether a thesis, exegesis, research article or conference paper.

The facilitators' handbook is an indispensable resource for anyone about to take on this important role. SLC staff are available for support in setting up the groups and for ongoing facilitator support, including workshops on specific writing elements where requested.

Why join a writing group?

The literature clearly shows the high level of isolation felt by many research candidates (for instance, Ingleton & Cadman, 2002; Martin, Drage, Sillitoe & Clingin, 2006). RWGs are one particularly useful way of establishing a support community. RWGs aim to bring a sense of a learning community to the participants by bringing candidates together to discuss their research journey, particularly in relation to their research writing.

Research writing contributes to the construction of the research candidate's scholarly identity, but effective scholarly writers must understand the 'characteristic discourse, debates and assumptions about knowledge' in their discipline (Cotterall, 2011, p. 414). In this sense, it is important understand that RWGs

are not a substitute for supervisor input into candidates' writing. However, peer critique in RWGs has been shown not only to enhance research candidates' conceptual knowledge but also their ability to communicate this through their writing (Aitchison, 2010).

The many specific benefits of setting up a RWG include the following:

1. The group gets to know what your research is about and is able to comment on it.
2. Receiving and acting on regular writing feedback keeps you focused.
3. Giving regular feedback improves your own writing skills.
4. Sharing information can make the research process more efficient and enjoyable.
5. Together you'll learn a metalanguage – a way to talk about research writing
6. By explaining your writing to others, you'll discover what you really want to say and the way to express it.
7. You'll develop greater confidence and resilience to show your writing and ideas to others
8. The group can support you through difficult times when the study-work-home balance feels unstable.
9. You'll further develop peer mentoring skills that are transferrable to teaching and coaching roles.
10. The group can call on expert advice, which will be more forthcoming for a group over an individual.

What's in the kit?

The RWG kit includes information and resources for setting up and maintaining a RWG and a facilitator's handbook. Check other sections of the postgraduate area of Learning Lab for more resources that you can use in RWGs.

The SLC maintains and updates the kit based on your input and feedback, and can provide:

- mini workshops and tutorials on specified topics related to research writing
- information about other services or experts as relevant.

The RWG kit contains the following:

- Starting a group
- Feedback on writing
- Approaches and activities
- Handbook for facilitators
- Further resources.

References:

- Aitchison, C. (2010). Learning together to publish: Writing group pedagogies for doctoral publishing. In *Publishing pedagogies for the doctorate and beyond*. (C. Aitchison, B. Kamler, & A. Lee, Eds.). New York: Routledge, pp. 83-100.
- Cotterall, S. (2011). Doctoral students writing: Where's the pedagogy? *Teaching in Higher Education*, 16.4, pp. 413-425.
- Ingleton, C. & Cadman, K. (2002). Silent issues for international postgraduate research students: Emotion and agency in academic success. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 29.1, pp. 93-113.
- Martin, E., Drage, N., Sillitoe, J. & Clingin, D. (2006). Knowledge creation and research training: Meeting the academic development needs of postgraduate students and their supervisors in small and new universities. In *Knowledge creation in testing times: Refereed proceedings of the Quality in Postgraduate Research conference* (M. Kiley & G. Mullins, Eds.). Retrieved from: <http://ogpr.educ.ubc.ca/Doctoral%20ed/Documents/QPR%20%282006%29.pdf>