

Research writing groups

What are they?

Will it suit me?

What will I learn?

How does it work?



What are research writing groups?

In a writing group, people engaged in research (candidates and academics) meet regularly to:

- discuss their work
- give and receive feedback on each other's writing (*conceptual and structural*)
- support and motivate each other.



Will a research writing group suit me?

- ☑ Can you commit to the group? (attendance, trust, care)
- ☑ Are you able to write regularly and contribute text?
- ☑ Are you willing to give and receive feedback?
- ☑ Are you interested in and willing to support the work of others?
- ☑ How independent are you? Do you have a clear sense of purpose?



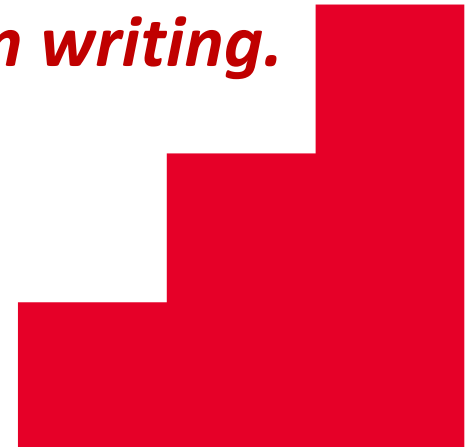
What we learn in research writing groups:

Research writing is about

- content
- form
- identity and authority as a researcher and writer (Kamler & Thomson, 2006):
“the hands-on-hips stance”



Every person's work gives us ideas for our own writing.



What we do in writing groups:

Discuss and get feedback on:

- macro-level organisation of text: chapters, etc.
- middle level organisation: heading hierarchies, nesting of concepts
- paragraph level organisation
- your research design
- accessibility of graphics and data presentation
- managing the overall text and workload
- maintaining motivation
- tools for organising writing and data.



What research groups *don't* do:

- 'fix' sentence-level grammar (unless negotiated)
- edit whole theses, exegeses or research articles
- solve all research problems
- act as a counselling group (unless negotiated)
- give you intensive one-to-one time.



Meetings and group composition

How often?

- weekly, fortnightly, monthly?
- irregularly by need?

Where and when?

- room booking required?
- library? internet access?

Membership?

- stable or changing? new people?
- how many is enough?
- what kind of commitment is expected?



Facilitator/leader



Image source: Microsoft Images

- One person?
- How will you nominate them?
- Should the role be rotational?

Facilitator role:

- email reminders?
- establish a 'roster'?
- distribute the text?
- facilitate the session?
- create/coordinate a blog or wiki?
- other roles?



Communication

- email?
- Blackboard?
- Wiki or blog?
- SMS?
- Facebook?
- one person as central facilitator?
- contact as necessary?
- open forum?



Image source: Microsoft Images



The writing

What kind of writing?

- Thesis or exegesis sections only?
- Presentations?
- Papers for publication?
- Graphics, images, data representations, etc?
- Conceptual ideas? Other?

How much text per session?

Recommend 2 participants provide:

- 2-3 pages each to examine writing-content relationship
- More for feedback on broad organisation.

Other writing activities?

The ***Approaches and activities*** section of the RWG kit has many writing activities for use in group sessions.



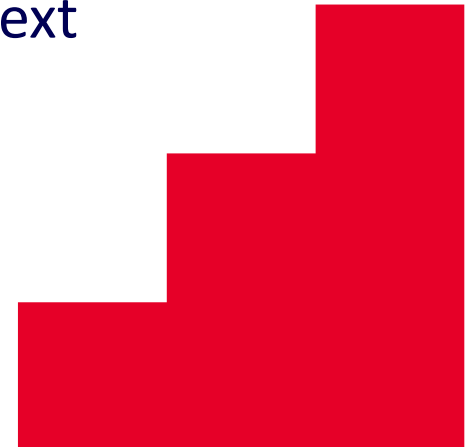
Image source: Pixabay



Sharing the writing

How will you share the writing?

- Will you distribute text extracts in advance?
- How many days' notice should you give?
- Will you make copies for the next session?
- What do you do if you're not ready to submit the text as promised?



Receiving feedback:

How would you like to receive feedback?

- Verbally only?
- Your text copy returned with written comments?
- Both?

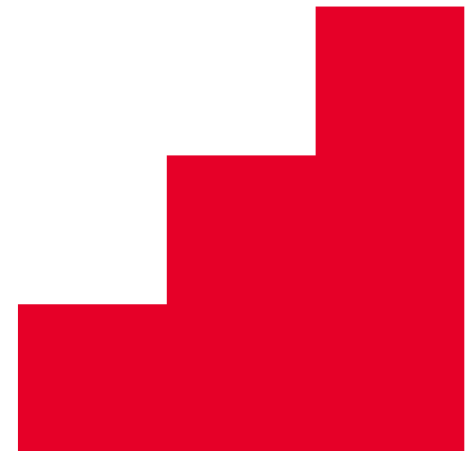


Image source: Microsoft Images



Summary of housekeeping list:

- Is your facilitator 'for life', rotating or on secondment (semester/year)?
- When and where will you meet?
- Who can attend the group?
- How will you communicate and share resources?
- How much writing will you look at?
- What sort of writing will you look at?
- How and when will you disseminate it?
- What sort of feedback do you want to get?
- How will you give the feedback?
- Where will you go for additional support?



Where to go for support

- **Find the experts**

Supervisors who share their doctoral experience

Researcher with strong publication experience

Research software/stats experts

- **School of Graduate Research**

PhD Up workshops and other activities

Thesis Whisperer blog

HDR policy and procedures



Support from the SLC

