

# ACADEMIC WRITING: RETREAT 'BOOTCAMP'

DATE: 2 AND 3 JULY 2020

COLLATED FEEDBACK

FACILITATOR: DAVINA WHITNALL

## 1 What were your expectations for this webinar, and to what extent do you believe the webinar has enabled you to meet these?

- I wanted to gain an understanding of how papers are evaluated by journal editors and I have been given a clear understanding.
- This was a two-day webinar to get me back into writing (opening up projects that have been on hold due to everyday business). The way the event was structured this time (with 'Sprints') combined with tips on writing from Davina was excellent and very well-suited to the online environment.
- I had really enjoyed and benefited greatly from attending bootcamps in-person in the past. I was sceptical as to whether the webinar experience would be as enjoyable and beneficial. I expected that this bootcamp would help me to structure my writing time and that I would get a lot of writing done. My honest feedback is that the online bootcamp did not work as well as it does in person. This is, of course, understandable. While I did not get as much writing done as I usually would have, at the very least, the online bootcamp did prompt me to start taking my writing seriously again and provided some structured time to do that.
- Good practice for academic writing. Useful advice from Davina and also others on the bootcamp.
- I was expecting structured support with writing and the opportunity and space to block out time to work on writing projects.

## 2. How will attending this webinar benefit your work?

- It will help me focus on the 4 key elements that ought to be in an academic paper.
- I have got two overdue writing projects back on track - one of them for a potentially REFable article.
- Made me take my writing seriously (which I have not been of late in the light of lockdown) was beneficial. It was also useful to be reminded of tips and tricks of the trade. I also liked the check-ins as this had the double effect of not feeling so bad when things didn't go to plan but also motivating me when I heard about how productive people had been and how they troubleshooted issues as they arose. The one-to-one sessions with Davina were also very helpful in terms of adding more tools to my writing toolkit.
- Increase productivity for academic writing activities and hopefully quality of work produced. Will help to plan academic writing within a heavy teaching schedule.
- It has enabled me to progress with a peer-reviewed journal article, which I am intending to submit to a 4\* journal in the next few weeks.

## 3. Did you experience any technical problems accessing or participating in this webinar, if, so please provide details?

- Voice was not very clear and there was background noise.
- No.
- At times the webinar facilitator was difficult to understand and hear due to poor internet connection.
- No significant problems.
- No I had no problems. The only problem was the facilitator's internet connection, but obviously this was something that couldn't be helped.

## 4. What changes would you make to improve this webinar for future participants?

- Possibly reduce amount of different tips, confining to basic goal-setting and sprint timing - but it is possible to tune out if information overload so this wasn't an issue.
- Ideally, it would have been better if the connection speed of the webinar facilitator was faster and/or the connection was stronger as this did affect my ability to listen and absorb what was being said.

As far as the content goes, I think the first day involved a bit too much back and forth. I know that short sprints were the aim but I found it difficult to go away and be productive and log back in again so soon. I lost momentum with the activities as well. In person, this sort of thing works well but for me it just didn't have the same effectiveness online. The second day for me was better as there were longer intervals for writing. Perhaps a happy medium between the two days can be achieved going forward. Maybe start Day 1 with goal setting, tips and tricks and just one activity. Then from lunchtime onwards dedicate that to writing sprints or longer stretches with a check-in at the end of the day/goal setting for Day 2. Day 2 could then start with a check-in/accountability/goal setting discussion and then the rest of the day could be dedicated to longer intervals of writing. Just a thought. Finally, I don't think the peer-review activity works in an online setting. Admittedly, I didn't partake in it but my reason for not doing so was because it was eating into what I had designated as dedicated writing time.

- Face to face and opportunity to network during breaks is useful but under the current circumstances this was a good solution.
- I've attended this sort of course 'in person' in the past and have always immensely benefitted from the dedicated writing time and have accessed the support, as and when I need it. I understand that greater structure is needed for a virtual event and it was good that a flexible approach could be offered and that there was variety between Days 1 and 2. I am quite an experienced writer, but there were others in the group who needed more support, and I found that it was a little bit interrupting for me to discuss writing approaches and techniques when I just wanted to get on with my own project and work at my own pace. That said, I found having the time blocked out for this workshop immensely beneficial and I thought Davina coped with the transition to the online format and the challenges that this brought (especially managing a very diverse group) very well.

	Extremely Satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Extremely Unsatisfied
How satisfied are you with the way the webinar was facilitated	4 Participants	1 Participants		
How useful did you find the Pre-work/learning aids that we sent you to support the webinar	4 Participant	2 Participants		
Overall how satisfied are you with the training	4 Participants	1 Participant		

## 5. Further comments

- Davina is an excellent, very approachable and knowledgeable facilitator - I hope it will be possible for her to facilitate more workshops (and writing retreats) in future.
- If I hadn't had such great in-person experiences and outputs in the past, perhaps I would have been more satisfied with the online experience - it was hard not to compare them. While the online experience cannot compete with the physical, atmospheric conditions that contributed to my productivity in past bootcamps, perhaps there is room to try and emulate these conditions online. Watching other people working was always very motivating as it stopped me from



procrastinating. I also find it harder to get into my "zone" at home which is why slightly longer "sprints" would have worked better for me. In-person, sprints are easier everyone just stops immediately and turns around.

- Very useful - thanks for organising.
- Please keep these 'bootcamps' going - they are a real highlight of the academic year for me and I find them incredibly helpful and useful for giving me the space and opportunity to start new writing projects and complete others. Davina is also incredibly supportive and knowledgeable and I really enjoy working with her.