Supporting Academics To Write For Publication: A Holistic Approach

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Abstract

Dissemination of knowledge from research-active academics has always been relevant in the academic landscape. However, with an increased focus on measurement of writing output, not only for individual promotion but institutional excellence, the pressure on academics to publish with the highest impact is greater than ever. The literature recommends that universities support the development of structured interventions to support academic writing, but also that a more holistic approach to academic writing support be adopted. This paper evaluates the Writing for Academic Publication Programmes offered by a research-led university which promoted exploration of the personal and emotional as well as the technical and intellectual aspects of writing. The paper also explores the types of writing support academics stated they wanted, such as being part of an active community of academic writers, being supported in overcoming the emotional barriers to their writing, and being shown learning strategies to help prioritise and manage their own writing more effectively.

Keywords: writing for publiation, academic writing, holistic, community, support, prioritising writing, emotion, time.

Introduction

The importance of disseminating knowledge emanating from scholarly, scientific and ethical philosophies has always been relevant in the academic environment (McGrail et al, 2006) and the expectation on academics to be research active, long established. It has been argued that research only becomes 'a work' in the academic world when disseminated in the form of a published paper (Ramsden,1994) and indeed, the scholarly peer-reviewed journal article still maintains a central position as a key indicator of academic worth and identity (Lee and Boud, 2003). However, the need for academics to evidence research activity in peer-reviewed journals with high impact factors is now so established that it is 'difficult to challenge this expectation on any level' (Murray and Cunningham, 2011, p.832). Academics are well aware of the relationship that exists between research publication and the reward system of the institution (Braxton, Luckey and Holland, 2002, Cargile and Bublitz, 1986 quoted in Hardre and Cox, 2009), but with the increasing commercialisation of the institution and its focus on measurement, not only for individual promotion but institutional excellence, the pressure on academics to publish with high impact is greater than ever. As Anoniou and Moriarty note (2008),'not writing is rarely an option' (p.158).

But what then of those who find it difficult to write for publication, especially in the current pressurised environment? MacLeod, Steckley and Murray (2012) argue that it is imperative we support these academics: 'In the current competitive publishing culture it would be unethical not to address this problem, given the serious consequences for academic careers of failing to publish. (p.642). The literature recommends that universities support the development of structured interventions for staff in order to increase their writing for publication (Lee and Boud, 2003, M.R.McGrail et al, 2006, Rickard, McGrail, Jones, O'Meara, Robinson, Burley and Ray-Barruel, 2009, Murray and Moore, 2006, Murray and Newton, 2008, Murray and Cunningham, 2011, Murray, 2012). McGrail et al argue, that 'a regular, ongoing arrangement seems to be most beneficial, with a format that can be adapted to meet the needs of the attendees' (p.34).

Murray and Newton (2008) suggest mainstreaming writing interventions as strategies for sustaining productive writing, and Murray and Cunningham (2011) advocate for writing interventions that support researchers who are at different phases in their development, arguing for 'for small-scale, targeted investment in self-selecting staff' (p.842). Recently, Murray has contended that academic writing support should form part of an institution's or unit's research strategy (2012).

Evaluations of formal support strategies have also been well documented in the literature, especially in terms of increased writing output, and have concurred on the benefits of writing interventions – increased productivity and writing output (Lee and Boud, 2003, Murray, 2001, Baldwin and Chandler, 2002, Murray and Newton, 2008), faculty esteem (Baldwin and Chandler, 2002), and through increased publication, increased perceptions of institutional excellence (Ramsden, 1994, Baldwin and Chandler, 2002, Teijlingen and Hundley, 2002). There have been a number of strategies and approaches evaluated. For example, Lee and Boud (2003) examined a writing group over three years and discussed the fear and anxieties experienced by academics generated by scholarly writing. They posited the writing group as a way of demystifying the writing process where skills and writing practices could be developed in a supportive peer environment. Murray, Thow, Moore and Murphy (2008) examined the writing consultation process as a means to prioritise and improve academic writing output, and Murray and Newton (2008) assessed a Writing for Publication course for allied health professionals from the point of view of skills and strategies developed and sustained. Interestingly, whilst an increase in publication output was a definite goal, the authors noted that participants 'also identified the need for ongoing support' (p.29). The outcomes of this study were therefore presented both in quantitative outcome measures (publication rates) and qualitative outcome measures (changing writing practices and attitudes to writing). However, a limitation of the study identified by the authors was the small number of participants. In the Australian context, McGrail et al (2006) reviewed the effectiveness of writing interventions used to increase publication rates. They noted that academic publication outputs were repeatedly found to be low, despite compelling personal and professional reasons to publish. They cited

many barriers to writing and examined the effects of various writing strategies on publication quality, writing knowledge and skills, and psychosocial outcomes. Aside from an increase in knowledge and skills, they noted that 'support, encouragement and motivation are key benefits of writing interventions' (McGrail et al, 2006, p.30).

What these studies have in common is an acknowledgement of the multi-faceted nature of writing for publication. What we see when we read a published paper is the polished, refined, final product, what we don't see is the complex, iterative, troublesome and often emotional process that leads to this product. And even when the research seeks to quantify increased publication output, the qualitative data strongly suggests that this output cannot easily be disentangled from the emotions so strongly associated with its process of publishing scholarly writing. The literature has shown the anxiety and fear that impedes writing (Cameron, Nairn and Higgins, 2009, MacLeod, Steckley and Murray, 2012) and highlighted the depth of isolation that struggles with writing can provoke. Murray and Moore (2006) go as far as saying that 'writing often leads people into a zone that can be psychologically dangerous' (p.8) and note the importance of 'incorporating emotional awareness into the process' (p.11). The literature has concurred that the academic's sense of self as a writer needs to be supported in an environment where vulnerability and other psychosocial issues can be voiced (Antoniou and Moriarty, 2008, Cameron et al, 2009, Grant, 2006, Lee and Boud, 2003, MacLeod et al, 2012), and where the personal aspects of writing can be addressed as well as the technical and intellectual ones (Murray and Moore, 2006, Antoniou and Moriarty, 2008, MacLeod et al, 2012). It has also leaned towards a more holistic approach to writing interventions. For example, McGrail et al found that while there 'did not appear to be any trend in one type of intervention being more or less effective than the others' (p.25), all of the successes had at least one, and possibly all three, of the elements of support, encouragement and motivation. Murray and Moore presented a variety of approaches in their handbook to help the academic become 'productive' and 'effective', with 'healthier, more positive approaches' (2006, preface). And more recently Murray and Cunningham (2011) noted that 'researcher development requires nurturing, and since institutions stand to benefit from researchers' outputs, it makes

sense to provide this nurturing in a range of mechanisms' (p.844). There are also places where the literature has also explicitly recommended adopting a more holistic approach to academic writing support. For example, Cameron et al's (2009) interesting contribution viewed academic writing as a composite of three interrelated elements: 'the emotions of writing, a sense of self as a writer and writing knowhow' (p.271). The authors then discussed strategies to 'help remedy' the situation. However, with a focus on graduate students and early career academics, and based solely on feedback from two initial standalone workshops, there are limitations to this study and to the authors' aspirations of finding a 'remedy' to the challenges of academic writing.

Antoniou and Moriarty (2008) also took a holistic view of writing and the writer and bemoaned the technical focus of writing interventions, arguing that although some of the previous literature had acknowledged the personal and emotional aspects of writing, it had tended to separate the personal and the professional: 'Little attention has been paid to the more holistic aspects, such as the lecturer-writer's sense of self and identity, their emotional orientation to their writing and their creative process' (p.158). While the paper's focus on what academic writers can learn from creative writing is a novel one, it is restrictive, as is the fact that the academic writing reflections are based on the co-ordination of a standalone 'writing and publishing day' for new academic staff. Recently, MacLeod et al. (2012) have argued for a deeper explanation of the environmental aspects that impede writing productivity, including organisational dynamics. Their fresh approach uses Ruch's model of 'holistic containment' (emotional containment, organisational containment and epistemological containment) as a framework for the organisation to understand and promote the multifaceted dimensions of containment, thus providing a systematic approach to 'understanding the interdependence of the individual and the collective context in providing work environments that are containing' (p.645). The study is restricted to a writing retreat, but the authors conclude:

it appears that, for many respondents, the experience of holistic containment at the retreat enabled the development of self-containment outside the retreat. Most respondents commented on this process being gradual, with modest claims of change. This highlights the importance of conceptualising containment as dynamic. (p.651)

While the authors reason that this highlights the limitations of 'purely technical-rational' (p.651) approach to writing support, it could perhaps also point to a need for a diversity of interventions to be offered by the institution, ones that are ongoing, progressive, and capable of adaptation by the writers at various stages of their development.

The Macmillan English Dictionary defines 'holistic' as *'thinking about the whole of something, not just dealing with particular aspects'. The approach to Trinity College's Writing for Academic Publication, which I wish to explore in this paper, is* holistic in that it is concerned with connections in the human experience of writing, and tries to include all aspects that affect writing. The writers' final publication is far more complex than can be quantified by output, number of words, citations or impact factors. But we never see the *process* in the final published product of works we read – the multiple drafts, deliberations, emotions, fears, disappointments, moments of clarity, the highs and the lows – which are the very real and common experiences of this journey remain hidden. As facilitator of the writing interventions, it was always my expressed intention to provide an appropriate space and protected time to write in a safe, collegial and congenial environment where the emotional, intellectual and environmental challenges of writing for publication could be simultaneously addressed. From this perspective, our WfAP programmes seek to discover, voice, and integrate the multiple layers of writerly experience associated with writing for publication, and to see if the sharing this more holistic approach can demystify writing for publication and benefit academic writers.

This paper thus adds to the literature by reporting on an evaluation of two Writing for Academic Publication programmes conducted in 2010-11 and 2012 that sought to support academics in their writing for publication through taking a holistic approach to academic writing. While there

are many studies of academic writing interventions in the literature, they have been less explored in the context of the types of support academic staff say they need. This study formed part of a longitudinal evaluation of our other writing interventions (structured two day retreats) which sought to assess the current offerings and ascertain what writing supports academics felt they needed.

The Writing for Academic Publication Programme (WfAP)

Since 2006 Centre for Academic Practice and eLearning in Trinity College Dublin has offered a number of writing interventions to support its academic staff including workshops, the establishment of writing groups, writing retreats, and writing for publication groups in learning and teaching. The writing interventions target male and female, and a range of participants in terms of seniority and discipline. All writing interventions are self selecting, always oversubscribed and uniformly well received, with evaluations regularly requesting more prolonged or more regular interventions. As a result of these requests, the first 'Writing for Academic Publication Programme' (WfAP) was set up in 2010, and the second a year later.

The two Writing for Academic Publication Programmes evaluated in this paper ran for a six month and a four month period respectively. The WfAP programme was largely based on the model advocated by Morss and Murray (2001) and Murray and Moore (2006), although certain changes were made to reflect the context of Trinity College Dublin. Like Murray and Moore (2006), the rationale was to support academics throughout the writing for publication process, to encourage participants to adopt new writing behaviours, to develop writing strategies for publication, and to offer some protected time and space to write. The WfAPs were advertised as multi-discipline programmes that sought to encourage academic writers of all levels of experience in publication to become part of an active writing community. Participants had to have specific writing projects to work on for the duration. However, whereas Murray and Moore (2006) suggested monthly meetings, our programme ran the three hour sessions twice a month for six months and four months respectively. For each programme, sessions comprised of

focused discussion and writing activities on a specific theme (1 hour) and individual writing time (2 hours). The room was also available for some hours after the session for those who wished to continue writing. Both programmes ended with a one-day writing retreat for attendees. The first programme had 18 academics and ran for a total of 35 hours (9 x 3 hour sessions and an 8 hour writing retreat). The second programme had 9 academics and ran for a total of 26 hours (6 x 3 hour sessions and an 8 hour writing retreat).

Each programme followed a defined agenda, but themes could be suggested or tailored by participants. Unlike some programmes (for example Hislop, Murray and Newton, 2008), ours did not follow a linear progression. Writers were at all stages of their papers, and we did not use the programme to progress their papers step by step. The themes for each programme are set out in Figure 1, below.

Writing for Academic Publication Programme 1: Themes.

Week 1: Challenges and benefits of writing for publication/ setting writing goals

Week 2: Choosing a journal

Week 3: Writing strategies (generative writing, writing prompts, etc)

Week 4: Targeting a journal

Week 5: Analysing abstracts

Week 6: Writing abstracts

Week 7: Outlining

Week 8: Giving and receiving feedback

Week 9: Peer review

Week 10: One day writing retreat

Writing for Academic Publication Programme 2: Themes.

Week 1: Challenges and benefits of writing for publication/ setting writing goals

Week 2: Targeting a journal

Week 3: Writing an abstract

Week 4: Outlining

Week 5: Giving and receiving feedback

Week 6: Peer review

Week 7: One day writing retreat

Figure 1: Writing for Academic Publication Programme outlines

Methodology

Aims

My research had the following objectives:

(1) To establish the perceived value of our writing interventions for participants,

(2) To gauge what support academics in Trinity College Dublin want for writing for publication.

This led me to design a survey that sought to capture participants' views on our writing interventions. The introduction to the survey described its intention:

The literature recommends that Universities support the development of structured interventions for staff in order to increase their writing for publication. However, to date it has focused on evaluations in terms of output. This survey will help CAPSL evaluate the value of its current writing interventions, not just in terms of participants' output but also in terms of any emotional or psychosocial benefits gained by participants. We also hope to gauge from it what support for writing for publication academics want.

Written evaluation

On completion of each WfAP, participants were given an evaluation form to complete. This consisted of eight open-ended questions, covering the programme's length and the timing of sessions, the balance between writing interventions and writing time, achievement of participants' goals, benefits of the programme, what didn't work, differences made to practice, and whether the programme contributed to a shift in the participant's self as an academic writer. Seventeen completed evaluation forms were received from the first cohort and six from the second, a response rate of 79%.

See supplementary files for a copy of the evaluation form.[*]

Survey

Eight weeks after completion of the programmes participants were invited to complete an online survey, which was part of a larger survey evaluating both Trinity College's writing retreats and the WfAP. The survey comprised 3 parts, the first and third of which concerned the WfAP. The questions were designed to explore participants' experiences with a mix of open and closed questions. 6 questions gathered demographic information and writing output to date, 5 questions concerned attitudes to academic writing, 5 open-ended questions concerned barriers and supports to writing, and 4 questions evaluated the writing for academic publication experience and its impact. Of the 27 who attended the WfAP programmes, 20 completed the

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[*]   The supplementary files can be accessed from the reading tool in the online version of the paper. Alternatively, they can be found at http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/rt/suppFiles/103/0

survey, a response rate of 74%.

The response rates of 79% for the evaluation forms and 74% for the survey is a remarkably stable proportion, and the author was thus confident that the survey reflected an accurate representative of the sample. See Supplementary files for a copy of the survey.[**]

Data analysis

In analysing the online survey data I chose a 'thematic analysis' method. In the design of the survey and the evaluation forms, broad categories were chosen initially and some of these are reflected in the findings section. Previous evaluations written by participants following the retreats usually focused on the value of having time and space to write, and the usefulness of techniques and strategies used to frame the retreat. But they also invariably commented on the value of openly discussing the challenges of writing for publication with academics from different disciplines, and often made special note of the safe, pleasant and supportive atmosphere of the retreats which they indicated as being conducive to their writing productivity. I was thus interested in ascertaining what supports academics were receiving or lacking, and what supports they wanted, and in exploring the perceived value of the writing interventions, including any emotional or psychosocial ones. The broad categories I chose when designing the survey reflected this interest: (1) Attitudes to academic writing (2) Perceived barriers to writing, (3) Support for writing required/received/lacking, (4) Sense of self as an academic writer, (5) Perceived value of WfAP programme.

In order to identify emerging themes and establish patterns from the descriptive data contained in the survey and evaluation forms, I used thematic analysis which, according to Namey, Guest, Thairu and Johnson (2007), 'moves beyond counting explicit words and phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas' (, (p.138). I thus considered this an appropriate tool for analysing the responses from the evaluations and the survey as it highlighted themes within the broad categories already established. In analysing the surveys and written evaluations, I combined a data-driven approach (looking for key-words,

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trends and themes in the data to help outline the analysis) with a theory-driven approach as the evaluations and survey had pre-determined categories I wanted to assess. This allowed me to focus my attention on the rich, descriptive detail of the qualitative data, whilst giving me boundaries in which to work. Initially, I compared the data received under the pre-determined categories, before conducting content analysis of words and phrases to filter the data. The key words, trends and themes that emerged included the following:

(1) Category: Perceived barriers to writing

Key words and trends: time management, protected time, space constraints, administration overload, motivation

(2) Category: Support for writing required/received/lacking

Key words and trends: time, space, encouragement, support from others, community, isolation

(3) Category: Sense of self as an academic writer:

Key words and trends: self-confidence, encouragement, skills, empowerment

(4) Perceived value of WfAP programme

Key words and trends: engagement, strategies, time, encouragement, support from others, goals, output, prioritisation, motivation, confidence, safe

Patterns were also observed at this stage and listed before being coded to form trends (for example, lack of time and space were indicated, equally often, as being both a personal barrier and an institutional barrier. And the multi-disciplinary and collective approach of the programme was often explicitly linked to a growth in confidence). Trends were then collated in an attempt to form a representation of the participants' collective experience of the writing interventions. Information collected from WfAP workshops was also included where relevant.

As certain themes have already been explored in the literature on academic writing, in this paper I wish to discuss the three following themes drawn from this analysis of the surveys and the evaluations: (i) prioritising writing, (ii) becoming part of a writing community, (iii) addressing the emotional aspects of writing for publication.

The next section of this paper will present and discuss the findings. Each respondent has been numbered and coded as to whether their response formed part of the online survey (S) or programme evaluation (E). I have also indicated respondents' current position at the time the research was conducted the research by the following key:

Academic teaching less than or equal to 5 years: ≤5

Academic teaching greater than or equal to 6 years: ≥6

Other (research fellow or staff in a supporting role): O

Findings and Discussion:

On prioritising writing

In the online survey, respondents were asked to note both institutional and personal barriers to writing. By far the most cited barrier, in both categories, was time constraints.

> It is impossible to do good research without sacrificing sincerity in teaching and other administrative duties. S1≤5

> The writing programme was one of the few opportunities available to 'block' time off for writing. E12≤5

> Making a six month commitment puts the right amount of pressure on you to get work done and remind you when you're not getting the work done! E6≥6

Moore, Murphy and Murray (2010) argue that because academics have a responsibility to write, they therefore have the right to schedule time and space in which to do it. However, difficulties in prioritising writing and maintaining momentum can deter academics from writing (McGrail et al., 2006). Respondents to the survey saw managing time as both an institutional barrier and a personal time management issue, and noted how the WfAP afforded them the opportunity to commit protected time for writing to their working day. Scheduling time to write is increasingly challenging in the current landscape where rising student numbers, falling staff numbers and increased administrative, teaching and research loads mean that writing becomes progressively more relegated. The WfAP, scheduled once or twice a month on a Friday morning, offered participants discussion and writing time in a safe, collegial environment but also showed participants techniques to manage their writing time, and encouraged them to write in short, regular bursts (Murray, 2006) rather than holding out for increasingly elusive prolonged periods of time to write.

> The programme helped me to refocus on work that had been hanging around for over a year. (S2≥6)

> Providing a set time to write every couple of weeks gave me motivation to write. (E20≤5)

> It has helped me to focus and become more goal orientated. (S22.O)

We can see here how our formal structured programme created the incentive to start writing, or helped pull it from a lull or to progress the writing momentum. The structure, where writing time was embedded into each session, undoubtedly progressed participants' writing, and each session discussed techniques to prioritise writing more. But participants also spoke of learning 'how to use time constructively' and of making writing a priority:

It made writing an overt item at the top of the list. Most importantly it has contributed to making writing a priority over the imposed priorities. (S22.O)

Over the course of the programme, participants began to voice their desire to sculpt out time to write as part of their working day, and began to share means of doing so. For example, one participant designed a screen saver that said 'Write for 20 minutes' which reminded her to write every morning before turning on her email. Many changed their attitudes as a result of the programme:

I have a broader perspective of how challenging it is to keep on top of papers and submitting them in the academic worlds. One needs to be persistent, prepared, informed by the journals and have peer reviewers look over your work. (E4≤5)

I'm more aware of the importance of writing in my career and while I find it tough, in general most academics do. (S10.O)

However, for some, maintaining that momentum on completion of the programme was more difficult:

It has made a change to my attitude but unfortunately not my practice - yet! (S.14≤5)

I have found it hard to maintain the momentum and would welcome regular 'writing sessions' to force me to sit down and write. (S2≥6)

What we see here is that for some the completion of the programme freed up time only for other commitments to take its place. As one respondent said when answering the survey question 'Do you feel that attending the programme made a difference to your writing practice?' 'It did while I was attending the programme but I am now swamped with work again'. It was uniformly appreciated that Trinity College supported writing for publication by providing professional development in the area, but some participants sought more regular protected

writing time. Other supports requested in the survey included: mentoring for writing, peer support groups, more dedicated structured time for writing within the working week, and more writing retreats.

The majority of participants, however, were more successful in maintaining momentum in the months following the programme, although long term impact has yet to be ascertained:

> I'm more conscious of the approach to take at the start of writing a paper and the methods to use to keep encouraging myself to write. (E5≤5)

> I found that it kept me focused on writing for what is my busiest teaching time of the year. (E16≥6)

> Now [writing] is part of my life and practice, before it was a specific event. (E13≥ 6)

> It has provided me with the confidence to write and the conviction to seek out time within my work schedule dedicated to writing. Overall, I now know that I can write once given the time and encouragement to do so. (S4≤5)

> It has made a difference to my priorities and now writing is at the top of the list. (S11≥6)

We can see from these quotes how participants are clearly focused on prioritising writing and on finding ways to fit it into their schedules. In the survey they speak of 'carving out' time for writing, of 'making writing a priority over the imposed priorities', of 'continuously' setting 'small and manageable goals', and of reminding themselves that they 'can and should be doing more writing'. As one participant noted, 'motivation is now the most important part of my writing. And because I attended the programme, I urge myself to write and to think in any spare time.' For these participants, prioritising writing is something that has to be deliberately and systematically sustained by the individual, and is not just seen as the responsibility of the university. In return, they seek continued structured support from College in the form of

academic writing interventions.

On becoming part of a writing community:

Respondents to the survey noted isolation as one of the barriers to their writing:

> I work better with other people, rather than in isolation. I feel there is a lack of sharing of ideas and possible projects. My preferred style of working is more collaborative teamwork which for me has been missing in college. (S2≥6)

> I write best when I have intellectual engagement with others - students, colleagues, interdisciplinary forums - but we do not have enough of these. (S7≥ 6)

It appears that some respondents regret the lack of formal opportunities to discuss and share their ideas with others, either within or outside the discipline. When asked in the survey if academic writing was discussed in their discipline (Statement: 'Staff in this discipline often discuss their academic writing together'. Please tick one: often/sometimes/rarely/never), most ticked 'sometimes' (n=9) or 'rarely' (n=7), with the small remainder answering 'often' (n=2). These discussions could be interpreted as formal or informal, but it seems that academic writing is not regularly or systematically discussed as some would wish. Added to this, the isolation of the academic, undeniably part of the culture of academia where as lecturers we close the door and experience solitude (Shulman, 1993) has been heightened in the current uncertain climate where workload has increased significantly and there is less time for faculty to engage with each other.   And as MacLeod et al note, 'Academics can talk to their colleagues, but this is not always productive or safe, nor are there regular, routine, dedicated discussions of these issues. Moreover, if everyone is working 'harder and longer', who has time to talk?' (p.642)

The WfAP offers participants the opportunity to become part of an active and supportive community of academic writers. As Murray notes, writing interventions that have a community of practice focus may offer faculty 'a collegiality that they crave, that they expected to find in

University, but that seems to be missing in the competitive culture of academic writing' (Murray, 2008, p.23). Murray and Newton (2008) have documented the roles of the community of practice and learning through participation in structured writing retreats. However, the social aspect of writing does not have to work against a necessity for solitude when it comes to writing, and the WfAP seeks to provide a balanced approach, drawing from Grant and Knowles the notion of nourishing the writer 'so she can more easily enter that state, and more often derive pleasure from it.' (2000, p.16):

> The WfAP was very beneficial. Although working alone for a lot of the time it was great to be within a group interested in doing the same things. (E15≥ 6)

> It was good to be part of a community of fellow writers. The experience of sitting in a group just writing was a good one for me - it forced me to focus and not be distracted. (E9≤5)

These quotes show that participants benefitted from the dual purpose of each session's three-hour structure, that of talking about writing and actually writing. Participants also repeatedly highlighted the community aspect as being important for increasing their self confidence, especially when they realised that other academics experience similar challenges with academic writing:

> The social aspect I find extremely important.   Realising that it is not just 'your incompetence'. The system forces writing to be at the bottom of the list. Only talking to others do you realise this. Meeting people from other disciplines and in the same boat, is very motivating and supports you in the effort. (E12≤5)

> The programme has been invaluable, meeting colleagues who are grappling with the same issues has been a great support in counteracting the self doubt and within school challenges. (S4≤5)

> There appears to be real collective action. It is not just about time set aside and a nice comfortable space, although that is lovely. It is also, for me anyway, about the collective piece, checking in with one another, task setting and in a way, being in a room full of people attempting to do and produce academic writing. It seems to 'demystify' it a bit and make it seem less threatening. (E2≥6)

Although our programme attracts a range of participants in terms of discipline and seniority, as Lee and Boud found with their programme, hierarchic power relationships are backgrounded as a collective purpose is foregrounded (Lee and Boud, 2003, p.195). This is highlighted in the 'collective action' of the above quote, where the room full of academics, of different levels of seniority and from many disciplines, share a common purpose. In the first programme, all of the participants were academics with over 6 years teaching experience, surprisingly to me, there were no academics 'less than 2 years' category. At the time I wondered if pressures of being newly appointed to Collegewere influencing this. However, the second programme saw a mix of junior and senior academics, with junior academics more prominent, although perhaps this was because the second programme ran in the second semester whereas the first programme had begun in the first semester.

Wenger (1998) conceptualises a community of practice where members participate through mutual engagement, interaction, a shared sense of purpose and a common discourse. In the WfAP, there was no marked difference between junior and senior academics in the class, all sharing their experiences, successes and fears, and each working towards progressing their chosen publication piece. The WfAP shows that participants, through a sense of shared enterprise and support, can gain an understanding of the tacit discourse surrounding writing for publication, and draw strength from realising that others also struggle with aspects of the academic writing. Lave and Wenger (1991) note that a community can also be nourished and steered through opportunities that promote and support participation. In Trinity College Dublin, the WfAP is just one of a number of writing interventions that support academic writers through interaction with peers. As a direct result of our programme, writing groups have formed, along

with informal fora for sharing of ideas, and even collaborative writing partnerships.   Many programme attendees now regularly attend our writing retreats, other participants requested a room/space for writing. While we could not provide a designated space, our academic development room is now regularly used by writing intervention participants to either write in silence ('writing days'), or to conduct peer reviews, intentional dialogue on writing, or collaborative writing. A writing community is certainly emerging as a result of the interventions offered by CAPSL.

On addressing the emotional aspects of writing for publication:

A recurring barrier referred to in the survey related to self-doubt and lack of confidence, both in writing and in the academic writing process:

> A big barrier is a lack of self-confidence which leads to procrastination. (S19.O)

> There is a lack of encouragement when it comes to academic writing. It would be good to have a mentor or senior staff member to guide the writing process and to offset self doubt as to the quality of my writing. (S4≤5)

> I don't know if my writing skills are good enough. I don't understand exactly what journals are looking for and I don't know how to go about finding out what they expect. (E1≤5)

Fears of writing and publication processes and little understanding of how the system works and of what ideas are acceptable were iterated by respondents. But lack of confidence in 'being' an academic writer, in having a worthwhile voice, and fear of being adversely judged were also key issues. Antoniou and Moriarty note that 'Emotions – including fears and desires – play a huge role in shaping academic identities and academic practice, but are rarely explicitly acknowledged in academic life.' (2008, p.166) Indeed, when asked in the survey to define barriers to writing one respondent simply noted, 'the Fear'. In 2003 Moore asserted, 'any intervention to help individuals to write more productively should address the issue of

confidence' (Moore, 2003, p.341). The WfAP places a strong focus on supporting academics in this aspect. For example, in the very first session, academics are asked write down and then share with the group the first word they think of when they hear the term 'academic writing'. Figure 111 shows the response to this from the first programme, which were also typical of those for the second programme:
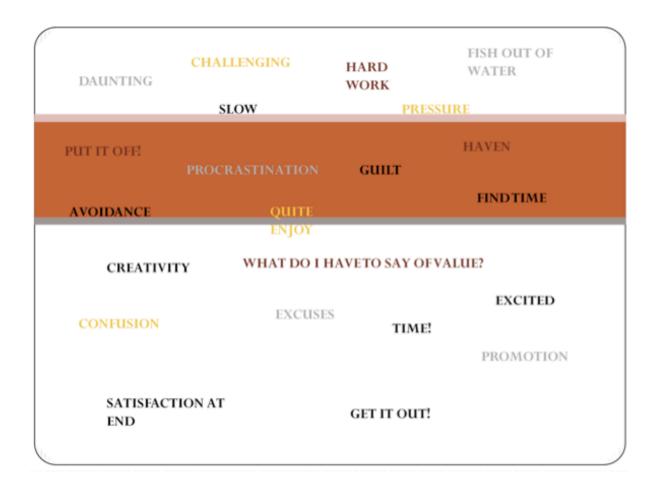

Figure 111: Exercise: Write down the first word you think of when you hear the term 'academic writing'.

These words clearly indicate that most participants, at the beginning of the WfAP find academic writing a daunting task, despite the fact that the majority of participants had experience of being published in peer reviewed publications. (Of those who completed the survey, only 20% (n=4) had not previously published in peer reviewed publications). By voicing, reflecting and discussing with each other their responses and emotions about writing right at

the beginning of the programme, participants noted that they relaxed in knowing they are not alone in their fears, and began to see that their fears might be responsive to the context of writing for publication (judgement/peer review/measurement/impact) rather than being simply subjective.   They consequently became more inclined to address these fears in the safe environment of like-minded academics:

> It was so supportive - the first session revealed how everyone had their own concerns about writing and how some crossed over. Working and writing in an environment where people share similar problems and goals is supportive in itself. (E7≥6)

> It reinforced my conviction, confidence in writing and reassured me that colleagues across Trinity were sharing and overcoming similar barriers to writing. (S4≤5)

> It has been a means of gaining membership to the academic writing club and demystifying the process. (S17≤5)

> I have been more productive since and more confident about producing books and articles. (S19.O)

The literature has testified to the assumption that if you are an academic, you are both able and willing to write (Blaxter er al, 1998 in Moore 2003, Driscoll and Driscoll, 2002, Keen, 2006). The WfAP dispels this myth and tackles some of the emotional barriers to writing academics face before offering strategies to overcome any that negatively impact on their writing. Fear of judgment is one such example. Fear of external censure, and its effects, can paralyse academics (Cameron et al, 2009, Murray and Moore, 2006, Elbow and Belanoff, 2000, Lee and Boud, 2003) even though, or perhaps because, academics are in many ways trained to write for approval. As Brett notes:

> [...] from their student essays to their PhD theses, they are writing work to be submitted for examination. And even when they have achieved their PhDs, they must submit work to refereed journals in order to accumulate the publications necessary for appointment and then to accumulate the publications necessary for promotion and so on. At every

> point their writing is subject to external criteria – approved topics, accepted methods of research and styles of writing, the norms and conventions of the disciplines. (Brett, 1991, p. 520)

The highly charged emotional aspects of the peer review process help little in moving academics away from the anxiety that accompanies writing for approval. However, successful writing depends on 'sharing work between peers at all stages of the process and on receiving feedback' (Antoniou and Moriarty, 2008, p.165). In the WfAP we firstly focus on the emotional aspects of peer review, and ask participants to share their reactions to their experiences of the peer review process:

> It was just wonderful to realise that most other academics in the group shared the same fears of the peer review process. It was really quite empowering to hear that I wasn't the only person who had an article locked away in a drawer after a peer review that had totally knocked my confidence in being an academic. After that class I routed it out – it wasn't actually an outright refusal, though it felt like one at the time – and I am now working on it again with renewed confidence. (E19≥6)

Not only does the sharing of reactions like this help demystifying the process for those newer to academic writing but, as we see from the above quote, the peer review process can also be equally obtuse for experienced writers, and this sort of open exchange of knowledge and experience can motivate experienced writers back to their writing. We should not assume that 'all academics are equally prepared for the selection process' (MacLeod, Steckley and Murray, 2012).

Participants of the WfAP also share their draft writing with colleagues during the WfAP and conduct peer reviews of each others' writing in a safe and collegial environment, in an attempt to provide a kind of 'sanctuary' such as Moore recommends, where academics 'can get support before exposing their work to critics' (Moore, 2003, p. 341). As Antoniou and Moriarty note, 'academic writing, even when presented in its formative stages as conference papers, is always required to appear polished, and is rarely seen by others in a raw and rambling state' (Antoniou and Moriarty, 2008, p.165).

Our attempts to address and support the emotional aspects of writing were strongly welcomed in programme evaluations, and in the survey. Of particular interest is that a notable shift in their 'sense of self' as a writer resulted. When asked if participants 'sense of self' as an academic writer had changed since the writing programme, responses included the following:

> Very definitely. The whole atmosphere was exactly what I like and it was amazing to find that I enjoy writing. (E17≥6)

> Yes. If I continue to dedicate time to it I will improve more and more as a writer. (S10.O)

> I would not have previously viewed myself as an academic writer. I do now. (E10≤5)

> I feel confident again. (S17≤5)

Reflecting on the emotional barriers to writing in a collegial and supportive environment is an important step before finding strategies to overcome them. By encouraging the sharing of goals, aspirations and challenges of academic writing we can not only identify the supports we need as individuals, but learn from and support each other. This process can lead to a shift in one's sense of self as a writer:

> There is a threshold shift in my consciousness about communicating my practice. (S3.O)

> I believe my writing skills have improved. Also my confidence in writing - knowing that I'm not the only one that finds it difficult is very reassuring. It's great to even chat over a coffee with others in the same struggle. (E5≤5)

I still find being an academic writer is a difficult job. I still find I'm lacking in confidence. But anyway, I wouldn't be as afraid of writing a paper as I used to be. (E1≤5)

For some, the change in consciousness is striking, for others developing confidence in writing is a more steady process being undertaken in the company of fellow writers, others still are at the starting point of their journey, but feel now they have tools and the support to begin to steer change in their attitudes or practices.

Conclusion

'It is in the best interests of both university employers and employees for staff to be publishing, and publishing often.' (McGrail et al, 2006) It thus makes sense that universities support their academics to write, especially in the current context where citations and impact factor are increasingly important for the institution and for the individual academic. However, the production of writing is not solely an intellectual activity (Antoniou and Moriarty, 2008) so it is important that the interventions universities offer take a holistic approach to supporting academic writing, and address the emotional as well as the technical orientations to writing. This paper has argued that the success of the WfAPs in Trinity College Dublin is due to a number of interlaced features including the emotional, the social, the psychosocial and the pedagogical/technical. I have shown that a WfAP that addresses all these aspects helps its participants to be more confident when it comes to their academic writing. It enables academics to work collectively and form meaningful connections, it enhances collegiality and mutuality, and it embeds sustainable writing strategies that can motivate academics to maintain momentum on completion of the programme. This paper has also shown that academics want further, sustained writing initiatives, and facilitated, protected time to write and discuss the writing process in a community of writers from across the disciplines. In return, they will use the strategies learnt to carve out time and prioritise their writing as much as possible outside of these interventions.

The importance of developing a positive culture towards writing for publication cannot be underestimated in the present higher education context. Indeed in the current landscape where consequences of not publishing are so high, it is incumbent on the university to support academics to publish. This paper has argued that writing for publication programmes that have a holistic focus can provide a valued and sustainable method of supporting academics at all stages of their publishing careers, and thus can serve the dual purpose of helping the institutional needs and actively supporting its academics in their writing for publication.

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