The Power Hour of Writing (PHOW) is a regularly hosted short period of protected time which allows participants to focus on a project of their choice, strengthened by accountability and supported by a community of peers.

Our research into the PHOW demonstrates that participants, usually a mixture of university staff and postgraduate research students (PGRs), appreciate the legitimacy of having time set aside for them to work on their project; this is especially relevant for academics trying to juggle a heavy teaching load with research and/or study commitments.

Strategies to promote academic writing are not new: there is a growing body of research around different approaches to promote time, space and confidence for writers in higher education institutions (Jensen, 2017; Sword, 2017; Murray, 2017, 2015, 2012). However, potential participants can find it challenging to afford the money or time to attend these types of events, while others may not be ready for an event focused entirely on writing. In addition, certain approaches may separate staff and PGRs instead of encouraging them to work together.

The Power Hour approach allows for flexible, low-cost and inclusive engagement with staff and PGRs to minimise barriers to academic writing such as workload, additional funding to attend retreats or travelling to other locations. It helps to break down concerns around academic writing and enables PGRs, in particular, to feel more confident about their place at university, encouraging their sense of belonging and enhancing opportunities for retention and progression through higher education.

Looking towards hybrid campus models the PHOW can be adapted to fit into a mixed-mode delivery with regular online sessions but allowing for meaningful face to face get togethers. Having a shared experience will help to build writing communities and foster belonging.

We are also keen to find out what you have tried and what worked and what maybe didn’t work as planned. We will have time for a discussion after a little Power Hour taster.

How will this session enhance #VitaeCon2021 for participants?

Our session will show how the Power Hour concept works, what makes it different, its benefits and how it can be adapted to support a variety of researchers. In addition, we will share resources and a taster of this innovative, low-cost format to support researchers with their writing, as well we help build communities and strengthen belonging.

What is the main format of your session?

Overview presentation with a short taster activity followed by a Q&A/Discussion

Which theme does your session most closely relate to?

Cross-cutting issues of research culture and environment

How does your session relate to the above theme(s)?

Writing and for some researcher other aspects of research are solitary experiences. The Power Hour format brings researchers together and encourages them to share their whole experience. Research shows that over time, as confidence increases the Power Hour spaces and communities provide support beyond research and writing and help foster a positive and supportive environment for everyone.

Detailed session plan
15 min Overview of the Power Hour of Writing
15 min taster event
30 min follow-up and Q&A / Discussion