



UWS Academic Portal

The power hour of writing – an inclusive online community to foster supportive research environments

Zihms, Stephanie; Reid Mackie, Claire

Published: 14/10/2021

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication on the UWS Academic Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Zihms, S., & Reid Mackie, C. (2021). *The power hour of writing – an inclusive online community to foster supportive research environments*. Researcher Education and Development Scholarship Online Conference 2021.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the UWS Academic Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact pure@uws.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

The Power Hour of Writing (PHOW) is a 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 shows that participants, a mixture of university staff and Postgraduate Researchers (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 their research with a heavy teaching and/or study commitments. The PHOW is an online community open to anyone at the institution. The key group are PGRs and staff, but we do have MSc students joining occasionally as well. Due to the focus being on the individual and their goals, there is no need to create spaces for different groups, everyone can take part in the PHOW. This open approach removes barriers and creates a sense of belonging to the wider institutional community. In addition, using an online space allows for a variety of engagement options to accommodate how participants want to or can engage. For example, video and audio engagement are optional, it is possible to engage in a PHOW fully via the chat function. As participants become more familiar with the PHOW and regular participants get to know each other the level of exchange and the type of conversations have changed over time. At the start it was very focused on host - participant interaction, over time it evolved to participant-participant interaction. The PHOW has also contributed to an open and honest discussion about the different pressures academic staff are facing, sharing of tips on how to deal with certain pressures and increased the confidence in some staff to take control of their working schedules. The PGRs attending these sessions are able to get a better understanding of academic life beyond their doctoral research, because staff share their lived experiences very openly. As hosts we also greatly benefit from these discussions, as we get to know PGRs and staff better and gain an understanding of potential development needs that can then inform our own approach to support these communities. The PHOW approach allows for flexible, low-cost and inclusive engagement that can be easily adapted and is scalable from research group to institution and beyond.