HDRs and ECAs together: A combined writing group as a community of practice

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Who we are

• 2 x HDRs, 3 ECAs
• Academic and professional staff in central learning and teaching unit
• Music, Cultural Studies, Psychology, History, Education backgrounds
Developing researcher identity

Belonging to academic community

Affect and emotional support

Publication

Exposure to different writing styles and topics

Feedback and peer review

Confidence building

Developing writing

Time and space for writing
Community of practice

- Meaning (learning as experience)
- Practice (learning as doing)
- Community (learning as belonging)
- Identity (learning as becoming)

(Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991)
Our study

– What are the challenges you face?
– How has writing group impacted on your practice?
– What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a mixed group of HDRs and ECAs?
Word cloud
Learning as Experiencing

- I have also got better at receiving feedback. ... This means I am less emotional when I receive negative feedback outside writing group (ECA1).
- I feel that the lessons I have learnt from writing group, ... have improved my supervision. (ECA1)
- Its also a nice feeling when you can give someone else advice based on your own experience - it somehow makes you feel less incompetent. (HDR2)
- This group models not only writing per se, but also processes before (identifying a topic, planning the piece of writing) and after (submitting, dealing with editors, coping with feedback) (HDR1)
- I have increased confidence in writing and publishing (particularly in submitting papers to higher quality journals) (ECA2)
- It has honed my ability to give feedback (...) and receive feedback. It has enabled opportunities for reflection - our writing retreat was a highlight. (ECA1)
- I enjoy hearing how others receive my work and learn a lot every time. Its the peer review without the long wait. (HDR2)
By the time a piece of writing is submitted for publication, it has already been read and commented on by several people. This means that I rarely have articles rejected or major feedback required. (ECA1)

There are also opportunities for both groups to work collaboratively and create joint outputs in addition to their own individual work (e.g. Conference/journal papers on academic writing). (ECA2)

It helps me by setting deadlines for my writing. It helps to review other's work because at the same time you think about your own i.e. styles of writing etc. (HDR2)

We also write collaboratively as a group - this, more than any other writing I am doing, has kept me research active, helped me plan my output and define my research interests. (ECA1)

With feedback and critique on my writing plan, drafts, etc. (HDR1)
Learning as Belonging

Moral and emotional support (HDR1)

I wish I had belonged to writing group like our one when I was a HDR! (ECA3)

Seeing myself as part of a bigger picture (the academic/discipline community) rather than a producer of set tasks (HDR1)

I have found writing group incredibly supportive of me and my writing. (ECA3)

belonging to a group of like minded individuals who share similar experiences is fantastic. You feel like you have the opportunity to share your frustrations with people who are going or have been through the same. (HDR2)
It would also be good to have some more senior academic members who could mentor us. I am starting to think about what mid-career academia might look like, but I feel unprepared. (ECA1)

seeing opportunities for articles, etc. (HDR1)

By apprenticing and scaffolding me through our joint publications (HDR1)

This mixed group scaffolds my writing onto the next level – that of an ECA – and allows me to glimpse my future. (HR1)
Challenges

• Finding **time** to write
• Developing a **researcher identity**
• Writing and **publication skills**
Advantages

For HDRs:
- induction into academic practice
- mentoring
- learning from those with more publishing experience
- academic career development
- working collaboratively/joint publications

For ECAs:
- working collaboratively/joint publications
- feedback experience (giving and receiving)
- practice for HDR supervision
- opportunities to mentor
So what?

• Induct HDRs into academic practice and ECAs into supervision
• Develop academic and writerly identity – non-linear, troublesome
• Gain perspectives beyond PhD.
References

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