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The power hour of writing – fostering belonging and creating community

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The Power Hour of Writing (PHOW) is a short period of protected time which brings staff and postgraduate research students (PGRs) together online to form a supportive writing community. The PHOW seeks to connect PGRs and university staff, both academics and professional services, by encouraging the development of sustainable writing habits, strengthened by peer accountability. The PHOW began in August 2019 to support writing development in a multi-campus university but moved online in April 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic, using Microsoft Teams as a platform to host regular writing sessions. By focusing on individuals' projects and small, achievable goals, the framework of the Power Hour removes the need to create spaces for different groups; it also overcomes potential barriers between staff and PGRs, promoting a sense of belonging to the wider institutional community.

Research into the PHOW combined descriptive analysis of participant numbers with qualitative analysis of free text responses from three online surveys taken during 2020 and 2021. Three key themes emerged: writing is increasingly seen as a legitimate part of participants' everyday work; the structure of the PHOW helps to create accountability; and the community provides a support network not just for writing, but other areas of academic life. PGRs particularly valued the community aspect of the PHOW while academic staff also appreciated having time set aside to work on their project, especially when they had heavy teaching and/or study commitments.

The presenters will share key tips for starting and sustaining a Power Hour of Writing, including access to Creative Commons resources. They will also outline how the approach supports flexible, low-cost, and inclusive engagement that can be easily adapted and is scalable from research group to institution and beyond.