***Writing Clubs in the Research Communication Context***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Length of module | Approximately 3 hours 30 minutes to 5 hours 30 minutes |
| Module summary | This module is intended to increase participants’ awareness of writing clubs and their benefits and to guide participants in establishing or in further developing their writing club/s. Participants are encouraged to draw on their own experiences of writing clubs and the lessons gained from them, during discussions. |
| Equipment, visual aids and handouts | PowerPoint projector, screen and laptop  Internet connection  Flip chart paper and marker pens  Sticky notes (or post-it notes) of three different colours  Chalkboard and chalk, or a whiteboard and whiteboard pens  Stapler  **Writing clubs module.pptx**  Prepared by trainer/s in advance**: participant workshop agenda (+ intended learning outcomes)** one agenda per participant and workshop administrator. Some example intended learning outcomes have been provided on **slide 5** in the trainers’ PowerPoint slides.  If trainers choose to use the **University of Colombo writing clubs example** (currently slides 11-13 in the trainers’ PowerPoint slides), it is recommended that participants are sent the publication in advance of the workshop to read. It can be found at [www.inasp.info/publications/research-writing-clubs-ensure-sustainable-skills-development](http://www.inasp.info/publications/research-writing-clubs-ensure-sustainable-skills-development).  **HO1 UoC writing clubs overview.docx:** if trainers choose to use the above writing clubs example, it is recommended that participants are given this handout after discussing the example.  **HO2 detailed questions.doc:** to hand out to each participant as indicated.  Prepared by trainer/s in advance (if necessary)**:** **evaluation forms**  Prepared by workshop administrator in advance (if necessary): **certificates of completion** |
| Guidance to facilitating learning activities | Display **Writing clubs module.pptx-slide 1** as a holding slide while participants enter the room and get settled. Start off with some gentle banter or informal conversation with participants, to create a relaxed, positive and friendly atmosphere.  **Welcome and general introductions** (10-20 mins)  If the workshop is to be ‘opened’ by a senior administrator, politely request that this person keeps their speech to under 10 minutes if possible.  Explain that *we will start by establishing a sense of ‘geography’ for the workshop, also agreeing on how we want to work together and what we want in the learning environment and from each other to feel ready and free to learn.* Display **slide 2** and quickly run through the agenda for the welcome and introductions session.  Next invite the participants to introduce themselves and say a little about their background and what they hope to gain from the workshop.  The trainer/s should note their backgrounds, especially as related to the subject matter of the workshop. Try to project a positive attitude, for example *by saying that you are looking forward to exchanging views and experiences during the workshop and noting that it is a chance for all present to learn from each other.* **Warm up activity: Desert island survival** (15-20 mins) Pick five objects that are different, for example a clothes peg, a bottle cap, a fork, one sock and a ball of string. Line these objects up in front of the participants. The idea is to not select a choice of objects that makes it too easy to solve the problem outlined in the following scenario.  Split all the participants into even teams (a minimum of two and a maximum of five teams).  Describe the scenario on **slide 3**. Note that the survivors do not have any additional objects with them (this includes mobile phones).   * Once the five minutes are up, invite each group to briefly outline their survival plans based on the five objects. If there is time hold a full-group vote to decide which team would survive for the longest.   To conclude, ask participants how they think this exercise relates to participating in a writing club, for example *the exercise draws on many heads rather than one, it stimulates creative and critical thinking (prompt for what kind of skills), it encourages deeper collaboration etc.*  **Housekeeping** (3-5 mins)  Trainer/s cover basic information participants need to know about the venue, facilities, comfort breaks, refreshments, security of belongings and room etc.  **Introduction to workshop** (5-15 mins)  Display **slide 4** and explain that this workshop is intended mainly to increase participants’ awareness of writing clubs and their benefits, to introduce them to some types of writing clubs and to guide and encourage participants in establishing and/or further developing their writing clubs.  Note that the workshop is based on the active learning approach. This means that the module contains activities that encourage participants to take an active, engaged part in the learning process, such as: group discussions, participatory presentations and problem-solving.  Share the learning outcomes for the workshop on **slide 5** (these can be modified if needs be). Invite any questions or comments from participants.  Then next do a quick run through the **participant workshop agenda**.  **Learning contract** (5-10 mins)  Explain that the following activity is a way of agreeing how participants and trainer/s want to work together, is a way of ensuring that everyone has a focus and that the group is productive. Display **slide 6**(on animated fade setting)with suggested ways of working, that have proved effective in past workshops.  Ask participants if they have any questions of clarification and/or any changes/additions they would like to make and why. Trainer/s can make the appropriate changes to the learning contract slide (remember that these are for the trainer/s as well so make sure points which are important to the trainer/s are not deleted!).  Display **slide 7** and note the topics that the module will address, which reflect the learning outcomes presented earlier.  **Paired discussion: What is a writing club?** (10-20 mins)  Still displaying **slide 7**, ask the participants in pairs or in groups of three, to discuss the first two questions on the slide (on animated brush colour setting). Participants can then share their answers with the full-group for a short follow-up discussion.  Display **slide 8**, it is recommended that the trainer/s make the following key points in relation to the first question, if not already made by participants:   * Note that writing clubs can be face-to-face (for example, with periodic meetings in a given place), electronic (via one or more distance media), or a combination (for example, with contact by email or telephone between face-to-face meetings). * Also note that writing clubs may focus on the product (for example, drafts that members prepare), the process (for example, ways to be more productive in one’s writing), or both.   If appropriate, ask participants whether they have taken part in, or otherwise know of, writing clubs. If so, ask them to briefly describe these writing clubs.  It is recommended that the trainer/s make the following key points in relation to the second question, if not already made by participants:   * Can provide support, including both practical support (for example, by providing advice and suggesting resources) and psychological support (for example, by providing encouragement). * Can provide accountability (for example, by having people report on their progress). * Can provide feedback (for example, on drafts of participants’ work). * Note that often writing clubs have more than one of these functions.   **Presentation: Types of writing clubs** (20-30 mins)  Next display **slide 9** which provides some examples of writing clubs. The trainer/s can make the following points:   * Groups providing mainly feedback: participants discuss one or more members’ drafts (or parts thereof). Typically, they should note strengths of the drafts and make suggestions for improvement. If long drafts are to be discussed, distributing them beforehand can be helpful. * Accountability groups: focus largely on ensuring that members are productive. Members may, for example, report on how much they have written or how much time they have spent writing and revising. They may also discuss ways to overcome barriers to such progress. * Write on-site groups:members get together to write. Although each member writes individually, the presence of the group provides support and ensures that each member spends time writing. They can help each other solve writing problems as they arise and can provide feedback and encouragement. * Online groups with daily contact: members chat daily via email, online forums, or other such means. In addition to reporting on their progress, members may confer about overcoming difficulties that they are facing, share resources that they have come across, and otherwise provide mutual guidance and support. * Hybrids of these types: use a combination of approaches. Trainer/s can present their own example or note that the University of Colombo writing clubs that will be discussed shortly uses such a hybrid approach. If any writing clubs described earlier by participants were hybrids, it could be good to note that fact. * Other: can also be of other types or have other activities. For example, some writing clubs regularly have guest speakers.   Invite participants to share with the full-group, any other types of writing clubs or writing club activities, not already mentioned in these discussions.  Next ask participants individually to identify one challenge related to research communication within their professional context, which could be addressed by one of the writing clubs and/or activities discussed so far.  Invite some participants to share their challenges and the type of writing club and/or activities that could help address them.  **Mid workshop reflection** (15-25 mins)  Display **Slide 10** and invite participants individually to write down their responses to the three bullet points on the slide. Allow around five minutes for this part.  Next invite participants to form pairs and discuss their responses to the three bullet points. Again, allow around five minutes for this part.  Finally, invite the pairs to find another pair to form a group of four, to discuss their responses to the three bullet points.  Select a spokesperson, in each group of four, to feed back their key questions only to the full-group for discussion. It is recommended that one of the trainer/s writes them up on a flipchart for reference, so that they can be reviewed with the  full-group later in the workshop.  **Presentation: an AuthorAID writing clubs example** (15-30 mins)  **Slides 11-13** touches on a successful series of writing clubs developed as part of an initiative to embed AuthorAID work at the University of Colombo Faculty of Medicine in Sri Lanka. These writing clubs can serve as a helpful example.  The trainer/s will need to have thoroughly read the publication and overview slides (see [www.inasp.info/publications/research-writing-clubs-ensure-sustainable-skills-development](http://www.inasp.info/publications/research-writing-clubs-ensure-sustainable-skills-development) and **HO1 UoC writing clubs overview.docx**) before facilitating this part of the workshop.  If the trainer/s wish to describe a different writing club instead or in addition, they can add or substitute slides in that regard.  Display **Slide 11** and introduce the next part of the module.  Display **Slide 12**:   * This slide lists some of the main features of the University of Colombo Faculty of Medicine writing clubs and is fairly self-explanatory. For additional detail, the trainer/s can refer back to the overview slides and publication. * A main concept to present is that each of these writing clubs is intended to help the junior researchers within it, to each move forward in writing, revising, and publishing a journal article.   Display **Slide 13**:   * Note that a successful writing club requires some planning and coordination. * Run through some of the main activities of the coordinator of the University of Colombo Faculty of Medicine writing clubs. Note that a coordinator of these writing clubs found it convenient to designate one day per week for doing most of the writing club coordination. * If participants in the current workshop have coordinated or helped coordinate writing clubs, perhaps have them identify activities in this regard and share tips. * Conclude this section by noting that many people find writing clubs useful and enjoyable, while others don’t. Also, that different types of writing clubs and/or activities may suit different people. * Writing clubs should be an opportunity, not a requirement. Also, having more than one kind of writing club may be worthwhile. * Elicit participants’ thoughts in the full-group regarding these concluding points. * The trainer/s can hand out **HO1 UoC writing clubs overview.docx** to each participant, if they think it would be useful.   Display **Slide 14**.   * Note that the key questions on the slide are the “5 Ws and an H” that need to be answered when forming a writing club. * Journalists often make sure to include these in their stories. In general, other types of communications, such as those about research, also should address most or all of these key questions. * Note that there are many more detailed questions which need be considered when forming a writing club, as illustrated on the slide. Some of these questions will be explored next. At this point the trainer/s can hand out **HO2 club detailed questions.doc** to each participant.   **Forming a writing club: questions to consider** (30-40 mins)  Invite participants individually to spend 10 to 15 minutes first reading through the handout, noting down any questions of clarification they might have and any additional questions that they think are missing.  Next briefly run through the handout, covering the following points.  **1. Why:**   * Note that the answers to the other questions in the hand out will depend largely on the function(s) of the writing club - and thus that the function(s) should be identified early. * Remind the group of the common functions of writing clubs (as noted in **Slide 8**: support, accountability, and feedback). * Additional outputs and/or outcomes of a writing club could include: successful grant proposals, increased knowledge of the publication process, greater confidence in one’s ability to write successfully and motivation to continue writing. * Ask for any questions of clarification and/or additional questions participants think are missing.   **2. Who and 3. What:**   * These sections present questions about who should be involved and on what the main activities of the writing club will be. * Ask for any questions of clarification and/or additional questions participants think are missing.   **4. When:**   * This section focuses on scheduling the activities of the writing club. * Ask for any questions of clarification and/or additional questions participants think are missing.   **5. Where:**   * Perhaps note that there may be trade-offs in terms of where the club meets. For example, meeting at the group members’ workplace might be the most efficient, but some other settings (for example, a mentor’s home) may promote a more positive atmosphere and have fewer work-related distractions. * Ask for any questions of clarification and/or additional questions participants think are missing.   **6. How:**   * This slide provides opportunity to discuss other items to consider when establishing a writing club. * Ask for any questions of clarification and/or additional questions participants think are missing.   **Small group discussion: Review of questions from mid-workshop reflection** (5-10 mins)  Invite participants to form groups of three or four and allow them around five or so minutes to discuss the questions on the flipchart paper prepared earlier by the trainer. Bring the participants back to the full-group and invite them to share any of the questions that they think have been answered or still remain unanswered.  **Drafting a preliminary plan for a writing club** (40-50 mins)  Display **Slide 15** which outlines the task, in which small groups of participants each draft a plan for a writing club. Each small group’s plan should address the 5 Ws and an H and should include the reasons for their choices. Allow 15 to 20 minutes for the groups to prepare their plans.  If there are six or more participants in total, this task should be done in groups of about three or four participants. However, if five or fewer individuals are participating in the module, they should do the exercise in one single group.  If participants are from more than one worksite, it can be helpful to place participants from the same worksite in the same group, to help maximize likelihood that the plans developed will be instituted.  Invite participants to write their plans on flip charts or PowerPoint slides for presentation to the full-group. Each group should summarize its plan orally, and discussion of the plan should follow:   * If the module is for about 10 to 15 participants (in which case there would be about three to five groups), each group should summarize its plan in about three minutes or less. * The summaries should include reasons for choices made. The full-group should then have opportunity to comment. The trainers should then briefly comment, noting strengths and identifying additional aspects to consider or potential pitfalls to address. The comments from the participants and trainers can be a good chance to reinforce content from earlier in the module. * If the module is for a smaller group of participants and thus there are only one or two subgroups, each group may present at greater length, and more extensive discussion may follow. * If more than about 15 individuals are taking part in the module, having all subgroups report to the full-group probably will not be feasible. One option is for some subgroups to report to the full-group. Another option, especially if one or more co-trainers are available, is to break the full-group into two or more sets of subgroups and have presentations and feedback within the subgroups.   At the end of the activity, sum up. In doing so, it may be helpful to compliment the groups on their work, reinforce some key points with regard to planning a writing club, and encourage participants to actually start writing clubs.  **End of module reflection** (20-30 mins)  Trainer/s can share a summary of the module’s activities and the highlights for them as trainer/s. Then invite participants to share their reflections on the module and impressions of the workshop.  Finish by asking participants to individually fill out exit cards. Display **slide 16** (on animation fade setting) with the instructions. Make sure the colours of the sticky notes correspond with those named on the slide. They can be of any colour, as long as they are of three different colours, and preferably not white.  If there is time, invite participants to share some of their contributions with the  full-group for a brief discussion.  **Evaluation** (3-5 mins)  If relevant, the trainer should have the participants complete a workshop evaluation.  **Closing remarks** (3-5 mins)  If the module is part of a wider series of learning and professional development initiatives, then the trainer/s should note what is upcoming.  Trainer/s should express the hope that the workshop was helpful and wish participants success in their writing clubs and otherwise.  If applicable, offer to be available for future support and perhaps encourage participants to share their learning points and resources from the module with others.  **Presentation of certificates** (10-15 mins) |