***Helping a mentee approach a writing project***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Module 4 | Helping a mentee approach a writing project |
| Length of module | Approximately 2 hours to 3 hours 30 minutes |
| Module summary | This module is the first of two, exploring challenges to mentees within the research communication context. In this module we will start by looking at two cases which will introduce you to helping a mentee approach a writing project. They look at the types of problems that mentees may commonly encounter and that mentors in turn, on occasion, will need to help mentees address. This module will then go on to refresh your knowledge and bolster your confidence in approaching an actual writing project. You are encouraged to draw on your own (mentoring-related) experiences and the lessons gained from them, during discussions. |
| Equipment, visual aids and handouts (on the day) | PowerPoint projector, screen and laptop  Internet connection  Put the **exit cards** up on the wall from the previous day or module (if applicable)  **4-help writing project.pptx**  **Video clip** on AuthorAIDmentoring: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNlCivj46d8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNlCivj46d8) (4 mins 27 sec)  **HO1 cases to distribute.doc**  **HO3 principles ethics.docx** |
| Guidance to facilitating learning activities | **Morning review** (5-15 mins)  Start off with some banter about what you or the participants did the previous evening, for example. Don’t make it about yourself – get the participants talking!  Next stand beside the **exit cards** on the wall and make some overall comments on the frequent themes. Say that you won’t have time to respond to all the cards but you will be commenting on the key ones. Invite further comments from the participants.  Remind participants of the learning contract on **4-help writing project.pptx*-*slide 2** (on animation fade setting) if necessary.  Throughout the module, trainer/s should refer participants to the **four reflection questions** on the wall and at the back of their handbooks. Trainer/s should encourage participants to makes notes in response to these four questions, at regular intervals (not just at the end of the module or day).  **Video clip: AuthorAID mentoring** (10-15 mins)  The trainer/s may have already sent the link to participants in advance of the workshop. However, they might choose to play the short YouTube clip again (provided above) to set the scene for the forthcoming modules which focus more heavily on mentoring in research communication (the link is also provided in the participant handbook in **Resource 11**). It is recommended that the clip is accompanied by one or two questions for participants to discuss as a full-group, for example *in what ways does the mentor in the clip help authors improve their work? in what other ways do and/or will you help your mentees to improve and communicate their research?* The trainer/s might want to write the two questions on a flipchart or whiteboard before playing the clip.  **Module summary** (2-3 mins)  Display **slide 3** and verbally present the module summary above to set the scene. It is important that these points are shared with participants from the outset.  **Group work: Mentoring others in their writing** (20-30 mins)  This activity can help make the transition between considering mentorship in general, as covered in the previous two modules, to focusing on providing mentorship to others in writing.  Invite participants, in groups of three or four, to come up with their top three pieces of advice for the successful mentoring of others in writing specifically.  Next bring the full-group back together, elicit the pieces of advice from each group (making sure that each group volunteers a new suggestion rather than repeating what has come before), while one trainer (or participant) types them up on the blank slide - **slide 4**or on a flipchart paper. Some suggestions from the groups might include:   * Emphasize writing as a process, not a product * Emphasize revision * Offer examples of writing to use as models * Share some of your experiences, including challenges you faced * Sometimes review writing line by line with the author present * Remember to praise as well as criticize * Join in celebrating the mentee’s successes   **Case 3: The mired mentee and Case 4: Too similar** (15-25 mins)  First, trainer/s should select their preferred case discussion method/s for Case 3 and Case 4 from the ‘Guidance for trainer/s section’.  If time permits, encourage participants to share any experiences or examples which are relevant to the topics covered in the cases and the trainer/s can do the same.  One method could be for roughly one half of the participants, in small groups of three or four, to discuss Case 3 and the other half, again in small groups, discuss Case 4 (in **HO1 cases to distribute.doc**).  Then invite two or three of the groups who discussed Case 3 and then Case 4 to feed back their ideas and suggestions (making sure that only new suggestions are contributed rather than repeating what has come before) to the full-group.  Encourage participants in the full-group discussion to make additional suggestions or comments, contribute relevant real-life examples/experiences and question (respectfully!) the contributions being made.  A major point to draw out from Case 3 (if not raised already) is that perhaps Zeke is getting bogged down in his writing but is afraid to tell his mentor. To stimulate discussion, the trainer/s could ask the group: *how would you approach Zeke about this problem?* Note that later in this module there will be advice on avoiding and overcoming such ‘writer’s block’ so there is no need to go into great depth here.  A major point to draw from Case 4 is that Beth has plagiarized. To stimulate discussion, the trainer/s could ask the full-group: *how would you approach Beth about this problem?* Note that later in this module the subject of plagiarism will be covered.  Trainer/s might want to note AuthorAID resources, including blog posts and resource-library materials, on avoiding plagiarism, which can be found on their website (refer participants to **Box 1** in the participant handbook).  Invite participants to add new suggestions to their notes under Cases 3 and 4 before moving on to the next case.  Display **slide 5** and explain to participants, that for the next part of the module, we will be focusing on approaching a writing project and how best mentors can support mentees on the different elements involved.  **Small group discussion task: Establishing the mindset** (5-10 mins)  A discussion task is presented on **slide 6*.*** Invite participants to discuss the questions (in blue) in pairs and/or groups of three. It is intended to encourage participants to think how mentees can make effective use of constructive criticism of their writing.  Invite some pair and/or small-group members (not all) to share their observations with the full-group.  If not raised by participants in the discussion, the trainer/s could highlight the following key points, before moving on to the next topic:   * Remember that the author is writing to communicate, not to impress. * The mentee needs to realize that those reading their work want them to do well, for example journal editors, peer reviewers, professors etc. The purpose of their constructive criticism is to help the author to succeed.   **Paired discussion task: Knowing the ethics** (15-25 mins)  Invite participants in pairs to discuss the following question (you may want to write this on a flipchart or whiteboard), while displaying **slide 7**at the same time: *What do you think are the key dos and don’ts related to each of the principles, that you would want to discuss with a mentee?*  Invite some participants (not all) to share their key points with the full–group. Keep an eye on the time, as this is a topic which can open up a lot of discussion and is better covered in more depth within the context of a wider research writing course or workshop (reference the AuthorAID Research Writing Toolkit as an example).  The trainer/s could hand out some key points related to the six principles at the end of this task (see **HO3 principles ethics.docx**), so participants can note down any new points which came out of discussions.  **Mini presentation: Preparing to write** (5-10 mins)  Display **slide 8.**The trainer/s should note the importance of authors obtaining and following journals’ instructions. If appropriate, the trainer/s might ask what style manuals, if any, participants are familiar with.  If time and internet permits, follow the hyperlinks to one or two of the listed style manuals and briefly show the range of content.  **Hot seating activity: Doing the writing** (10-20 mins)  Explain to the full-group that one of the trainer/s is going to adopt the role of a mentee who is suffering from an initial ‘writer’s block’ and is asking their mentor for advice on a) how to improve the way they organize content before writing and b) how to overcome their writer’s block.  The trainer sits in front of the group, explaining their situation and the type of advice required, then invites the participants (who all take the role of mentor) to give concrete advice directly to the mentee.  The suggestions made by the group could be noted on a flipchart, by the second trainer, and posted on the wall for the duration of the workshop.  Some suggestions for preparing to write might include:   * Making lists of points or outlines * Drawing concept maps * Using colour coding * Writing ideas on cards or sticky notes and moving them around to achieve an effective structure * Stacking papers in the order the mentee plans to cite them   Some suggestions for trying to overcome a writer’s block might include:   * Scheduling specific times to write for example, the mentee could write down their usual weekly schedule and block out times to write or schedule writing for times of day when they function best. * Starting with whatever part the mentee might find easiest. The trainer/s might want to share the story of the graduate student who had terrible writer’s block and so began by writing the acknowledgments! * Not interrupting writing to search for small details * Realizing that often in writing there is no ‘one right way’ but rather a series of problems with more than one solution.   **Individual reflection: Revising your work** (10-15 mins)  One of the trainer/s could tell the story of the guest speaker (a researcher known for submitting excellent journal articles) who, when asked whether they revise their manuscripts before submission, replied: “If I’m lucky, only ten times”.  Ask participants to individually reflect on their experiences of revising their own work. Then ask each participant to note down one of the most important pieces of learning they have taken away from their experiences, which would be useful to share with a mentee.  One example has already been provided on **slide 9**for the trainer/s to present first. In conjunction with the first bullet point, the trainer/s could also mention the possibility of seeking an AuthorAID mentor to help with this task. Refer them to the website link in **Box 1** in the participant handbook.  Once the participants have had time to reflect, ask them to share their learning points with the full-group (not repeating learning points already shared), while one of the trainer/s or participants types up the contributions on the slide or flipchart paper.  **Full-group discussion task: Questions to consider in revising** (5-10 mins)  The trainer/s can share the example questions in **Resource 12** in the participant handbookthen ask participants in the full-group to volunteer and discuss any additional questions that could be added to the list of questions. Allow some time for the participants to note them down in their handbooks.  **End of day or module reflection** (20-30 mins)  Trainer/s can share a summary of the day’s or module’s activities and the highlights for them as trainer/s. Then invite participants to share their reflections on the day’s or module’s work and impressions of the workshop.  Finish by asking participants to individually fill out exit cards. Display **slide 10** (on animation fade setting) with the instructions. Make sure the colours of the sticky notes or cards 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. |