

Title: **Academic reading and writing retreats for students:
Using extracurricular provision to explore curricular
content to enhance student learning**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Consider the relationship between learning development, disciplinary learning and the relationship between academics and learning developers in planning extra-curricular learning events.
- Share experiences and concerns regarding the above.
- Identify opportunities to further embed subject and discipline-specific concepts and learning within extra-curricular learning development events in their practice.

Session Outline

The session will showcase two student-facing learning development initiatives from Keele University's Student Learning team. Both sit outside the timetabled curriculum yet provide spaces for students to explore academic practices within their disciplinary identities, concepts and assignments:

- 1. Academic Reading Retreats** - have been developed to provide time for deeper learning (Marton & Säljö, 1976) about the *purpose* of enquiry and the relationship of reading to enquiry (MacLellan, 1997; McAlpine, 2012). Focused on the art of navigating academic journal articles, 'open' reading retreats attract undergraduates and postgraduates from a range of disciplines, as well as, and uniquely, academics who attend as 'readers-in-residence'. Academic reading retreats are whole-day events, providing interdisciplinary group discussion and learning. This presentation will discuss the development of our interdisciplinary reading retreats, sharing the evaluative data gathered thus far and future directions.
- 2. Student Writing Retreats** - Staff and researcher writing retreats have a range of benefits from improved productivity and motivation through to an increased self-identification as 'writers' (Moore, 2003; Murray and Newton, 2009; Papen and Theriault, 2017; Swaggerty et al., 2011). As such, we made structured writing retreats available to all UG and PG students in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 academic years. This presentation will detail the progress of these retreats and discuss future directions.

Both of these initiatives receive excellent feedback from the staff and students that engage with them and have led to embedded instances within formal curricula. Furthermore, when evaluated, participants report that these initiatives have played a key role in their progression and development. Both academic reading retreats and student writing retreats provide a space for collaboration and conversation across disciplinary borders. This workshop, whilst practically demonstrating some of the ways in which we engage participants, will discuss the value of this conversational space.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

- Reflective activity centred upon academic reading – 5 minutes
- Reflective group discussion centred upon reading activity – 5 minutes
- Outline of academic reading retreat structures and methods – 10 minutes
- Structured writing activity – 5 minutes
- Reflective group discussion centred upon writing activity – 5 minutes
- Outline of student-facing writing retreats – 10 minutes
- Discussion of the intersecting themes present in both types of retreat – 5 minutes

The workshop will model some of the methods we use in delivering our academic reading retreats and student writing retreats whilst engaging participants in reflective discussions throughout.

References

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- Moore, S., (2003). Writers' retreats for academics: exploring and increasing the motivation to write. *Journal of further and higher education*, 27 (3), 333-342.
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- Papen, U. and Thériault, V., (2017). Writing retreats as a milestone in the development of PhD students' sense of self as academic writers. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 40(2), 1-15.
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