

Setting up your own Writing Retreat

A Bristol Doctoral College (BDC) guide and checklist



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What is a writing retreat?

A writing retreat is a structured event consisting of dedicated writing time, writing exercises, and group discussion. Writing alongside peers creates a common purpose and sense of accountability to help you focus.

Steps to follow

1. Determine the length and capacity 🕒

How long and what time will the retreat be?

- Each writing block can be anywhere from 25 minutes to 1.5 hours long
- Determine how long each block will be and how many blocks to include in your retreat
- Consider what time of day works best for you

How many people do you plan to include?

- This will help you determine what kind of venue would be suitable.
- See 'Choose a venue' section for venue options.

2. Create a structure for the retreat

A writing retreat generally includes the following elements:

– Discussion

Spend 5 to 10 minutes discussing your writing goals for the session. Other topics could include:

- What helps you write in a focused way?
- What stops you from being productive?
- What are you writing today?

– Warm up

Spend 5 minutes writing continuously without worrying about content, grammar or style. This is known as freewriting. It can help you collect your thoughts and ideas and get into the correct mindset to generate lots of words! It's best to use a pen and paper, which can enhance your creativity. You can write about your research or something low stakes – such as your dream holiday or your favourite meal.

– Writing block(s) followed by a break

This is a period of focused writing, undertaken in silence alongside your peers. The number and length of writing blocks is up to you. If you include more than one, be sure to schedule a break (or breaks), and encourage participants to stretch and move away from their laptop(s).

– Writing goal review

Finish the event by discussing your writing with other attendees. Topics might include:

- How do you feel?
- Did you achieve what you had hoped for? If not, why not?

– Sample structure

Time	Activity
9 am	Welcome and discussion
9:10 am	Writing warm up
9:15 am	Writing block
10:30 am	Break (walk around Royal Fort Gardens)
10:45 am	Writing block
12 (noon)	Writing goal review and goodbyes

3. Choose and book a venue 🏠

PGRs can book the Training Room (2.22), or Breakout Room (2.21) located in the PGR Hub using [Microsoft Bookings](#). If the retreat will be more than three hours, send an email to uob-pgr-hub@bristol.ac.uk to check room availability and book.



The Training Room 2.22 is suitable for up to 40 participants



The Breakout Space 2.21 is suitable for 6 to 8 participants

You can also [book a group study room](#) on UoB campus.

4. Get the word out 🔔

Let people know about your writing retreat by creating a poster for local notice boards, posting on social media, or using WhatsApp. Ask that interested parties confirm their attendance with a direct message or email.

5. Confirm event details with attendees

Once you have completed steps 1-4, send confirmed participants a calendar invite that includes:

- Date/time
- Location
- Details of what to expect (schedule of writing retreat)
- Items they should bring on the day
 - Laptop and charger cable
 - Paper and pens for warm-up writing
 - Snacks for breaks

Further support

If you have any questions or concerns, email us at:

doctoral-college@bristol.ac.uk

If you would like the BDC to help promote your writing retreat, contact bdc-engagement@bristol.ac.uk. Please note that for the BDC to promote your event, it must be open to PGRs working in any discipline, at any stage of their research degree. Otherwise, please contact your school for further promotion.