

Writing Retreats

Graduate program faculty led a writing retreat for the program where they shared writing strategies, drafting/outlining techniques, and advice on how to create a more polished written work. [Sample Writing Retreat](#).

Student Feedback

A majority of the graduate students surveyed had participated in a writing retreat before and saw the value for continuing to attend writing retreats both within and outside their particular program. For writing retreats within the program, graduate students most valued the interactions with their cohort and faculty advice or tips. Students also found appreciated topics on scheduling or organizing writing time and recommendations for creating a writing space. Students appreciated the dedicated writing time provided during the event. Participants felt attending the writing retreat motivated them to write and made them more accountable to writing.

Students overwhelmingly recommended the retreats continue in future years:

“If the (program) offered this more often, I would definitely attend (time permitting).”

“I think the (program) needs to offer more opportunities to advance our writing with these types of retreats. At times it's hard to join other retreats and this one was better because it was with other (program) folks.”

“I think it helped to have the program organize the retreat and to have people from all over the (program) participate. Sometimes when I organize writing groups with friends, it's harder to keep things focused on getting things done since we all want to socialize.”

“For those of us out of coursework, connecting with our cohorts and finding space for writing is more difficult.”

Many participants appreciated the virtual space for writing. Even post-pandemic, students saw benefit to maintaining virtual writing retreat events:

“Yes. It is helpful to have a structured space for students to see each other and work together. Even after the pandemic, virtual writing retreats must remain. Virtual writing retreats that are structured and hosted by a faculty member are low-stakes and low-cost ways to get students involved. Students who participated in the writing retreat lived far and wide and were in different cohorts and emphasis areas. Getting a group of students like this together would not have been as likely on campus due to various factors, including conflicting schedules.”

Students recommended a longer retreat with more writing time, flexibility in scheduled offerings, time for peer review and feedback, and the possibility to work in groups by choice or subject. They also saw a need for courses devoted to academic writing, grant/fellowship applications, and sessions on collaborative writing.

Summary

Students found benefits in a program-based writing retreat and benefited from interacting with faculty within their graduate programs on writing within the specific field. Often discussions about writing and helpful writing habits can go unaddressed in coursework or research conversations, making events such as writing retreats vital for facilitating conversations about this critical part of a graduate degree. Faculty within the discipline can serve as relevant role models for writing and can provide encouragement for students in the writing phase. Graduate programs should consider offering regular writing retreat events or virtual writing spaces to create these opportunities for their students.