

Launch of new Write Now website

The new Write Now CETL website was launched on 12 March 2010 and is available at www.writenow.ac.uk.

This is an exciting development for Write Now and underpins our efforts to make Write Now information easily accessible to HE institutions and in particular to learning developers, academics, lecturers, writing specialists and senior managers. We hope that the new design and structure of the site will assist those interested in writing development to find information on our many areas of work, including peer mentoring, writing centres, and writing and assessment in the disciplines.

Over the coming months a range of additional resources will be added to the website to enable institutions to benefit from the experiences gained at London Metropolitan, Liverpool Hope and Aston universities. These will include guides on key areas of our work, assessment and feedback inventories, research results on the effectiveness of peer mentoring and case studies on a range of writing in the disciplines projects.

Why not visit the website and take a look at www.writenow.ac.uk – and please do keep returning, as our new guides will be added to the site during June and July.

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Writing development in Higher Education international conference

Registration now open

Registration is now open for the 13th Writing Development in Higher Education conference on "Sustainable writing development: approaches and challenges" which is being hosted by the Write Now CETL. The conference will take place from 28 to 30 June 2010 at the Royal College of Physicians in London.

Keynote speakers at the conference will be: **Dr Theresa Lillis** from the Centre of Language and Communication at the Open University, and **Professor Andrea Lunsford**, Professor of English and Director of the Program in Writing and Rhetoric at Stanford University, California.

There will be an optional early morning workshop on Tuesday 29 June, presented by the Write Now CETL team on using free online tools to support writing development. This will provide a whistle-stop tour of

freely available online tools

that support writing development for all. The workshop will provide a foundation for independent exploration of the tools throughout the conference, and further guidance will be available at the in-house cyber-station.

The conference will provide an excellent forum for meeting colleagues from the UK and overseas to explore the future direction of student writing development and writing in the academic disciplines.

Full information on the conference programme, presentations and workshops will be available from mid March 2010 at www.writenow.ac.uk then click on the WDHE button. Remember to book early to secure your early bird reduction!



Write Now CETL in a nutshell

Overview of projects supporting the development of academic writing

Write Now CETL is a partnership between London Metropolitan University, Liverpool Hope University and Aston University and is funded by HEFCE.

Write Now works with students, academics and educational and staff developers to improve students' academic writing. We aim to enrich students' learning experiences by enabling them to develop academic and disciplinary identities as empowered, confident writers. The key features of our work are described below and further details on all initiatives are available on our website.

Development of writing centres - The Write Now CETL provides funding for the Writing Centre at London Metropolitan, and for writing mentors at the Liverpool Hope Writing Centre and at the Aston Learning Development Centre. The work of these centres is dedicated to promoting a discipline-specific approach to writing improvement for students and staff. Examples of academic writing development activities include peer tutoring programmes, writers' groups and student-authored resources.

Peer mentoring in academic writing

- The three partner institutions train undergraduate and postgraduate students to work as writing mentors with fellow students on all aspects of the academic writing process. Our peer mentoring programmes are underpinned by the belief that fellow students, who are peer collaborators rather than teachers, can provide an effective approach to creating better student writers. This approach complements writing development opportunities embedded within disciplinary teaching or offered through other university departments.

Writing and assessment in the disciplines - A central aim of our work is to promote and facilitate the embedding of writing practices within the academic curriculum. This Writing in the Disciplines approach is premised on a

fundamental connection between writing and thinking, and consequently an equally important connection between students' writing and learning. Opportunities to practise writing as part of their subject-based tuition helps students to develop an understanding of what they are studying as well as an ability to adopt the writing conventions of their discipline. Embedding the teaching of writing in the curriculum also means that all students are given the opportunity to benefit, rather than just those who seek additional support.

Write Now advocates an approach to assessment that views it as a means of facilitating students' learning and writing development. Assessment and feedback processes are thus used to enable students to continually improve and learn from their written work.

Writing centres
Peer mentoring
Writing & assessment
Staff development programmes
Technology & writing
Pedagogical research

Write Now staff collaborate with lecturers to design and sometimes assist in the teaching of disciplinary modules, with the aim of embedding effective writing and assessment practices within the subject-based teaching curriculum. The aim is that, after a period of initial support, lecturers are enabled to continue this work on their own. We have worked on numerous curriculum design projects, for example in the

disciplines of business, computer science, design, education, film studies, psychology, religious studies, sports science and postgraduate skills training programmes.

Staff development programmes - In addition to the development opportunities offered by writing and assessment curriculum design projects, Write Now organises a wide range of staff development programmes. These include writing for publication workshops, designed to enable staff to find time, space and motivation to write for publication, and an assessment roundtable, which allows departmental staff to explore the design of effective student assignments and how they are assessed.

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Write Now CETL in a nutshell

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Technology & writing - We collaborate with subject experts, writing specialists, learning development staff and students to develop learning technology that supports student writing development and underpins blended learning initiatives. We work with digital technologies including social media, virtual learning environments and multimedia tools. The resources we develop will be made available on our website, including our online Freewrite tool that can be tailored to support students' writing within disciplines.



Peer mentors' training session

Pedagogical research - Write Now takes an evidence- and theory-based approach to the development of its work with students and staff, and we investigate the effectiveness of our initiatives through a comprehensive programme of research. Current projects include:

- Writing in the disciplines action research collaborations with staff
- Effectiveness of peer-led writing tutorials on student learning, achievement and retention
- Lecturers' perceptions of assessment, marking and feedback
- International students' experiences of academic writing in the UK
- Using wikis and blogs to support writing development
- Feedback quality in an age of widening participation.

Over the coming months we will be including articles about different areas of our work in Write Now News.

Recent publications

Dr Peter O'Neill, Senior Lecturer in Academic Writing, and Dr Dipti Bhagat, John Cass Department of Art, Media and Design, at London Metropolitan University have written the following article about a writing in the disciplines initiative for first year design students at London Metropolitan:

- Bhagat, D., O'Neill, P. (2010). Writing design: A Collaboration Between the Write Now CETL and The Sir John Cass School of Art, Media and Design. *Art, Design and Communication in Higher Education*, Special issue.

Julian Brasington, Writing Centre Coordinator, and Wendy Smeets, Writing Specialist, at Liverpool Hope University, discuss in the following article the role of peer writing tutors and the valuable insights into student writing that are gained during tutorials:

- Brasington, J., Smeets, W. (2009). Peer writing tutors: insights from the tutorial process. *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* Fall 2009 Vol 7 Issue 1 <http://projects.uwc.utexas.edu/praxis>.

Writing essays @ University, available as a PDF at www.writenow.ac.uk/assessmentplus/documents/WritingEssaysAtUni-11.pdf, is designed to help students understand how the assessment system works, how to avoid some common pitfalls and how to succeed in written assignments. The book was written by Professor Lin Norton, Write Now Director of Research, and Edd Pitt, Lecturer, both at Liverpool Hope; Dr Kathy Harrington, Write Now CETL Director, London Metropolitan; Professor James Elander, Head of the Centre for Psychological Research, University of Derby; and Peter Reddy, Teaching Fellow in Psychology, Aston University:

- Norton, L., Pitt, E., Harrington, K., Elander, J., Reddy, P. (2009). *Writing Essays @ University: A Guide for Students, by Students*, Write Now.

Investigating the effectiveness of peer writing tutorials

Pathways to success through peer mentoring project

As part of a larger project focusing upon peer mentoring in Higher Education, researchers at Aston, London Metropolitan and Liverpool Hope Universities are investigating the effectiveness of peer academic writing tutorials on student learning, achievement and retention. This work is part of a HEFCE and Paul Hamlyn sponsored programme entitled 'Pathways to Success through Peer Mentoring Project'. This project is led by Aston University and involves seven institutions in total (see [www.actiononaccess.org/?p=11 3 2 5](http://www.actiononaccess.org/?p=11325) for further information).

The project will utilize a mixed methodological approach comprising surveys, interviews and focus groups to look at the effectiveness of different models of student-to-student interaction and their contribution to student engagement, retention and success. The diversity and experience of the project partners is a key strength of the project. For further information please contact Dr Jane Andrews at Aston University, j.e.andrews@aston.ac.uk

As part of the project student writers and mentors are taking part in surveys, interviews and focus groups at Aston, London Met and Liverpool Hope. Additionally, a statistical analysis comparing the academic outcomes for students who have, and have not, participated in writing mentoring, is also being undertaken at all three institutions.

Further information on the Pathways project will be made available over the coming months.

A writing mentor's view

Tulpesh Patel reports on a visit to Oslo University College

Aston University has been collaborating with Oslo University College, Norway (OUC), to help them establish a peer writing mentor scheme. Tulpesh Patel, an Aston writing mentor, reports on his visit to the OUC to give a presentation to 30 staff and students interested in the scheme:

"At the time of my visit, the OUC scheme had only been running for a matter of weeks. My presentation focussed on how the scheme is run and evaluated at Aston and also on my subjective experience as a mentor and my thoughts on what works and where we can still make improvements.

Four of the OUC's mentors also recounted their early experiences, which were similar to my own in terms of expectations, worries and interactions with their mentees. They also shared tips on how they run their sessions, including the use of coloured pens to aid students in visualising the structure of their work, an excellent idea which I then fed back to the team at Aston.

Whilst I did my utmost to transmit my enthusiasm for

mentoring and what I see as the benefits both to the students and the university as a whole, I also looked at the concerns we have at Aston so that the OUC team were aware of potential hurdles, such as the common misconception that mentoring is either remedial or simply a proofreading service. There were also suggestions by some OUC staff that mentoring was irrelevant if students were not offered subject-specific advice. I explained that writing mentors focus on producing 'better *writers*, not better *writing*' and that mentoring is about improving the students' confidence and assisting them in developing their own disciplinary thinking and understanding through writing

I hope that the ongoing collaboration between Aston and the OUC will assist them in establishing a worthwhile and forward thinking mentoring scheme of their own."

North, S.M. (1984). The idea of a Writing Centre. *College English* 46, pp. 433-446.



Tulpesh Patel

Lecturers' orientations to assessment Working towards a theoretical explanation

At the 13th biannual European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI) conference from 25 to 29 August 2009 in Amsterdam, Lee Shannon, a Write Now research assistant at Liverpool Hope University, gave a presentation on 'Lecturers' orientations to assessment: working towards a theoretical explanation'. This work reported on a qualitative study in which twenty lecturers from three North West Higher Education institutions took part in semi-structured interviews exploring views of assessment, marking and feedback.



Lee Shannon

The main findings revolved around the construction of two both complementary and competing frameworks for conceptualising the assessment relationship between lecturers and students. The first framework, the **Professional Orientation**, emphasises the need for students to gain skills and knowledge, anchoring assessment in a real world professional context. It also favours small stylistic changes in pedagogical approach over time, rather than wholesale shifts to different forms of pedagogy. It views assessment as a 'standardising' event, relating to the fulfilment of professional competencies, and feedback as a direct means of improving student written work.

The **Experiential Orientation** emphasises the need for students to gain skills and knowledge but also adds an element of personal development, anchoring assessment in a developmental context. It focuses on wholesale pedagogical change towards a personal developmental approach. The Experiential Orientation sees assessment as a developmental event, relating to the promotion of student learning rather than external validation, and feedback as an indirect means of improving student work.

These orientations draw together some of the central metaphors that often dichotomise debates about the purposes of Higher Education, i.e. between training and qualification on the one side and holistic/personal development on the other. The presentation concluded with the assertion that knowledge of competing frameworks and the particular foci on which they rely produces a richer account of assessment pedagogy.

Further information on the conference presentation is available at www.earli2009.org

The Liverpool Hope team will be reporting further on their research findings relating to assessment in future issues. They will also be adding research findings and research tools to the Write Now website over the coming months. To view details of articles and presentations by Write Now and Writing Centre staff, please visit the Publications page on the Write Now website.

Archive of peer writing tutorials

Write Now at London Metropolitan is developing an archive of face-to-face peer writing tutorials. These sample tutorials will help researchers, educationalists and students to find out more about the different types of learning that take place during peer tutorials. To date 25 tutorials have been recorded and we will continue recordings in the spring term 2010, with the aim of gaining richer data by covering a wider variety of disciplines. Guidelines on using the archive are being developed prior to making the archive available on the Write Now website.

Who's who

Write Now CETL directors

Dr Kathy Harrington

Write Now Director
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Kathy provides overall strategic leadership for Write Now's programmes. Her work involves contributing to all of the core activities, including resource development, teaching students, pedagogical research and staff development. For further information on Kathy's research and publications see www.writenow.ac.uk/KathyHarrington

Professor Lin Norton

Write Now Director of Research
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Lin's role is to establish and drive forward a high quality research programme across Write Now's collaborating institutions by working closely with the CETL team to identify research opportunities within and outside of the CETL. An over-arching responsibility is to co-ordinate the research projects to ensure maximum reach and impact. For further information on Lin's research and publications see www.writenow.ac.uk/LinNorton

Dr Ged Hall

Write Now Deputy Director
hallg@hope.ac.uk



As Deputy Director Ged assists Kathy and Lin in overseeing Write Now's projects and research. He is Manager of Liverpool Hope's Student Success Zone which houses the Writing Centre, the Write Now CETL, Career Development and the LearnHigher team. For further information on Ged's work and publications see www.writenow.ac.uk/GedHall

Events

Presentations will be given by staff from Liverpool Hope and London Metropolitan universities at the following events:

"Unwritten and Rewritten: Spaces for International Dialogue and Higher Education Writing Research, Part I"
Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), 17–20 March 2010, Louisville, Kentucky

- *Negotiating academic identities: students' experiences of academic writing in an era of internationalisation of higher education* - Melanie Brinkschulte (Göttingen University) and Peter O'Neill (London Metropolitan)

"Challenging the curriculum: exploring discipline boundaries in art, design and media"

5th Centre for Learning & Teaching in Art & Design (CLTAD) international conference, 12-13 April 2010 in Berlin

- *Writing design*
- *The implications of widening participation research in art and design for higher education practitioners* – Both presentations by Dr Dipti Bhagat and Dr Peter O'Neill (London Metropolitan)

"(Re) Thinking and (Re) Situating the Writing Center and WAC connection in Europe and Beyond"

7th European Writing Center Association (EWCA) conference, 24–28 May 2010 at the American University in Paris

- *Writing Centre data: a means towards curriculum-based writing solutions* - Julian Brasington and Wendy Smeets (Liverpool Hope)
- *Writing programme design consultancy: Collaborations between departmental staff and the writing centre* - Wendy Smeets (Liverpool Hope)
- *Researching the role of the Writing Centre in promoting "Writing in the Disciplines" in UK Higher Education* – Panel presentation – Dr Peter O'Neill, Dr Kathy Harrington, Roger Gossett, Debbie Holley and Rosemary Stott (London Metropolitan)
- *Using wikis in training and to support reflective practice in the Writing Centre* - Dr Kathy Harrington, Dr Peter O'Neill, Savita Bakhshi, Lynn Reynolds and a number of writing mentors (London Metropolitan)

For full information on the Write Now staff please visit the Contact us section of our website.



Stats corner ...

Writing tutorial attendance figures at London Metropolitan

In each issue of Write Now News we'll highlight some interesting statistics gathered during our research into the effectiveness of our various projects

This month we look at the attendance statistics for peer writing tutorials at the London Metropolitan University Writing Centre, and compare the figures for the Autumn terms of 2008 and 2009. Figure 1 below shows that there was an encouraging increase in the number of tutorials rising from 440 in 2008 to 534 in 2009. A breakdown of the figures for the two terms can be seen in Figure 2 below.

Figure 1

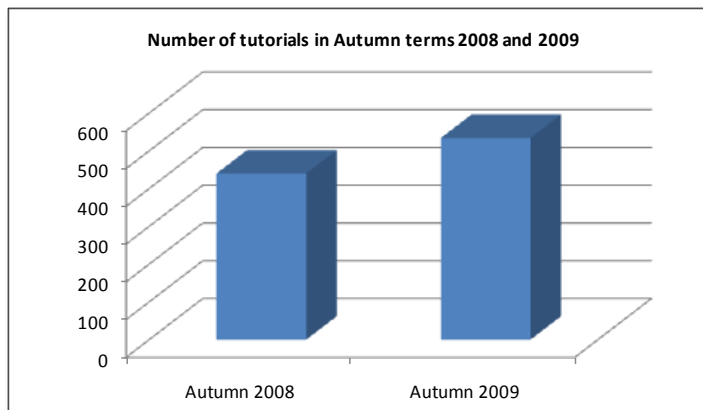


Figure 2

	Autumn term 2008	Autumn term 2009
Face-to-face tutorials	433	491
Online tutorials	7	43
Total face-to-face and online tutorials	440	534
Average no. of tutorials per week	44	48.5

Face-to-face peer writing tutorials have been offered at the London Met Writing Centre since 2006/07, and in Autumn term 2008, a pilot was held to allow students the additional option of online tutorials. The number of face-to-face tutorials held in the Autumn term of 2008 and 2009 increased from 433 to 491, and the number of online tutorials held increased from 7 to 43. As London Metropolitan University is split between several sites around London, it is hoped that online tutorials will increase in popularity for those students not based at the two main sites where face-to-face tutorials are offered.

Articles in this issue were contributed by: Dr Kathy Harrington, Savita Bakhshi, Dr Jane Andrews, Julian Brasington, John Murray, Tulpesh Patel, Lee Shannon, Wendy Smeets, Jane Ferguson

For further information: Visit www.writenow.ac.uk or email j.ferguson@londonmet.ac.uk