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# Crynoldebau / abstracts

Shut Up and Write: Running an Online Writing Support Group

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One of the main challenges for distance learners is that finding the time and motivation to study can be incredibly challenging. In the Department of Information Studies we have around seven hundred distance learning students, many of whom are returning to study after several years out of formal education, are working full time in professionally relevant occupations, and who often have demanding personal commitments such as young families or being primary care givers. Finding the time and inclination to sit down and study, often in isolation, can be difficult in these circumstances. This presentation outlines an experiment with a group of distance learning students to see if Shut Up and Write sessions could overcome some of these barriers to study and progress.

Based an idea originating in the creative writing community, SUAW has been used amongst some online PhD communities and has an academic counterpart run via Twitter. Shut Up and Write is based on the idea that study/writing is more effective when:

a) It is social

b) It is undertaken in short, concentrated bursts

c) Students feel some sense of ‘accountability’

In this study the moderator used Twitter to build a social study space where students could commit to working for blocks of time alongside other students under the guidance of the moderator. The aim was to encourage students to share study experiences, create a supportive environment for study, and build social links between students. This paper reports back on the student experience of this experiment and assess the value of SUAW sessions in supporting students in their studies.