

Thesis/Dissertation  
Manuscript  
Grant

**GROUPS**

**CSU Writes  
Research Writers'**

**HANDBOOK**



**CSU WRITES**  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

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For more information, contact CSU Writes at: [csuwrites@colostate.edu](mailto:csuwrites@colostate.edu) or go to:  
[CSUWrites.ColoState.edu](http://CSUWrites.ColoState.edu)

Dear Colleagues,

This handbook is designed to support research and academic writers in their participation in a CSU Writes writing or feedback group at Colorado State University—Fort Collins. It was drafted during the fall semester 2020, when many of graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, researchers, and faculty found their regular campus work and writing routines disrupted by COVID-19 safety protocols. Our goal is to provide a guide that researchers across campus can use to create and to participate in highly supportive and productive research writing groups. A need made all the greater given the context of writing during a global pandemic.

This guide was drafted and will continue to be added to and edited by Dr. Kristina Quynn, Director of CSU Writes (CSUW) and Kira Marshall McKelvey, a doctoral student in Communication Studies and CSU Writes Intern. This guide, thus, models a type of collaborative writing and partnership—a version of writing group—in our work together to provide information to you about the types of research writing groups CSU Writes currently organizes.

May you and your group partners have a wonderful low-stakes, collegial experience of accountability (and feedback, if that's your choice) so that each of you might build momentum on your projects during a challenging time. We write better because we write together.

Sincerely,

Kristina Quynn  
Kira Marshall McKelvey

## TYPES OF GROUPS: CSU WRITES

Research writers can benefit from meeting regularly with other researchers to talk about their current writing projects and goals. The benefits of group support for writers have long been understood since the philosophers and playwrights of Ancient Greece to the studies of contemporary academics. Specifically, Robert Boice's research on writing productivity identified that the most prolific academics do a minimum of three things:

- schedule their writing (show up)
- track/log their writing
- are held accountable for meeting the goals they set (bite-sized and regular are best)

Accountability—particularly low-stakes accountability—is the basis of every group CSU Writes organizes and supports. In your group, you may also decide to set meeting times to write together or you may decide to provide feedback on each other's drafts. Low-stakes accountability (versus the higher-stake accountability of deadlines with advisors, committees, panels, or editors), however, will always inform your participation in a group.

The types of groups you can currently participate in through CSU Writes are:

### THESIS / DISSERTATION GROUPS

Thesis and dissertation generating groups support CSU graduate students' academic writing journey as they develop healthy writing habits and skills among peers. Research shows that academics are far more likely to produce *more and better* writing when part of a group. Forming and maintaining a good writing group can be integral to your success as an academic writer.

- **ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GENERATING**  
Accountability groups offer a space for you to discuss your writing goals, to devise strategies for meeting your goals, and to support other writers. Weekly (bi-weekly) writing goal setting and regular writing-focused conversations form the foundation of low-stakes support.
- **WRITE-ON-SITE**  
Write-on-site groups provide regular, set times for writers to write as a group, also to discuss weekly writing goals, and to develop a writing community. During COVID, we recommend meeting virtually on MSTeams, Zoom, or at the CSU Writes [show up & write](#) sessions. You can access via the [CSU Writes website](#).

- **THESIS/DISSERTATION FEEDBACK GROUPS**

Feedback groups are for graduate students who have a draft of a manuscript they will submit for degree completion. Graduate students work with peers across disciplines to revise and edit thesis/dissertation drafts. Most feedback groups are participant led.

Select feedback groups may be organized by a CSU Writes facilitator. CSU Writes generally runs two groups per semester for 4-5 weeks per group. These are intensive, targeted groups that are designed to guide writers through the revising processes of an existing manuscript (up to 30 pages). These groups work well if you have an article or proposal you wish to refine for submission or a chapter of a thesis/dissertation that needs intensive feedback. Participants must be willing to provide reader's feedback on their group members' manuscript as well. Facilitated groups are generally limited to 5 participants.

## **MANUSCRIPT GROUPS (FACULTY / RESEARCHER)**

Manuscript groups support faculty, postdoctoral fellow, and soft-money researchers, providing them with low-stakes, collegial support to move their articles or book manuscripts forward.

- **ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GENERATING**

Most faculty groups are exclusively accountability groups, through which faculty and researchers (postdoctoral fellows and soft-money researchers) from across campus meet regularly to share goals, troubleshoot challenges, and encourage one another. Weekly meetings are recommended; although, some groups have found bi-monthly meetings suit their needs best. The key is regular, routine, low-stakes accountability support for all writers in the group.

- **WRITE-ON-SITE**

Write-on-site groups provide regular, set times for writers to write as a group, also to discuss weekly writing goals, and to develop a writing community. During COVID, we recommend meeting virtually on MSTeams, Zoom, or at the CSU Writes [show up & write](#) sessions. You can access via the [CSU Writes website](#).

- **MANUSCRIPT GENERATING & FEEDBACK GROUPS**

During the fall and spring semesters, CSU Writes has supported small feedback groups (2-5 writers), through which participants generate manuscripts and

eventually, if they choose, transition to reading and providing feedback on the manuscripts. Given COVID protocols, we have rearranged these groups into a MANUSCRIPT SUITE of offerings, which include a designated 2-hour weekly virtual write-on-site sessions (MSTeams) and breakout feedback options starting mid-semester. You can find more information on the faculty pages of the [CSU Writes website](#).

### **GRANT GROUPS (FACULTY & GRADUATE STUDENT)**

Yearly, CSU Writes partners with the Research Acceleration Office (RAO) in the Office of the Vice President of Research (OVPR) has supported small feedback groups (2-5 writers), through which participants generate manuscripts and eventually, if they choose, transition to reading and providing feedback on the manuscripts. Given COVID protocols, we have rearranged these groups into a general GRANT SUITE (with NSF-CAREER breakout sessions to support early career writers) and a specific NIH SUITE. These SUITES include a designated 2-hour weekly virtual write-on-site sessions (MSTeams), writing retreats (FEB & APR), and group feedback options. You can find more information on the faculty pages of the [CSU Writes website](#).

## YOU & YOUR GROUP

Reflecting on your prior research writing experiences, your expectations of “group work,” and your writing goals can help you communicate more clearly with your group members (and to yourself) about what you wish to achieve and to contribute by joining a group.

Below are some questions to answer before your first writing group meeting.

### ACCOUNTABILITY GROUPS

- What are your writing goals?
- What does accountability mean to you?
- What kinds of accountability are you looking for?
- What sorts of accountability have worked for you in the past?
- What sorts of accountability have **not** worked in the past?

### WRITE-ON-SITE GROUPS

- What are your biggest writing challenges/obstacles?
- What are your greatest strengths as a writer?
- If you could change one thing about your writing or your writing process, what would it be?
- Have you changed as a writer over the last five years? If so, why?
- Why do you want to join a writing group?
- What kinds of things do you think a writing group will help you with?
- How can you help others in a writing group?
- What is the best possible outcome for your writing group?

### FEEDBACK GROUPS

- What does good writing feedback mean to you?
- Why do you want to join a feedback group? What are you hoping to get out of this group?
- What are your biggest challenges in the revising and editing stages of your writing?
- What kinds of feedback have you gotten about your writing in the past?
- What can you contribute to a feedback group? What are your feedback/editing strengths?
- What are your writing goals?

### GENERAL ADVICE FOR WRITING GROUPS

- Treat your writing group commitments with the same level of dedication as you would a class, presentation, or advising meeting.

- Communicate with your group members: let them know if something isn't working for you, and, conversely, if something is.
- Meet in a neutral location such as a coffee shop or a study room (make sure you pre-book the study room ahead of time!).
- Be flexible: your group members are figuring this out alongside you. Try to remain flexible and understanding as you collaborate on making this time the most effective for every group member.
- Be vulnerable: let your group know your struggles in addition to your victories. Talking through obstacles and strategies for overcoming those obstacles is one of the key benefits of writing groups.

In 2020, CSU Writes adopted a "Community Writing Guide" to clarify that all writers are welcome and belong in a CSU Writes sponsored event and to acknowledge that for many researchers talking about writing can feel risky and stressful. Dr. Quynn met with members of the Office of Diversity to develop the following guide. Feel free to use it to open your own writing groups sessions (particularly early on when you are getting to know and trust each other).

## COMMUNITY WRITING GUIDE

### Our Writing Community Guide

Be present, honest, authentic

Listen actively and with respect

Be open to and considerate of other perspectives  
(race, ethnicity, nationality, sex/gender, orientation, discipline, appointment)

Share speaking time (avoid dominating)

Encourage others as participants

If uncertain, ask clarifying questions

If challenged, respond with grace

After our time together, share only what is yours to share.



write. early. often. better. together.



CSU WRITES  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

## SET WEEKLY WRITING TARGETS & GOALS

WEEK (date)	WRITING TARGETS & GOALS
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	

This is a model of what you may create in a Word doc., Excel spreadsheet, or other software program so that you might sketch out and set regular goals. Feel free to print this page and fill in by hand if you prefer. Simply “make it your own” by breaking down your writing project(s) into steps and tasks to be undertaken gradually throughout the semester.

# YOUR FIRST MEETING

## THESIS AND DISSERTATION ACCOUNTABILITY GROUPS

The purpose of the first meeting is to set the tone for your accountability group, to establish community guidelines and logistics, and to discuss your personal writing goals. Below is a suggested plan for your first meeting to promote collaboration and long-term success.

### Introductions

- Introduce yourself: your name, pronouns, professional standing (masters student, doctoral student), your department, where you are from, and anything else you would like your group to know about you.
- Introduce the project you are working on: why you are working on the project, how the project originated, what stage you are at with the project, goals you have for the project, and obstacles you have faced/are facing with the project.

### Define Accountability

- What does accountability mean to you?
- What kinds of accountability are you looking for?
- What sorts of accountability have worked for you in the past?
- What sorts of accountability have **not** worked in the past?

These questions do not have a right or wrong answer; they are designed for you to share your insights, experiences, and expectations. They can also help you identify where there are similarities and differences among group members.

### Community Guidelines

- Share the CSU Writes Community Guide reminders
- Develop a list of community guidelines as a reference point throughout the semester. Think of this as “ground rules” for what you expect from yourself and your group members. Examples might be “show respect” or “ask questions.”
- Keep your community guidelines in a place all members of the group can access.
- Use the precursor questions you answered in YOU & YOUR GROUP section as a reference point for developing community guidelines (see below):
  - What is your favorite kind of writing? Why?
  - What is your favorite stage of writing? Why?
  - What is your least favorite stage of writing? Why?

- What are your biggest writing challenges/obstacles?
- What are your greatest strengths as a writer?
- If you could change one thing about your writing or your writing process, what would it be?
- Have you changed as a writer over the last five years? If so, why?
- Why do you want to join a writing group?
- What kinds of things do you think a writing group will help you with?
- How can you help others in a writing group?
- What is the best possible outcome for your writing group?

### Sharing Targets and Goals

- Develop a list of writing projects you wish to complete this semester: sections of thesis/dissertation completed, conference papers/posters presented, proposals submitted, and the like. achieve by the end of the semester. Remember to account for Graduate School submission deadlines, committee and advisor deadlines as they will impact the timeline of your goals.
- Devise a plan for how you will break up your writing goals into weekly sub-goals.
- Add your weekly goals to your “WEEKLY WRITING TARGETS & GOALS” list for the of the semester.
- Share your weekly writing goals with your group.

### Wrap-Up

- Decide on your next meeting time and place. Ideally, your group will meet at the same time and place every week.
- Decide on other logistics: what to bring, assigned snack rotations, etc
- If comfortable, exchange contact info (email, text, GroupMe). Consider creating a writing support group chat for informal support in between meetings.

### THESIS AND DISSERTATION WRITE-ON-SITE GROUPS

The purpose of the first meeting is to set the tone for your writing group, to establish community guidelines and logistics, and to discuss your personal writing goals. Below is a suggested plan for your first meeting to promote collaboration and long-term success. Remember, ACCOUNTABILITY is the basis of write-on-site groups as well.

## Introductions

- Introduce yourself: your name, pronouns, professional standing (masters student, doctoral student), your department, where you are from, and anything else you would like your group to know about you.
- Introduce the project you are working on: why you are working on the project, how the project originated, what stage you are at with the project, goals you have for the project, and obstacles you have faced/are facing with the project.

## Group Writing Ideas

- Discuss how you want to structure group writing time. Some potential ideas to consider:
  - Beginning each meeting with a writing prompt to get creative juices flowing:
    - Describe your current and most present writing project
    - Describe what excites you most about your current writing project
    - Imagine and name your shoulder critics and editors
  - Writing “sprints” (spending 3-5 minutes writing nonstop, then taking a short break).

## Community Guidelines

- Share the CSU Writes Community Guide reminders
- Develop an additional list of community guidelines as a reference point throughout the semester. Think of this as “ground rules” for what you expect from yourself and your group members. Examples might be “show respect” or “ask questions.”
- Keep your community guidelines in a safe place that you can continuously access.
- Use the precursor questions you answered in the CSU Writes GUIDE as a reference point for developing community guidelines

## Writing Goals

- Develop a list of writing goals you would like to achieve by the end of the semester (consider Graduate School submission deadlines, advisor deadlines, etc).
- Discuss your writing goals with your group. Devise a plan for how you will break up your writing goals into weekly sub-goals.

- Create a weekly goals list for the first 7 weeks of the semester (see table below)
- Share your weekly writing goals with your group.

### Wrap-Up

- Decide on your next meeting time and place. Ideally, your group will meet at the same time and place every week.
- Decide on other logistics: what to bring, assigned snack rotations, etc
- If comfortable, exchange contact info (email, text, GroupMe). Consider creating a writing support group chat for informal support in between meetings.

## THESIS AND DISSERTATION FEEDBACK GROUPS

*(these recommendations are for peer-facilitated groups)*

The purpose of the first meeting is to get to know one another, establish community guidelines, and to establish what kinds of feedback each group member is looking for. Remember, ACCOUNTABILITY is the basis of feedback groups as well.

### Introductions

- Introduce yourself: tell your group members what field you are in, where you are in your academic career (Master's student, PhD student, professor, etc). Discuss what project you are working on and at what stage you are at in your project. Additionally, use the feedback guide you filled out prior to this meeting to discuss what kinds of feedback you are looking for and your writing goals (see below):
  - What does good writing feedback mean to you?
  - Why do you want to join a feedback group? What are you hoping to get out of this group?
  - What are your biggest challenges in the revising and editing stages of your writing?
  - What kinds of feedback have you gotten about your writing in the past?
  - What can you contribute to a feedback group? What are your feedback/editing strengths?
  - What are your writing goals?

### Community Guidelines

- Share the CSU Writes Community Guide reminders
- Develop a list of community guidelines as a reference point throughout the semester. Think of this as "ground rules" for what you expect from yourself

and your group members. Examples might be “show respect” or “ask questions.”

- Consider an attendance “policy” for your group.
- Discuss when draft sections should be due on Dropbox and how long each section should be (e.g. “24 hours before our meeting,” “5 double-spaced pages”).
- Remember, “clear is kind.” As a writer, ask for specific types of feedback on specific sections so that the readers know where to focus their feedback. As a reader, direct your feedback to the expressed needs of the writer.
- Avoid making or taking comments on writing as personal or as an attack. Keep comment focused on improving the quality of writing. You can always disagree with compassion and gratitude for your writing colleague.

### **Create/Review Schedule**

- Determine how many and which writers will receive feedback each week. All? One or two? Rotating?
- How many pages can the writer submit to the group for review?
- How long will readers spend providing feedback (15-minutes, 30-minutes, 1-hour)?
- Will feedback be provided prior to session or in session?
- Add your weekly goals to your “WEEKLY WRITING TARGETS & GOALS” list for the of the semester.
- Share your weekly writing goals with your group.

### **Wrap-Up**

- Decide on your next meeting time and place. Ideally, your group will meet at the same time and place every week. (REMOTELY during COVID—Zoom or MSTEAMS)
- Decide on other logistics: what to bring, assigned snack rotations, etc
- If comfortable, exchange contact info (email, text, GroupMe). Consider creating a writing support group chat for informal support in between meetings.

## SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS: MID-SEMESTER

### ACCOUNTABILITY GROUPS: MID-SEMESTER MEETING

The purpose of the mid-semester meeting is to check in on your larger goals, to revisit your group's guidelines, and to boost writing morale. The following guidance can be used at all points of the semester, but is particularly useful for weeks 7-8.

#### Check-in

- Discuss how you're feeling at this point in the semester: how is your research, writing, and/or teaching going?
- What are some academic obstacles you're facing?
- What are some accomplishments you've made or victories you've had so far?

#### Revisit Community Guidelines

- What is working for you in this group?
- What isn't working for you in this group? How can group members work to resolve this issue?
- What do you need from the group for the remainder of the semester?
- Revise your group's community guidelines as needed.

#### Revisit Writing Goals

- Review your semester-long writing goals you made at the first meeting. Discuss the progress you are making toward your goals.
- What helps you with productivity and meeting your goals? Brainstorm as a group.
- Revise your semester goals as needed.
- Make a list of weekly writing goals for the remaining 9 weeks of the semester.

#### Weekly Writing Goals

- Check in about your writing goals for that week. Discuss what went well, obstacles you faced, and other experiences with writing that week.

#### Wrap-Up

- Confirm your next meeting.

## **WRITE-ON-SITE GROUPS: MID-SEMESTER MEETING**

The purpose of the mid-semester meeting is to revisit your community guidelines, to flesh out your semester goals, and to keep making progress on your writing. You can use this meeting plan at any point in the semester, but it is designed with week 7-8 in mind.

### **Group Writing**

- Review and share that week's writing goals with your group. Discuss how you've made progress on your weekly writing goals, and what you hope to accomplish during today's writing session.
- Write! You might try a group freewrite on an agreed upon topic, writing sprints, or another group writing activity. Try to get at least 30 solid minutes of writing in.
- Discuss your progress with your group. Address any obstacles you've faced, tips for working through writing difficulties, and anything else that came up during your writing session.

### **Writing goals**

- Make a list of writing goals for the remainder of the semester

### **Revisit Community Guidelines**

- What is working for you in this group?
- What isn't working for you in this group? How can group members work to resolve this issue?
- What do you need from the group for the remainder of the semester?
- Revise your group's community guidelines as needed.

### **Wrap-Up**

- Confirm your next meeting.

## **FEEDBACK GROUPS: MID-MEETING**

The purpose of the mid-meeting is to continue building a routine and schedule for workshopping each other's papers.

### **Reminders for Individual workshops**

- The writer will discuss the pages they sent their group and will articulate any challenges or concerns they encountered while drafting.
- The readers will then give feedback based on the writer's questions and concerns. Keep in mind the original goals the writer had (for instance, if they want help with organization, keep the grammar comments to a minimum).

- The writer will pose clarifying questions to their readers.
- Repeat until each writer has been workshopped.

### **Community Guidelines**

- Review the community guidelines and consider if your group would like to tweak, add, or change anything.
- Use this time to address any obstacles or issues that have come up in your feedback group (review the interpersonal conflict notes in the general section to guide your discussion).

### **Wrap Up**

- Confirm your next meeting.

## SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS: END-OF-SEMESTER

### ACCOUNTABILITY GROUPS: END-OF-SEMESTER MEETING

The purpose of the end-of-semester meeting is to recognize, honor, and celebrate your accomplishments. This is also a time to review your goals and start generating goals for the following semester. You will take a temperature check on your writing group and consider what you want to change and/or continue during the following semester.

#### Revisit Writing Goals

- Review your writing goals. Check off what you accomplished.
- For all your remaining writing goals, sketch them out, craft a plan.
- Discuss your accomplishments with your group.
- Discuss how you can meet your remaining goals next semester.

#### Group Temperature Check

- Discuss how you are feeling about meeting next semester.
- Would you like to incorporate new members?
- What would you like to keep the same? What would you like to change?
- When would you like to meet? Get a meeting for next semester on the books.

#### Celebrate!

- You did it! You and your group made it through a challenging semester. Use this time as a chance to unwind and debrief. If meeting in-person, bring some celebratory snacks. If meeting remotely, still bring some celebratory snacks! Make a writing group playlist (but be mindful of your surroundings!). Chat with your group members about non-writing group things

### WRITE-ON-SITE GROUPS: END-OF-SEMESTER MEETING

The purpose of the end-of-semester meeting is to finish your writing project strong, boost writing morale, and plan logistics for the following semester. Take this time to celebrate your excellent work together!

#### Group Writing

- Review and share that week's writing goals with your group. Discuss how you've made progress on your weekly writing goals, and what you hope to accomplish during today's writing session.
- As always: Write! You might try a silent freewrite, writing sprints, or another group writing activity.

- Discuss your progress with your group. Address any obstacles you've faced, tips for working through writing difficulties, and anything else that came up during your writing session.

### **Reviewing Writing Goals**

- Review your writing goals. Check off what you accomplished.
- For all your remaining writing goals, write them down on a new document. Keep it in a safe place for next semester.
- Discuss your accomplishments with your group.
- Discuss how you can meet your remaining goals next semester.

### **Group Temperature Check**

- Discuss how you are feeling about meeting next semester.
- Would you like to incorporate new members?
- What would you like to keep the same? What would you like to change?
- When would you like to meet? Get a meeting for next semester on the books.

### **Celebrate!**

- You did it! You made it through a challenging semester. Use this time as a chance to unwind and debrief. Bring some celebratory snacks. Make a writing group playlist (but be mindful of your surroundings!). Chat with your group members about non-writing group things.

## **FEEDBACK GROUPS: FINAL MEETING**

The purpose of the last meeting is to make final comments and to address overall questions/concerns about group members' drafts.

### **Group Temperature Check**

- Discuss if you would like to have another round of your feedback group. Discuss how many more meetings your group would like to hold. Consider deadlines, busy times of the semester, etc.

### **Celebrate**

- You did it! Take some time to celebrate your hard thoughtful and solid work with your group.

## WHEN THINGS GET TOUGH

### GENERAL WRITING GROUP POTENTIAL PITFALLS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

- **Being too busy for group meetings**

Remember that an essential part of the writing process is community and collaboration. Talking about your writing is just as important as physically writing. You wouldn't shirk a meeting with your advisor; your writing group deserves the same respect and dedication.

Try setting up an agreement with your accountability group. Maybe you agree to give at least 24 hours notice if you cannot make that week's writing group. Maybe a certain number of "no-shows" results in leaving the group. The important thing is to communicate expectations and policies with your group.

- **Group members aren't showing up**

As previously mentioned, consider forming a writing group chat so that group members can communicate absences and other related information. If you know you will miss a weekly meeting, be courteous and let your group members know.

Additionally, agree upon a policy regarding showing up for weekly meetings. It may feel harsh and formal at first but will help your group's success in the long run.

- **Feeling guilt/shame for not meeting writing goals**

You do not need to meet your writing goals every week in order to attend writing group. The purpose of writing groups is to share personal highs and lows and to collaboratively discuss strategies that could work in the future. Everyone has days, weeks, and months where they don't get as much done as they initially had hoped. Your group is here to help you, not judge you.

- **Feeling vulnerable**

Writing and talking about writing can be scary and vulnerable. There is often a great deal of pressure tied to academic writing. Remember that the more you practice vulnerability and openness, the easier it gets. Writing group is an opportunity to share your experiences and your work in a low-stakes environment.

- **Not feeling motivated to meet**

Much like writing, exercising, or other habits, gaining motivation is one of the hardest hurdles to overcome. Consider the reward of accomplishing something on your agenda,

or give yourself a reward for committing to your writing group. You might also consider external motivators with your group, such as weekly prizes.

- **Feeling like you have nothing to add to the group**

Remember that your presence is a big component of group success. Even if you do not talk much, being present for your peers means a great deal. Keep in mind that you and your group members are going through the shared experience of graduate school, and as such, your experiences are relevant and helpful.

- **Lacking field expertise**

While being in a different discipline from your group members might seem like a pitfall, it is actually a benefit. Across disciplines, academic writers should be clear and accessible to a wide variety of readers. Reviewers within the same discipline can become clouded by personal expertise. Thus, your experience outside of your group members' disciplines is highly valuable.

- **Interpersonal conflict within your group**

The most important part of working through interpersonal conflict is communicating openly with your group. Here are some specific suggestions for communication:

1. Assess and discuss your conflict style (are you competitive? Collaborative? Compromising? Avoidant? Accommodating?). Consider how different conflict styles might work together.
2. Check your expectations: what expectations might be too high? What expectations can you let go of?
3. Know your goals: consider your goals for writing group and if the conflict is interfering with those goals. If it is, establish an open line of communication with your group to discuss how to reach a fair compromise.
4. Recognize what you can and cannot control.
5. Be proactive, rather than reactive.<sup>1</sup>

- **Lacking community in your group**

While it's great to be productive and use your writing time effectively, these groups are also meant to invite a sense of community. Make sure you are spending time each session debriefing your writing goals and discussing through writing successes and obstacles. Additionally, a group chat via text or GroupMe may help establish community between

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<sup>1</sup> From Dr. Meara Faw's CSU Writes presentation "Collaborating Effectively and Managing Writing Challenges" (2020).

sessions. Lastly, you might consider organizing an informal get together with your group to get to know each other.

## WRITE-ON-SITE POTENTIAL PITFALLS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

- **Experiences a stall or writer's block during a writing session**

Remember that generating isn't all about putting words to paper. If you are stuck on a certain section of your thesis/dissertation, use the time to read scholarship in your area, find/develop images for your project, or simply use the time to breathe and regroup.

Consider keeping a ventilation file or notebook. If feeling stuck, write for a minimum of 15 minutes in your file about your current experience with your writing project. In writing about your being momentarily stuck with your writing can often help you identify places where you can start moving forward:

- Is your project feeling overwhelming?—How might you make it more manageable or to break down sections or targets. Remember you are contributing incremental knowledge or analyses to your field, which is important but does not have to compete for any "best of" prizes.
- What might you need to better understand before moving forward?—What might you benefit by reading, understanding, or considering before writing your current section? Identify, go find, and write along the way!
- Are you stalling by
- This is a strategy recommended by Joli Jensen in *Write No Matter What: Advice for Academics* (2017) because a ventilation file provides you a place to write about you project and tap into some of the deeper reasons why you might have stalled, identify them, and devise strategies for working through them. All, while keeping the pen to the page or fingers to the keyboard so that you are still showing up and writing.

## FEEDBACK GROUP POTENTIAL PITFALLS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

- **You feel as though you are not giving helpful feedback**

Talk to your group members. Ask them about the quality of your feedback. If they respond, ask follow-up questions:

1. What kinds of feedback are you looking for?
2. What has been the most helpful feedback I've given you so far?
3. Where in your draft should I direct my attention?

- **Your group members are not giving you helpful feedback**

This is another issue where simply talking to your group members (and answering the above questions) will likely solve the problem. If it does not, however, direct your group members to some resources on giving helpful feedback such as Richard Straub's ["Responding—Really Responding—to Other Students' Writing."](#)

- **The tone of your group members' feedback is hostile or aggressive**

This is an opportunity to revisit community guidelines and specifically address tone of constructive criticism. Oftentimes rephrasing a comment as a question helps soften the tone and generates better ideas/writing.

# RESOURCES: WRITING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## CSU RESOURCES

CSU Talent Development: <https://training.colostate.edu>

Graduate Center for Inclusive Excellence (GCIM): <https://graduateschool.colostate.edu/diversity/>

CIMER Trained Mentors (see below)

Graduate School Professional Development Series:

<https://graduateschool.colostate.edu/professional-development/>

Writing Center: 30-minute consultations (not editing): <https://writingcenter.colostate.edu>

GRAD 550: STEM Communication (1cr course), Dr. Stuart Tobet, Biomedical Sciences,

<https://www.online.colostate.edu/courses/GRAD/GRAD550.dot>

INTO CSU Grad Pathway (international graduate students)

<https://graduateschool.colostate.edu/admissions-resources/intopathways/>

WiSER: Writing in Science & Engineering to publish Research: (15-week no-cr. course) Dr. Susan DeLong, Civil & Environmental Engineering, on CANVAS

## RECOMMENDED READS ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH WRITERS

CSU Writes has copies of the following and can loan them, if you wish.

Email query to: [csuwrites@colostate.edu](mailto:csuwrites@colostate.edu)

Allen, Jan. (2019) *The Productive Graduate Student Writer*. Stylus Pub.

Glasman-Deal, Hillary. (2009) *Science Research Writing for Non-Native Writers of English*. LCP.

Goodson, Patricia. (2017) *Becoming an Academic Writer: 50 Exercises for Paced, Productive, and Powerful Writing*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Sage Pub.

Heard, Stephen. (2016) *The Scientist's Guide to Writing: How to Write More Easily and Effectively throughout Your Scientific Career*. Princeton U Press.

Jensen, Joli. (2017) *Write No Matter What: Advice for Academic Writers*. Chicago U Press.

Schimel, Joshua. (2012) *Writing Science: How to Write Papers that Get Cited and Proposals that Get Funded*. Oxford U Press.

Swales, John and Christine Feak. (2012) *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. U Michigan Press.

Sword, Helen. (2017) *Air & Light & Time & Space*. Harvard U Press.