BERA GERA WERA Academic Writing Seminars

We welcome you to the Academic Writing Seminars Programme! In 2020 the British Educational Research Association (BERA), The German Educational Research Association, and the World Educational Research Association (WERA) initiated an international collaboration on academic writing for the first time.

The mission of the BERA GERA WERA academic writing seminars is to support participants' academic writing.

The goal of each set of writing seminars is to help participants complete the writing of an excellent conference abstract for a research conference paper submission.

Each academic writing seminars partnership consists of three seminars. In between the seminars there three email exchanges between participants and their academic writing tutorrs to review the progress of participants' writing of a conference abstract.

Writing an Abstract for an Academic Conference Paper

The word 'paper' in the context of a conference presentation is ambiguous because not all conferences require the writing of a full academic paper if people are selected to present research at the conference. Whether there is a requirement for a paper differs according to academic disciplines and according to different conferences. For example the American Educational Research Association (AERA) strongly encourages a final paper to be written and submitted to their repository which is available through the ERIC database system, whereas BERA does not specify what the final output will be.

We have agreed to use BERA's conference paper abstract format for the seminars. Although conferences differ somewhat in their criteria and processes for academic review of abstracts they often have the following criteria: clear research focus; knowledge of the field of research; rigorous methodology; and the presentation of compelling findings, and implications of the research.

The idea of the seminars is that each participant uses their own research project as the basis for writing an abstract as if they were applying to present at the BERA conference. This gives the writing a real purpose.

Sometimes participants cannot use their own research projects so we have two other options:

a. write an abstract based on research you have done that has been completed and that you hope to present at a conference; or,
b. write an abstract based on your master's or ongoing doctoral study.

Expectations of the format for the abstract

The abstract must not exceed 750 words for the main text plus 250 words for references. References should use author-date style (American Psychological Association APA format is common). The title of the abstract should succinctly

summarise the topic of the research to be reported. The first paragraph of the abstract should demonstrate awareness of the field of education research that is relevant to the focus, and clearly identify the contribution that the work makes. The second paragraph should outline the methods used for the research. For theoretical papers this outline should address the approach taken to the argument made in the paper, including theoretical and other relevant influences. The third paragraph should outline the findings of the research. The final paragraph should clearly communicate the implications of the research and demonstrate why it is important.

The tutors will comment on the drafts of the abstracts. They will be guided by the following criteria (which is used by BERA to select applications to attend the BERA annual conference):

- clarity of the focus of the research;
- originality of the research;
- rigour of the research;
- significance of the research for education practice, policy or theory.

For BERA conference abstract submissions each abstract is reviewed by at least two academic reviewers. To protect against personal bias the name of the applicant is not known by the reviewers (a processes known as 'blind' reviewing). Each criterion can attract a maximum score of four points giving a total maximum of 16 points for the abstract. Depending on the number of places available at conference (which during physical attendance relates to the number of rooms available for presentations) the abstracts with the highest total scores are offered places at the conference. All other abstracts are rejected.

Seminar 1: Introduction to the aims of the seminars and to the participants. [Date to be confirmed TBC]

After the first seminar the tutees will be allocated a tutor. The tutee should write the first draft of the conference abstract then send this by email to the tutor. The tutor will respond with some advice about how to improve the abstract. Two other email exchanges will take place, depending on the needs of the participants.

Seminar 2: Participant-led session to discussion progress with academic writing. [Date TBC]

Tutor team organises pairs of tutees who will give feedback to each other and agree a brief written record of what happened and what was learned.

Seminar 3: Reflecting and Learning. [Date TBC]

At the third seminar you will be expected to discuss, in front of all participants, one of the main topics for discussion that arose as you worked with your tutor to write the abstract. In this way all the group will be able to learn from each other. You will be required to prepare a small number of slides that include quotes from your writing to illustrate challenges that you discussed with your tutor.