



hms | hsdm

office for postdoctoral fellows

25 Shattuck Street | Gordon Hall 006 | Boston, MA 02115 | 617.432.6735 | postdoc_office@hms.harvard.edu | postdoc.hms.harvard.edu

HMS/OPF Writing Support Program Curriculum

Professional Correspondence for Scientists (1.5h)

Instructor: Kathy Brenner, Writing Consultant

Description: Scientists are not usually trained to efficiently and effectively communicate with colleagues and potential employers. However, research as well as your career cannot progress without gaining familiarity with best practices in professional correspondence for scientists. Join us for this one-hour seminar as Kathy Brenner describes proper email etiquette along with crafting cover letters for manuscript submission and job applications.

The Cultural Aspects of Writing (2h)

Instructor: Kathy Brenner, Writing Consultant

Description: Writing is cultural - so come join a workshop that will focus on the contrastive rhetoric that will provide explanations for why you write the way you do when dealing with a new language, a new culture, and new expectations. Targeting a specific discourse community (postdoctoral fellows) and a particular writing genre (journal publication), we will look at common writing problems for non-native speakers of English. Aspects such as strength of claim and lexical nuance will be discussed in more depth. Using a PLOS ONE research article, we will touch upon the writing processes of content, context, and form, looking more closely at how language and structure are used to produce selected components from the introduction, methods, results, and discussion sections. *This workshop is designed for non-native speakers of English. Native speakers are welcome to attend.*

Preparation Strategies For Science Writing (6h)

Instructor: Leslie Roldan, PhD, MIT

Description: Instruction will consist of four 1.5-hr stand-alone sessions and will include the following: PPT lectures, hands-on activities (analysis, writing), peer review, and instructor feedback on assignments. Aspects of scientific writing will be covered in the following order:

1. *Visual communication:* crafting effective illustrations for written and oral communication
2. *Genre analysis and Predrafting strategies:* identifying and evaluating the rhetorical choices made in a variety of genres (e.g., research article, grant proposal); learning strategies (storyboarding, generating idea maps, free writing) to craft/refine aim and narrative
3. *Revision strategies:* reverse outlining to improve overall, paragraph structure
4. *Style:* editing at the sentence level to improve clarity of the prose

Course objective: At the conclusion of the workshop series, participants will have a deeper understanding of the processes involved in composing a genre in their profession.



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Writing for Journal Publication (6wk | 12h)

Instructor: Kathy Brenner, Writing Consultant

Description: Writing a manuscript for journal publication is a daunting task, especially for non-native speakers of English. This 6-week course is designed for non-native speakers of English who are at the beginning stages of writing a manuscript. The course will focus on the IMRaD (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) + Abstract template for journal publication, and the understanding of how language and structure produce the necessary component parts. As the weeks pass, the writers will construct and develop manuscripts, section by section. Topics such as culture, the western writing process, revising and editing, and grammar conventions will be discussed. Weekly grammar, structure, and vocabulary will target clarity of writing for the reader. The writers will utilize peer writing groups, peer editing/review, and teacher workshops to explain and describe research, and receive feedback on writing. Ultimately, all writers will learn that language matters.

Expectations and Objectives: Participants will be totally committed to the 6-week course, complete all written assignments, and participate in the assigned peer writing groups as well as class discussions.

- Clarity of language; Audience awareness; Ability to self-edit
- Ability to revise and edit multiple drafts
- Ability to construct a variety of complex sentence structures, deal with grammatical conventions, and produce writing that is clear, concise, and cohesive.
- To produce a draft for authorship team review

Course Structure:

Week 1	IMRaD analysis/template/components Literature analysis; models Journal selection and guidelines Western writing process	Peer writing groups Peer editing Peer review Revising drafts
Week 2	Methods (analysis; components) Complex sentence structures Lexical nuance Strength of claim	Grammar Structure Vocabulary Peer writing/editing
Week 3	Results (analysis; components) Sentence focus Nominalization	Grammar Structure Vocabulary Peer writing/editing
Week 4	Introduction (analysis; components) Discourse markers Active vs. passive voice; verb tenses	Grammar Structure Vocabulary Peer writing/editing
Week 5	Discussion (analysis; components) Parallel structure “Flipping the sentence”	Grammar Structure Vocabulary Peer writing/editing
Week 6	Abstract (analysis; components) Mechanics Wrap up/End of working draft	Grammar Structure Vocabulary Peer writing/editing



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Manuscript Boot Camp (8h)

Instructor: Kathy Brenner, Writing Consultant

Description: Writing a manuscript for journal publication is a daunting task. Because language matters, using correct grammar, appropriate vocabulary, and complex sentence structures can be mystifying. Many postdoctoral fellows recognize that this kind of writing can also be an isolating activity and that finding motivation can sometimes be difficult. To counteract these hurdles, the HMS Office of Postdoctoral Fellows is offering a writing boot camp to help you make progress on your research manuscript while sharing the space with the support of your peers and a professional writing consultant. Moving around the room, answering questions, and discussing your writing, the writing consultant will assist you with writing conventions, strategies, and techniques that will support the linguistic and structural underpinnings of the manuscript content.

The boot camp provides a quiet space with minimal distractions, a writing regimen/routine, peer motivation, and access to a facilitator with writing expertise. The goal is to help you become better writers. Instead of simply producing better papers, the aim is to begin the process of critically evaluating and refining your own writing.

Sample schedule:

- 9:00 – 9:15 am – Sign in, set up, set goals for the day, breakfast
- 9:15 – 10:45 am – Writing, writing, and writing
- 10:45 – 11:00 am – Break for coffee, tea, snacks, stretching session
- 11:00 – 12:00 pm – Writing, writing, writing
- 12:00 – 1:00 – Lunch
- 1:00 – 2:30 pm – More writing
- 2:30 – 2:45 pm – Break for coffee, tea, snacks, stretching session
- 2:45 – 3:45 pm – Even more writing
- 3:45 – 4:00 pm – Accountability session