Helping PhD students overcome writers block

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The process of writing about one’s research is a private, self-mastered activity, and is often not discussed, and thus it is difficult for PhD candidates to solve the problems they face in overcoming writers block. Students need to generate momentum in writing in candidature to ensure long term success and thesis submission. There is a need to teach the skills of writing which are described by Boice (1994) as tacit, by describing and discussing what is known to lead to fluent and stress free writing.

Searching the literature reveals that there is no ‘cure’ for writers block, however, a new workshop series at Flinders University, addresses the causes of writers block such as:

- Fear of failure/success
- Perfectionism
- Procrastination
- Depression

Turbo-Charging your Writing is a 7 part workshop series held over 6 months which teaches students in the ‘write-up’ stage of candidature how to maximise their writing output and overcome common obstacles that reduce productivity by:

- Using techniques such as accurate self-talk
- Challenging internal beliefs that hinder progress
- Establishing a steady and productive writing plan
- Setting achievable goals
- Raising consciousness about resistance
- Making writing a group activity which generates peer support.

Evaluation of the program has shown that participants claim to have submitted an average of 6 months earlier than expected and that anxiety levels are significantly decreased.