

AALL Conference 2017

The Pink Palace Experiment

How a Writing Club assists in the Retention
of Youth Work students

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The Staff in the Pink Palace



AALL Conference 2017 - Youth Work Writing Club

The Youth Work Writing Club

- Originally, based on the idea of students coming together to discuss ideas and their writing
- Bachelor of Youth Work – first year to third year
- 2 hours a week for 12 weeks of the semester
- Conducted jointly by discipline academic, academic support person and a third year student
- Size of attendees varies – about 10-15 students

Theoretical Frameworks

- embedded academic support via a writing group is a popular idea since the 1970s (Beilinska-Kwapisz, 2015; Velda 2004) and writing groups offer significant advantages such as the improvement of academic writing skills, greater confidence and increased output of improved academic assessments (Li & Vandermenbrugge, 2011)
- strength-based social pedagogy that values peer learning, and where students take ownership and power of their own learning journey (Slovenko & Thompson, 2016)
- elements of an *academic socialisation* model, in which there is acculturation or integration of students into disciplinary and subject-based discourses (Lea & Street 2006, p.269)
- many first year social work students are apprehensive and unsure academic requirements (Goldingay et al., 2014)
- Supportive relationship between academic staff with each student, and without this trust students lose their learning identity and allows anxiety to form, and may lead to students not seeking any form of assistance (Christie et al 2008).
- students remain engaged and feel empowered when they begin to actively undertake practices and access services and there is access to computer facilities and formal as well as informal spaces (Lumsden, McBryde-Wilding & Rose, 2010, p. 15)

An informal educational environment in which collective learning, relationships, conversation and dialogue are emphasised.

(Jeffs & Smith, 2005)

Pink Palace Learning Spaces



Snap shot of Youth Work Students

- Plenty of passion and maturity
- Poor academic writing skills and low self-esteem
- Disrupted education or bad school experiences
- Do not readily engage with uni support services

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build confidence

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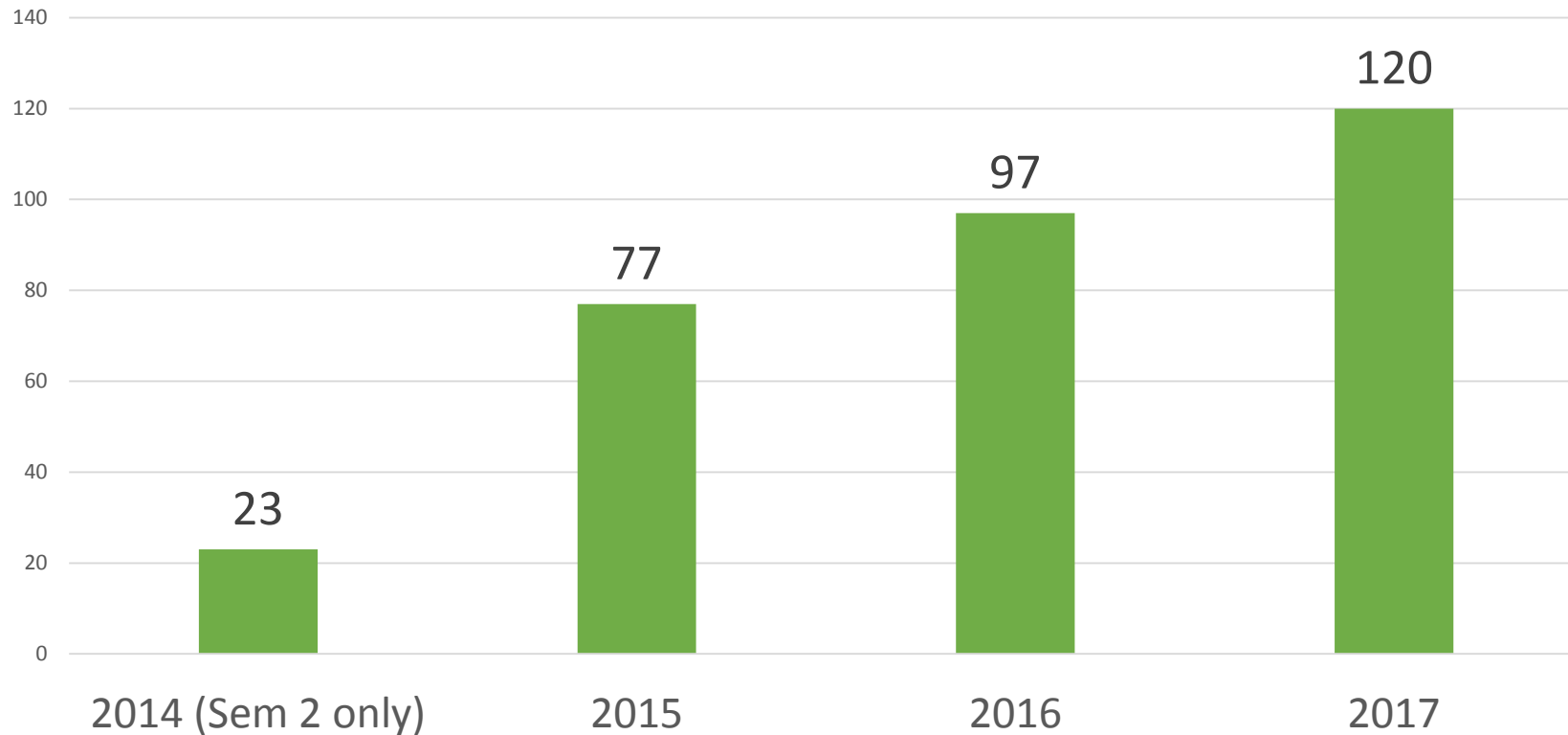
reduce assessment anxiety



participate in peer collaboration

Student Attendance

Writing Club Student Attendees (n=309)



Student Feedback - 2016 Student Survey Data

“... the moral ... academic and friendship support is immeasurable; it is a great motivator”

“helpful tips on essay writing, and the tremendous support I have been given has increased my confidence”

“Writing Club has made me more confident to let others read and assess my work.”

“With assistance from the writing club, I completed my first piece of assessment and it has boosted my confidence heaps!”

“I am confident that I am writing the right stuff!”

“Developing ways to articulate my thoughts better and feeling confident to share my understanding.”

LESSONS LEARNED



Peer collaboration – critique writing of others



Sitting with their friend or in small groups



Weekly workshop theme i.e. paragraph structure



Individual advice on their writing



Colleague replaced me or provided advice



Building trust and a relationship

Familiar Faces in Familiar Spaces

Tracking Fail/Withdrawals To Passes

Students	Sem 1 2016	Sem 2 2016	Sem 1 2017	Comment
Student 1	N, N, N, N	-	P, C, C, D	4 fails to 4 passes
Student 2	-	N, N, N, N	D, HD, P, D	4 fails to 4 passes
Student 3	-	WD, WD, WD, WD	HD, HD, D	4 WD to 3 passes
Student 4	WD, WD, WD, WD	-	HD, HD, HD, D	4 WD to 4 passes
Student 5	-	WD, WD, WD, WD	D, HD, WD, WD	4 WD to 2 passes
Student 6		WD, WD, WD, WD	N, L, D, D	4 WD to 2 passes

Tracking Regular Writing Club Attendance

Students	Sem 1 2016	Sem 2 2016	Sem 1 2017
Student 1	HD, HD, HD, HD, D	HD, D	HD, D, D, C
Student 2	HD, HD, C, D	-	-
Student 4	-	-	HD, HD, D, D
Student 5	HD, HD, HD, W	HD, HD, HD, HD	HD, HD
Student 6	D, D, D, D	C, C, D, D	C, D, D
Student 7	D, D, D, D	C, C, D, D	C, D, D
Student 8	C, P, C, P	C, HD, C, D	C, D, D
Student 10	D, D, HD, P	P, C, D	D, D, C, L
Student 11	-	-	D, D
Student 12	-	-	HD, HD, HD, HD
Student 13	-	-	HD, HD, HD, HD
Student 14	-	-	C, P, D, D
Student 15	-	-	P, D, N, P

Final Comment

Traditional **group-based workshops** may be cost-effective, but they **do not** provide the high level of **expert advice** directly related to solving the **particular** writing problems of **individual** students that have hitherto gone **undiagnosed**.

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