

THE CONVERSATION

Pitching and Writing Masterclass: how to write for influential decision-makers, including industry, government, the media and the public

Do you have an important story to share about your research? Can you tell that story in a concise and compelling way?

Join us for a day-long masterclass with a senior editor and discover how you can persuade influential people outside your field – including politicians, the media, industry and the public – that your work *matters*.

Highlights

Each session is limited to 20 participants and can be adapted to suit all levels of experience: from senior leaders to early career researchers or PhD candidates. Before each session, participants must submit a short summary or “pitch” about their work to develop in the masterclass. Selected pitches are shared in the class for group and individual feedback.

Highlights of the day include gaining access to:

- Strategic advice from an experienced editor;
- A time-saving method to critically assess your own or others’ writing;
- A checklist to follow before starting a pitch.

Note: this masterclass does *not* focus exclusively on pitching to The Conversation. Instead, it’s about sharing our editors’ knowledge of why so many pitches fail – based on our experience with The Conversation and other national and international media outlets including the ABC, Fairfax and Nature.

THE CONVERSATION

Trainers

This Pitching and Writing Masterclass is a collaboration between [The Conversation](#), a not-for-profit project helping researchers share their knowledge with millions of readers worldwide (35 million article views in a month, as of March 2017), and The University of Melbourne's [Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education](#).

The Masterclass was developed in response to requests from universities and research organisations across Australia seeking practical advice from professionals with experience in accepting or rejecting article pitches. Our team of trainers includes senior editors:

Misha Ketchell is Editor of The Conversation. He has been a journalist for more than 20 years and in previous roles he was founding editor of The Big Issue Australia and editor of Crikey, The Reader and The Melbourne Weekly. He worked for The Age as a reporter and feature writer and spent several years at the ABC where he was a TV producer on Media Watch and The 7:30 Report and an editor on The Drum.

Executive Editor Liz Minchin is a Walkley award-winning journalist and author. Liz was a reporter and news editor at The Age newspaper for a decade, before working as an executive media trainer and a radio and online producer. In 2010, Liz co-authored a book with a scientist on serious solutions to climate change, called 'Screw Light Bulbs'.

Sunanda Creagh is an award-winning journalist and The Conversation's NSW Bureau Chief and Digital Storytelling Editor. Sunanda has also worked as a news correspondent in the Reuters Jakarta bureau, and as a reporter at The Sydney Morning Herald. Her work has been published internationally, including by The Washington Post, CNN, ESPN, The Scotsman, and The New York Times.

Sarah Keenihan is The Conversation's Science Editor. Sarah joined The Conversation in October 2016. She previously worked as a freelance science writer and editor, in science communication and as an immunology researcher in Australia and Indonesia. She has a PhD and a Graduate Diploma in Sciences Communication.

Testimonials

THE CONVERSATION

“This masterclass is now the cornerstone of our academic professional development program. From professors to doctorate candidates, each has participated with interest. For some, the critical analysis process will define their access to readers and, ultimately, funders.” – **Ann McLean, QUT Science & Engineering Faculty Corporate Communications Coordinator**

"Excellent. You did a really great job at making the workshop interactive, engaging and well-paced. I especially enjoyed the insight into the inner workings of the publishing world." – **Future Fellow and Associate Professor Tim Dargaville**

Researchers and academics from more than a dozen universities and research institutes around Australia have taken part in this masterclass. Asked to rate the training in post-workshop surveys, 64% of participants rated it as “Outstanding” or “Excellent”; no one has ever given it a negative rating, or said they would not recommend it to colleagues.

Fees

[Members of The Conversation](#) – including the vast majority of universities in Australia and New Zealand, as well as the CSIRO and other research bodies – are eligible for discounted training fees. The masterclass can also be delivered for organisations that are not members of The Conversation, either on-site or at The University of Melbourne, but these sessions attract a higher rate. The minimum number of participants in a session is 10, while the maximum is 20; 15 is an ideal size.

When holding training on-site, we ask the host institution to organise the venue and catering, as well as cover the cost of return economy travel and accommodation (where needed). In return, we will offer a 50% discount on fees for participants beyond the minimum group of 10.

Fees for on-site training for Conversation members

- AU\$995 per person inc. GST for the minimum 10 participants.
- AU\$500 per person inc. GST for up to 10 additional participants.

To check if your university, research institution or organisation is a member of The Conversation, see our Australian and New Zealand [Partners and Funders page](#).

THE CONVERSATION

Fees for sessions hosted by The University of Melbourne, and for sessions hosted on-site for non-member organisations

Prices range from AU\$995 to AU\$1,495 per person. Please contact us for a quote or to find out more.

THE CONVERSATION

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Time	Session
9.00am – 10.30am <i>Please note the session needs to start on time.</i>	Past participant success stories and why their pitches worked. Introduction to the class, including survey results. How the 'Impact and Engagement' agenda and changes in the news media are affecting academics and researchers. Common mistakes in writing and communicating with the media/public, government and industry. Learning the Fast Feedback process. Group feedback on pitches: what the group did well and key areas for improvement.
10.30am – 11.00am	Morning tea
11.00am – 12.30pm	Group & individual feedback on selected pitches. Academic vs news writing structures: how to reach time-poor readers. The power of the first sentence. Group & individual feedback on selected pitches.
12.30pm – 1.00pm	Lunch
1.00pm – 3.30pm	Group & individual feedback on selected pitches. How to identify and target specific audiences and outlets. Time to develop pitches, in pairs or individually. One-on-one feedback during that time for those whose pitches weren't discussed by the whole group. Rapid group feedback on revised pitches. Final discussion & evaluation. <i>Participants can choose to leave from 3.30pm.</i>
3.30pm – 4.30pm	Optional one-on-one feedback for remaining participants.

CONTACTS

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