

INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL WRITING  
COURSE GUIDE



# ACCREDITED ONLINE TRAINING

Studying with the School for Writers allows you to fit learning around work and family commitments. Whether you're keen to pursue a new career or wish to develop additional workplace skills, our course can help.

## TRAIN AS A PROFESSIONAL WRITER

During the course, our focus is on developing your writing skills and bringing your writing up to a professional level.

Your tutor will provide extensive, constructive feedback on your writing, starting from your current level.

During the course, we'll also explore the main areas of medical writing, so you can identify those areas that are of most interest to you and most closely match your skills and background.



Online tutor support is available between 9am and 9pm every day, including weekends, so that you can get the support you need as soon as you need it. No waiting for an email reply or grappling with a call centre!



# INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL WRITING

This is an in-depth online course providing a comprehensive introduction to the work of medical writers.

Subjects covered include: understanding the work of medical writers; core writing and editing skills; medical journalism; working with clinical study reports; requirements of regulatory writing; preparing patient information leaflets; ethical issues; medical education; working successfully as a freelance; marketing your services; building a portfolio.

## ACCREDITED TRAINING

In addition, the course will show you how to:

- assess your target audience and develop documents to meet their needs
- choose the appropriate style and tone for the topic and reader
- design an effective document layout, according to industry requirements
- use diagrams, tables, charts and other graphical tools effectively
- follow a style guide

- proofread and edit your work
- use sentence and paragraph structure to give your writing clarity and impact
- improve the readability of your documents.

The course includes over 200 pages of information delivered straight to your inbox, and full tutorial support. The course is divided into 6 easy-to-follow study modules, and includes approximately 60 hours of study time. There are 6 tutor-marked assignments during the course, so you can begin to put your new skills into practice right away!

Our tutors are experienced professional writers. You can contact your tutor at any time by email and speak directly to a member of your support team between 9am - 9pm each day by instant chat. (UK time.)

If you would like further advice please contact us before you enrol.



**Module 1 - Core Writing Skills** - sentence structure, paragraph structure, plain English, writing to communicate, your target reader; explore different types of medical writing; plan and structure effective documents; preparing for a medical writing test.

**Module 2 - Ready to Write** – effective research; harnessing the power of research tools; using and working to readability tests; writing opportunities in mainstream magazines and newspapers; plan, structure and write an effective feature article; analysing the readers of potential markets and working to their needs.

**Module 3 - Manuals and Reports** - write clear, comprehensive reports; produce focused, effective reports suitable for your target readers; create longer pieces such as manuals; create effective patient communications; patient information leaflets (PILs); creating scientific papers for peer-reviewed journals.

**Module 4 - Editing and Proofreading** - explore the document review process; understand different types and levels of editing; develop proofreading skills; learn and use editing and proofreading symbols,

following guidelines from British Standard BS 5261.

### **Module 5 - SOPs and Regulatory**

**Documents** - prepare Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) documents; understand the process of preparing regulatory documents for pharmaceuticals; explore the process of planning, writing and submitting regulatory documents.

**Module 6 - Writing for the Web** – moving patient information and advice online; benefits and challenges; requirements of effective web writing; learn how websites and web pages are structured; the role of medical writers in creating online content.

### QUALIFICATION

- Level 2 CPD Certificate in Medical Writing.

“Very interesting course that covered much more than I expected. My tutor gave excellent feedback throughout, positive and constructive, but not afraid to discuss areas where I could improve. I think that’s really important because it’s so difficult to judge your own writing objectively.

Both the tutor and the support team offered great advice on marketing my work and identifying freelance markets. Definitely helped me to make a strong start as a freelance.”

~ Rachel Wilson

# QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS

No specific qualifications are required for medical writing but the majority of writers in this field have a biomedical science degree and often a higher degree. Many medical writers have previous experience in drug discovery or clinical research but there are also opportunities for new graduates.

Some medical writers have a background in languages or journalism rather than the sciences.

In addition to these qualifications, certain personal abilities are needed. Good language skills are essential. Medical writers must be able to convey complex information to the reader in a clear and concise way. Attention to detail is critical, as clarity, accuracy and completeness are required in every document.

Medical writers also need to be able to work independently, absorb and summarise large amounts of data, and communicate their messages effectively to a range of very different readers.

Good interpersonal skills are also important. Medical writers work as part of inter-disciplinary teams and, in some cases, with people outside of their company, so they need to be comfortable working with people from a range of backgrounds. This is even more so for freelance writers who may work on a varied range of projects, with many different editorial teams.

Medical writers are often expected to 'ghost write' documents, which means that their name will not appear in print.



One example is the preparation of clinical expert reports, where the writer works closely with the expert who will sign-off the document and whose name the report will carry. In practice, many of the documents produced by medical writers will not carry their name. Larger documents, in particular, are usually produced by a team of writers, editors, researchers, and clinicians.

Medical writers may need to produce documents for a varied range of readers, and require the ability to pitch each piece of writing at just the right level. A clinical research report is a comprehensive exploration of the methods and results of the research. It may be over 100 pages in length and may need to be submitted to regulatory authorities. This is very different from a short article on the same study, which is for a wider scientific and medical audience, yet must still put across the same key data and messages.

# CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Medical writers may work in a wide range of settings, including pharmaceutical companies, contract research organisations (CROs) and medical communications agencies. In addition, government bodies such as the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) employ medical writers.

An increasing number of writers are choosing to go freelance, preferring the variety and freedom a freelance career offers to employment.

In a pharmaceutical company or CRO, medical writers spend a lot of time preparing the detailed, technical documents required for regulatory submissions and work closely to templates and regulatory guidelines.

A writer working in a medical communications agency may prepare a wide range of manuscripts for publication, including articles and booklets, as well as items such as posters and slide presentations for conferences, marketing literature, training material, and multimedia, such as websites and DVD presentations. For this reason, the work in communications agencies is often seen as more creative and varied than other types of medical writing. However, some agencies now also have departments that prepare regulatory documentation. Equally, writers in CROs and pharmaceutical companies may have the opportunity to produce articles, presentations, patient leaflets and a wide range of other literature.

Contract Research Organisations (CROs) conduct clinical studies and help pharmaceutical companies to register their products with international regulatory authorities. This involves preparing a wide range of documents for regulatory submissions, including protocols and final reports for clinical trials, and clinical expert reports. Medical writers in both CROs and pharmaceutical companies spend a great deal of their time working on these regulatory documents.

They may also produce:

- Protocols
- Patient information leaflets/package inserts
- Clinical study and expert reports
- Efficacy and safety summaries
- Summary of product characteristics
- Marketing and General Documents
- Manuscripts for publication
- Literature reviews
- Abstracts and posters
- Conference proceedings
- Training material
- Slide kits
- Advertising material.

Our training course will help you to develop the writing skills necessary to produce a range of documents, including articles, booklets, training literature and regulatory submissions. It will also show you how to write effectively for different groups of readers by pitching each piece to exactly the right level.

# HOW OUR COURSES WORK

## With online learning, you can begin studying within hours!

Online learning means that we deliver the course material to your in-box and you can then save it to your computer or print it off for reading at your leisure. You do not need to be online to work through your course material.

You can study in your own time and at your own pace, from anywhere in the world. You have one-to-one access to an expert personal tutor throughout the course.

### STUDYING YOUR COURSE

You work through course materials written by expert medical writers and trainers, then send your assignments to a qualified personal tutor for detailed feedback. You can also contact your tutor at any stage if you need additional help or advice.

The course has been designed to be easy to follow and includes a set number of assignments. The course materials give full guidance on how to prepare and complete each one.

### HOW MUCH TIME WILL I NEED?

You can take up to 12 months to complete the course, but most students complete within 6 – months (based on a few hours

study each week). If you would prefer to work to a timetable, your tutor will be happy to agree deadlines to suit your requirements.



### WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE COURSE FEE?

The course fee includes everything you need to complete your course: full study material, supplementary reading, and full tutorial support.

### HOW MUCH SUPPORT IS INCLUDED?

When you become a student, you're assigned an expert personal tutor who you can contact at any time by email and who will work with you throughout your course. A member of our team is also available by instant chat between 9 am and 9 pm, 7 days a week, to answer any questions you might have at time to suit you.

## HOW DO I ENROL?

Getting started on our course is simple.

You can enrol on-line, using the Paypal buttons on the course page. This allows you to enrol securely using a credit or debit card or your Paypal account if you have one. If you prefer, you can enrol or by standing order. (Just let us know and we'll send you an enrolment form that you can send in by post.)

Your course materials will arrive in your in-box within 2 hours of your enrolment. You will also receive contact details for your personal tutor, so you can get started on the course and your first study module straight away.

## ACCREDITATION

We're part of Borders Connect and our training is accredited by the ODLQC.

We're a registered provider with the Online Learning Council.

## Any Questions?

Visit our website at [www.medicalwriter.org.uk](http://www.medicalwriter.org.uk) and click on the chat button in the bottom right of the screen. One of our advisers will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

