



University of Sussex

Sussex Centre for Language Studies

Academic Writing Guide – Stage 3, Part 1

James talking about writing the first draft

Sue: So what was it like drafting an essay for the first time?

James: It was unusual because like the plans I'd never really drafted before. But trying to constantly remind myself not to make it perfect; to give myself that sort of okay-that-it's-not-okay. So I'm writing and I think 'oh that sentence is a bit clunky, but it's fine just get on with it, just keep going' you know and it takes a lot of self-control to finish an essay and submit it thinking there was loads that I'm not happy with. But forcing yourself to think of it as a whole before you start to think of the nuances, I think was really important for me.

Sue: Yes. So you don't start editing work until the whole thing is on the page.

James: Yeah.

Sue: Good. If you start editing too soon, and you have more experience of this now, what happens?

James: I get lost. I find myself doing this sometimes now and I really have to stop myself, but I just get all muddled. Yeah, I start trying to piece things together and then you know I'm 50 words from the word count and I'm thinking I've got no idea where this essay has gone – there's no thread through this! And I just, and I almost have to start again! Yeah and it's really frustrating when that happens because you think you're putting lots of effort in, but you just get yourself muddled.

Sue: Yeah. So it's actually that holding back, isn't it, from the trying to polish before the ideas are fully developed?

James: Yes.