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Title: Sustainable embedded academic literacy development: The gradual handover of literacy teaching

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Related papers:

Macnaught, L. (in press for 2022). Writing Blog Critiques in Teacher Education: Teaching Students What is Valued with Semantic Gravity and Genre Theory. In Szenes E. & D.N Tilakaratna (Eds.), *Demystifying Critical Reflection: Improving Pedagogy and Practice with Legitimation Code Theory*. New York: Routledge.

Macnaught, L., Van der Ham, V., & Milne, J. (forthcoming). Teaching blog critiques through an interdisciplinary collaboration in teacher education. Auckland University of Technology.

Abstract

This study reports on a four-year project to embed academic literacy within one core course of a Bachelor of Education program. It involves an interdisciplinary collaboration between learning advisors, as literacy specialists, and lecturers, as subject specialists. It examines their roles and responsibilities and lecturers' perspectives when handing over the teaching of academic literacy to them. Data encompasses interviews with lecturers, meeting notes, and cohort statistics about assessment grades. Discourse analysis with theory from Systemic Functional Linguistics identifies the shifting contributions of the collaborators and how lecturers evaluate their experiences. Findings suggest that handover is smooth when it is done gradually and involves intensive prior collaboration. However, the contrasting views of the lecturers raise questions about what is optimal for students. Although limited, data indicates that reductions in resubmission rates and students achieving in the minimal passing range co-occur with the addition of mini videos about reading and writing critically.

Key words

academic literacy development, embedded literacy, interdisciplinary collaboration, systemic functional linguistics, appraisal theory

Introduction

An embedded or integrated approach to academic literacy development involves teaching literacy within courses and programs as part of the core curriculum (Baik and Greig 2009; Maldoni 2018; Wingate 2019). It is widely regarded as optimal for students as it focuses on the specific discourses of their discipline (Clarence 2016; Chanock et al. 2012; Maldoni and Lear 2016; Murray and Nallaya 2016; Thies et al. 2014; Skillen and Mahony 1997; Wingate and Tribble 2012). This includes discipline-specific ways of 'reading, evaluating information, as well as presenting, debating and creating knowledge through both speaking and writing' (Wingate 2018, 350). To this practical definition of academic literacy, scholars have long argued for the inclusion of multimodal resources, such as intonation, body language, sound, music, and a wide range of visual meanings (see a comprehensive historical review in Mills and Unsworth 2017). With embedding, the teaching and learning of these literacies occurs during lecture or tutorial times and aims to anticipate what students need to draw on and develop for their assessments. In terms of outcomes for students, a growing body of research shows that an embedded approach contributes to improved assessment grades (Hunter and Tse 2013; Kennelly, Maldoni, and Davies 2010), higher pass rates (Allan, McWilliams, and Raleigh, Forthcoming; Hirst et al. 2004; Maldoni 2018), reduced assessment task resubmissions (Bassett, Forthcoming) and reduced re-sit rates (Hammill 2007). Overall, an embedded approach aims to reach and benefit all students within a cohort.

Many universities, however, are still operating from a remedial/support perspective (Arkoudis and Harris 2019). This manifests in positioning academic literacy development as marginalised service-oriented activity where the responsibility for teaching and learning academic literacy is commonly 'shunted off into special units' (Hyland and Shaw 2016, 4). The provision of literacy teaching also tends to focus only on specific groups of learners, such as students who have been identified as needing remedial support (Skillen et al. 1998). Teaching is most often provided via individual appointments with learning advisors (Breen and Protheroe 2015; Evans,

Henderson, and Ashton-Hay 2019) and through additional workshops that are not part of the core curriculum (Baik and Greig 2009; Reid and Gao 2015). Such adjunct provision has been shown to result in low student engagement with literacies learning (Harris 2016). Reasons for low engagement include students perceiving these ‘bolt-on’ sessions (Wingate, 2006) as having no academic value (Drummond, Nixon, and Wiltshire 1998), no relevance (Durkin and Main 2002), or as an embarrassing option because of the remedial connotations (Turner 2004). Such barriers to academic literacy development are addressed when it is designed into courses and programs.

One significant challenge with an embedded approach is that the disciplinary discourse knowledge of lecturers may be tacit (Bury and Sheese 2016; Elton 2010). Although lecturers are part of discourse communities (Gee, 1996) and have been shown to play a crucial role in their students’ participation in these communities (Donahue 2010; Lea and Street 1998), they have not necessarily had experience with precisely identifying and explicitly teaching the literacy demands of the assessment tasks that they set for students (McGrath, Negretti, and Nicholls 2019). This is not surprising as academic literacy development commonly falls within fields of research and practice within applied linguistics, or, more eclectically, English for Academic Purposes (Hood 2016). Teachers and researchers in these fields have been ‘consistently at the front line’ of theoretical developments to excavate what students are expected to know and create, as well as innovative practices for teaching this knowledge (Hyland and Shaw 2016, 2). Literacy specialists are, therefore, well-placed to collaborate with faculty. Such collaboration can focus on tailoring academic literacy development to specific assessment tasks (Clarence 2012; Jacobs 2007; Thies et al. 2014; Wingate, Andon, and Cogo 2011), and to the broader graduate attributes, graduate qualities, or generic competencies that appear in graduate profiles (Macnaught, Forthcoming).

Past research involving collaboration between subject specialists (hereafter ‘lecturers’) and literacy specialists (hereafter ‘learning advisors’ abbreviated as ‘LAs’) has identified a range of responses to embedded practices. From the perspective of some LAs, lecturers should be involved in teaching academic literacy because they are the ones with disciplinary expertise (Hunter and Tse, 2013; Jacobs 2007) and knowledge of their students (Chanock 2013; Wingate, Andon, and Cogo 2011). Some lecturers, however, self-critique that they do not possess sufficient relevant knowledge and skills to teach embedded literacy (Bailey 2010; Jenkins and Wingate 2015; Mostert and Townsend 2016), have concerns about adding to existing heavy workloads (Murray and Nallaya 2016; Thies 2016), or see literacy teaching as someone else’s responsibility (Hallett 2021; Moon, Ruggles Gere, and Shultz 2018). In contrast, other lecturers see themselves as teachers of both disciplinary and language content (Olsson et al. 2021; Stewart and Perry, 2005), finding such teaching not only enjoyable (Mostert and Townsend, 2016), but also beneficial for better understanding how their students experience learning within their disciplines (Clarence 2012; Maldoni 2017; Zappa-Hollman 2018). Indeed, some lecturers, such as Olsson and colleagues (2021), have taught themselves how to teach academic literacy without any involvement from LAs. Such enthusiasm is rarely reported in the literature. Even less clear is what contributes to lecturers being willing and confident with embedding academic literacy in their courses.

While more research is needed on the process of how LAs and lecturers collaborate, there are also operational constraints to consider. Perhaps the most significant constraint is that institutional investment in academic literacy development is typically low (Devereux et al.

2018; Jones, Bonnano, and Scouller 2001; Li 2020). This is evident in the low ratios of LAs to students at higher education institutions. In a report of 42 Australian universities, the average ratio of LAs to students in Australia is 1:3595 (Ashton-Hay, Barthel, and Muller 2021). At the authors' own institution, Auckland University of Technology, an annual report of student numbers (Auckland University of Technology 2020) and a staff webpage, viewed on November 1st, 2021, shows a ratio of 1:2696. In other universities and polytechnics in Canada, New Zealand, Scotland and the UK, correspondence with LAs provided approximate figures from which to calculate indicative ratios (see Appendix 1). Ratios of up to one learning advisor for over 5700 students point to the seemingly insurmountable problem of equitably and effectively providing academic literacy development for all students. LAs simply cannot work with lecturers in all courses and programs in their institutions.

The reality of low investment raises the issue of how embedded practices can be done sustainably. This paper examines one option where LAs gradually 'hand over' teaching and learning materials to lecturers (e.g., Blake and Pates, 2010). It reports on specific ways in which roles and responsibilities shifted over time and examines the experiences of lecturers involved in that process. The perspective of lecturers also extends to their reflections about the assessment outcomes of students. Overall, this paper aims to generate new knowledge about how embedded practices can be shaped by intensive collaborations but also be designed with an exit strategy so that the teaching is more sustainable.

Context and Methodology

The research reported on in this paper is from a project called Sustainable Embedded Academic Literacy (SEAL). This project is approved by Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEK), project number 19/204. It involves a four-year (2017-2020) collaboration between LAs and faculty lecturers within a Bachelor of Education program at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). The collaboration centres on a second-year course, titled, Principles of Learning and Teaching (EDUC651), taught once a year as part of the core curriculum. The SEAL project tracks four consecutive iterations. During this time, the same lecturer was the course leader.

The two assessment tasks in EDUC651 involve student teachers critiquing a published blog and writing a series of blog posts. Initially, the teaching materials to support students with these assessments predominantly focused on the structure and essential parts of a blog critique and blog post. In 2019, additional resources were created to further guide students with critically reading blogs. This included identifying how examples of classroom practices in blogs related to theoretical constructs, and also identifying and responding to the points of view represented in the blogs. The core teaching materials were also segmented into mini videos. Students thus had access to teaching about the academic literacy related to their assessment through attending lectures and watching complementary videos through the Learning Management System.

This research constitutes a longitudinal qualitative case study. It focuses on the researchers' immediate environment and in-depth examination of an educational practice (Merriam, 2009). The researchers involved in this case study are all involved in EDUC651. John Milne is a lecturer in the School of Education and was the course leader for EDUC651 from 2016 through to 2021. Chris Jenkin, a senior lecturer in the School of Education, shared the teaching load with John during 2019. In their role as researchers and research participants, John and Chris

undertook interviews to reflect on their experiences of embedding academic literacy (see more detail below). The other researchers are LAs from the Learning Success team at AUT. They are involved in the design and teaching of academic literacy in EDUC651, across the wider Bachelor of Education program, as well as other courses and programs at AUT. A central reason for investigating such collaborations is the potential for LAs to ‘get stuck’ wherever they teach. In other words, if they are always part of teaching during lecture and tutorial time, then LAs have less time to work in other courses and programs. In the context of small teams of LAs being tasked with academic literacy provision across universities (in face to face and online teaching as well as teaching through online materials, such as mini videos), there is thus an urgent need to critically investigate practices that may be more sustainable.

This case is an exemplar of a recurrent phenomenon (Duff 2014), namely an interdisciplinary collaboration that focuses on the embedding of academic literacy within a tertiary course. In addition to the focus on collaboration over time, this study also facilitates understanding of other phenomena. Forthcoming publications investigate the literacy demands for specific types of assessments, such as blog critiques (see Macnaught, Forthcoming), and the process for tailoring teaching to these tasks (see Macnaught, et al, Forthcoming). Thus, as Tann and Scott (2021) have similarly argued, this study has properties of what Stake (2005) refers to as an *intrinsic* and *instrumental* case study.

The data collection period spanned June 2017 to December 2020. To capture how the collaboration unfolded over time, the first data set included collaboration notes created by LAs, and audio-recorded meetings between LAs and the course leader. These meetings occurred as part of the collaborative process of creating teaching materials and reflecting on what was taught. A typical collaboration cycle for one semester is represented in Figure 1 and explained in detail in Macnaught and colleagues (forthcoming). At the conclusion of the SEAL project, the researchers most involved in teaching during the project met to review the specific ways in which their roles had changed over time.

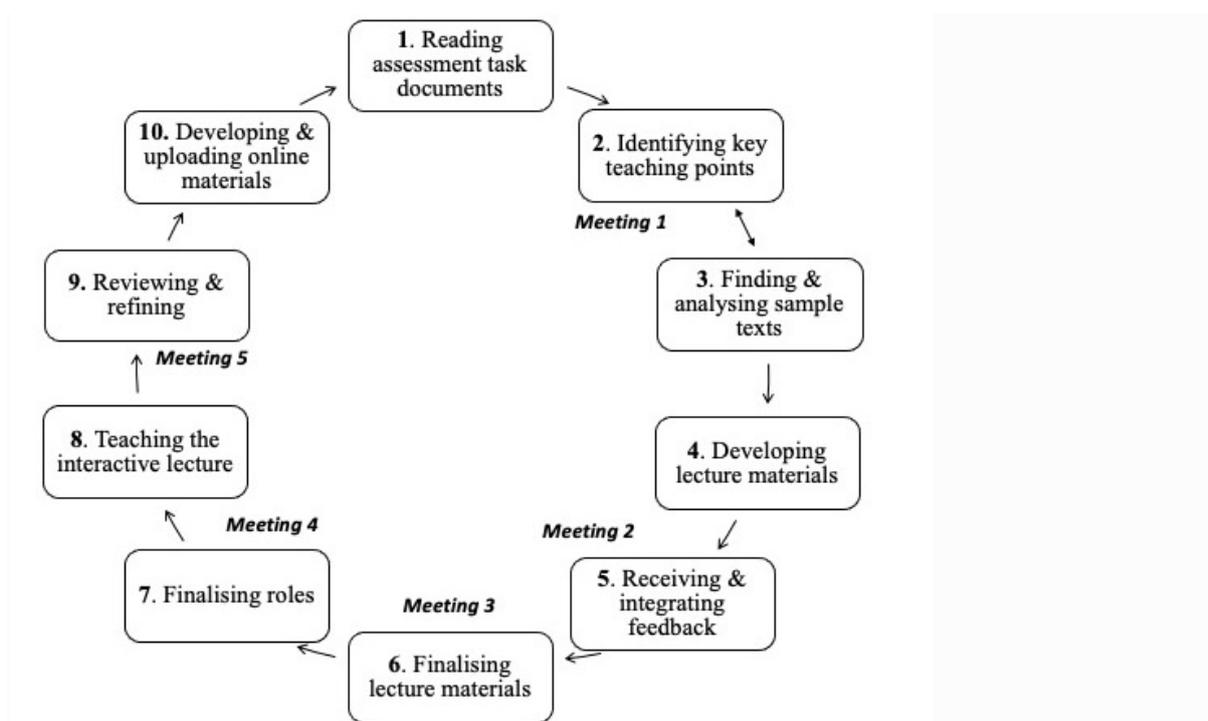


Figure 1. A collaboration cycle for embedded academic literacy development (Macnaught, Van der Ham, Milne, 2021)

Discourse analysis of the meeting notes and transcriptions of the audio-recorded meetings established the contribution of collaborators and the chronological sequence of how the teaching materials were created and used. This was achieved through analysis that drew on the applied linguistic tradition of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to identify who did specific actions (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). Additionally, theory about language to connect series of ideas and events (Martin and Rose 2007; Martin 1992) was used to identify when specific things were created. Previously we have used similar analysis to establish a typical collaboration cycle (See Figure 1), however, in this paper, it was used for tracking possible changes in the contributions of collaborators across the duration of the project.

The second data set focused on the experiences of the lecturers. The notion of ‘hand over’ suggests that lecturers may be willing and confident with teaching the academic literacy in their courses. In order to investigate the extent to which this may or may not be the case, data included audio-recorded interviews with each of the two lecturers. The semi-structured interviews occurred after the third iteration of EDUC651 at the end of 2019. During this third iteration, the lecturers had the opportunity to teach some or all of the lectures about academic literacy related to blog critiques and writing blog posts. The discourse analysis of the interview transcripts focused on how the lecturers expressed value related to their teaching experiences and collaboration with the LAs. Specifically, it drew on the system of attitude in SFL theory to consider the stance or position that speakers and writers take up as they communicate (Martin and White 2005). A well-established coding scheme (see Martin and White 2005; Hood 2010; Szenes and Tilakaratna 2021) was used, as shown in Appendix 2 with sample analysis in Appendix 3.

The third data set focused on the assessment outcomes of students. This data was accessed in the Learning Management System and collated by the ICT Application Support unit at AUT. It was provided to the researchers in a de-identified form within an excel spreadsheet. It included the grade distributions for each assessment task, as awarded to each cohort, every year, e.g., the percentage of students in 2019 who were awarded a grade in the A-range, etc. This data also included the resubmission rates, i.e., the number of students who did not initially pass an assessment but were given the opportunity to improve their work and submit it again for marking. For resubmissions, the maximum grade is a 'pass' or 50%. The resubmission process is critical in the Bachelor of Education program because students must pass every single assessment task to complete their degree. The purpose of collecting this assessment data was to gain an indication of whether any changes in what was taught or who does the teaching correspond to any changes in the distribution of grades and resubmission rates. Overall, the findings generated by these methods are expected to have relevance to wider tertiary contexts where faculty lecturers and LAs investigate different means of academic literacy provision.

Findings & Discussion

This section starts by reporting on findings in relation to the roles and contributions of the lecturers and LAs between 2017 and 2020. It positions these findings in a topology of types of embedded practices and argues that such a representation provides a flexible and dynamic way to understand how collaborations may change over time. Second, it discusses findings in relation to the experiences and perspectives of lecturers. Third, it discusses statistics about the assessment outcomes of students.

Lecturers gradually taking more ownership of the literacy teaching

Throughout the project there was a gradual shift in the extent to which the course leader took ownership of teaching the academic literacy related to his assessment tasks. In the first iteration (2017), the LA consulted with the lecturer about the assessment task and needs of the students. The course leader found and sought permission to analyse sample texts and the learning advisor conducted the text analysis and created model texts for use in teaching. The LA predominantly designed and taught the lecture herself; however, the course leader was present during class time to answer students' questions and comment further on why something was important. In the second iteration (2018), the course leader worked more closely with the LA to review and refine the teaching sequence and in-class activities. He also observed the LA, as she taught, with the view to eventually taking on the lectures himself. By the third iteration (2019), LAs collaborated more closely with the course leader to further adapt the sample texts for teaching purposes and make additions to the teaching materials. These additions extended the initial focus on modelling the structure and language features of a blog critique to include teaching students how to read blogs critically. The course leader took responsibility for the final content of the lectures. He taught the lectures alone on one campus. On the second campus, both the LA and the lecturer who was newer to EDUC651 taught together: the lecturer explained the assessment outcomes, marking rubric, and contributed to answering questions, while the LA taught content related to critiquing and writing blogs. In this third iteration, the LAs also developed mini videos about the assessment tasks. Finally, in the fourth iteration in 2020 (coinciding with the lockdown periods due to the COVID-19 pandemic), the course leader delivered all the teaching related to academic literacy. The LA was available for discussions, but this was not needed. There was thus a continuity of relationship over four years in which

the course leader’s involvement gradually increased. These contributions from year to year are documented in Table 1. The dash indicates activity that did not occur. The double arrow indicates where something that was created in a past iteration is used again in the next iteration.

Table 1. Shifting contributions from the learning advisor (LA) and the course leader (CL)

| Year/Tasks | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| Discussing the assessment task & rubric | both | both | both | >> |
| Identifying key teaching points | both | both | both | >> |
| Finding sample texts | CL | >> | CL | >> |
| Analysing sample texts | LA | >> | LA | >> |
| Adapting sample texts for teaching | LA | >> | both | >> |
| Developing the teaching sequence | LA | both | both | >> |
| Designing in-class activities | LA | both | both | >> |
| Teaching academic literacy in class | LA | LA | CL | CL |
| Designing & creating online videos | - | - | LA | >> |

These gradual changes in how embedded literacy materials were created and taught are represented in Figure 3. This topology generates four quadrants from the intersection of two clines. The horizontal cline refers to the role of the learning advisor and the lecturer (in this case the course leader) and the extent to which they lead the provision of academic literacy development for the assessment tasks in EDUC651. Here ‘teaching’ includes face to face or online lectures and the development of materials for students to use online, such as videos. The vertical cline refers to the extent to which the contributions to the design and delivery of teaching and learning materials are more individual or more collaborative. Within the top right quadrant, embedded practices could be described as *guest lecturing and endorsing*. Here, embedded practices are more led by LAs and teaching materials are created more individually by the learning advisor. However, the lecturer discusses the assessment task with the learning advisor prior to material design. He/she is also present during face to face or online teaching to answer student questions and verbally endorse the teaching content, such as adding comments about why something is important. Within the bottom right quadrant embedded practices could be described as *co-designing and observing*. Here, LAs still take more of a leading role in lectures, but both the LA and lecturer are involved in the development and/or refinement of the teaching sequence and in-class activities. Within the bottom left quadrant some collaboration occurs, however, tasks are more distributed in the sense that the collaborators have distinct areas of responsibility, such as the lecturer taking responsibility for lectures and the LAs developing mini videos. Embedded practices in this quadrant could be referred to as *distributed designing and teaching*. Finally, within the top left quadrant, *handing over* refers to embedded practices where the lecturer takes full responsibility for the academic literacy related to the assessment tasks in his/her course and uses or further adapts the materials that were co-developed in previous iterations.

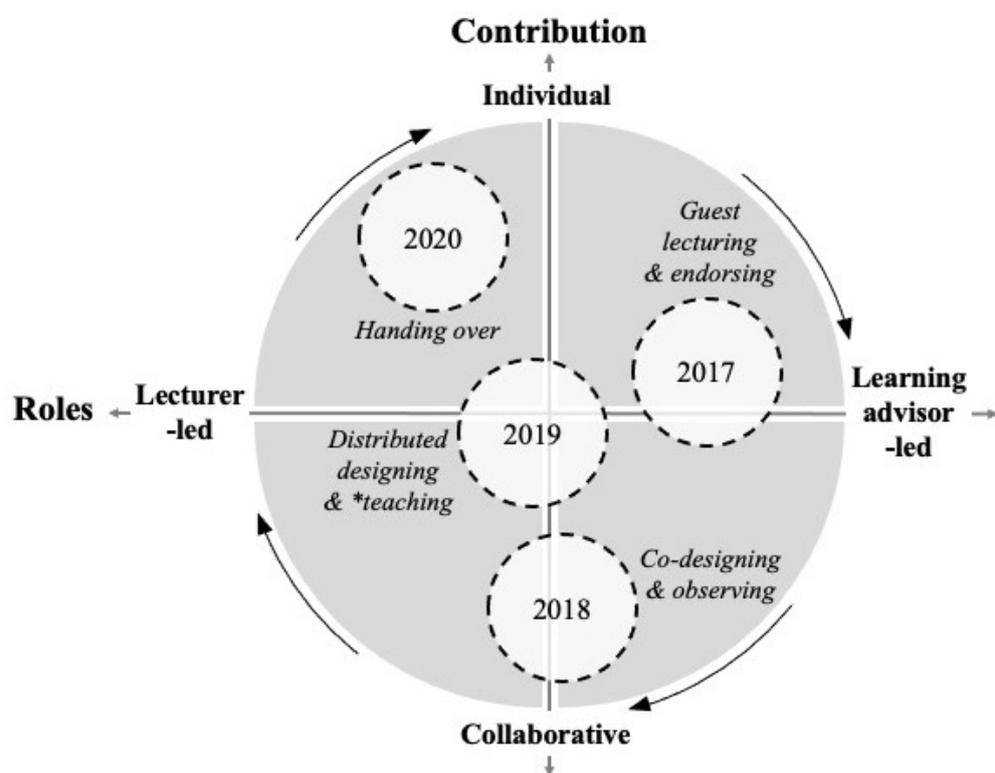


Figure 2. A topology of embedded practices (*teaching refers to face to face or online lectures and online materials, such as videos).

Past investigations of embedded practices have also identified different configurations of lecturer and learning advisor contributions and areas of responsibility (e.g., Blake and Pates 2010; Harris and Ashton, 2011; Jones, Bonnanno, and Scouller 2001; Kennelly, Maldoni, and Davies 2010; Maldoni 2018). However, categorisation has tended to focus on either/or choices, such as the LA teaching, or the lecturer teaching, or both. Such differentiation has not tended to capture changes over time where roles and responsibilities may shift. An advantage with a topological representation of embedded practices is that it easily foregrounds flexibility. It can be used to show that roles are not fixed or that there not necessarily a linear progression towards greater contribution from lecturers.

Overall, these findings show that handing over the teaching of academic literacy to lecturers can be designed into embedded practices. However, it may require an extensive initial collaboration period and an extended timeframe in which the handover is done gradually across multiple iterations of the course. The next section closely considers the experiences and perspective of the lecturers.

Lecturers' experiences and perspectives

This section reports on findings related to the discourse analysis of interview data, involving the course leader (John Milne) and the second lecturer (Chris Jenkin). They were both researchers and research participants in this study and will be identified as 'John' and 'Chris' respectively. The findings show how they experienced working with LAs as an opportunity for informal professional development, particularly in terms of gaining insights about the assessment tasks. The findings also reveal contrasting experiences in terms of teaching

academic literacy within EDUC651 and contrasting attitudes about who should be doing this teaching.

Informal professional development

Both lecturers in this study related their collaborations with LAs to professional development. The collaboration was appraised for its general worth, through wording, such as ‘*it’s been seen as a learning opportunity for us*’ (John) and ‘*informal professional development*’ that was happening ‘*all the time*’ (Chris). Chris also reflected on the positive impact on her own writing practices (‘*the number of tips that I’ve picked up for my own writing is extraordinary*’), and she valued the opportunity to watch others teach (‘*You think: Oh, that was really effective! I wonder how that would work for me?*’). Such comments indicate an overall positive orientation to working with LAs, as also found in past research (e.g., Blake and Pates 2010; Clarence 2012; Devereux et al. 2018; Zappa-Hollman 2018).

Gaining insights about the assessment tasks

More specifically, the lecturers identified one significant area of contribution from LAs as sharing complementary knowledge about the assessment tasks. LAs were seen as positively contributing to the process of ‘*breaking down*’ (John) or ‘*unpacking*’ (Chris) what students are expected to do. As the extended interview extracts below highlight, this contribution was seen as valuable for their students and themselves. Past studies of embedded collaborations (e.g., Clarence 2012; Maldoni 2017; Zappa-Hollman 2018) have also identified that new knowledge for lecturers includes a focus on how students may experience learning discipline content and demonstrating their understanding of it through assessments. The opportunity to think about the assessment tasks from a complementary perspective was seen as particularly important in the context of inheriting assessment tasks designed by others and being unable to change them during the semester. As each lecturer reflects:

[Interview extract 1] Chris: When you see somebody start to unpack your assignment, you think: Bloody hell, that’s complicated! We do seem to set this most extraordinarily convoluted triple quadruple eight-parted beasts... Often we add another bit because the students didn’t get that bit, so we’ll write another three sentences of explanation, and by the end of it, three years down the track, it’s like this huge beast of a thing. And so, I do support, go back to: What am I actually asking? What are the clearest ways to unpack that for students?... The knowledge of the processes is held by the learning advisor, and the knowledge of the content is held by the lecturer, and that’s woven together to produce something that is stunning for the students.

[Interview extract 2] John: You can’t do that [change the assessment during the semester] in a university context, so you have to find ways of working with an imperfect thing... Having a second or a third person looking at an assignment and trying to think about how to scaffold students through that assignment, and what are the key understandings that they’re going to need to be able to do that assignment, well, is always helpful, both for students, obviously, but also from my own point of view in terms of thinking about those assignments and what works about them and what doesn’t work quite so well. Because, I think, often as lecturers, we are a little, perhaps more focused on the content than the understanding that we’re wanting the students to show, whereas Vanessa [the learning advisor] was coming more from the point of view of

what are the actual, what are the mechanics of the assignment, and how are they [the students] going to navigate that, and how do they do these things... That's the benefit of this. What she's [learning advisor] wanting from me is a sense of what am I wanting to see from the students, what are we actually getting them to do. And then from her perspective, it's how can we help them to do that... All of that hopefully gives them [the students] a much more rounded picture of a) what is the lecturer wanting to see, and then how do I go about doing that?

Experience of teaching academic literacy & views about 'handover'

While both lecturers valued the complementary knowledge of LAs, their views about being the one to teach academic literacy were very different. This teaching occurred during the third iteration of EDUC651 and falls within the *distributed designing and teaching* quadrant of the topology in Figure 2. At this point in time, John had collaborated with LAs continuously for three years in his role as course leader. For him, the shift to teaching academic literacy was straight forward, as evident in positive reactions, such as, '*Oh, it was good*' and '*it wasn't difficult at all, or awkward in any way*'. As other qualitative research has also found (e.g., Blake and Pates 2010; Zappa-Hollman 2018), John attributes the ease of handover to the long collaboration period and not simply being handed someone else's teaching slides ('*It wasn't like someone suddenly turning up saying, "here's something I've done, go and do it"*').

John also expressed the gradual shift in who did the teaching as a '*transfer of responsibility model*'. In his words, '*a greater amount of the load is carried by the learning advisor in comparison to the lecturer, and at some point it starts to switch over*'. He could also see the need for flexible contributions, depending on whether the teaching staff and or assessment changed ('*That doesn't mean there's a total withdrawal of support*'). Overall, in the context of universities having few LAs, he expressed positive judgment about lecturers doing the academic literacy teaching to extend their '*capabilities*'. These views align with past studies where lecturers see themselves as teachers of both disciplinary and language content (e.g., Olsson et al. 2021; Stewart and Perry 2005).

In contrast, Chris had only started to work closely with LAs in EDUC651 during the third iteration. (She had worked with them on many other courses over many years.) However, she raised strong concerns about the notion of 'hand over' that were irrespective of the collaboration timeframes. For her, the issue of who does the teaching about academic literacy centred on providing students with '*optimal learning experiences*'. She expressed negative attitudes related to veracity and propriety (see Appendix 3), indicating that her concerns were based on judgments about ethics. As she emphatically states:

[Interview extract 3] Chris: We should be teaching to our strengths, and our expert knowledge, and this is not mine. I want the learning advisors there... I want their expertise. I'm not bringing the depth to it – I'm the parrot. And I can bring in anecdotes from my own knowledge to liven things up, but I'm still the parrot... They're [the students] not going to get the depth, or the nuances... I think those skills of unpacking an assessment belong with the learning advisors. They're the experts, and we want to use that expertise, and not arrogantly think that we can do it ourselves. I think it's the height of arrogance to think we can do it. It just so devalues the expertise you [the learning advisors] bring.

Clearly, from Chris' perspective, team teaching *with* LAs is the ideal configuration for academic literacy teaching. Her views resonate with findings from past research where the convergence of expertise, or, as Elton (2010, 151) puts it, the 'constructive collaboration between equals' is critical 'to construct new understandings that would most likely be unachievable' (Maldoni 2017, 106) if teaching was done individually. Additionally, Chris' comments position academic literacy teaching as a specialist field of knowledge (*They're the experts*). To use her analogy of '*the parrot*', it is one that should not be 'mimicked' by others with a different knowledge base. While some lecturers in past studies felt that they, alone, did not possess sufficient relevant knowledge to teach embedded academic literacy (see Bailey 2010; Harris and Ashton 2011; Jenkins and Wingate 2015; Mostert and Townsend 2016), Chris's concerns about expertise are more about the high value she places on academic literacy: she relates it to the development of transferrable '*skills*' that are relevant well beyond the boundaries of individual assessments. As she explains:

[Interview extract 4] Chris: The skills that we want for them to do for assessments are probably skills that they're going to use in life...The process parts of the assignment, and they're actually what matters...That 'how' is crucial in that, and we're undervaluing it with our talk about sustainability and our rationalisation of budget cuts.

The contrasting perspectives of the lecturers highlights the tension between specific configurations of embedded practices that may be ideal for students, lecturers, and small teams of LAs. This tension seems bound to the degree to which staffing capacity can sustain intensive collaborations or increase their scale. In terms of gradually transitioning to a stage of hand over, the core question to arise is whose needs are being served by doing so. With the success of students in mind, the next section examines the assessment outcomes of students in relation to who does the teaching.

Lecturer reflections on student assessment outcomes

Over his five years of leading EDUC651, the lecturer observed that students typically encounter a number of demands that make the assessment tasks challenging. First, the content of the course relates to psychosocial theory of learning, but the blog posts students need to engage with rarely make theory explicit. Second, the assessments require students to be critical of content that they are only beginning to come to terms with themselves, and students are still developing their ability to demonstrate criticality in their writing. Finally, students are dealing with text forms (blog posts by accredited teachers, their own blog critiques, and blog posts) that many have not previously encountered for a tertiary level assessment task. The combination of these three aspects results in a challenging experience for students.

In light of these demands, the embedded literacy model employed in this project aimed to prepare students for better understanding the demands of their assessment tasks before submission. Resubmission rates, therefore, provide one indication related to the impact of such teaching. They are particularly important in programs like the Bachelor of Education where the requirement to pass all assessment tasks creates a significant demand on lecturers' time. Additionally, as teachers and members of the professional body of teachers in New Zealand, lecturers in the BEd program have a moral and ethical need to provide optimal teaching for

students and to ensure as many students as possible experience success (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand 2017). Throughout the project, the course leader experienced a reduction in the time spent on supporting students with assessment related issues. From 2019, findings also show a positive impact on the number of students not completing the task to a suitable standard. At this time, teaching materials were expanded to include reading critically (writing critically was already taught) and four mini videos that distilled core teaching points from the lectures. Table 2 details the change in the percentage of assessment task submissions requiring resubmission during the collaboration period.

Table 2. Percentage of assessment tasks requiring resubmission

| Collaboration status | Year | Total assessment task submissions | Resubmission rate |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--|--------------------------|
| Prior to collaboration | 2016 | 236 | 5.5% |
| Iteration 1 | 2017 | 232 | 4.7% |
| Iteration 2 | 2018 | 242 | 5.8% |
| Iteration 3 | 2019 | 336 | 1.8% |
| Iteration 4 | 2020 | 321 | 1.8% |

Alongside the reduction in resubmission rates, shifts also occurred in the distribution of grades. Although comparative data is limited, such as access to the performance of each cohort across all core courses, in EDUC651, fewer students achieved an overall C grade during the second half of the project period. This timing corresponds to the reduction in resubmission rates. The exception is 2017 where resubmission rates only dropped slightly, but far more students achieved in the A range (52%). From the lecturer's perspective, this cohort of students were particularly supportive of each other, such as running their own study groups, and this may have significantly contributed to their high achievement. Typically, students that require resubmits are not engaging with their peers or teaching materials to the same extent. In 2018, such change in the distribution of grades was not evident. However, as previously identified, the lecturer reported a reduction in time spent supporting students with their assessments via emails and individual consultations. In 2019 and 2020, the reduction in resubmission rates (from a high of 5.8% to 1.8% in both years) coincided with the reduction in students achieving within the C range (from 24% to 11% and 14%), as shown in Figure 3.

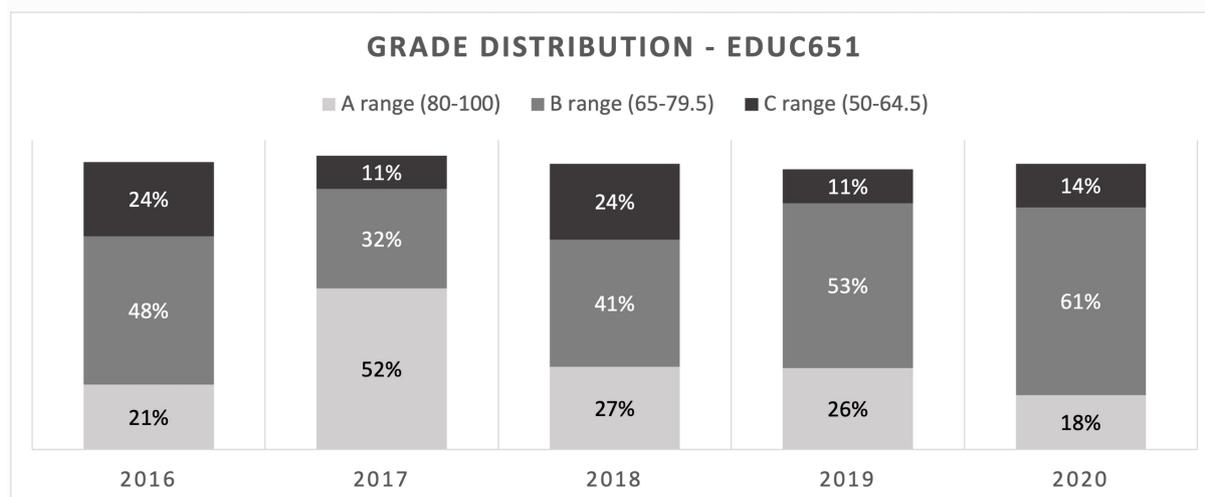


Figure 3. EDUC651 grade distribution in student cohorts between 2016-2020

One possible reason for the co-occurrence of these reductions in 2019 and 2020 is that students could flexibly access videos about both reading and writing critically for their assessments. These videos were not yet available to previous cohorts of students. The course lecturer believes the introduction of these videos was of particular importance in 2020 through the disruptions caused by COVID-19. During this time, many students were balancing increased demands on their time as essential workers and becoming not only the parents of their children but also their at-home teachers. Other students faced reduced access to suitable study spaces and/or technology. In relation to these pressures, the flexible access of specialist academic literacy teaching is likely to be relevant to performance. As previously discussed, a further influencing factor is the lecturer's increasing understanding of the specific literacy demands of the assessment tasks. Overall, in relation to examining the notion of hand over, these findings indicate that such a transition does not appear to negatively impact student performance.

Conclusion

This paper has examined a process through which lecturers gradually take on the teaching of academic literacy within their course. This is investigated in the context of small teams of literacy specialists being tasked with academic literacy development across their universities. The study sought to identify specific ways in which roles and responsibilities shifted over time and lecturers' experiences of this process. Findings show that, early in the collaboration, LAs predominantly created the teaching and learning materials and taught the lectures about academic literacy themselves. Subsequent iterations of the course provided the lecturer with a further opportunity to observe the learning advisor's teaching and saw a greater involvement in refining and improving the model texts, the teaching sequence, and the in-class activities for students. He eventually continued to use these co-created materials to teach independently. This shift in who did the teaching of lectures provided more time for the LAs to develop complementary online resources, such as mini videos about the key teaching points.

Traced over four years, these findings about contributions and roles were presented in a topology of embedded practices. Movement between the four quadrants in the topology can be flexible to account for the ways in which distinctive configurations of lecturer and learning

advisor activity and levels of responsibility may change. In this study, the continuity between collaborators over four years contributed to a clockwise shift between each quadrant: from *guest lecturing and endorsing* in 2017; to *co-designing and observing* in 2018, to *distributed designing and teaching* in 2019, and finally to *handing over* in 2020. These findings indicate that a supported and smooth hand over is possible, but it may need to be done gradually across multiple iterations of a course.

The lecturers involved in this study positively appraised the contribution of the LAs in terms of providing complementary knowledge about the assessment tasks. They saw this contribution as being beneficial to themselves and students. This knowledge was identified as illuminating the expectations of specific assessment tasks and transferrable processes that could be used by students in future tasks at university and thereafter. Their views, however, about who should do such teaching differed. In the context of having few LAs, one view is that teaching academic literacy is an opportunity for lecturers to extend their capabilities. The contrasting view is that interdisciplinary collaborations between lecturers and LAs should be on-going if providing students with an optimal learning experience is the goal. Strong ethical concerns were expressed around the notion of handover as devaluing specialist expertise and literacies teaching. These concerns raise the issue of whose interests are being served by designing an exit strategy for LAs to collaborate with lecturers intensively, but then undertake embedded teaching elsewhere.

In this study there is limited available data with which to examine the possible impact of handing over literacies teaching on student performance. Findings indicate that possible positive impacts of embedded teaching, particularly when lectures and videos about reading and writing critically are available to students, are a reduction in assessment task resubmissions and fewer students achieving minimal passing grades. These changes were sustained at the point of hand over. More robust comparative data is needed to determine if students consistently perform better when academic literacy is not only embedded in their courses, but also taught by their course lecturer. Overall, in the context of low investment in academic literacy development, but the desire for graduates to have a high level of transferrable communication skills, more research is urgently needed to identify how literacy specialists and subject specialists can collaborate sustainably and assess the impact of their teaching on the experiences and academic performance of students.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. A sample of approximate ratios of learning advisors to students

| Country | Sample ratios (LAs to students) | Source (as referenced) or correspondence with LAs (at specific institutions) |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Aotearoa/New Zealand | 1:1,740 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auckland University of Technology Annual Report 2020 (Auckland University of Technology, 2020). • Auckland University of Technology Library staff academic profiles webpages viewed Nov 1, 2021 • Unitec Institute of Technology • Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki • Victoria University of Wellington • Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology |
| Australia | 1:3,600 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Language Learning centres/units - Australian universities, 2020-2021 (Ashton Hay et al., 2021) |
| Canada | 1:4,560 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collège communautaire du Nouveau-brunswick - Campus de Dieppe • Conestoga College • Lethbridge College • McGill University • Mount Royal University • Sheridan College • St. Mary's University (Calgary) • University of Guelph |
| Scotland | 1:5,770 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Caledonian University • Strathclyde University • University of Glasgow |
| UK | 1:4,240 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangor University • Canterbury Christchurch University • St George's, University of London • Teesside University • The University of Law • University College of Estate Management • University of Hull • University of Plymouth |

Appendix 2. A coding scheme for text analysis (adapted from Szenes and Tilakaratna, 2021)

| Coding scheme | |
|---|--|
| Inscribed attitude | black bold font |
| Invoked attitude | <i>italics</i> |
| Targets (what gets appraised) | <u>underlined</u> |
| Valence (the positive or negative charging) | ‘+’ for positive evaluation ‘-’ for negative evaluation |
| Modifying the force or focus of evaluation with choices within the sub-system of GRADUATION | <i>Black bold italics</i> |
| Specific choices within the sub-system of APPRAISAL | Square brackets e.g. [+affect] |
| Embedded clauses | [[.....]] |

Appendix 3. Sample analysis of evaluative language used by lecturers in the interviews

| Target | Appraising item & co-text | Type & valence |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| [It] = <u>working with learning advisors</u> | is a <i>learning opportunity</i> | [+ appreciation: valuation] |
| [something] = <u>what is woven together by lecturers and learning advisors</u> | is stunning for students | [+ appreciation: reaction: quality] |
| [It's] = <u>the assessment task</u> | like this huge beast of a thing | [- appreciation: composition] |
| [They've] = <u>lecturers who have worked with learning advisors to over time</u> | <i>developed their own capabilities</i> | [+ judgement: capacity] |
| <u>the learning advisors</u> | I want the learning advisors there | [+ affect: inclination: desire] |
| <u>I'm = lecturer doing the literacy teaching</u> | <i>the parrot</i> | [- judgement: veracity] |
| <u>The skills</u> [that we want for them to do for assessments] | are probably [[<i>skills that they're going to use in life</i>]] | [+ appreciation: valuation] |
| [It] = <u>the process parts of the assessments</u> | we are undervaluing it | [- judgement: propriety] |