

Article

Out of the Writing Centre and into the Classroom: Academic Literacies in Action

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Abstract

Writing and learning centre professionals have expertise in supporting the development of academic literacies but are typically positioned outside of departmental contexts, limiting their interaction with instructors in the disciplines. Small scale initiatives towards meaningful collaboration with faculty can create the dialogic space to move the work of academic literacies development into the classroom. This paper describes three collaborative projects in business, science, and arts disciplines to move instruction in academic literacies from a supplemental, outside of class model to an embedded, in-class delivery. Working towards collaborative projects enhances opportunities for writing centre professionals to impact their institutions while remaining flexible in delivering support in a variety of modes. These collaborative projects enhance the professional development of both teaching faculty and writing centre professionals, allowing both parties to gain insight on the often-implicit processes of thinking, using information, and writing that distinguish disciplines from one another.

Keywords: Academic literacies; writing in the disciplines; writing centres; learning centres

Introduction

Writing and learning centre professionals support students in writing assignments across the disciplines, regularly encountering a range of student texts from humanities essays, to scientific lab reports and business proposals. Despite the fact that writing centre professionals focus on developing student writers by identifying strengths and building skills, writing centres may nonetheless be viewed within their institutional contexts as places to send students with perceived deficits. While individualized support benefits students of all abilities, the academic literacies model (Lea & Street, 1998) recognizes that all post-secondary students work through a process of developing communication skills specific to their discipline. How can writing centre professionals work collaboratively with faculty in other academic areas to support larger numbers of students in learning the writing processes of their chosen disciplines, while at the same time reducing deficit thinking about student abilities in their institutions?

This paper outlines approaches to collaboratively embedding writing support in several disciplinary contexts using an academic literacies approach, explored through my journey working in partnership with others. This journey demonstrates that embedding support in the disciplines is not a one-size-fits-all task, and that collaboration enables writing centre professionals to have a deeper impact across their institutions.

Literature Review

Defining Academic Literacies

The academic literacies model emerged out of critical linguistics in the 1990s; it focuses on approaching student academic writing in its social context (Lea, 2016). Academic literacies are the practices involved in becoming a participant in an academic community and include the skills to read literature, evaluate ideas, interact with other members of the disciplinary community, and create knowledge within that community (Kelly-Laubscher & Van der Merwe, 2014; Wingate, 2018). Successfully supporting students as they gain academic literacy skills requires precise understandings of how knowledge is organized and how inquiry is conducted in each discipline. While similarities do exist between broader disciplinary categories (e.g. humanities), students must also master the finer distinctions of knowledge production in their chosen field (Clarence & McKenna, 2017). Additionally, because most students take courses in multiple disciplines, they must master these distinctions in

order to move between discourse communities throughout their studies (Kelly-Laubscher & Van der Merwe, 2014; Lea & Street, 1998; McKay & Simpson, 2013). The academic literacies model can also be used to consider the competencies that students must gain over the course of their studies in order to meet program objectives and transition into their chosen profession (Göpferich, 2016).

In addition, academic literacies can extend beyond traditional textual forms. Richards and Pilcher (2018) emphasize the need to extend the concept to other methods of disseminating knowledge, using nursing and design as examples of disciplines that require verbal, non-verbal, pictorial, and digital literacies. They advocate for broadening the concept of academic literacies beyond the text to better address student learning needs in all disciplines. Lea (2016) also highlights the impact of new forms of writing, such as blogging and micro-blogging, on literacies in academic communities, and notes the need to extend concepts of academic literacies to these emerging forms.

The academic literacies perspective understands disciplinary conventions as socially constructed. Therefore, following Vygotsky's (1978) understanding that learning is social in nature, novices to a disciplinary community learn from experienced members through a scaffolded introduction to new concepts. The academic literacies model highlights the fact that the transition to post-secondary education requires all students, not only those traditionally considered at risk, to master new forms of literacy as they are socialized into the academic community; thus, the model avoids deficit thinking (Lea & Street, 2006; McKay & Simpson, 2013). However, while the academic literacies model shares the constructivist framework of academic socialization, it extends further to address issues of power relationships and the social identities present in the institutional practices of academic environments (Lea, 2016). Furthermore, the model builds on Street's *ideological model* of literacy that considers literacies as sociocultural practices and provides space for critically questioning whether other forms of meaning-making might be legitimate in a discipline (Lillis & Scott, 2015).

Academic literacies, as a theoretical framework, is positioned at the intersection of theory and practice (Lillis & Scott, 2015). Practitioners influenced by the academic literacies model often use the methods of genre analysis and/or systemic functional linguistics, helping students to understand the communicative conventions of their discipline by breaking down the features of example texts (Wingate, 2018). Lillis and Scott (2015) describe academic literacies researchers as practitioners who apply their knowledge to understanding the literacy practices of specific discourse communities, with the intention of making these explicit. Academic literacies incorporates ethnographic approaches,

observing practices from the viewpoint of expert members of discourse communities, as well as through the perspectives of students who are emerging members of the discipline.

The Rationale for Embedding Discipline-Specific Academic Literacy Strategies

Murray and Nallaya (2016) highlight the growing consensus that students are best introduced to academic literacy practices through learning activities embedded in their courses. Wingate (2006, 2018) highlights the problems with traditional “study skills” programs, which are often directed at non-native English speakers. She notes that these programs are often based upon the false concept of a universal approach to academic communication, and furthermore, they fail to engage disciplinary experts in the process of exploring the tacit conventions of their fields. Because of their generic nature, these programs are unable to engage students in understanding the research and reading processes that support writing in a particular discipline. Moreover, students themselves may become frustrated in attempts to apply their generic skills to multiple disciplines, receiving vastly different feedback on the quality of their work in different courses (Lampi & Reynolds, 2018). In addition, study skills programs offered outside of class may, paradoxically, attract stronger students rather than those who struggle (Durkin & Main, 2002), and students may not recognize them as relevant to their courses or learning needs (Durkin & Main, 2002; Göpferich, 2016; Wingate, 2006). This paradox may occur because of strong students’ motivation to engage in activities that they perceive will lead to higher grades. Additionally, strong students are often able to make metacognitive connections between generic programs and course specific applications in ways that are less transparent to struggling students. Thus, while attempting to address perceived deficits in student skills, generic programs often fail to reach their target audience.

On the other hand, discipline-based academic literacies programs can enhance both motivation and deep learning for students. Durkin and Main (2002) found that students demonstrated higher motivation to attend discipline-specific sessions. Successful implementation of discipline-specific academic support has been demonstrated across disciplines, including in general sciences (Emerson et al., 2006), architecture (Baik & Greig, 2009), and nursing (Mitchell et al., 2017). In discipline-specific contexts, instructors can also work with students to critically examine the practices they are learning, allowing students to understand the social construction of knowledges more clearly (Anderson & Hounsell, 2007).

Thus, successful examples across multiple disciplines demonstrate that students are best supported to acquire the practices and discourses needed to enter their chosen academic community when this instruction is provided in discipline-specific contexts. When discipline-specific support is provided, students are able to accurately learn the needed discourses, maintain motivation, and develop a critical viewpoint on the nature of knowledge creation and dissemination in their disciplines. Furthermore, embedding academic literacies creates powerful partnerships that foster development in writing centre professionals and disciplinary faculty.

Roles of Disciplinary Faculty and Writing Centre Professionals

Embedding academic literacies within the classroom creates space for critical conversations between writing centre professionals and disciplinary faculty about the tacit social practices that need to be made explicit in their courses. Middendorf and Shopkow (2018) highlight that persistent student difficulties in a learning task and mismatches between instructor expectations and student performance are often the result of implicit processes known to experts, but opaque to students. Learning and writing centre professionals may also find themselves isolated from this implicit, discipline-specific knowledge, and can become more engaged in discipline-specific discourses through collaboration (McKay & Simpson, 2013). Collaboration between faculty and writing centre professionals can foster learning and growth for all partners, and create effective instructional practices for students.

While faculty often bear the burden of facilitating student writing development, an area often outside of their specialization, these teaching faculty may also reject the task of supporting student writing, believing it to be primarily a language issue outside of their scope of practice (Benzie et al., 2017; Murray & Nallaya, 2016; Wingate, 2018). Teaching faculty may also fear that time given to academic literacies work may detract from content delivery (Göpferich, 2016), and may have difficulties securing time to prepare lessons to support this work (Murray & Nallaya, 2016). While faculty may struggle to find a path ahead in supporting student writing, Lampi and Reynolds (2018) emphasize the need for instructors to take on the task of making disciplinary conventions explicit to students. To improve student work, instructors can specifically address assumptions around knowledge creation in their fields, explain to students their role as knowledge creators, and model the processes of integrating one's own view with knowledge from the existing research (Lea & Street, 1998). Additional strategies include addressing questions of purpose and audience, creating and analyzing models, and practicing the common rhetorical structures used in the discipline (Lampi & Reynolds, 2018). While

these tasks are clearly necessary, they remain difficult for two reasons. First, most teaching faculty have not been trained in analyzing language and discourse. Second, the assumptions behind disciplinary communication seem intuitive to experts, and difficult to deconstruct. This is where partnership has the potential to enhance the practice of writing experts and instructors alike.

Part of the value the writing centre professional provides in the partnership is their “outsider” status to the discipline. Wingate (2018) explains that writing professionals often do their best work when they function as novices to an academic discipline, identifying challenges students may face from this perspective. This creates a space for dialogue where the writing centre professional can freely ask naïve questions, allowing discipline faculty the opportunity to make their implicit knowledge explicit (Clarence & McKenna, 2017). Middendorf & Shopkow (2018) also emphasize the role of the outsider in interviewing teaching faculty about the thinking processes that underlie their work within the discipline. Clarence and McKenna (2017) note that when momentum towards a true academic literacies framework is reached, this dialogue can extend to helping instructors critically examine conventions.

The dialogic, boundary-shifting relationship between discipline faculty and writing centre professionals is at the heart of enhancing academic literacies support (McKay & Simpson, 2013). Jacobs (2007) emphasizes that the most successful initiatives take place when both parties make a strong contribution, with neither leaving the work to the other. Writing professionals should avoid “colonizing” the work of discipline specialists by taking over core curriculum development or teaching tasks. On the other hand, it is also important to be cautious of requests to produce resources with minimal input from teaching faculty (Benzie et al., 2017). Thus, it is clear that successful efforts require a true partnership where both parties function as equals yet retain their distinctive part of the contribution. Jacobs (2007) suggests that this can lead to a shared identity as a transdisciplinary collective of teaching professionals.

Academic literacies activities offer benefits to all members of the collaborative team. Lea (2016) suggests that professional development in academic literacies offers benefits for teaching faculty, particularly in view of emerging digital literacy practices. A knowledge of academic literacies allows instructors to critically examine their assumptions around how knowledge is produced and privileged in their discipline, to open space for new forms of writing in academic contexts, and to provide students with a “meta” knowledge of the discipline that allows them to make genuine contributions

(Jacobs, 2007; Lea, 2016). Writing professionals also develop through the dialogue as they develop specific knowledge of practices across disciplines, gaining the ability to provide more directed support to students as a result (McKay & Simpson, 2013). In summary, academic literacies are most effectively brought into the classroom when teaching faculty and writing professionals enter into genuine partnership.

Implementing Academic Literacies

A typical product of writing specialist and teaching faculty collaborations is a series of scaffolded exercises that leads students through the process of deconstructing pieces of academic writing in the same genre as those they will produce, evaluating both strong and weak examples of writing, and reflecting, making notes on what is acquired to produce strong writing, and reflecting on how these findings apply to their own writing on a particular assignment (Wingate, 2018). The process of modelling and deconstruction provides students with insight about both the structure and language expected in their discipline (Kelly-Laubscher & Van der Merwe, 2014). As Richards and Pilcher (2018) emphasize, these same processes of deconstruction and reconstruction can be applied beyond the text to support non-textual academic literacies. Lampi and Reynolds (2018) suggest that writing and learning professionals attend classes, interview instructors, review syllabi, and interview faculty in order to enhance their knowledge of the requirements of academic courses, thereby using this knowledge to offer enhanced genre-specific support and raise instructor awareness of how they can highlight the characteristics of their discipline for students. Lea and Street (2006) also suggest workshops where faculty explore their own identities as academic writers as a means to developing understandings of academic literacies. A faculty research circle may also be used to achieve similar goals (Lea, 2016).

Small-scale implementation of academic literacies initiatives is valuable in increasing the quality of student learning support (Wingate, 2006). The small-scale partnerships can provide the demonstration effect that shows success and motivates participation from others (Drummond et al., 1998). However, writing centre professionals, faculty, and administrators can also learn from initiatives that allow for wider implementation of these practices. Wingate (2018) highlights the Australian model of support for academic literacies, where collaborations between academic language specialists and teaching faculty are widespread across institutions and recommended in the national Higher Education Standards Framework. She also mentions long-term partnerships at the University of Cape Town

between language development team members and academic departments in an effort to achieve systematic, institutional change. However, as Wingate notes, most collaborations to infuse academic literacy into the curriculum are localized; while successful, they are not yet normative.

Like Wingate (2018), Göpferich (2016) asserts that broader initiatives are possible and desirable. At the departmental level, faculty can create a disciplinary literacies matrix that reflects the literacies students are expected to develop as they achieve program learning outcomes. When these literacies are identified, plans for implementing them in courses across the discipline can be developed with the support of writing professionals. Furthermore, Göpferich states that university-wide policy should be the goal, with incentives offered to teaching faculty who embark on collaborative academic literacies projects. In this model, the role of writing centre professionals shifts from individual student support to becoming a hub that supports faculty development in teaching writing across disciplines. The writing centre supports the work in the classroom by creating a third space for student dialogue on their work (Ganobscik-Williams, 2011). Shifting conversations around writing within the academic literacies model requires change at individual, departmental, and institutional levels (Drummond et al., 1998).

Murray and Nallaya (2016) emphasize the need to create a supportive structure for the change process involved in implementing academic literacies. Leadership, networking, political savvy, a communication plan, and the support of institutional leadership contribute to the success of initiatives. Engaging all stakeholders, with particular attention to teaching faculty, is vital (Benzie et al., 2017). However, writing and learning centres often find themselves in marginalized positions outside of the conversations occurring in academic departments, and thus, collaborations must be sought (McKay & Simpson, 2013). Benzie et. al. (2017) suggest that adaptive leadership may serve as a model for engaging all stakeholders in addressing the challenge of incorporating academic literacies across the curriculum.

Setting the Context: An Applied Linguist Enters a Polytechnic University

Given the challenges and possibilities of the academic literacies model, how can this approach practically be implemented by writing specialists? I came to my work at a highly culturally diverse me-

dium-sized polytechnic university from a background in applied linguistics, influenced highly by systemic functional linguistics as an approach to analyzing text and communication. My own educational experiences had been primarily in arts and humanities courses, and many of the wide range of disciplines present within a polytechnic university were foreign to me – sometimes requiring students to produce texts in a language that still felt unknown to me. Though I was in new territory, I carried with me a toolkit that would help me decode the context. From my previous experience, I knew that I would need to interact with others from these unfamiliar disciplinary contexts to learn the way that insiders understood these new discipline-specific ways of communicating.

I was also supported by the strong organizing framework that structured learning support at my institution. The framework that shaped our learning centre team's work, which included writing support, was organized into four tiers: general support (skills development and tutoring programs), complementary support (individualized support, course-based programs), integrated support (learning/writing strategies integrated into course assignments, in-class visits) and embedded support (learning/writing skills are integrated throughout a course and systematically throughout programs). This framework, particularly with its focus on integrated and embedded support, considers academic and writing strategies support as enhancing the experience of all students and creates space for collaborative partnerships.

From time to time, I was approached by faculty colleagues who observed that their students experienced difficulties with the literacy practices in their courses, and who were searching for strategies to support their students. The case studies below describe three of these partnerships: one in an individual arts course, one across all sections of a first-year science course, and one that extended more broadly to a variety of business courses. Each case study is told through my perspective as a writing specialist who works within a learning centre context, with the intent of helping others in similar roles in their own institutions envision possibilities for their own work.

Writing in Criminology: Research and Writing Experts Meet

How does a dedicated faculty member with strong expertise in research learn to initiate students into the foundational steps of the research process in his discipline? A relatively new faculty member was assigned to teach several sections of a first-year course in criminology. The classes include high numbers of internationally-educated students who were gaining some of their first exposure to academic

writing. Despite the provision of extensive assignment instructions and a library tutorial, student assignments showed high levels of plagiarism. This was despite the fact that students had access to writing support and instructor office hours in the campus learning centre. The instructor had a high level of expertise in research and desired to see his students understand the foundations of research in criminology early in their study process.

I met with the instructor in an attempt to pinpoint the cause of the students' difficulties, bringing with me my "outsider" skill of asking basic questions to get at the heart of the assignment task. Through our conversation, we discerned that there was one piece of the process that remained implicit for students: using information from their sources. The students had opportunity to learn to find sources, and opportunity to understand the structure of the assignment. Yet, as novices, the students had not yet learned how information was organized in the criminology literature, how to find relevant material, and how to paraphrase and interact with the material.

I designed a 90-minute workshop, to be delivered during the class time, ensuring that all students had equal opportunity to access the session content. Students were instructed to bring two research articles that they had selected to the workshop. After reviewing the structure of a typical research article in the social sciences, students received step-by-step instruction on how to effectively paraphrase information from their sources. After working through their research articles and identifying relevant material for their papers, the students also were given time to create an initial outline. After the workshop, several students reported that this process was new to them, and that they were now better equipped to move from research, to reading, to extracting information, and on to writing.

Implications for Writing Centre Practice

- 1) *Consider all aspects of literacy processes.* Often, the default mode in writing centre instruction is to focus on what happens after the student begins organizing and drafting their paper. In this case, students' plagiarism behaviour was not a direct result of misunderstanding academic integrity policies, rather it was their lack of exposure to the reading processes used in academic writing. While the students knew that they had to cite the work of others, they did not yet know how to accurately find relevant information, and how to interact with it in their writing. When partnering with faculty to work on students' academic literacies, processes beyond the act of writing are important. Partnerships with librarians can also assist in providing integrated scaffolding for the research and writing process.

2) *Partnerships with newer faculty can be particularly fruitful.* Jacobs (2007) observes that newer faculty may be more inclined to participate in initiatives to integrate academic literacies into their courses, as these faculty may be more receptive to interacting with new perspectives. While all faculty can be involved in successful partnerships, newer faculty may be actively seeking these partnerships.

Writing Right in Biology: From Outsider to Team Member

How can a writing centre help students write more effectively in biology? One of my earliest collaborations began when I was asked to join another learning strategist who was working with a group of biology faculty to develop two workshops for first-year students. Many students in the course struggled to formulate test responses and write lab reports in ways that reflected the conventions of scientific writing. After my colleague prepared the initial workshop materials, I began to facilitate these two workshops several times each semester. While I worked to increase my knowledge of scientific writing by reading student handbooks on the subject, my greatest challenge remained my lack of personal experience in scientific writing.

As I facilitated the lab report writing workshop, I came to believe that the curriculum would be enhanced by creating exercises where students analyzed examples of successful undergraduate lab reports, so I met with colleagues in the biology department to share this need. I facilitated again using the revised materials, and while I noticed improvements, I remained unsatisfied with the teaching and learning experience. A deeper level of collaboration was needed; as an outsider to the field, I lacked the personal experience of the communication strategies implicitly known by my biology colleagues. Most significantly, I needed input from the lab instructors responsible to ensure that students could report their findings using expected conventions.

After spending a half-day with the biology lab instructors, we soon determined that a stronger partnership would be forged by combining the lab instructors' inside knowledge of their genre with my knowledge of the academic literacies. Over the next months, in a working group where I joined biology faculty and lab instructors, we developed sessions that would be delivered in-class by the lab instructors, systematically building students' skills over the two semesters of first-year biology. One of my recommendations was for lab instructors to write two versions of an introductory level report – one demonstrating effective writing and the other demonstrating ineffective writing. This allowed

instructors to utilize their discipline-specific knowledge and allowed me, as a learning strategist, to formulate activities and exercises to highlight particular writing skills essential to successful writing in the discipline. From an outsider, with little knowledge of the specific conventions of biology writing, I transitioned to the role of a team member, working alongside colleagues with a common goal.

Since the materials were developed, all first-year students now access scaffolded support in learning to write biology lab reports. Thus, the experience has become embedded into the laboratory portion of the course, removing the deficit-model connotations that can be present in outside of class workshops. In the past, it was observed that supplemental workshops are often attended by motivated, stronger students, with no means of ensuring that struggling students are provided with support in a timely manner (Durkin & Main, 2002). Therefore, structuring needed academic literacies content within the classroom eliminates the barriers that supplemental sessions can pose for students with significant work or family responsibilities.

Implications for Writing Centre Practice

- 1) *The value of longer-term partnerships.* The current learning centre-biology department partnership to support student writing has grown over a four-year period. This has allowed for all partners to learn from one another, to trust each other, and to continue making adjustments towards the solution that most optimally supports students.
- 2) *The role of integrated strategies in moving beyond deficit thinking.* The move from a complementary (outside of class delivery) to integrated (in-class delivery) model supports the assertion that all students require support to gain academic literacies in their discipline (Lea & Street, 1998). While students may have completed simple biology writing tasks at the secondary school level, the move to post-secondary requires a new set of literacy skills as students gradually move towards becoming full members of the scientific discourse community. An in-class model recognizes this as a normative part of students' learning process.

Developing Professional Skills in the Classroom: Scaling Up

When I began my role as a learning strategist, business was one of the most unfamiliar writing domains for me. My first entrance into a network of business faculty came from an invitation to co-facilitate a transition program for new international business students, and the opportunity to join

an interdisciplinary committee supporting internationalization initiatives within the School of Business. My network of business faculty colleagues increased, and I began receiving requests to facilitate in-class workshops to support writing in business, leading students through such tasks as writing executive summaries and recommendations. In this process, I was as much of a learner as the students. I searched for texts in business genres to deconstruct as I worked to build my own knowledge of business writing.

During the same period, I received a grant to develop an Open Educational Resource to support student learning. I began creating both online texts and supplementary videos but remained puzzled as to how students would independently find and engage with these resources. I shared the resources I had created with some of my colleagues in the School of Business, along with the basic principles behind embedding learning support in the classroom. Soon, several of my business colleagues formed a team that worked on a communication strategy and a plan to engage faculty in a workshop. At the suggestion of colleagues, the program was framed in the “business language” of *Building Professional Skills in the Classroom*.

Soon after, a pilot group of six instructors joined together for the first half-day workshop that outlined the embedding process. The workshop was co-sponsored by the learning centres, the school of business, and the teaching and learning commons. The workshop included the following content:

- 1) A basic overview of the rationale for embedding academic literacies into courses.
- 2) Collaborative identification of the bottlenecks (Middendorf & Shopkow, 2018), areas where students had not yet mastered the required academic literacies, that caused student difficulties in completing key course assignments.
- 3) An “assignment audit” analysis of the implicit skills behind each bottleneck.
- 4) The introduction of a student-facing “skills audit” that instructors could use in the classroom to gain a more realistic picture of their students’ current academic literacies as they relate to the course requirements.
- 5) A process for breaking down assignments and creating a scaffolded process to support students in building the required academic literacy competencies within the context of their assignment. The scaffolded processes developed include embedding relevant components of

Open Education Resources within course assignments to support students.

Workshop participants were given access to a closed site in the learning management system that included previously prepared resources, with the invitation for instructors to embed and adapt the relevant resources into their assignments and courses.

An immediate unintended benefit of the workshop is that the faculty present began to see the process of academic literacies development as it occurs (or fails to occur) throughout their programs (Göpferich, 2016). This created an opening for ongoing faculty conversations around how the process of academic literacy development builds year over year, ensuring that students meet program outcomes. Another workshop was held about six weeks after the first, with a mix of returning and new participants continuing the conversation.

Implications for Writing Centre Practice

1. *Scaling-up.* Prior to this workshop, my previous work supporting academic literacy development occurred in either individual collaborations (such as the criminology project) or with instructors in a single course (first-year biology). While these collaborations were fruitful, they also began to challenge my own capacity to support requests for partnership. Additionally, in some cases, supporting single courses or assignments led to the creation of resources without fully developing the dialogue process that supports ongoing faculty and writing centre professional development. Part of the impetus for the *Building Professional Skills in the Classroom* program was the search for a sustainable way to support faculty and students.
2. *Identifying faculty champions.* The success of the project was the result of early-adopters and faculty champions contributing their knowledge of how the message of academic literacies development might be shaped in ways that would attract the participation of their colleagues. This is enabling the work to take place within a Faculty, rather than the course level, with future possibilities of scaling up more broadly across the institution.
3. *Beginning the dialogue with felt needs.* One of the original motivations for the project was meeting the challenges of rapidly internationalizing classrooms, with students entering university with varied competencies in the academic literacies needed to succeed in their courses. The rapid change in classroom composition and student needs was challenging for many faculty

and created an opening to introduce new practices. Within the context of the workshops, content is presented in a frame that is closer to academic socialization than the more critical perspective of academic literacies. However, the relationships created in this context, along with deepening institutional conversations around open pedagogies, leave space for deeper discussions around the meaning of business discourse practices and the assignments used to lead students towards program outcomes.

4. *Creating new synergies*: The workshops created new synergies between faculty across disciplines, and between faculty and writing specialists. These synergies created a unique energy that fueled the development and adaption of resources by faculty to support their students. The result is increasing movement away from generic resources, to targeted initiatives to grow students' academic literacies. Many participants articulated the benefits gained through collaboration across disciplines.
5. *Partnering with teaching centres*: Another unique feature of the project was its design as a three-way partnership between the learning centres, the teaching and learning commons, and the school of business. Embedding academic literacies support has implications for curriculum development at both the course and program levels. Collaborations with teaching support units provide another avenue for discussions of the place of academic literacies development within broader teaching and learning processes.

Lessons from Embedded Academic Literacies Collaborations

Moving away from strictly one-to-one practice, and towards embedded writing support and collaborative partnerships is a long-term process. In the case studies described above, these partnerships started organically through one-to-one conversations with faculty members. Often, the movement towards embedded support begins by collaborating with a single instructor in one of their courses before expanding more broadly towards departmental partnerships. Each small step taken provides learning for both writing centre professionals and teaching faculty colleagues.

Collaborations to embed academic literacies may also include a number of other units within the institution. In particular, librarians and writing support professionals may form an effective team in supporting students through the full research and writing journey. This integrated approach can be

particularly fruitful at the first-year level, as students learn to approach research, reading, and writing as an integrated set of practices. In addition, as demonstrated through the *Building Professional Skills in the Classroom* project, partnerships with educational development professionals and teaching support units may also create effective spaces for collaboration in promoting the development of academic literacies.

The academic literacies model also offers space for broader explorations of academic culture, supporting culturally diverse students while avoiding deficit representations of students who are new to the university learning culture. Blasco (2015) notes that all students work through the process of learning new academic language, new ways of engaging in a classroom setting, and new strategies for learning, regardless of their status as domestic or internationally-educated students. Blasco suggests that a key **facilitator** of academic adaptation for all learners, particularly those who are internationally-educated, is making tacit elements of the learning process explicit. Embedded, discipline-specific writing support provides one avenue for making tacit academic culture explicit, facilitating exploration into the workings of academic culture and providing students with opportunities to reflect on their participation in their academic culture(s).

Conclusion

The academic literacies model puts the discipline-specific nature of academic communication at the forefront. While broad institutional implementation of academic literacies programming is the ideal, my journey has shown me that implementing small-scale initiatives creates opportunities to positively impact students, to influence faculty practices, and to develop as a writing specialist. While one-to-one consultations and supporting tutors remain an important part of our collective professional practice, developing collaborative partnerships provides the means to impact larger numbers of students. At the same time, this work enables us to shift the conversation away from deficit models and towards an understanding of academic literacies development as a part of the learning process for all postsecondary students.

Further research in this area would include analysis of how embedding academic literacy practices leads to tangible growth in student achievement (for example, by comparing student achievement before and after academic literacies interventions), as well as a study on the role of collaboration in enhancing the ability of writing centre professionals to understand the textual and non-textual

literacies students are learning in their institutions.

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