# International Journal of TESOL Studies (IJST) Special Issue Call for Papers
## Who's afraid of academic writing? Alleviating anxiety, fear, and stress for university students

### Guest Editor
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### Aims and Scope
Many university educators who teach writing go through a stage in which their sole concern is developing effective teaching methods to maximise student learning. Until a few years ago, I was no exception. In fact, I would describe my efforts as relentless and I interpreted recurring student feedback that my academic writing activities were demanding to mean that I was on the right track (Wong, 2023a); if my coursework were not demanding, I would not be an effective teacher. However, it eventually dawned on me that if I persisted in using what I thought were good teaching methods, I would generate dislike for the subject in my students. While I had always believed that care in teaching was important, literature confirmed that it is indeed a crucial area of pedagogical discourse (Wong, 2023b). After I tried to become more caring, I was amazed to see that, for the first time, the word 'care' appeared in my student feedback. A student wrote, "Dr Wong displays care for his students..." The comment convinced me that good teaching cannot be sustained without care.

To care for students is to, among other things, understand their emotions, especially negative ones. To this end, in the two semesters of 2023, I conducted a survey at the beginning of each semester to better understand student needs. The data suggest that the majority of students in both semesters associated academic writing with negative emotions, such as anxiety, fear, or stress. This finding was news to me and was of great concern. Anxiety, for example, is said to be "one of the critical individual affective factors in the process of learning a second language or a foreign language" (He, Zhou, & Zhang, 2021, p. 1). Presumably, something similar could be said of the process of learning academic writing. Anxiety, as studies suggest, is linked to "avoidance of the feared situation and loss of motivation to perform", which could adversely affect retention (England, Brigati, & Schussler, 2017, p. 2/17). Anxiety, which can cause "heightened stress" (Wynne, Guo, & Wang, 2014, p. 366) and fear can ultimately affect language performance (Soriano & Co, 2022, p. 450).

Thus, dispelling anxiety, fear, stress, or any negative emotion among students is a pedagogic imperative. According to literature, one way of addressing the problem is to create positive learning experiences for students, which could replace negative ones. To create a positive experience, teachers could "provide instructor presence" and give students "a sense of belonging" (Cook, 2021, p. 136). They can create a positive learning experience through an ethic of care (Noddings, 2012). Teachers can display "empathic concern" by acknowledging student perspectives in class, using inclusive language, encouraging open communication, and accommodating student needs (Patel, 2023, p. 64). The teacher can create "a safe learning environment" by establishing "rules of engagement" and encouraging students to "explain their answers" in class without labelling the answers as "wrong" or "incorrect" (Teo, 2023, p. 79). After all, "harsh criticisms" can impede learning (Soriano & Co, 2022, p. 452), whereas positive feedback can alleviate anxiety (He, Zhou, & Zhang, 2021). Lastly, teachers can also use positive psychology and implement "emotion regulation and management practices that aim at boosting student enjoyment" (Li, Wei, & Lu, 2023).

The International Journal of TESOL Studies invites university educators to contribute to a Special Issue entitled 'Who's afraid of academic writing: Alleviating anxiety, fear and stress for university students', targeted for publication in mid-2025. Contributors are invited to share with readers how they address the issue of anxiety, fear, stress, or other negative emotions that students experience in writing. The paper, 7,000-8,000 words in length, should end with recommendations for fellow educators.

Contributors do not have to be writing teachers. They could be subject teachers who have experience teaching writing within their areas.

### Submission Instructions
Interested parties are invited to submit an abstract using this template to the guest editor before 30ᵗʰ April, 2024. In the abstract, please include a context for the study, the problem or need to be addressed, the research gap (if necessary), the objective statement, and the importance of the study. Deadline for the submission of papers is 30ᵗʰ December 2024.

Abstracts and papers should be written in Standard English, but in a way that is accessible to educated readers. Excessive use of technical terms is to be avoided and, when used, the technical terms should be clearly explained. Please refer to the journal's style sheet when formatting the paper.

Email abstracts and papers to jock@nus.sg.

References

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