

International Journal of TESOL Studies
Special Issue on Critical Thinking and Communicating in the Disciplines
Call for Papers

Guest Editors

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Aims and Scope

Writing instruction in Higher Education institutions has become a field that is both specialized and diverse. This development is the outcome of changes in the HE landscape in general, and has presented differently in contexts around the world. In the UK, for example, the merging of universities and polytechnics, coupled with a resultant debate about the role and scope of universities, as well as a burgeoning of economic and administrative imperatives, has led to the “proliferation of rival and disarticulated agendas” (Findlow, 2012). In the case of the US, Labaree (2017) traces the separate trajectory of higher education, conceptualizing it as a “perfect mess” that has become “lean, adaptable, autonomous, consumer sensitive, self-supporting, and radically decentralized” (p. 1). Asian universities have been heavily influenced by these developments, with origins in colonialism and shifts in global economic power (Altbach & Selvaratnam, 2012). The result is a complex HE landscape, in which writing instruction responds to a diverse range of challenges and takes on an equally diverse range of forms and systems.

In terms of challenges, two examples are the move towards interdisciplinarity in undergraduate education, and the opening up of universities to include more professional training courses. Both developments have implications for the conceptualization of writing in and across the disciplines. With regard to writing studies more broadly, Bazerman (2011) argues that this field is fundamentally interdisciplinary, but Kaufhold and McGrath (2019) note that from the perspective of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), there have traditionally been attempts to demarcate disciplines and to teach within them. They also posit, however, that this situation is changing, and that there is in fact a need to reconceptualize the very notion of a discipline. Simultaneously, as more vocational and professional training courses enter the ambit of the university, the traditional academic underpinning of the term dissolves, opening the way to redefine disciplinary writing instruction in terms of desired professional outcomes (Russell, 2013). Against this context, one significant development has been the foregrounding of Critical Thinking components in higher education writing instruction (Çavdar & Doe, 2012). The relevance of these components is underscored by the call from numerous professional accreditation standards for evidence of students’ critical thinking in the learning process (e.g. Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology - ABET).

Scholars have stressed the importance of improved critical thinking instruction in higher education (Bays & Ralston, 2015) to prepare students for the workplace. While some academic/professional disciplines have had a longer runway to formalize this component and are in an advanced stage of debates related to integration, evaluation and diversification (e.g. Conn Welch, Hieb, & Graham, 2015; Živković, 2016), others are still grappling with the question of how to incorporate it. As universities design interdisciplinary courses, there is an expansion of focus beyond writing to include other forms of communication. However, scholars have posited that it is important to acknowledge the integral connection between communication and the disciplines because of the unique disciplinary differences and objectives that shape the communication practices in the disciplines (Tarabochia, 2013). Thus, there is a growing need for tutors of higher education to discuss the opportunities, challenges and issues when developing courses that integrate communication competence across disciplines.

This special issue aims to explore curriculum design innovations, instructional strategies adoptions and assessment practices in the teaching and learning of critical thinking and communicating skills in the disciplines in higher education. Discussions in this area will expand our understanding of how language educators approach issues and challenges in Writing in the Disciplines (WID) or Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) with a particular focus on developing critical thinking and communicating.

The editors would like to invite contributions to the area of critical thinking pedagogy in the disciplines or interdisciplinary studies, including but not restricted to the following:

- Pedagogical practices, curricular and instructional models that focus on the teaching of critical thinking and communicating
- Curricular and learning experiences of critical thinking and communicating from students' perspective
- Use of technology-enhanced learning approaches to teach critical thinking and communicating
- Challenges in developing critical thinking and communicating skills
- Integrating critical thinking and communicating skills explicitly

Style Guide

For more information on the type of articles and submission requirements, please refer to the link here: https://www.tesolunion.org/article_types/.

Important Dates

Abstract submission: Submit an abstract of 250-300 words with a short bio (50 words) to Nadya Patel (nadya.patel@singaporetech.edu.sg) and Shobha Avadhani (cnmsa@nus.edu.sg) by 15th November, 2021.

Notification of acceptance: 15th December, 2021

Full manuscript due: 15th March, 2022

Peer review and editorial decision: 15th April, 2022

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