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**Developing writing pedagogy and tertiary
learning advice in a disciplinary programme
at a New Zealand university**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English

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Abstract

This thesis provides a summary and interpretation of a three-year action research study conducted by a tertiary learning advisor (TLA) at a New Zealand university (referred to in the study as NZU). The study investigated how a TLA, working as an informal writing consultant to staff and students in a disciplinary programme, could make positive contributions to writing pedagogy and TLA practice.

The main sources of data were a reflective journal together with interviews and focus groups with NZU students and staff. Interviews were also held with TLAs in other New Zealand institutions to supplement the limited body of relevant literature. Other data comprised classroom observation, recordings made by lecturers while marking student work and disciplinary and institutional documentation. Data was collected and analysed interpretively and subjectively on a continuous, iterative basis.

Significant contributions were made to writing pedagogy in this disciplinary programme. Progress was based on incremental 'small wins' through prolonged engagement with staff and students. This resulted in the provision of resources and workshops to support students in writing effectively within their disciplinary and professional context. Some collaborations had a formative influence on disciplinary writing practices themselves, particularly reflective writing. However, changes in writing pedagogy remained limited to courses in which staff had volunteered to participate and initiatives requiring substantial time and effort from them had limited success.

The main contributions to TLA practice were a greater involvement in classroom teaching and in the professional development of disciplinary teaching staff. However, two shifts in TLA practice which have been advocated in the literature were not supported in this context. Rather than supporting a shift away from one-to-one consultations with students, the study found that they contributed to TLA expertise and to the teaching and learning practices within the programme. The handing over of responsibility for teaching writing from the TLA to disciplinary teaching staff was also not supported; rather, continued involvement of the TLA in direct teaching was seen as consistent with the plurality of expertise and teaching roles which existed in much of the programme.

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Glossary of Terms

AD	Academic developer
AH	Applied health (pseudonym for an area of community health and educational support in which the BAH programme qualifies students to practise)
BAH	Bachelor of applied health (pseudonym for the four-year degree programme which is the focus of this study)
ESOL	English for speakers of other language
LTU	Learning and Teaching Unit (used to describe the institutional units in which TLAs operate. These are most often Student Learning Centres or Centres for Teaching and Learning, but other arrangements and titles are also found in tertiary institutions in New Zealand and elsewhere)
LTW	Learning to write (one strand of WAC / WID)
NZU	New Zealand University (pseudonym for the university in which the project took place)

PBRF	Performance-based research fund, administered by the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission; 60% of funds are allocated to institutions on the basis of a quality review of the research carried out by its staff members. The remainder is allocated according to student completions and institutional success in generating external funding (mostly from industry).
PTF	Professional teaching fellow
TLA	Tertiary learning advisor
WAC	Writing across the curriculum
Wānanga	New Zealand tertiary institution with a Māori ethos
WID	Writing in the disciplines
WTL	Writing to learn (one strand of WAC / WID)