

Auditorium
12.45-1.30pm

Embedding academic literacies in a Pharmacy module: A collaborative initiative

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This roundtable discussion reviews a collaborative embedded academic literacy initiative between the Department of Pharmacy and the Centre for English Language Communication (CELC) at the National University of Singapore. Academic literacy includes respective learning critical thinking, reading and writing skills, academic conventions and using appropriate formal registers for selected academic genres. The initiative involved embedding primarily academic writing in the Final Year Project (FYP) module. The other related academic literacy areas that are embedded include poster and presentation for the examination panel. For the purpose of this roundtable discussion, the focus will be on the FYP.

Embedding academic writing in disciplinary modules helps students make explicit connections between the discourse variables of their disciplines and the specific demands of a given assignment (McWilliams & Allan, 2014). The design of the initiative involved the weaving of academic literacy aspects which are pertinent to the writing of the Pharmacy final year project into the project module over a duration of 17 weeks. It draws on aspects of Wingate's curriculum-linked and curriculum-integrated type of embedding with the materials being subject-specific and texts/tasks directly linked to classroom content (Wingate, 2015). The learning of this specific academic discourse is contextually situated in the genre of a research project report that students submit to fulfil the requirements for module completion. Essentially, the roundtable aims to review the following areas of the collaborative initiative:

- a) To what extent was the course and materials design effective in the development of students' academic literacy?
- b) What are some advantages in the embedding of academic literacy in a disciplinary module?
- c) What are some challenges in the conceptualisation and implementation of the collaborative initiative?
- d) To what extent have learning outcomes been achieved through the embedding approach?
- e) Anecdotally, what are some key improvements observed from students' drafts?

The review of the effectiveness of this collaborative effort draws on notions and principles in McWilliams and Allan's (2014) best practice model for embedding academic literacy skills in disciplinary modules. The key underlining principles consist of the following: the importance of student-centredness, the need for close collaboration and cooperation between disciplinary and language instructors, the relevance of a multi-approach philosophy and the priority of a socialisation into academic discourse culture over a remedial focus, and the need for institutional support. Examining the Pharmacy-embedded programme against these principles help identify key factors that contribute to the effectiveness of the programme, namely the importance of student-centredness, as well as the need for close collaboration and cooperation between disciplinary and language instructors.

Keywords

Academic literacy, embedding, report genre, disciplines

References

- McWilliams, R., & Allan, Q. (2014). Embedding academic literacy skills: Towards a best practice model, *Journal of University Teaching & Learning*, 11(3), 1-22. Retrieved from <https://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol11/iss3/8>.
- Wingate, U. (2015). *Academic literacy and student diversity: The case for inclusive practice*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.