

Embedding Academic Literacy Instruction in Disciplinary Courses

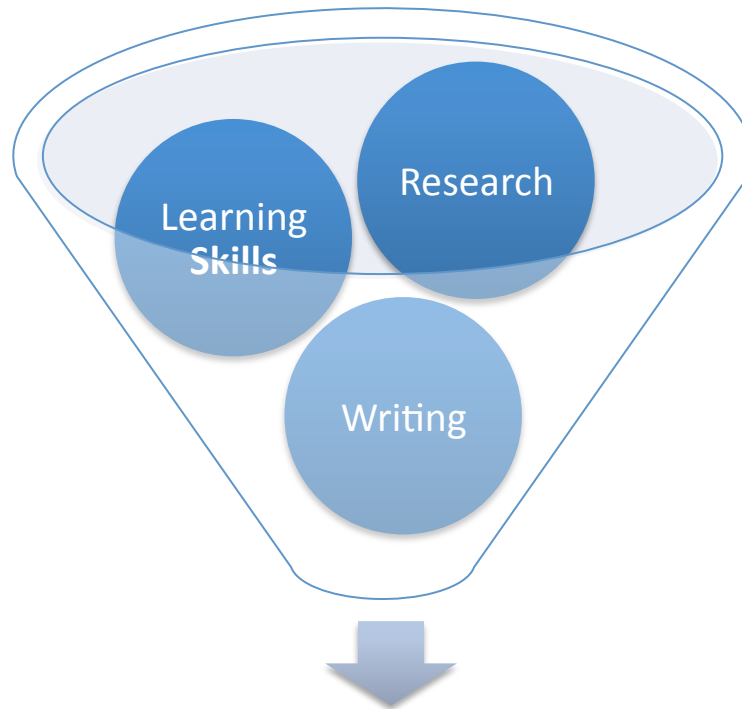
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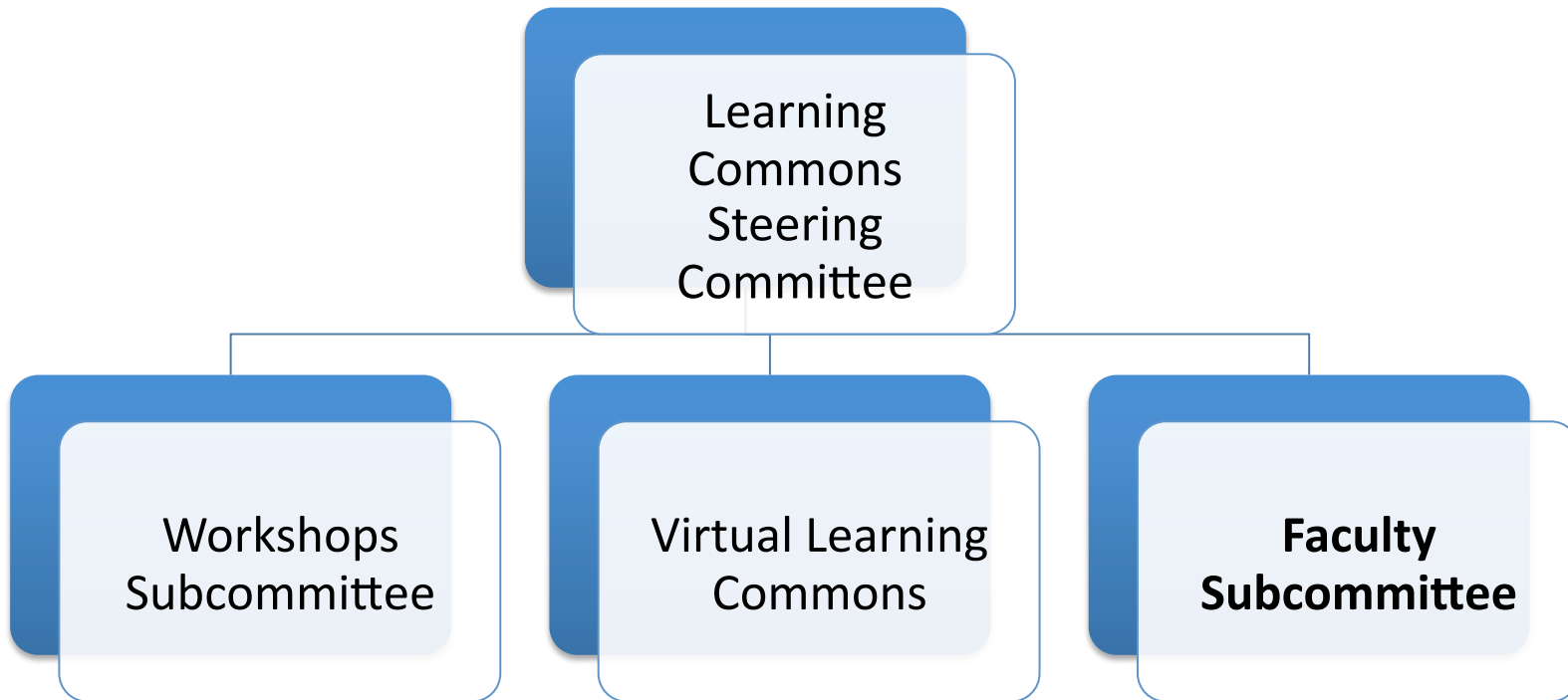
Agenda

- Introduction to Learning Commons
- Academic Literacy: goals & theory
 - Addressing the tacit assumptions of the academic culture
- Faculty conceptions of academic literacy
- Collaborative programming models



**LC Partners: Libraries, Career Centre,
Learning Skills Services, and Writing Department**





The Virtual Learning Commons: SPARK

Pulling It Together

SPARK Student Papers & Academic Research Kit

SPARK Home Pulling It Together Revising Your Arguments

Revising Your Arguments

1. Why revise?
 - Take a break
 - Ask others
2. Thinking like a reader
3. Reviewing:
 - The whole
 - The Paragraphs
 - The Sentences

Why revise?

We often hope to research and compose our essays from beginning to end without making any revisions. But this hope overlooks the fact that writing about a topic is also a way of learning about it. Writers deepen their understanding of their topic as they write and rewrite.

Reviewing and revising your work will help you to:

- “re-see” your topic and what you have said about it
- see new points to make, find better explanations of your ideas, and make interesting new connections among those ideas
- improve your understanding of your topic and the quality of your essay

This module on making *revisions* is closely related to the following modules:

- [Writing Strategies](#) which deals with strategies for *drafting*
- [Essay Editing](#) which deals with strategies for *editing*

Revising, drafting, and editing are closely related processes. In fact, most writers do not readily distinguish the three as they work. They do not simply draft once, revise once, and edit once in that order. They are likely to move back and forth among these processes readily and frequently. This module will help you develop efficient and productive strategies for *revising* your work, wherever you may be in the writing process.

Resources

- Peer Review Guide

10%

Back Next

Getting Started Exploring **Pulling It Together** Objectives Navigation

YORK UNIVERSITY

Supporting Academic Literacy Instruction Within Courses

- The purpose of our LC Faculty Subcommittee project
 - to establish a Summer Institute on the teaching of academic literacies. We wish to help York instructors adopt strategies to aid their students in developing academic reading, writing, and information literacy skills.
- The role of the Teaching Commons in the Learning Commons project

Steps in Preparing for an Institute on the Teaching of Academic Literacy

- Hired graduate student with expertise in literacy education, aka Rebecca! (Spring 2012)
- Literature review on supporting faculty teaching of academic literacy within university courses
- Focus groups with faculty at York University
- Pilot-programming with York Teaching Commons

Academic Innovation Fund

Academic Literacies

The term “academic literacies” refers to the writing strategies, library research strategies and learning skills needed for effective engagement with university coursework, including how to read sophisticated academic material.

Entering the Academic Culture



Academic Literacies: Theoretical Context

- Socio-cultural ideas of learning (apprenticeship)
 - Academic world as a discourse community, or set of discourse communities
 - Thinking like a Political Scientist, Psychologist, ...
- Developmental rather than deficit model (Haggis)
 - Embedded rather than supplemental instruction
- Novice-expert progression (Leckie)
- Systemic barriers to developing literacies
 - Unaddressed gaps, the tacit, the taken-for-granted
 - Making implicit processes just as explicit as the product of those processes

Faculty Members' Conceptions of Academic Literacy Instruction

Faculty focus groups at York University

- Four groups with a total of 18 participants
- Summer 2012

Included Faculty of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences, Faculty of Health, Faculty of Science & Engineering

Department Chairs nominated participants from General Education courses or core first/second year courses

Facilitated by Rebecca Katz

- Outside literacy studies scholar

Participants agree that academic literacy skills of students require development

“...once they have the information in front of them, they have a hard time reading it and understanding it and summarizing it and evaluating it. All those skills I think need to be shown or taught.”

Literature and Language Professor

Participants see critical reflection and engagement with research and coursework as fundamental for student learning and growth. Critical reading gets special emphasis

“...they’ve been told to read the primary literature but they haven’t actually been given any guidance. I mean even in first year, we’re telling them to go find the literature. But there isn’t true guidance about how to read literature and dissect it. And as we know, a lot of it is very, very obtuse writing.”

Biology Professor

Plagiarism often identified as being connected to students' lack of academic literacy skills, and a great deal of concern expressed about this issue

"The fire that we had to put out was plagiarism... What was discovered was...they think writing a paper is copying stuff and editing it. So we spend the 12 weeks [dealing with questions like] Why are we at university? What is writing a paper all about?...What is academia?"

Health Studies Professor

Participants readily offer diagnoses of the problem they see with student abilities. Often refer to motivation, high school, part-time work or need for remedial attention

“But I do find that students...come in with a lack of understanding and the difference between their opinion and evidence, what we’d like to call evidence-based conclusions, or something of the sort...they seem to come from high school with the view that any opinion is equally good, or my opinion is as good as the experts.”

Psychology Professor

But, participants speak about research as a recursive, iterative process and see role for selves in scaffolding the process

“And I used to think my job was to deliver content. It’s not about content...[It’s about] process, process and psychological support. I teach them to learn how to learn.”

English Professor

Participants feel that TAs must play a fundamental role in academic literacy instruction and associated challenges

“I’m thinking more of the TAs I’ve worked with and my suggestions to them...we go over how to critically read in the tutorial and how to, you know, make notes from what they’re reading, identify key points and arguments, have students do reading – like pose a question that they have to then delve into and extrapolate more...”

Social Sciences Professor

Participants see Learning Commons possibly providing a forum for dialogue about academic literacy issues and instructional techniques

“And I think what would be really good for this summer institute would be to help faculty find ways of integrating different writing assignments, different levels of writing, different skills...so it’s not just like one big research paper, for example, like I do. But it should be --- this is dreaming, but anyway, it should be a sort of collective effort.”

Languages and Literature Professor

Our Initial Programming

90 minutes workshop for faculty members on developing students' critical skills

Half-day workshop on teaching academic literacies within the context of the Course Design @ York program

Implications for our practice

Continue our programming with a Learning Commons academic literacy approach

- joint planning of programming for faculty
- deficit vs. socio-cultural model
- concept of tacit knowledge

Treat critical reading as the entry point for embedding literacy instruction

Focus on assignment design support

- Introduce principles of assignment design
 - scaffolding, sequencing, alignment
- Introduce design frameworks for academic literacies
 - Coonan & Secker, Biggs, Bloom

Implications for our practice (continued)

Represent ourselves as process experts

- Spell out explicitly for faculty members the aspects of reading, writing, and library research that are taken for granted within the academic culture
- Encourage modelling of expert process
- Encourage explicit, guided practice

Provide faculty members with multiple examples of worksheets, exercises, and assignments consistent with academic literacy approach

Be prepared to address issues of large courses and heavy marking responsibilities.

Good sources for examples of exercises, worksheets, and assignment design templates

- Grassian, E. *Teach Information Literacy & Critical Thinking*. Retrieved from: <https://sites.google.com/site/teachinfolit/>
- University of Huddersfield. Embedding Skills: Integrating Learning Development in to the Student Experience. Retrieved from: <http://embeddingskills.hud.ac.uk/>

All items from these sources are in the public domain

Sources that informed our presentation

Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University: What the Student Does, 4th Ed.* Maidenhead, Eng.: McGraw-Hill.

Coonan, E., & Secker, J. (2011). *A new curriculum for information literacy: Reports and outputs.* Retrieved from <http://newcurriculum.wordpress.com/project-reports-and-outputs/>

Duke, L. M., & Asher, A. D. (2012). *College Libraries and Student Culture: What We Now Know.* Chicago: American Library Association. (ERIAL PROJECT)

Haggis, T. (2006). Pedagogies for diversity: Retaining critical challenge amidst fears of 'dumbing down'. *Studies in Higher Education, 31*(5), 521-535.

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Head, A. J., & Eisenberg, M. B. (2010). *Assigning inquiry: How handouts for research assignments guide today's college students*. Project Information Literacy. Retrieved from http://projectinfolit.org/pdfs/PIL_Handout_Study_finalvJuly_2010.pdf

Head, A. J., (April, 2013). *Project Information Literacy: What Can Be Learned about the Information-Seeking Behavior of Today's College Students?* ACRL Conference. Indianapolis.

Krause, K.-L. (2001). The university essay writing experience: a pathway for academic integration during transition. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 20(2), 147–168.

Leckie, G. J. (1996). Desperately seeking citations: Uncovering faculty assumptions about the undergraduate research process. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 22(3), 201-208.

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