

Improving student writing: Roles for EAP and disciplinary faculty

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Abstract

A substantial part of tertiary language centres' work aims to enhance the writing ability of students. But how is this best done if the responsibility for improving writing is shared between a language centre and a faculty? This paper explores the question with reference to a small-scale study conducted in a disciplinary first year legal writing course which ran alongside a language centre enhancement course. The study investigated student needs for feedback and their perceptions of their writing improvement. Eight students took part in semi-structured interviews which probed what feedback focused on and student perceptions of the usefulness of the feedback they received from disciplinary staff. The study found that students did not believe their writing had improved as a result of the feedback they were given, and yet they still seemed to want more of it. The findings seem to suggest that students feel there is potential for improved writing from teacher written feedback. Student responses also tentatively suggest that some disciplinary staff are unsure of their instructional role and are uncomfortable giving feedback on language. In light of these findings, possible ways that faculties and language centres might work together are explored.