

**'Academic staff will never go for that!':
blogging as an inclusive writing genre**

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OUR CONTENTION



Blogging has the potential to function as an alternative or hybrid genre of writing that promotes engagement with learning and assessment in ways in which the production of a 'traditional' academic essay frequently does not.

In other words, blogging offers **a more inclusive form of assessment.**



Research questions

1.

How does incorporating blogging into an undergraduate module influence student writing?

2.

What effect does blogging have on student attitudes towards writing?

3.

What are the educational benefits (and pitfalls) related with the use of blogs in undergraduate courses?



<https://www.mentimeter.com/public/3a61203b18c23256130788f0c2f69873>



Many people have learned to manage or handle adequately 'correct English', but in doing so, they muffle or clog their thoughts into language that's far less clear and interesting than they could have used in the language of their talking

Many other people don't even feel that writing is an option for them and feel excluded – yet they speak smart, eloquent and interesting things.

ELBOW (2012:3)

Feeling excluded
from academic
writing

'When I'm writing I know what I want to say, but it's just writing it ... You need to watch your expression. And in the dissertation 'you need to watch your expression' and I was like 'I can't'. I can feel myself it's not going like it is in my head'

(Final Year Student of English Literature, 2016)

(see French, 2016; Bowstead, 2009; Mann, 2001)



“The language that comes most easily to mind and mouth” (Elbow, 2012:6)

“Will help people write better and with more satisfaction”
(Elbow, 2012:8)

BLOGGING?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- General sense of enthusiasm for the potential pedagogical benefits
- Potential for interaction, collaborative learning, community building, reflection, and promoting literacy development
- 'Blogging assists students in understanding audience, negotiating between their academic and personal voice, synthesising and integrating prior knowledge, and peer reviewing each other's work' (Bryant, 2014:96)
 - However, research remains relatively new and under-explored

Students as bloggers

- L6 module, *Contemporary Issues in Sports Practice*
- Blogging aspect of the module was embedded over a series of interactive workshops
- Students required to submit an individual blog post on a sports-related issue of their choosing
- Engagement with peers' blog posts was also a requirement
- Blogs were submitted to NOW and then published online by module tutor using *Tumblr*
- This formative activity fed directly into the summative assessment, with an emphasis on reflection

RESEARCH DESIGN

- Exploratory, mixed methods approach
 - Survey (N=33; 19 male, 14 female)
 - Focus group (N=5; 1 male, 4 female)
- In-class activities, blog posts and reflections
- Thematic analysis of transcribed focus group and written reflections were undertaken to code the qualitative data to tease out recurring themes and common phrases (Sparkes & Smith, 2014)



New to blogging

Emotions around blogging

Effect of audience on learning and writing

Impact of social aspects of blogging on the emotional domain of learning

Impact of social aspects of blogging on higher order skills

Blogging contributing to improved editing/writing skills

Language of blog enabling authorship

Blogs: academic or less academic pieces of work?

1

New to blogging

'Initially when faced with the prospect of writing a blog I felt quite daunted and overwhelmed'

'I was worried about the balance between using academic language and keeping the content simple and accessible'

'The first week I was panicking. I've never written a blog before ... I was a bit worried about putting my opinion out there. What if someone doesn't agree with it or if nobody agrees?'





2

Impact on the emotional domain of learning

'The first comment I received on my blog was very complimentary, filling me with pride and happiness. They praised my use of literature, which provided them with a greater understanding of my blog topic'

'This has given me the confidence and motivation in wanting to construct a wider range of blogs'

'Writing a blog of my own was inspirational, and a highly enjoyable practice'

3

Higher order skills

'The comments ... allowed me to gain multiple viewpoints on the topic which beforehand I had not recognised'

'I was exposed to something I had never considered before ... this lead me to my researching ...'

'Others' comments ... made me question my own beliefs and views'

'Collectively reviewing and generating a discussion on the blogs of my peers has demonstrated that all these issues are correlated in one way or another'



4

Impact on writing

'It has helped me have a more diverse writing style, so I am able to present an academic piece of writing in a way that the audience can understand and relate to.'

'On one of the comments highlighted that my style of writing could have been more appropriate for a blog ... If I had used these techniques it would have broken up the text which may have engaged the reader.'





5

Student voice

'The comments I received really increased my confidence in my ability to be able to speak out'.

'Being able to inform someone else on an issue I am personally passionate about, gives me a truly accomplished feeling'.



6

Impact on student identity

Students as writers: 'This has given me the confidence and motivation in wanting to construct a wider range of blogs highlighting my opinion on other sporting debates'.

Students as change agents: 'I felt like an expert who was actively educating and encouraging people to talk about grass roots disability sport'.

6

Community of practice

'It has enabled me to academically support comments on other blogs'.

'I also made points that they necessarily did not think of within their blog so that they have something to think about when writing their essay'





<https://www.mentimeter.com/public/6df5ad4c1d556010e89e6bbe39e6e5ae>

Concluding remarks: a case for blogging as an inclusive writing genre

1

Improves higher order skills

2

Has a positive impact on the emotional domain of learning

3

Encourages participation, engagement, and collaborate learning

4

Helps foster a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for one's own writing

5

Students also saw blogging as a worthwhile skill in its own right

Want to know and/or
do more?

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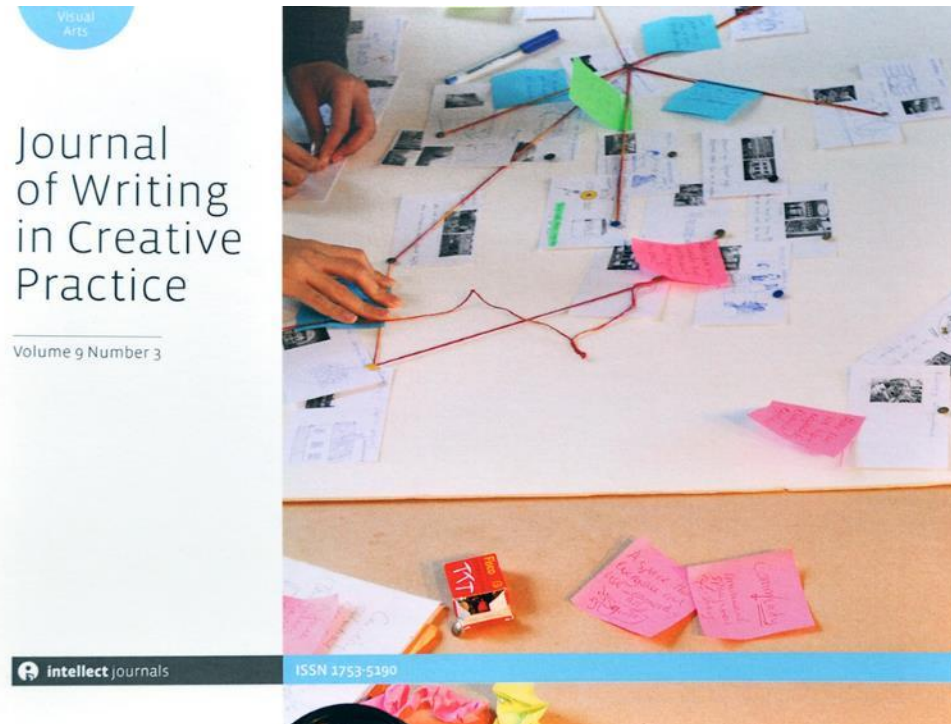
Hindley, D and Clughen, L.

'Yay! Not another academic essay!' Blogging
as an alternative academic genre.

Abstract

Academic writing is a staple university practice required across disciplines to determine student success. Despite its ubiquity, however, literacy scholars have long argued that academic writing is both exclusionary and prohibitive. Drawing on the work of literacy scholars we make the case for the use of blogs in higher education as a way of providing a type of inclusive writing or 'regenring' that such scholars advocate. To achieve this, we trial the use of a blog in a final-year undergraduate module, employing a mixed-methods approach to explore student perceptions on whether blogging affords them a means to engage with and take ownership of their writing and learning. In keeping with the task we have set our students, we have presented this article using blog-like features.

<https://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Article,id=26213/>



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