Writing disciplines: producing disciplinary knowledge in the context of contemporary higher education

Karin Tusting and David Barton
Lancaster University (UK)
k.tusting@lancaster.ac.uk & d.barton@lancaster.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper addresses academic disciplinary writing practices, and how these are affected by changes in the landscape of Higher Education in the UK. After exploring the definition and understanding of the notion of "discipline", the paper presents research from an ESRC-funded research project studying academics' everyday writing practices, working closely with academics across different disciplines and different kinds of higher education institutions. The changing context of Higher Education in the UK is presented, in particular the emergence of new kinds of managerial practices which shape and co-ordinate the everyday writing work of academics. The paper shows that while some disciplines, such as History and Pure Mathematics, are associated with clearly-defined writing practices, others are more diverse. It discusses how managerial practices, particularly those driven by centralised national research evaluations, affect different disciplines in different ways.

Keywords: academic writing; managerialism; higher education; literacy practices; History; Mathematics.

Resumen

La escritura en las disciplinas: la producción del conocimiento disciplinar en el contexto contemporáneo de la educación superior

Este artículo analiza las prácticas de escritura académica disciplinares y la manera en la que dichas prácticas están condicionadas por los cambios actuales de la educación superior en el Reino Unido. En primer lugar, definimos el concepto de "disciplina", para posteriormente presentar los planteamientos de un proyecto de investigación financiado por la ESRC que estudia las prácticas

cotidianas de escritura de los académicos, trabajando con ellos en distintas disciplinas y en distintas instituciones de educación superior. A continuación describimos el cambiante contexto de la educación superior en el Reino Unido, prestando especial atención a los nuevos tipos de prácticas de gestión que configuran y coordinan las prácticas de escritura de los académicos. El artículo muestra cómo algunas disciplinas, como Historia y Matemáticas Puras, están asociadas a prácticas de escritura muy bien definidas y cómo en otras las prácticas son diversas. También valora las prácticas de gestión académica, en concreto, las dependientes de procesos centrales de evaluación de la investigación, tienen impacto diferente en las diferentes disciplinas.

Palabras clave: escritura académica: actividades de gestión; educación superior; prácticas de literacidad; Historia; Matemáticas.

1. Introduction

A central aspect of the field of languages for specific purposes is to address the patterns and practices of language usage within particular academic disciplines. Disciplinary knowledge is constituted in research texts such as journal articles and monographs, but also in teaching, through social media, in research funding bids, in articulations produced for accountability requirements, and in the myriad of other written genres academics engage with and produce. This paper addresses how disciplinary writing practices are affected by changes in the contemporary context of Higher Education. Drawing on data from a UK-based research project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, it asks specifically how changes in managerial practices, in relation to research and teaching practices, are reshaping the kinds of writing which take place within particular disciplines, in varying ways.

2. What is a discipline?

In order to address this question, we must first ask what we mean when we talk about "a discipline". Generally speaking, academic disciplines refer to a particular area of subject knowledge, which is studied and developed by a particular group of academics. Disciplines have recognised histories, traditions and intellectual lineages, as well as recognised areas of conflict and debate. Disciplines are associated with recognised practices for data or source collection and analysis, and also with specific forms of writing –

established genres and discourses for conveying the knowledge created by the discipline, which are structured in recognisable ways. We return to this topic later. Disciplines can be identified at a range of levels, and there is often debate over what constitutes a specific discipline, what is a sub-discipline, and alternatively what is a "field of knowledge" which might draw on the tools and body of knowledge of several other disciplines. Fields defined by a specific empirical topic in the social sciences are often positioned in this way – think of gender studies, or educational research. Disciplines, and the relationships between them, are not fixed, and change over time. Very few of them are unproblematic and boundaries are often disputed. Individual academics may locate themselves as being more central or more peripheral to a given discipline, and this can change depending on the context they are situated in and the stage they are at in their trajectory of intellectual development.

There is clearly a relationship between the area and nature of the knowledge a discipline is aiming to develop, and the practices that discipline is associated with. Becher and Trowler (2001) make this the central plank of their argument in *Tribes and Territories*, which suggests that the nature of the knowledge structures in academic disciplines, "the territories", shapes the behaviour and values of the academic "tribes" who make them up.

Trowler (2012: 9) has built on this work more recently to develop a more nuanced social practice approach, which accounts for the similarities within disciplines, and the differences both within and between them. Within this model, people are carriers of social practices, patterns of behaviour and ways of knowing drawn from broader reservoirs; and disciplines are enacted as people perform these practices. Disciplines provide the reservoirs of knowledge resources, both about the topic(s) under study within the discipline, and about ways of creating knowledge about this topic which students are inducted into: regularised discourses, ways of thinking, research and writing procedures, emotional responses and motivations. Individuals draw on this reservoir in their biographical trajectory, putting together individualised repertoires which make up their own embodied instantiation of the discipline. Groups of people who work together, whether in departments and institutions or as research and writing collaborators, build up shared repertoires by drawing on these disciplinary reservoirs of knowledge resources in their everyday practices. This explains why disciplines emerge with different characteristics in different institutional locations. Practitioners share a degree of common background knowledge

about key figures, conflicts, and achievements within the discipline, and of course individuals within the discipline can adopt rather differing positions in relation to such conflicts and achievements. And disciplines have organisational forms, hierarchies, and power structures.

This social practice model helps to explain how different individuals can recognisably be members of the same discipline but also have rather different collections of and orientations towards knowledge resources. And it enables us to talk about disciplines in terms of shared ways of doing things, as well as shared understandings and knowledge resources. This paper focuses on the shared ways of doing writing associated with particular disciplines, and the different ways in which the introduction of external managerialist strategies impacts on some aspects of these ways of writing.

3. Disciplines and written communication

The social practices of disciplines include shared ways of using language. Within Applied Linguistics a significant amount of attention has been paid both to developing theories of discipline which are oriented to language use, and to describing the language practices associated with particular disciplines.

The notion of discourse communities was developed by Swales (1990) to label the distinctive kinds of communities characterised by shared communication towards the achievement of common purposes – "sociorhetorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals" (Swales, 1990: 9). These networks may include people who never meet and interact face to face but nevertheless participate in the communicative practices of the community. Discourse communities share distinctive genres, practices, and uses of time and space, and their shared purposes are achieved through interaction – spoken and written. While this concept may be applied to many different kinds of communities, from internet forums to stamp collectors, it has been extensively drawn on, by Swales and others, to characterise academic disciplines, whose shared purposes and goals relate to building and testing knowledge about a particular subject or topic area.

Written communication is central to membership of and participation in these academic discourse communities. As Flowerdew and Wang (2015: 82)

state, "in the field of academic research and higher education, textual production is at the core of negotiating the interactive relationships among the members of academic communities". Face to face spoken interaction is of course important too, in interacting with local colleagues, research collaborators and co-writers, and members of the more extended discourse community, at conferences and other academic meeting places. But it is through written communication that the body of knowledge which forms the discipline's reservoir of knowledge resources is built up.

Engaging in written communication within a discourse community requires shared knowledge of the genres and discourses which are drawn on by that community. Scholars of academic writing have developed a range of ways to characterise this shared knowledge. Bhatia (2004) highlights the different "genre sets" associated with different disciplines. Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) argue that knowledge of the different genres of a community and the ways in which these are used in distinctive ways should be considered a kind of situated cognition, embedded in and shaped by the other kinds of activities associated with that discipline. Much of Hyland's influential work in this area has characterised specific patterns of language use associated with particular disciplines. For example, his recent corpus- and interview-based study (Hyland, 2012) identified distinctive patterns of interpersonal features of language, such as self-mention, stance, and positioning, in different disciplines. He explained these in relation to the distinctive writer-reader relationships seen to be appropriate in the attempt to achieve persuasion in writing within these different disciplinary communities.

Naturally enough, the patterns identified by research in this tradition have served as the basis of pedagogical materials for students apprenticing into the discourse practices of different disciplines (see, for example, Nesi & Gardner, 2012 for a corpus-based approach to this). Indeed, such work forms the basis for the field of languages for specific purposes.

So it is clear from the above brief review that academic disciplines are constructed and maintained through language practices, particularly written language practices, and that different disciplines are associated with different kinds of language practices. These language practices are engaged in by scholars working in particular institutional settings, associated with specific historical configurations of context and pressure which change over time. The rest of this paper explores the question, how are practices of written communication associated with particular disciplines affected by changes

and transformations in the contemporary context of Higher Education as a workplace?

4. Research and methods

The paper draws on research carried out as part of the project "The Dynamics of Knowledge Creation: Academics' writing practices in the contemporary university workplace", at Lancaster University, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council in the UK[1].

We are approaching academics' writing from a practice point of view. The two principal theoretical framings which inform the project are, broadly speaking, a literacy studies perspective and a sociomaterial perspective. The literacy studies perspective means that we are interested in writing as something that people do, shaped by their contexts, life histories, resources and experiences, situated within historical dynamics and power relationships, best studied by spending time with people, observing what they do with reading and writing, and interviewing them to understand their perspectives and experiences (see Barton & Hamilton 2001; Barton, 2007). The sociomaterial perspective means that we are particularly focused on understanding how social and material resources are networked together to construct writing practices, and how the nature of writing practices is shaped by resources like space, material tools used in writing, and the impact of digital resources on people's writing practices (Fenwick et al., 2011).

We are approaching academic writing as a workplace practice, shaped by the particularities of the contemporary context. So we are interested in all the different kinds of writing that people do on a day to day basis. Rather than privileging scholarly writing, we have been examining the relationships between the multiple kinds of writing academics engage in. We view knowledge production as including writing for teaching, administrative, "impact" and publicity purposes, in addition to the traditional research genres of monograph and journal article. The aim is to understand whether and how such practices are being influenced by aspects of the contemporary context of Higher Education which have changed significantly in recent years.

5. Higher Education in the UK

Higher Education in the United Kingdom, which was historically the province of a small elite, has expanded vastly since the mid-1980s – the so-called "massification" of both teaching and research. This massification has changed the nature of the everyday work carried out by academics, and the relationships between students and academic staff. The introduction of student fees in England, Wales and northern Ireland in 1998, and particularly the increase in fees to up to £9000 a year from 2010 onwards, have been associated with universities adopting a more marketised presentation of themselves, with more centralised assessment of the quality of teaching, increased weighting given to student satisfaction, and a more consumerised model of what it is to be a university student. Funding for research, always competitive, has become more so, particularly with the introduction of centralised research evaluations (on which, more later). Academics are being encouraged to become increasingly entrepreneurial in their approach to their own research careers, working on portfolios of short-term projects more as "managed professionals" than as autonomous intellectuals. Such shifts mean that universities as a whole become increasingly complex in their organisation. In some institutions, this has led to a greater separation than has historically been the case between teaching and research (Whitchurch, 2010; Trowler, 2012).

Such transformations are inevitably associated with changes in the working practices of those who experience them. The research drawn on in this paper focuses on academics' writing practices, asking whether changes in the overall context of higher education are influencing these writing practices, and what the implications of these changes might be. Questions explored by the project include:

1. How are academics' writing practices shaped by socio-material aspects of their situation? (tools, resources, space and place, time, social networks)

2. How are digital communications technologies shaping these practices?

3. How are managerial practices in Higher Education institutions shaping and co-ordinating writing work?

4. Are there any changes to academic professional and scholarly identities as a result of these changing practices?

This paper focuses particularly on question 3.

The design for data collection reflects our view that such changes in universities are playing out differently in different kinds of universities, and in different disciplines. The university sector in the United Kingdom is quite diverse, and can be analysed in different ways. Throughout most of the 20th century, the higher education sector was split into "universities", which focused on research and the provision of academic degrees, and "polytechnics" and "technical colleges" which provided more vocational and applied education. After changes in legislation in 1992, these polytechnics and technical colleges were able to apply to become universities, with their own degree-awarding powers, and most of them did so. They often remain strong in vocational areas, often have a greater proportion of their income coming from teaching than the "older" universities, and tend to be less focused on research overall, although many of them are strong in research in specific areas. These are known as the "post-1992" or "new" universities.

Another common way of grouping the universities is to follow the universities' own "mission groups", strategic groupings which institutions have set up through agreements between one another, designed to provide status and give institutions a significant voice in policy decisions. The "Russell Group" of universities positions itself as the most prestigious of these mission groups, bringing together universities which are large, research-intensive, and lay claim to being the top universities in the country. However, there are many research-intensive universities of high quality and recognised reputation which do not form part of the Russell Group. Some of these used to be part of an alternative grouping, the "1994 group", but this disbanded in 2013. The post-1992 universities also have their own mission groups, to represent their interests in policy and resourcing debates, such as the "Million+", highlighting the numbers of people educated by these institutions, and "University Alliance", highlighting their strong links with business and industry.

A third way in which universities are grouped is to associate them with the historical period of their establishment. There have been some key moments in the history of the UK in which universities have increased in number. The "ancient" universities, instituted in medieval times, are relatively few, wealthy, and highly prestigious (Oxford and Cambridge in England). The "red-brick" and "civic" universities refer to universities established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, usually in industrial cities. The "1960s" or "plate-glass"

universities emerged in a doubling of the numbers of universities in the 1960s, and are often located on their own campuses. They share similarities of architecture and, historically at least, tended to be associated with more radical ideologies of education. Finally, we have seen how the post-1992 universities were established from polytechnics and technical colleges. There are also other distinctions which can be made – between larger and smaller institutions, for instance, or between campus and urban universities – all of which influence the everyday working and writing practices of the academics concerned.

In the project reported on here, we chose to work with academics in three universities. One of them is a more teaching-intensive post-1992 institution, in an urban setting. The other two are more research-intensive. One of these is a smaller 1960s university, located on a greenfield campus outside a small, historic city. The other is a larger, red-brick, Russell Group institution, located in a large post-industrial city.

The other line of distinction in the project is between disciplines. As we have already established, disciplines have their own distinctive writing practices. While disciplines are often grouped together for administrative purposes (the arts and humanities disciplines; the social sciences; the science, technology, engineering and mathematics or STEM disciplines; the professional/applied disciplines), in fact the writing practices of disciplines within each of these broad groupings can be very different, a point made lucidly by Swales (1998). In the arts and humanities, for example, the practices of a literature scholar differ greatly from those of a scholar of the fine arts. In the sciences, a botanist engages in very different practices from a particle physicist. However, choices had to be made in order to carry out in-depth research with individuals which would be comparable across institutions. To get a range of approaches we chose to work with Mathematics as a STEM discipline, History as a humanity, and Marketing as a professional/applied discipline, at the same time carrying out auto-ethnographic work and pilot work in the social sciences as the area in which we are located and which we know the best.

Working with 3 disciplines in 3 different universities provided us with nine case study sites for the research. We worked closely with academics in these case study sites. Initially there were 16 focal participants across the 9 sites who were interviewed in 3 ways, with a walk-around interview focusing on their job and immediate surroundings, then with a techno-biographic

interview about their histories of writing and technology use, and thirdly a day-in-the-life interview focussing on the writing carried out on specific days and at particular times. Recordings were made of their writing processes, using screen-capture software (Camtasia), and their colleagues, line managers and administrative staff in the department were interviewed to provide a broader context for their data and to test out emerging findings. Overall, 54 participants were interviewed as part of the main study, in addition to the auto-ethnographic records of the research team and pilot interviews carried out in the social sciences.

Data collected from the project was imported into ATLAS.ti qualitative analysis software, and coded following a coding scheme which was initially based on the research questions of the project as outlined above, and then became more complex as further ideas and concepts emerged through working with the data. Our emerging ideas were discussed at dissemination meetings in three university sites, testing out and deepening our understandings.

6. Disciplinary writing practices

Within our dataset, each of the disciplines we worked with were clearly defined by very specific writing practices. The historians that we spoke to tended to orient to a very clear narrative about what were the important kinds of writing for them, as historians. This is expressed eloquently by Rebecca[2], a lecturer working at a research-intensive university, who said, "For most historians, including myself I think, that's the bit that we enjoy the most, is the actual writing of the history". The way the process is expressed here is interesting. As a historian, she does not talk about herself as writing about history, but actually writing the history. This practice of "writing the history" involved individuals spending time in archives, working through historical source material, and eventually writing single-authored texts on the basis of that careful historical work. It is through this historical writing that the discipline is being continually brought into being, and this is the centrally meaningful task of them, as historians.

Nevertheless, not all of our historian participants described themselves and their own work as fitting this model. D. Blue, a senior academic with a background in history, accepted the idea of writing history but now located himself more in cultural studies, and tended to draw on the work of other

historians rather than doing archival work himself. However, he recognized that for some, this could identify him as not being a "proper" historian. He recognised that "the historians will always say, 'Oh gosh, you didn't find this document yourself, how do you know about it?' I'll always say, 'Well, I'm trusting the historian'". He characterises himself now as an interdisciplinary scholar, but he recognises that this shift leaves him in a more vulnerable position in terms of his own intellectual identity: "Working interdisciplinarily means that there are always people there ready to shoot you down".

One particular genre is privileged in this production of history as a discipline: the scholarly monograph, described by Rebecca as "the heavyweight, solely authored piece of research work, which is usually the result of years of research in archives", destined to be read by a "very small group of other academics". There was a clear tendency to work alone, rather than to work collaboratively. Verity, a senior academic historian, told us, "There's quite a high premium on the monograph that literally is a monograph, so written by a sole author". The format of historical writing is also quite specific, with for instance the use of long footnotes being characteristic, serving as evidence of the careful work with sources and extensions of the primary argument. Verity had an especial dread of encountering publishers who insisted on the use of the Harvard system of referencing.

Pure Mathematics is another discipline in our data in which research participants described very specific practices. Pure Mathematics as a discipline has the mathematical proof at its heart. Our participants explained to us the writing practices that they engaged in, which were designed to carefully test out the logic of the proof step by step. Most of them described a practice of switching between scribbling on paper and writing things up on the computer, carefully testing out the logic of the proof at each point. Ian, a lecturer in the 1960s plate glass institution, explained the process: you start off with scribbled bits of paper, and once you think you can prove a statement is true you put it down on the computer. "Then as you're going through the different steps that are required to prove that, in the process of doing that you might realise, 'Oh well this bit that in my head I thought was easy is not as easy as I imagined'. So that then requires you to input an awful lot of extra detail and so on, or to go back and start scribbling more on the paper and so on".

All of this required silence and focus; as Ian explained, "Maths is a solitary activity". Some of our interview questions were around changes to work

space in institutions, including the introduction of open-plan offices. The mathematicians had disciplinary objections to this idea; as Gareth, a senior academic, explained, "the staff would react horrifically to open-plan, because it's all about quiet thinking. If you're trying to think technical mathematics, you do really need quiet".

However, despite the focus on detailed individual work to develop proofs, while most Mathematics articles were sole-authored until the 1990s, our participants reported far more collaborative papers being published more recently, with the advent of digital communication making collaborative work more possible. Still, the actual doing of the mathematics remained largely a solitary activity.

The professional mathematics writing process of testing the logical sequence of steps of a proof was reflected in the writing practices associated with teaching in this area. The characteristic practice of teaching pure Mathematics was to use large boards – traditionally blackboards, though whiteboards and visualisers were also in use by our participants – and to write out the argument, the various lemmas and proofs being taught, step by step, talking the students through each step and the logical connections between them. The temporality of this was important. The time it took to write out the steps on the board and to talk the students through each step was seen as providing the necessary and appropriate pace for students to follow and appreciate the logic as it was being built up, and to test out each step in their own minds. The spatial aspects of this presentation were also key. Powerpoint was not seen as being a particularly useful tool for teaching in this area, because of the limited space available on a Powerpoint slide. With a board, students had the entire sequence of steps in the proofs visible to them throughout and so could easily refer back to particular steps as and when this was necessary.

While History and Pure Mathematics were associated with clearly-defined writing practices, other disciplines we worked with had much less clear-cut disciplinary writing practices. Both Marketing and the more applied areas of Mathematics displayed a much more diverse range of subject areas, genres, and writing practices, and the same was true of the social sciences represented in our auto-ethnographic and pilot work.

7. Strategic management of research writing

The first area in which the changing context of higher education was directly affecting our participants' workplace writing practices was in the area of research writing. Since the 1980s, universities in the UK have been subject to regular research evaluation exercises in which departments (or, rather, Units, disciplinary groupings that normally map onto departments to some extent) are competitively ranked according to the quality of their research, and centralised research funding budgets are allocated according to the results of these assessments, with the more highly-ranked institutions receiving proportionately greater amounts of funding. The 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) evaluation judged Units according to a selection of four research outputs from each individual academic; an account of the research environment; and case studies of the social and economic impact resulting from selected research emerging from that Unit. Research outputs (publications) are read by a panel of peer experts in the field, and are ranked between one and four stars on criteria of originality, significance and rigour, with four stars indicated a "world-leading" publication and one star being work that is "recognised nationally" (http://www.ref.ac.uk/panels/ assessmentcriteriaandleveldefinitions/). The 2020 REF is thought likely to adopt a similar approach.

With centralised research income being a significant source of income, particularly for the more research-intensive universities, most UK academic institutions have adopted strategies for managing research and researchers which are intended to maximise the institution's performance in the REF. These vary depending on the institution, and there is of course a delicate balancing-act here where interference with academic freedom is still seen as something to be avoided. But strategies which reward and encourage publication in particular kinds of venues (usually high-impact-factor international journals), publications of particular types, an appropriate number of research publications in a six-year period, and mechanisms to support and encourage the social and economic impact of research are common. Overall strategies in this area, set by senior university management, would usually be mediated through management at the more local level of the department or faculty.

These managerial pressures affect the different disciplines in our dataset in different ways. We have already seen the dominant valuing in History of the single-authored monograph, based on extensive amounts of time invested in

archival research. The historians in our dataset felt that this very particular disciplinary writing practice was not really appreciated within the dominant managerialist strategies of higher education, for at least two reasons.

Firstly, as a discipline which valued the single-authored monograph, they felt that History was placed at a disadvantage given the structure of the REF in comparison to other disciplines where people would routinely be producing many collaboratively-authored journal articles. Rebecca, an established academic in History, felt that: "We would turn it round and say, 'Well, other disciplines, they're well-practiced in collaborative work, for example, and they can churn out lots and lots of one page, two page, five page articles, all of which apparently carry some sort of research weight or scholarly weight. Whereas we are more attuned to working on our own, and locking ourselves away in a little room for years on end, burrowing away in these archives to produce a piece of work'". She felt that a result of institutional strategies adopted as a result of the REF, "We are being stretched away from the monograph".

Secondly, the introduction of the "social and economic impact" criterion in the REF was felt to disadvantage History and historians. The purpose of writing history was not, for many of our historians, seen as being one of making direct social and economic impact. James, at another research-intensive institution, who was teaching and researching marketing but identified as a historian by training, explained that "Impact, capital I, in REF terms is not something that I worry all that much about I guess. [...] Part of that is because I was trained as a historian. Historians don't set out to change people's lives in the same way that a social worker might, even here in the school a marketing person might do". And Rebecca felt that there was an implicit equation made between the amount of time taken to produce a particular written output, and the social and economic impact which it "should" generate. "People don't appreciate the amount of work that goes into it, the length of time it takes. If it takes that much time to produce, then they want it to be proportionately more impactful". The cumulative effect of these changes was, for Rebecca, an assault on the writing which essentially constituted the knowledge production of her discipline; because "[the monograph] is regarded as the core part of our discipline, what it is to write history […] is under attack".

Other disciplines were affected by managerialist pressures in different ways. In Marketing, there was no single dominant genre like the historical

monograph, and the REF requirement to produce four high-quality outputs in six years was not unreasonable in quantity, in a discipline where people expected to be producing journal articles regularly. And in an applied discipline, where academic work often emerged from consultancy or other relationships with business and industry, the impact agenda was not described as a threat in the same way. The pressures encountered by our participants in Marketing were of a different kind, focusing on the particular venue of publication rather than the genre.

Our participants in Marketing were acutely aware of an influential journal ranking list produced by the Chartered Association of Business Schools, the "Academic Journal Guide". This "CABS list" ranks journals in the broad area of business and management studies, giving journals a rating of between one and four stars, depending on peer review, expert judgement, and citation information (https://charteredabs.org/academic-journal-guide-2015/).

These star ratings do not map directly onto the ratings which the REF places on research outputs. It cannot be assumed that a publication in a four-star journal will necessarily be rated by the REF panel as world-leading. However, in the way our participants talked about journal articles in interviews, publication in three- and four-star journals was clearly being used as a proxy for producing three- and four-star REF outputs. Emma, an early career lecturer at a research intensive institution, explained that successfully achieving probation required her to publish at least two articles "at three star".

Diane, a senior academic in this area, talked through the process she and her colleagues went through in deciding where a particular article should be located: "We were very clearly targeting 3 or 4 [star journals] because we needed a REF return". She explained that the list had produced profound changes in her discipline: "The idea was that if you gave people guidance as to where they should publish, everybody would try to go for the best. That got attached to the REF, Research Excellence Framework. Then that got attached to career progression, and that got attached to I guess market prices for academics as well. […] It's changed the culture of universities profoundly. It's changed the writing practice".

This presented Marketing academics with a problem, since very few Marketing journals were highly-rated in this list. The 2015 guide assessed 1,401 publications, awarding 84 of these 4* ratings, and 312 of them 3*

ratings. Marketing had only five 4* rated journals (https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/abs-ranking-reveals-world-elite-ofbusiness-journals/2018722.article). Those that were highly rated tended to publish large-scale, quantitative, positivist work. This did not fit with the approaches to research which most of our participants identified with. As Diane explained, "What concerns me now is the way that the list is produced for our discipline [...] is particularly bad. It recognises one very discrete form of knowledge. So actually it's killing the production of knowledge because the only thing that's valued is a four-star publication".

This put her in a difficult position because she did not produce work which fitted this very discrete form of knowledge. "I'm not a positivist, I don't do modelling. I have no way of engaging with that world." In order to achieve publication in the kinds of journals which she felt were expected of her, she tended to publish her work in journals which were "not in discipline"; either highly-starred general management journals, or journals in fields relating to the empirical area in which she was carrying out research which were outside the ambit of the CABS list. While this was a successful strategy in terms of her career success, she described this as a process of having been "pushed out" of marketing as a discipline, and experienced what she called "a bit of a crisis" in her own intellectual identity as a result.

8. Strategic management of teaching

Research is not the only area in which academics are subject to strategic management. Teaching is increasingly subject to pressures from outside the department, and this brings its own pressures on disciplinary writing practices. Since the introduction of student fees, and particularly higher rate student fees in the UK in 2012, following a change in legislation in 2010, institutions have been increasingly concerned with the management of student experience, as measured in surveys like the National Student Survey. These surveys, and the league tables of universities which result from such measures, are important for young people deciding which university to attend, and it has become very important to universities to market themselves to those who are going to pay large amounts of money to attend their courses. The crucial importance of revenue from these fees for the survival of institutions is driving another set of managerial pressures, towards maintaining student satisfaction and maintaining institutions'

positions in comparative national and international league tables which are important for student recruitment. This means that managerial attention is now paid to factors which count - or are seen to count - in the league table scores and in student satisfaction surveys, including things like teaching contact hours, the extent and quality of written feedback on student papers, the provision of pastoral support from named academics within departments, the development of "employability" through a degree programme measured by student destinations after graduation. Pedagogical considerations are now not the only considerations when planning teaching.

There is a wider debate to be had here around how this changes the relationship between students and universities, and what the effects are of positioning students as consumers. In relation to the writing practices around teaching in particular, it is clear that there is an increasing interest from university management in the details of how university teaching is carried out. Some aspects of this interest have a direct effect on the writing practices of teaching.

To return to the example of the historians we worked with, some of them had experienced significant changes to their established teaching practices as a direct result of management decisions about contact hours. History has traditionally been one of the arts and humanities disciplines which has been taught using relatively few hours of direct contact between tutors and students. In between lectures and seminars, students have been expected to engage in independent study in libraries and archives, reading and writing to develop their understandings of the discipline. The parallels here between the independent work of professional historians in archives outlined above are clear.

In comparison to students in the sciences, who traditionally spend a lot more of their time in direct contact with tutors, traditional history teaching therefore appears to be low in contact hours, and this became of concern in many universities, since contact hours is one of the criteria drawn on in putting together league tables of universities. At Verity's university, to address this issue, History lectures were now in three hour blocks. She explained, "There's such a neurosis in universities, as far as arts and humanities subjects are concerned that compared with science subjects, STEM subjects, there aren't enough contact hours". As a result, all of her established lecturing writing practices needed to change to address this. This increase in contact hours transforms the way students are apprenticed into the discipline.

9. Conclusion

What have we learned about how changes in the broader context of higher education are affecting academic disciplines? We have seen that disciplines can be characterised by regularised practices, discourses, ways of thinking, procedures, emotional responses, motivations, and genres. Contemporary changes in the context of higher education in the UK, particularly management strategies relating to the evaluation of research writing and relating to the marketisation of university teaching, are having direct effects on the established writing practices of disciplines. They are affecting the genres people write in, particularly with a perceived pressure to produce journal articles rather than monographs. They are affecting decisions about the particular journals in which people publish. They are affecting practices around teaching preparation and delivery, driven by imperatives of marketisation rather than the imperatives of the discipline. Different disciplines are affected in different ways, depending on the tradition and history of the discipline concerned. The clarity which the more established, traditional disciplines have about the writing practices which are valued within them may provide them with a more secure platform to defend those practices, in comparison to disciplines with less well-established traditions which may find themselves more vulnerable to external pressures.

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Karin Tusting is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics at Lancaster University. Her main interests are in the area of literacy in everyday working life, and she is particularly interested in how bureaucracy and accountability play out in people's working practices and change people's identities. Her previous work has been in the areas of literacy and identity, adult literacy, and communities of practice. She is principal investigator on the ESRC project *The Dynamics of Knowledge Creation: Academics' Writing Practices in the Contemporary University Workplace.*

David Barton is Professor in the Department of Linguistics at Lancaster University and erstwhile Director of the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre. His current work is mainly concerned with rethinking the nature of language and literacy in the online world and developing appropriate methodologies for online research. His most recent books, both co-authored and published by Routledge are *Language Online* (2013) and *Researching Language and Social Media* (2014). He is co-investigator on the ESRC project *The Dynamics of Knowledge Creation: Academics' Writing Practices in the Contemporary University Workplace.*

NOTES

[1] In addition to the authors of this paper, the academic project team includes Ibrar Bhatt, Mary Hamilton and Sharon McCulloch, with Dee Daglish providing invaluable administrative support.

[2] All names used are pseudonyms.