

2011

## Crucial Connections: an Exploration of Critical Thinking and Scholarly Writing

Roisin Donnelly

*Technological University Dublin*, roisin.donnelly@tudublin.ie

Marian Fitzmaurice

*Technological University Dublin*, marian.fitzmaurice@tudublin.ie

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/lc0th>



Part of the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Donnelly, R. & Fitzmaurice, M. (2011). Crucial Connections: an Exploration of Critical Thinking and Scholarly Writing. *International Conference on Thinking 2011* Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, 21-24 June.

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by the Learning Teaching & Assessment at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Other resources by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact [arrow.admin@tudublin.ie](mailto:arrow.admin@tudublin.ie), [aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie](mailto:aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie), [vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie](mailto:vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie).

# Crucial Connections: an exploration of critical thinking and scholarly writing



Roisin Donnelly  
Dublin Institute of Technology

*lttc*<sup>o</sup>

# Abstract

Academic writing in the context of producing quality research articles is something which all academics engage in and there is evidence of increased attention to supporting the development of the writing and subsequent output of academics and research students. However, while scholarly writing is learnt in complex ways, critical thinking is an intrinsic part of such writing. In practice the teaching of critical thinking is difficult and there is a lack of discussion about what it means within the context of the writing process. Critical thinking can only be acquired with practice and this study describes a pedagogic intervention with a group of academic staff to support the participants not only to explore critical thinking in their own writing, but to consider in depth how they would apply this learning to their work with students in higher education. An exploratory model is proposed for the teaching of scholarly writing.



# Discussion Outline

**Context** - scholarly writing in the context of producing quality research journal articles for academics; Aim of the **module** was to improve their understanding of the role of critical thinking and reading in the academic writing process.

**Rationale** - lack of discussion about what critical thinking means within the context of the scholarly writing process.

**Study** – 2010/11 Pedagogic intervention [action research approach] with a group of 20 interdisciplinary academic staff to support them not only to explore critical thinking in their own writing, but to consider in depth how they would apply this learning to their work with students in higher education.

**Findings** - Data suggests that the pedagogic intervention resulted in greater confidence in terms of participants' critical writing skills and also supported them to help their students in the academic writing process.

# What was the problem?

---





# What was the problem?

## Advanced Academic Literacy

(Stacey & Granville, 2009, p. 327)



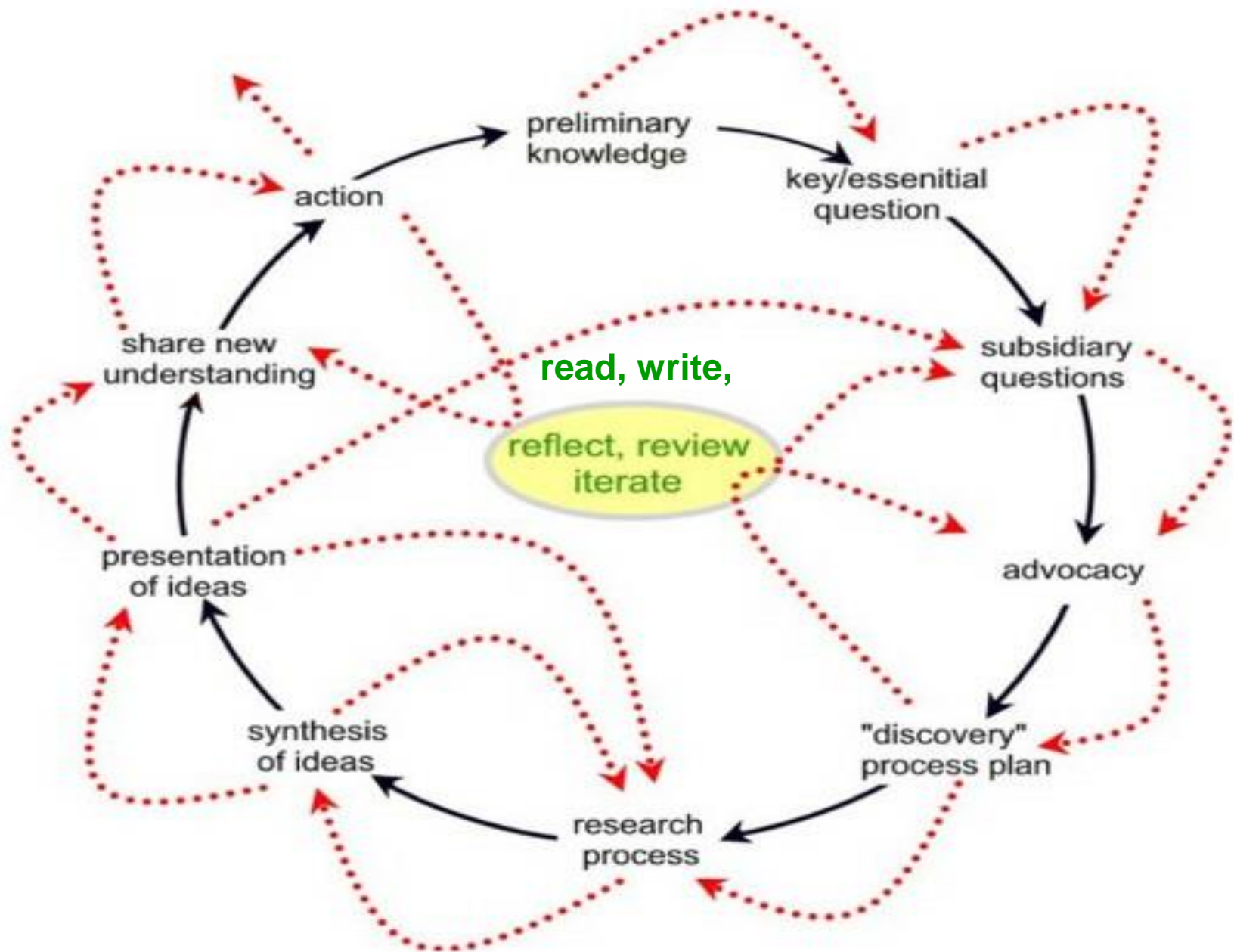


# What was the problem?

## Scholarly Writing

- Writing is often seen as a problem for the education of researchers in doctoral degree programmes  
(Aitchison & Lee, 2006)
- Indeed it is acknowledged as a problem in most undergraduate and postgraduate programmes
- There is an absence of a systematic pedagogy for writing and in the UK this has led to an over reliance on clinical intervention by writing advisers
- One of the aims of this module is to support academic writing development

# Inquiry Learning Model







# Towards a solution...

- So what pedagogic strategies can best assist in developing AAL?
  - socratic pedagogy

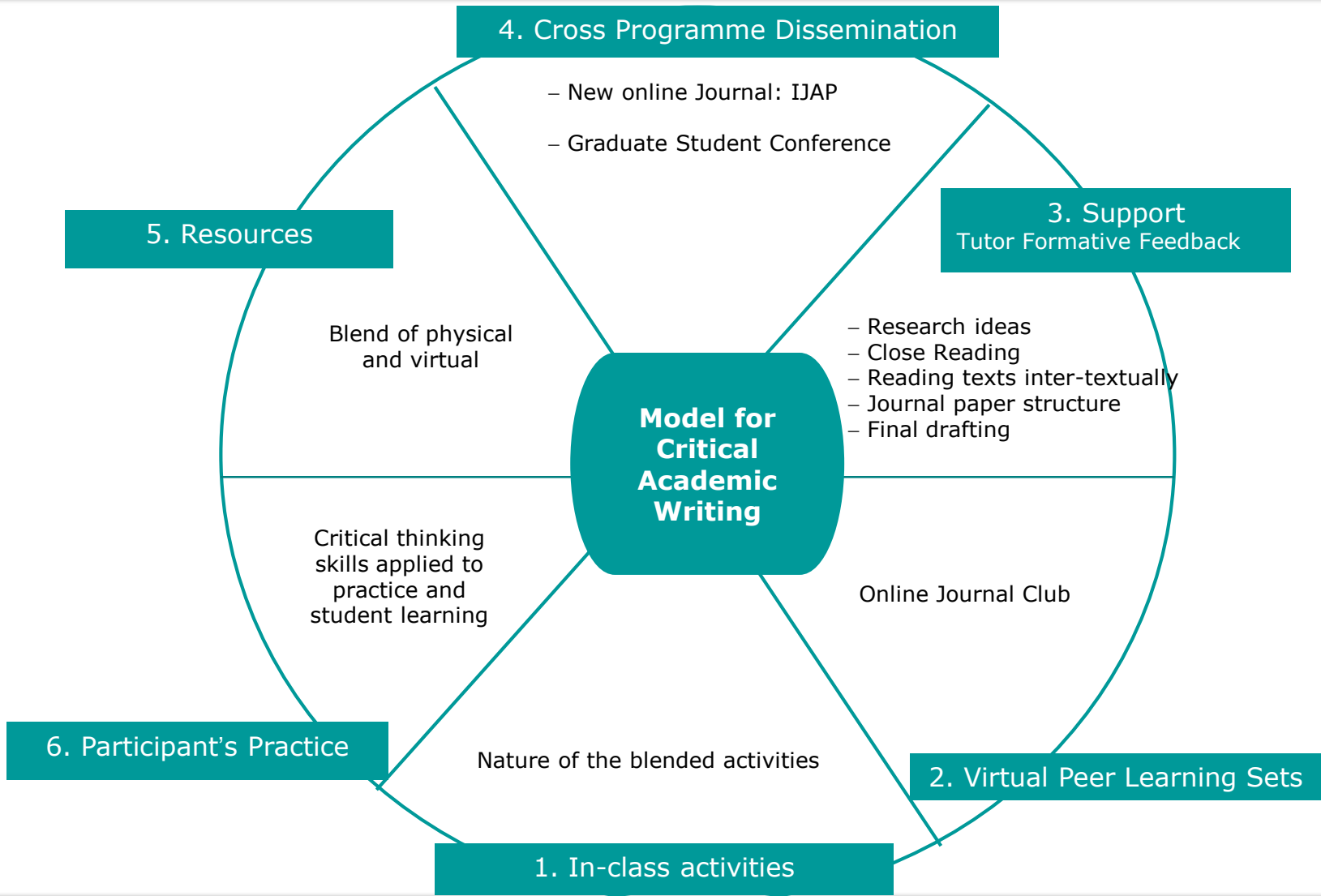




An exploratory model is proposed for critical academic writing encompassing a series of **scaffolded in-class activities**, **virtual peer learning**, and **blended tutor feedback**

- culminating in the publication and dissemination of individual practice-based educational research

# Exploratory Model of Critical Academic Writing





## The Process

- Dialogues - what is meant by critical thinking?
- Critical Reading
- Key Elements of Academic Writing
- Peer Critique



# Dialogues: Becoming Critical





# Dialogues: Close Reading





## Dialogues: Critical Reading

At the end of a chapter or paper:

1. Sketch a simple outline of the key arguments or ideas
2. What are the authors saying that has relevance to my work?
3. How convincing is what the authors are saying?
4. Write one or two sentences about the position of the author or authors
5. What use can I make of it?



## Dialogues: Writing a Journal Article

We all write – but the experience of writing a research paper is different and in writing a journal article, there are specific writing demands that will challenge all of us:

- Expected level of quality
- Understanding the conventions of the discipline
- Due date means that we must think out a schedule – getting reading material, taking notes and thinking and rethinking about your topic, doing research.
- Writing itself takes time because you have to read, research, think, compose, revise





## Key Elements (Adapted from Crème & Lea, 2003)

- Developing an argument
- Linking theory and practice
- Drawing a conclusion
- Analysing
- Being Critical
- Developing a central idea
- Processing Information
- Incorporating Facts
- Correct Terminology
- Logical Order
- Use of evidence to support an argument
- Use of primary texts
- Use of quotation
- Drawing on personal experience
- Expressing own opinions
- Using personal interpretation



# Reading texts inter-textually

**How do we assess the texts of other scholars?**

**A suggested way is by asking such questions as:**

- What is the argument?
- What aspect of x is spoken about in this article?
- From what position?
- Using what evidence?
- What claims are made?
- How adequate are they (blank spots and blind spots)?



## Responding to Texts

- Do you agree or disagree with the information?
- Is it significant information?
- Does it relate to other things you have read? If so, how does it relate?
- Does it offer more detail?
- Does it offer new insights?
- Can you identify a gap into which your work will fit?

Approach your reading as an activity that demands and commands your attention.



Pick an article to review    Your own article

What is the argument?		
What aspects of teaching/learning are spoken about in this article?		
From what position?		
Using what evidence?		
What claims are made?		
How adequate are they (blank spots and blind spots)?		

# Online Journal Club

**Course Tools**

- Course Content
- Announcements
- Calendar
- Discussions
- Learning Modules
- Profile
- Search
- Web Links
- Who's Online

(H) = Hidden

**Instructor Tools**

- Manage Course
- Grade Book
- Grading Forms
- Group Manager
- Tracking
- Selective Release

Please feel free to add your queries in here and the module tutors will aim to respond within one working day.

Technical or Administrative Queries (3 Messages)

If you have any questions about using Webcourses on this module, or any issues requiring clarification on the module itself, please post it here.

**Online Journal Club**

Final Learning from Articles (11 Messages)

Collation of groups' in-class discussions on 18/1/11

Group 2: Fighter Writers! (15 Messages)

Members: Eileen McPartland; Fiachra O'Cuinneagain; Attracta O'Regan; Mary Upton

Group 3: Please choose a name for your group! (2 Messages)

Members: Stephen Best; Martin Duff; Liz Farrell; Rachael Hession

Group 4: The Creators! (13 Messages)

Members: Alan Farrell; Kathleen Hughes; Ita Kennelly; Fiachra McDonnell; Rory O'Boyle

Group 1: The Deconstruction Bunch (12 Messages)

Members: Mark Glynn; Bruce Carolan; Peter Weadack; Andrew Stuart

# Virtual Peer Learning Sets

**Course Tools**

- Course Content
- Announcements
- Calendar
- Discussions
- Learning Modules
- Profile
- Search
- Web Links
- Who's Online

(H) = Hidden

**Instructor Tools**

- Manage Course
- Grade Book
- Grading Forms
- Group Manager

**Peer Learning Sets**

Use this online space to upload your latest draft work on your journal paper for your agreed peer to provide valuable feedback before your final submission. If you need any help, please contact the appropriate group tutor [Marian for MA and Roisin for MSc]

-  [Eileen McPartland & Ita Kennelly \[peer review space\]](#) (15 Messages)
-  [Alan Farrell & Martin Duff \[Peer Review Space\]](#) (12 Messages)
-  [Rachael Hession & Stephen Best \[Peer Review Space\]](#) (11 Messages)
-  [Rory O'Boyle, Mary Upton & Attracta O'Regan \[Peer Review Space\]](#) (12 Messages)
-  [Mark Glynn, Peter Weadack & Bruce Carolan \[Peer Review Space\]](#) (14 Messages)
-  [Kathleen Hughes & Fiachra O'Cuinneagain \[Peer Review Space\]](#) (9 Messages)
-  [Andrew Stuart & Fiacra McDonnell \[Peer Review Space\]](#) (14 Messages)



# Academic Staff evaluate the module



Crucial connections....

Academic writing



# Questions?

http://www.com @ url http://www.com  
http://www.com @ url http://www.com  
http://www.com @ url http://www.com  
http://www.com @ url http://www.com  
http://www.com @ url http://www.com  
http://www.com @ url http://www.com  
http://www.com @ url http://www.com  
http://www.com @ url http://www.com  
http://www.com @ url http://www.com  
http://www.com @ url http://www.com



# References



- Clare, J., & Hamilton, H. (2003) *Writing Research*. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone.
- Crème, P., & Lea, M.R. (ed.) (2003) *Writing at University*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Ganobcsik-Williams, L. (ed.) (2006) *Teaching Academic Writing in UK Higher Education*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jalango, M. (2002) *Writing for Publication: A practical guide for educators*. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon.
- Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2006) *Helping Doctoral Students Write*. London: Routledge.
- Lea, M.R., & Stierer, B. (2000) *Student Writing in Higher Education*. Buckingham: SRHE & Open University Press.
- Murray, D. (2000) *Writing to deadline – The journalist at work*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Murray, R., & Moore, S. (2006) *The Handbook of Academic Writing: A Fresh Approach*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Richards, J.C., & Miller, S.K. (2005) *Doing Academic Writing in Education*. New Jersey: Laurence Erlbaum Associates.
- Wallace, M., & Wray, A. (2006) *Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates*. Los Angeles: Sage.