

# Developing Students' Understanding of the Discourse of their Disciplines

## **Keywords:**

writing, redrafting, discourse

## **Abstract:**

This paper explores a discipline-focused approach to teaching communication skills at Curtin University of Technology. At Curtin student development of skills in information literacy, writing and oral communication is facilitated through a number of purpose-designed first-year half units, constructed to address the particular needs of various discipline areas. These units are implemented in courses in the Division of Engineering, Science and Computing, and the Faculty of the Built Environment, Art and Design.

In 2003 communication skills staff began two interconnected projects designed to improve students' writing skills and to develop their understanding of and competence in the discourse of their disciplines. Students were given the opportunity to redraft their written assignments in the unit, and teaching was redirected to specifically address student errors in order that the students might then resubmit their assignments for reassessment following editing. Those students who had met all outcomes with their first drafts were exempted from these redrafting classes and invited to participate in an independent learning project on the discourse of their discipline. This involved their compiling a glossary of language and an annotated bibliography on a sub-topic within their discipline; interviewing a professional in the discipline; or compiling a brochure advertising the activities of the discipline's professional association. The two projects were evaluated through written surveys administered to students, and focus groups of both students and staff. Results from analysis of data thus gathered have been used to refine the projects for future years.

## **Presenter details:**

Jane Grellier

Lecturer, Faculty of Media, Society and Culture

Curtin University of Technology

Phone: 9266 7739

Email: [j.grellier@curtin.edu.au](mailto:j.grellier@curtin.edu.au)

## **Co-Presenter details:**

Veronica Goerke

Lecturer, Faculty of Media, Society and Culture

Curtin University of Technology

Phone: 9266 7739

Email: [v.goerke@curtin.edu.au](mailto:v.goerke@curtin.edu.au)