

Reflections on 14 years at AUT

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My current role is within Te Mātāpuna Library & Learning Services based at AUT's South Campus in Manukau. At 14 years, this is the longest I have spent in any single institution, and I can't imagine wanting to work in any other role. This is partly due to the high calibre of colleagues in our team, and also because of the rewarding work that we do in terms of developing students' academic literacies.

The work of any TLA team is characterised by constant change – not just in technologies, but also in shifting priorities, institutional agendas, and budget allocations. In my time at AUT, I have observed various shifts in emphasis. For example, when I started in the role, a key focus was on encouraging students to seek 1:1 consultations in order to prepare them for assignments; there were various concerns with that approach – including sustainability – so TLAs now offer in-depth 1:1s with students *only* at the post-submission stage. These individual consultations aim to help students unpack feedback from lecturers regarding their submitted work.

The one constant during my time with the team has been our awareness of the importance of embedded workshops (Bassett & Macnaught, 2024; Raleigh et al., 2024). At the 2024 ATLAANZ conference, it became apparent that not everyone immediately understands what is meant by 'embedding,' so here is a brief explanation. Embedded literacy teaching sessions are tailored academic writing workshops facilitated by TLAs and ideally co-taught with faculty lecturers. These workshops are embedded into students' timetables—unlike generic workshops that students can choose to attend or not. At AUT, our team places considerable emphasis on embedding, and our approach is characterised by an explicit focus on the structural and rhetorical features of exemplar texts. One significant shift in our approach to embedding has been the team-

wide adoption of a robust model of language – Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) – to undergird academic writing materials. An example of the SFL approach relates to the deconstruction of exemplar texts (i.e., A-grade student assignments) to reveal salient features of different paragraph types, such as in reflective writing, discursive essays, or case studies. In the workshops, these features are then highlighted through the careful use of colour and annotation labels. Through the use of animation, students see how elements of the text work together to convey precise meanings.

Generic workshops are useful for those students who attend them, and embedded workshops fantastic for those who are fortunate enough to have them scheduled by their lecturers, but what about other students? A recent innovation in our team has been the development of a suite of self-access resources co-constructed with our Liaison Librarian colleagues and located in ‘Your Library on Canvas’. One key component is organised according to assignment type, and it contains annotated exemplars from a range of subject areas. Students can access these resources through a range of pathways, and ongoing research is being conducted to ensure that the resources are fit for purpose. It is heartening to observe the attention given to Universal Design for Learning principles, and the foregrounding of student needs and experience through ongoing User Experience testing (Bassett & Wattam, 2024). Another component provides guidelines which clearly outline permitted use of GenAI in assessment tasks, as well as cautions regarding inappropriate use. Caveats notwithstanding, from a TLA perspective, we can identify numerous advantages of GenAI tools to support student learning, for example, through tailored learning experiences, provision of real-time feedback, and fostering of critical thinking skills.

As we in the ATLAANZ community of practice reflect on where we currently stand and consider the decades ahead, it would be in our best interests to articulate the attributes that guide and inform our work in academic literacies development. As a practical starting point, I endorse Malik’s (2021) proposal for the co-construction of a core competencies framework for TLAs in Aotearoa New Zealand.

References

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