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Exploring effective individual consultations: Core competencies, challenges, and institutional tools

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Abstract

This article examines the competencies and practices that underpin effective individual consultations (ICs), contributing to the evolving professionalisation of tertiary learning advising in Aotearoa New Zealand. Responding to Malik's (2021) invitation to co-construct a national core competencies model, it focuses on Core Competency #3: "Plan and conduct successful advising interactions in one-to-one … settings." Drawing on an autoethnographic methodology which foregrounds practitioner reflection, the article reflects on three consultations with undergraduate students at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), each involving the use of asynchronous academic literacy resources.

The article argues that ICs should be understood not as remedial or transactional encounters, but as pedagogical spaces that require clearly articulated professional competencies. It explores how Tertiary Learning Advisors (TLAs) integrate institutional tools, respond to diverse learner needs, and foster student agency. The vignettes illustrate challenges related to unfamiliarity with assignment types, academic integrity, and neurodiversity; discussion of each vignette highlights the transformative potential of relational advising and digital resource integration.

By identifying salient themes, attributes, and values relating to ICs, this study contributes to the co-construction of a national competencies framework that reflects the full scope of TLA practice: pedagogically grounded, institutionally aware, and committed to inclusive, student-centred learning.

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Tertiary learning advisors (TLAs) in Aotearoa New Zealand engage in a wide spectrum of work, supporting academic literacies, fostering independent learning, and navigating institutional systems; however, the TLA role is often poorly understood within the wider academic community. Despite being integral to student success, TLAs frequently face challenges of visibility, professional identity, and recognition in tertiary institutions (Cameron, 2018a). One practical response is for TLAs to collaborate in the co-construction of a national Core Competencies Model that not only codifies best practice but also strengthens the professional identity of TLAs and informs institutional understanding of their contribution (Malik, 2021). This article responds to Malik's (2021) proposal by focusing on one element: Core Competency #3: "Plan and conduct successful advising interactions in one-to-one, small group, or workshop settings, either face-to-face, or online/blended environment" (p. 15). This competency provides a basis for examining the professional expertise required for effective individual consultations.

Individual advising sessions are central to TLA work but often overlooked in discussions of academic support and professional competencies (Bak & Grossi, 2025). While TLAs consistently report that their work contributes to student success and retention (Campitelli et al., 2019), there is a lack of empirical data at scale to substantiate these claims (Bassett, 2025; Kelly et al., 2025). This article does not attempt to address that gap; rather, it offers practitioner-based insights into the competencies that underpin effective individual consultations (ICs), dimensions such as pedagogical responsiveness, relational depth, and integration of institutional tools that are difficult to capture empirically but central to student success. By illustrating how these competencies manifest in practice, the study reframes ICs not as remedial or transactional encounters but as pedagogically rich interactions that demand nuanced professional expertise. ICs are often undervalued in institutional discourse, yet they influence student learning in ways that challenge simplistic metrics. This article provides practitioner-informed evidence of how conceptual, informational, and relational competencies operate in real-world practice. In doing so, it highlights underrepresented institution-related competencies and offers implications for strengthening TLA identity, advancing inclusive practice, and informing future research in an era of AI-driven disruption.

Employing an autoethnographic approach (Chang, 2008; van Maanen, 1988), I reflect on three consultations with undergraduate students at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). Each vignette illustrates a different challenge: genre unfamiliarity, academic integrity, and neurodiversity, and highlights the role of institutional resources such as AUT's Your Library on Canvas (YLOC), a suite of asynchronous academic literacy tools developed by TLAs and librarians.

This inquiry is guided by two questions:

1. What characterises effective ICs in a TLA environment in Aotearoa?
2. What kinds of online academic literacies resources enhance the effectiveness of ICs?

Methodology: Autoethnographic Approach

Autoethnography foregrounds the researcher's lived experience as both subject and lens of inquiry (Chang, 2008; van Maanen, 1988). Drawing on Schön's (1983) notion of reflection-on-action, this approach is well-suited to examining the relational and context-sensitive nature of ICs, which are shaped by tacit knowledge, emotional labour, and pedagogical responsiveness, dimensions often missed by quantitative research methods.

Reflexivity involves critically examining assumptions, positionality, and professional identity. I write as a Pākehā (European) New Zealander. As a trained language teacher with a background in applied linguistics, my insights derive from almost 40 years of experience teaching in a range of contexts, including TLA posts in three universities in Hong Kong. To mitigate bias, I ground reflections in pedagogical frameworks and wider discourses on equity, integrity, and professional competencies. This stance affirms reflective practice as scholarly inquiry and positions TLAs as agents in the professionalisation of learning advising.

In considering students who attend ICs, for the purposes of this article, the following variables are salient: undergraduate/postgraduate; coursework/research; self-accessed/referred; face-to-face/online. To protect student privacy, the vignettes presented in this article are semi-fictionalised composite accounts based on actual consultations. Each vignette is an amalgamation of interactions with referred undergraduate coursework students, with names and identifying details changed. The use of student avatars enables exploration of recurring themes without compromising confidentiality. While this approach limits the ability

to generalise findings in a conventional sense, it allows for rich, situated reflection on advising practice. The trade-off between narrative depth and empirical generalisability is a known limitation of autoethnography (Yazan, 2024) but one that is offset by its capacity to illuminate the lived realities of professional practice (Bak, 2025)..

A Brief Survey of Frameworks, Models, and Professional Practice Documents

Internationally, the first robust model of academic advising emerged in the early 2000s under the auspices of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA, 2006). Its Academic Advising Core Competencies Model (2024) outlines three domains – conceptual, informational, and relational – that define the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for effective advising. This framework offers a useful lens for analysing ICs, particularly in identifying the pedagogical, institutional, and interpersonal competencies TLAs draw on. Although developed in a US context, its adaptability makes it a valuable reference point for professionalising learning advising in Aotearoa.

In 2012, the Association of Tertiary Learning Advisors in Aotearoa New Zealand (ATLAANZ) created a professional practice document outlining the principles, values, knowledge, skills, roles, and responsibilities of TLAs. This high-level resource has served both as a practitioner reference and a way to explain TLA work to academic staff (Cameron, 2018b). A decade later, ATLAANZ released updated guidelines defining competencies, values, roles, and qualifications, and introduced two accreditation pathways: early career and advanced (2022). While these models and guidelines share common themes, values, and attributes, a practically useful competencies framework must also consider how these manifest in practice.

Individual Consultations: AUT Context

At AUT, TLAs work with a diverse cohort of students, many of whom are navigating university for the first time (Foronda et al., 2025). The AUT advising model is distinctive: TLAs typically meet students post-submission via lecturer referral, focusing on unpacking feedback and fostering independent learning rather than editing or content instruction (Bassett, 2025).

A key feature of the AUT approach is the integration of asynchronous resources through YLOC, a Canvas-embedded platform offering annotated exemplars, referencing guides, and discipline-specific writing models. Designed using User Experience (UX) principles and multimedia learning theory (Bassett et al., 2023), YLOC supports independent learning and academic confidence. The use of annotated exemplars in YLOC reflects a broader institutional shift toward exemplar-driven pedagogy (Raleigh et al., 2024), where student texts are central to literacy development.

TLAs frequently draw on YLOC during ICs, using it as both a teaching tool and a scaffold for student autonomy. This practice aligns with Malik's institution-related competencies (2021) and Shulman's (1986) concept of pedagogical content knowledge, knowing not just what to teach, but how and when to teach it effectively.

The next section is a series of three practitioner reflections providing thematic insights from ICs.

Practitioner Reflections on Three Individual Consultations

Vignette 1: Tom – Health Sciences Case Study

Tom, a first-year undergraduate student in health sciences, was referred by his lecturer following a failed case study assignment. My response focused on clarifying the task, modelling academic inquiry, and scaffolding independent learning using institutional resources.

Conceptual Competencies

The consultation began with an information-seeking conversation to establish Tom's understanding of the assessment task. It became clear that he was unfamiliar with the concept of a case study and had limited awareness of academic genres (see Figure 1).

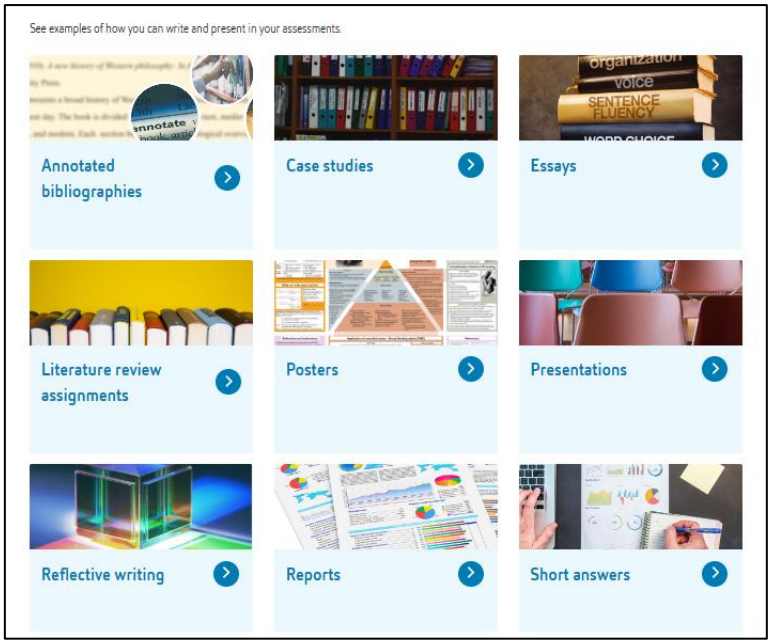


Figure 1. YLOC assignment types

Drawing on genre-based pedagogy (Hyland, 2007; Rose & Martin, 2012), genre analysis (Swales, 1990) and the academic literacies framework (Lea & Street, 1998), I framed the case study as a distinct genre with specific structural and rhetorical features. This modelling draws on systemic-functional linguistics (Coffin & Donohue, 2012; Halliday, 1985), which helps students interpret how meaning is constructed through language choices in academic genres. This dual framework positions writing not merely as a technical skill but as a socially situated practice shaped by disciplinary norms and institutional expectations. It supports students in developing genre awareness and epistemological understanding (Lillis & Scott, 2007). This understanding of genre as both a structural and epistemological construct is supported by cross-contextual research into academic literacies and disciplinary writing practices (Russell et al., 2009), which emphasises the socially situated nature of genre across curricula.

I also introduced the idea of constructive alignment (Biggs, 2014), guiding Tom to connect key elements from the learning outcomes, task instructions, and marking criteria. This modelling of metacognitive strategies supports threshold concept acquisition (Meyer & Land, 2003) and reflects the shift from deficit-based support to transformative learning.

Informational Competencies

To scaffold Tom's understanding, I navigated with him through YLOC, focusing on annotated exemplars and guidance notes for case studies (see Figure 2). The exemplars reflect disciplinary knowledge (Clarence & McKenna, 2017; Wingate & Tribble, 2012), helping students understand genre conventions within their field.

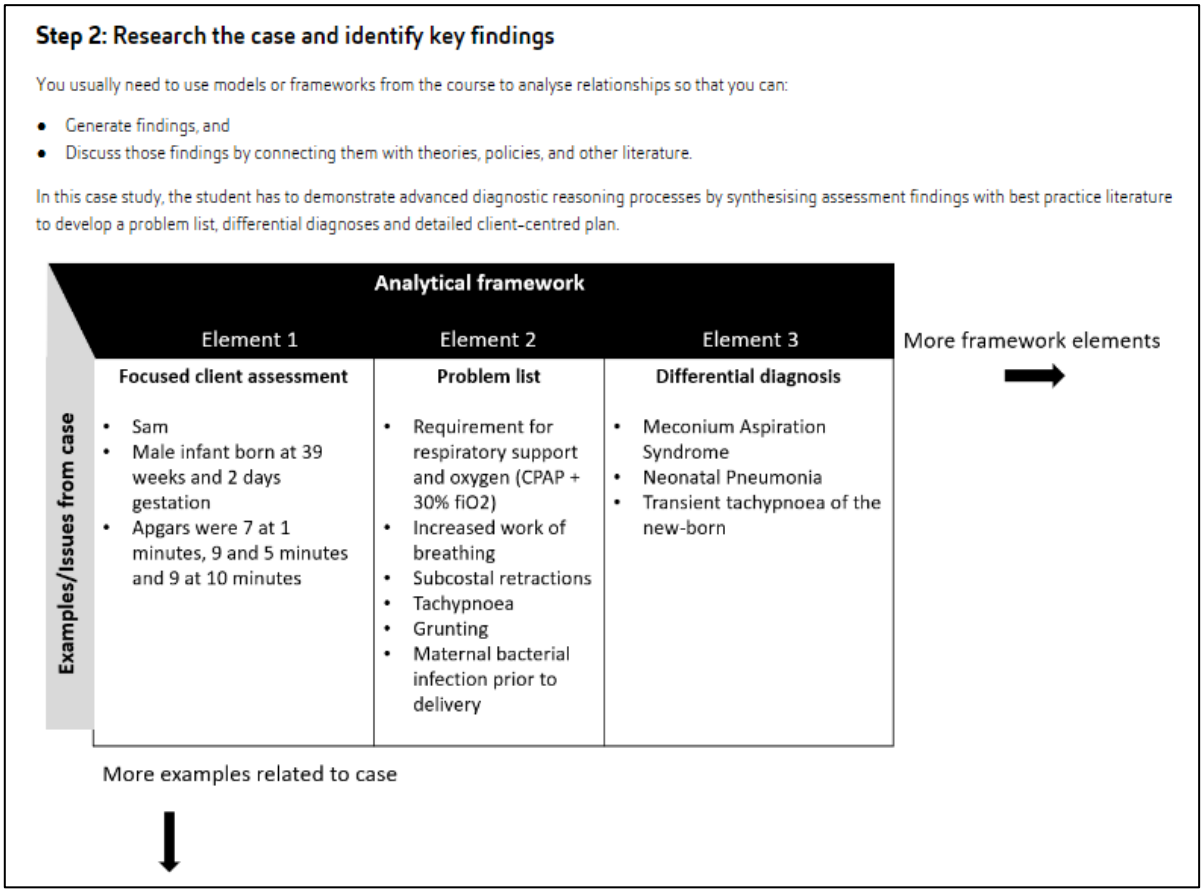


Figure 2. Clinical Sciences case study – analytic table

These resources provided visual and textual models of disciplinary writing, including annotated paragraphs (see Figure 3).

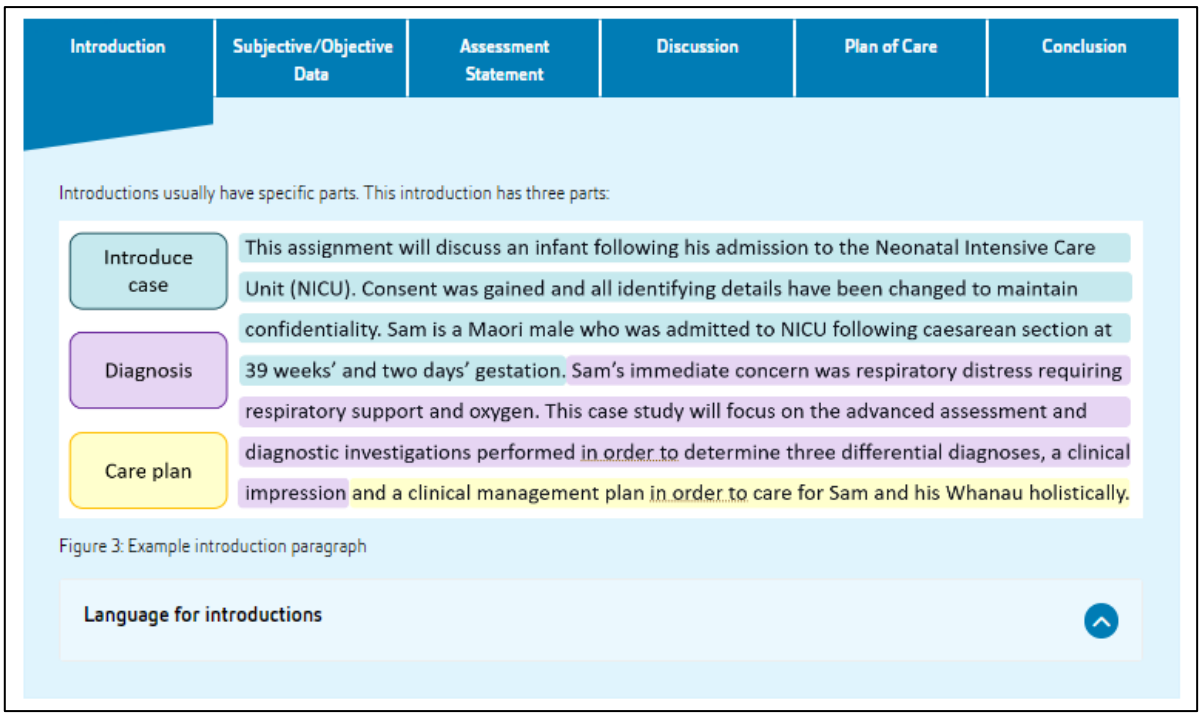


Figure 3. Clinical Sciences case study – examples from six sections

The design of the resources reflects principles of multimodal discourse (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), supporting students' interpretation of academic conventions through integrated visual and textual cues. The use of exemplars aligns with dialogic feedback principles, supporting student interpretation and self-regulation (Carless & Chan, 2016; Hawe et al., 2017), and reinforces the pedagogical value of modelling academic conventions.

Later in the session, we explored reflective writing, another unfamiliar genre. I used YLOC exemplars to introduce reflective models (see Figure 4).

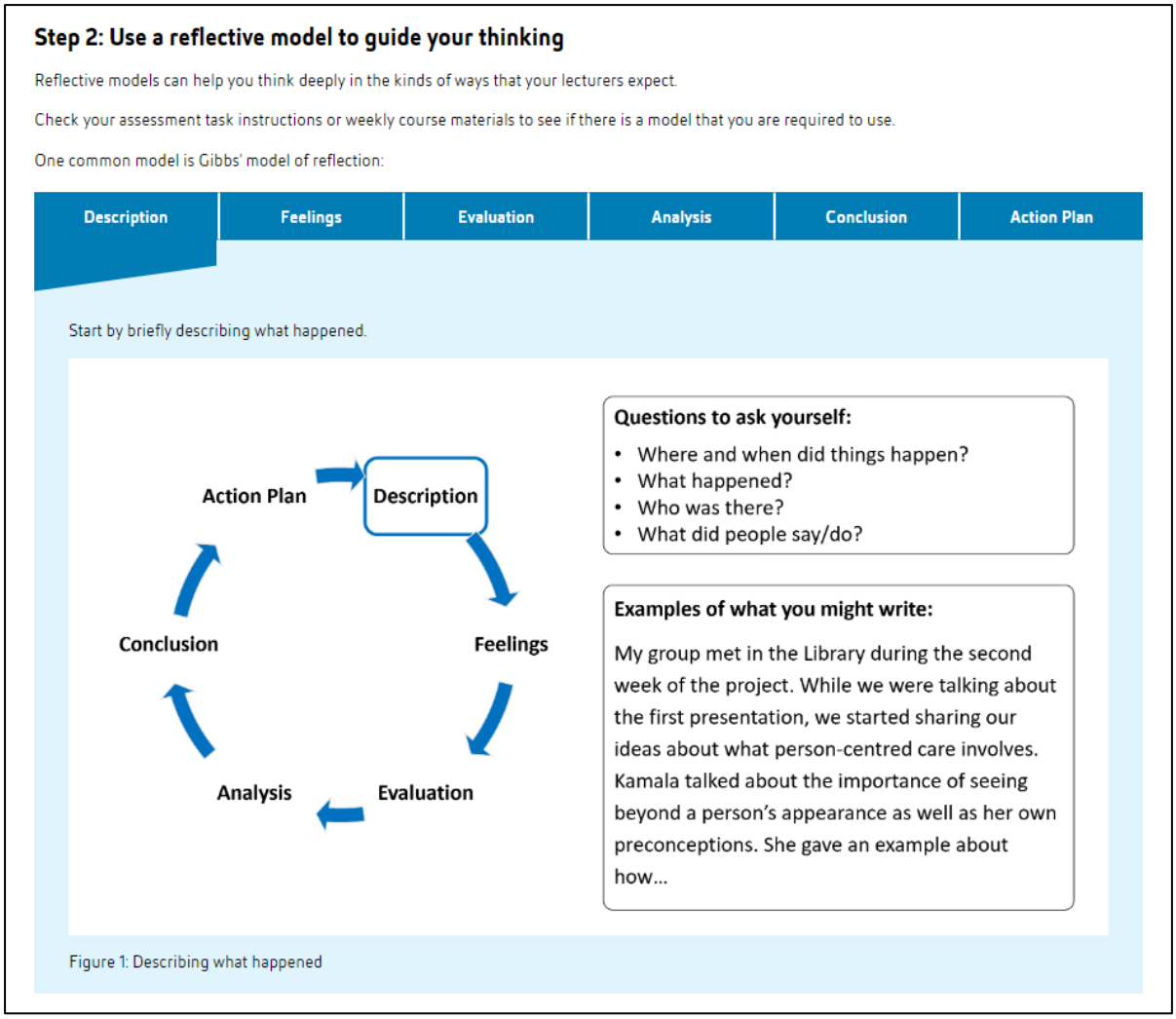


Figure 4. Using a reflective model

We also examined a range of reflective paragraphs, annotated to draw attention to sentence structures that connect theory with experience (Macnaught, 2020; Maton, 2013) (see Figure 5).

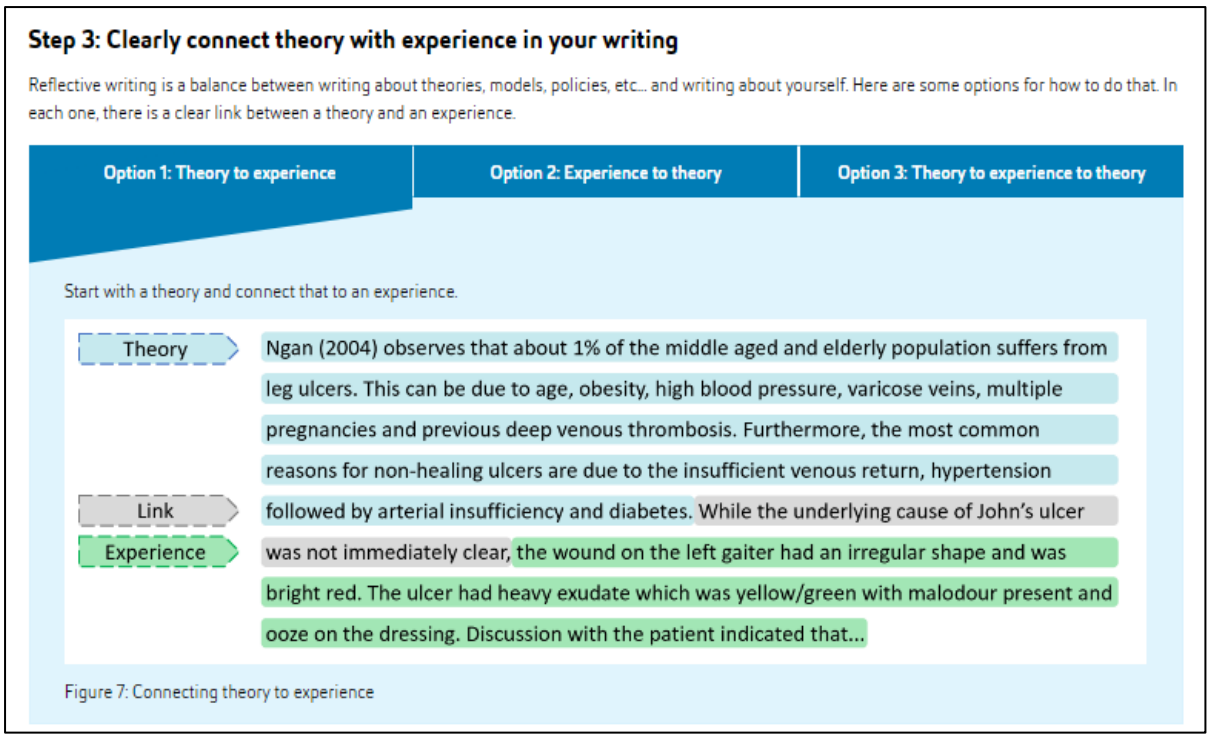


Figure 5. Annotated reflective paragraph

As preparation for writing an effective reflective paragraph, we examined phrases and sentence starters (see Figure 6).

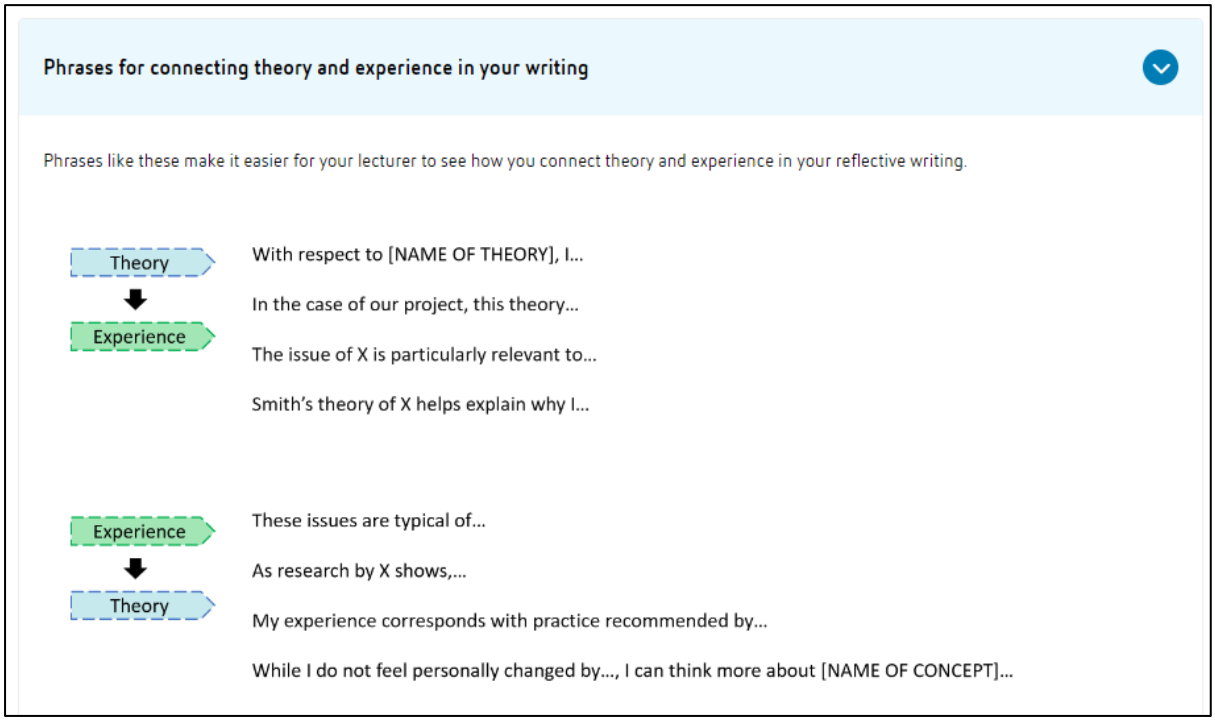


Figure 6. Sentence starters for connecting between theory and experience

This use of digital resources highlights the importance of integrating institutional tools into advising practice.

Relational Competencies

Throughout the consultation, I was attentive to Tom's emotional state; he expressed feeling overwhelmed but also relieved to discover practical strategies. I paced the session responsively, checking for readiness before moving between concepts. This attentiveness to emotional cues reflects the interpersonal dynamics of effective advising (Campitelli et al., 2019), where student well-being and readiness are central to pedagogical responsiveness. It also aligns with NACADA's emphasis on empathy, trust-building, and adaptive communication (2024).

I aimed to foster student agency by modelling how to navigate YLOC independently and encouraging Tom to schedule time to revisit the resources on his own. This aligns with inclusive pedagogy and heutagogical principles (Hase & Kenyon, 2007), which position students as active participants in their learning (Carter, 2010). The structured action plan exemplifies feedforward strategies (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Winstone & Carless, 2019), helping Tom translate feedback into actionable steps for future improvement.

Outcome and Reflection

The consultation concluded with a structured action plan: Tom would revisit the annotated exemplars and revise his case notes for resubmission. He expressed increased confidence and clarity about the task. A follow-up was scheduled to review his progress, reinforcing his sense of agency and academic resilience.

While Tom's consultation highlighted the importance of genre awareness and metacognitive scaffolding, the next vignette shifts focus to ethical academic practice and the challenges posed by emerging technologies such as generative AI (GenAI).

Vignette 2: Richard – Academic Integrity Breach

Richard, a third-year undergraduate student, was referred by his lecturer after using ChatGPT inappropriately across three assignments

Conceptual Competencies

My response focused on clarifying institutional expectations around academic integrity, modelling ethical academic practice, and guiding the student toward appropriate use of GenAI tools (Mollick & Mollick, 2023; Rowland, 2023). The consultation began with a discussion about academic integrity and the conventions of source attribution (Magyar, 2012; Stephens et al., 2024). Richard acknowledged his use of ChatGPT to generate assignment content but expressed confusion about what constituted acceptable use. This revealed a gap in his understanding of academic norms and institutional expectations (see Figure 7).

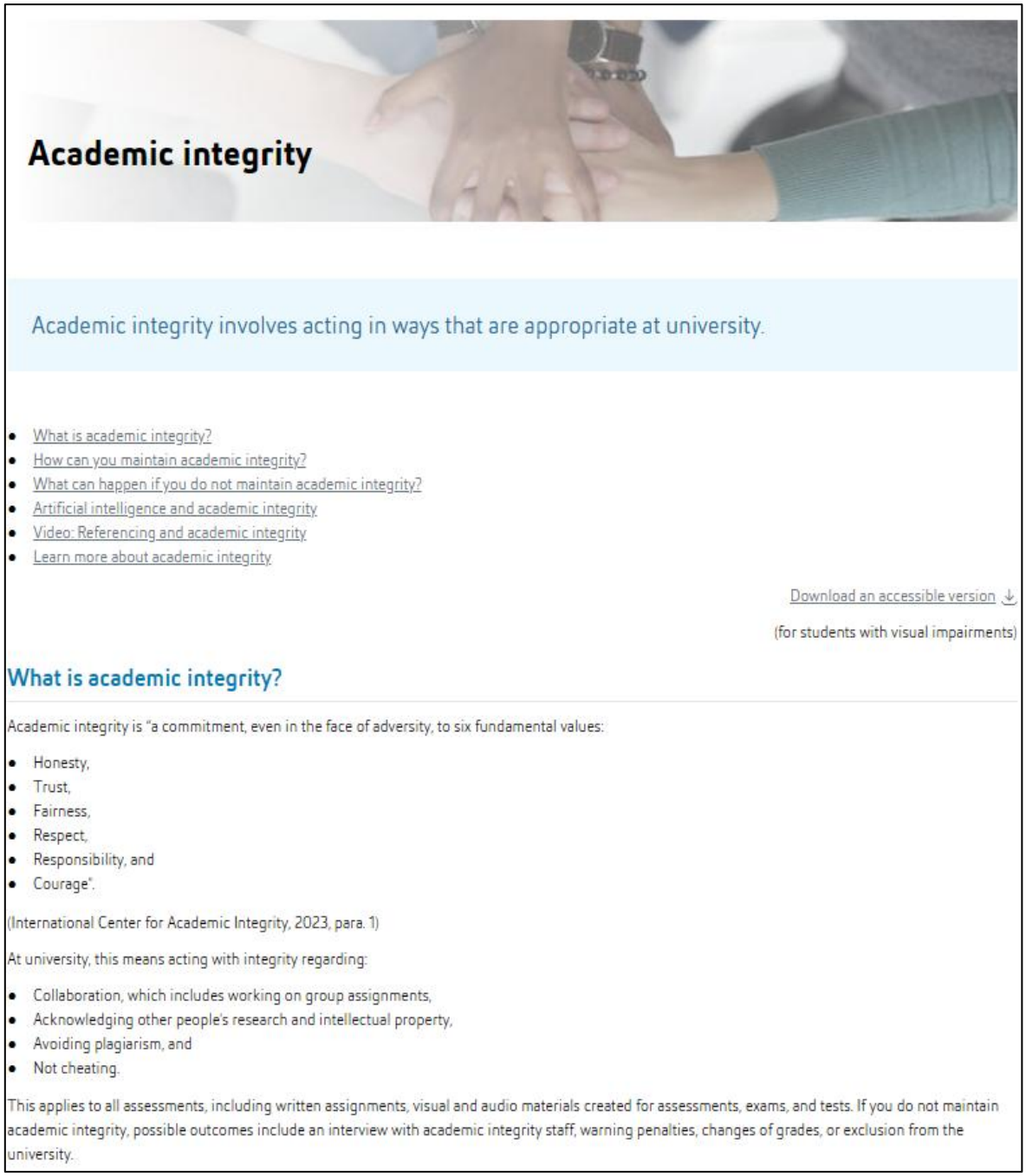


Figure 7. YLOC information about academic integrity

Drawing on academic literacies theory (Lea & Street, 2006) and ethical reasoning frameworks (Stephens et al., 2024), I framed academic integrity not merely as a set of rules but as a shared understanding of scholarly practice.

I also introduced the concept of epistemic responsibility, encouraging Richard to reflect on how knowledge is constructed and validated in academic contexts. This approach

supports critical thinking and identity formation (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010), positioning the student as an active participant in scholarly discourse.

Informational Competencies

To support Richard's understanding, I guided him through AUT's GenAI guidelines, which outline appropriate and inappropriate uses of GenAI in assessments. The design of YLOC's academic integrity modules reflects UX-informed principles (Bassett et al., 2023), ensuring that ethical learning resources are accessible, intuitive, and aligned with student expectations. We explored annotated examples and discussed the implications of each scenario (see Figure 8). This aligns with Eaton's (2024) argument that academic integrity extends beyond student conduct to encompass ethical decision-making in teaching, assessment, and institutional practice, as outlined in the Comprehensive Academic Integrity framework.

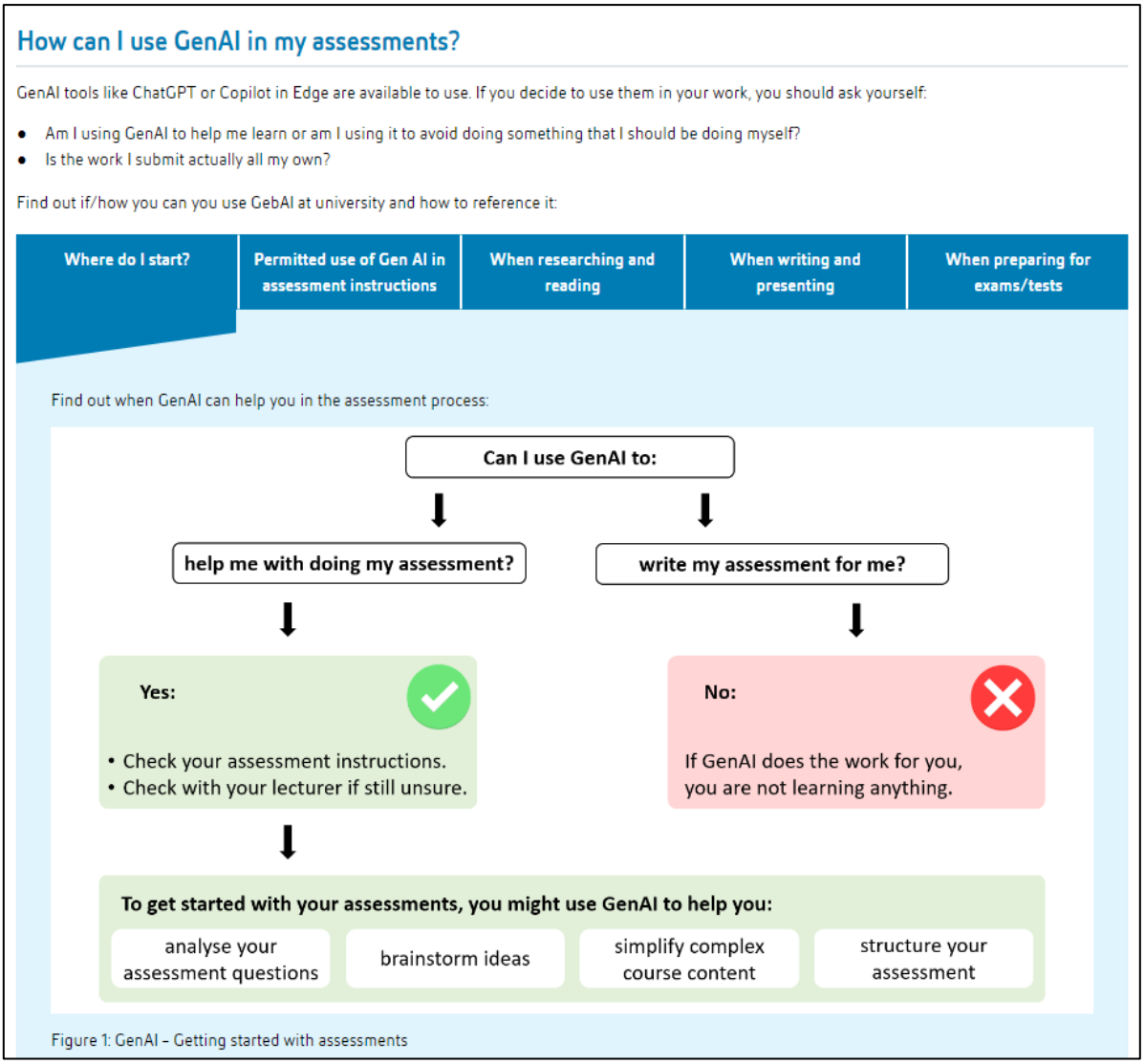


Figure 8. YLOC information about how to use GenAI in assessments

We then reviewed APA referencing conventions, focusing on the distinction between direct quoting and paraphrasing (see Figure 9).

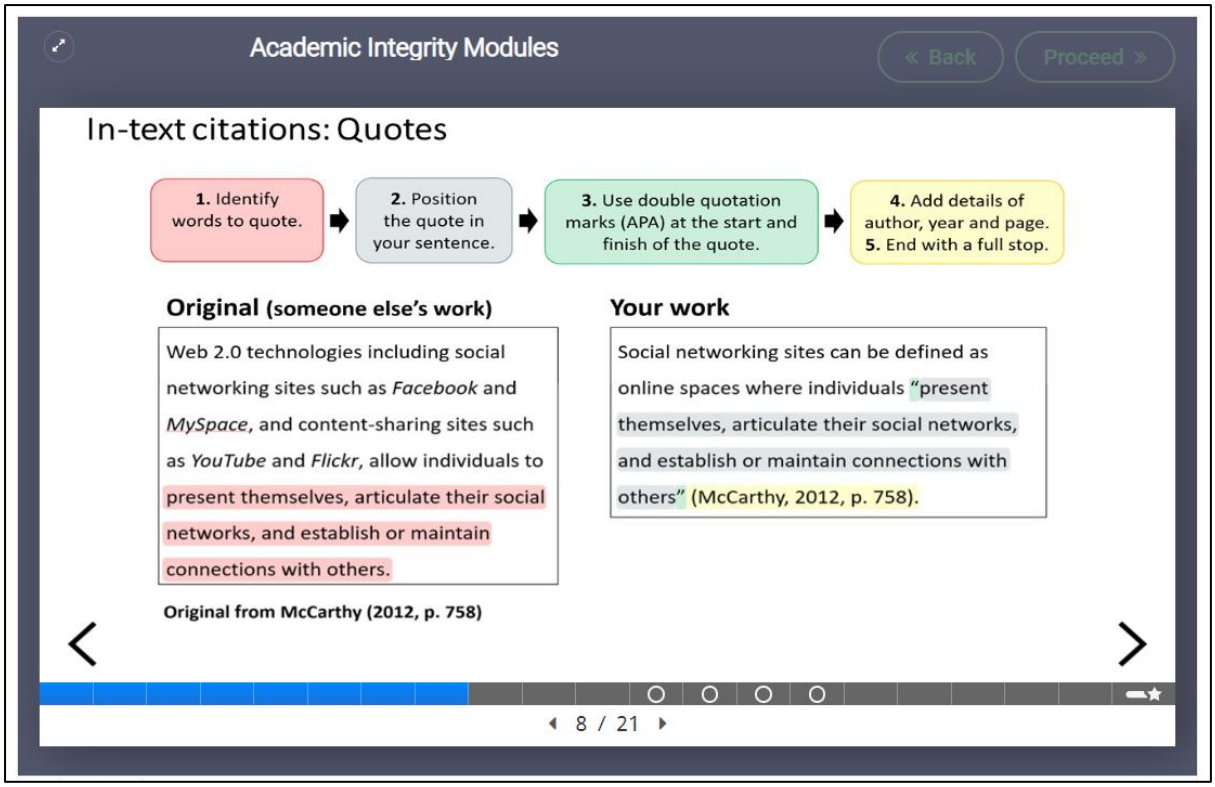


Figure 9. How to integrate direct quotes into a text

Richard had limited familiarity with these practices, so I introduced YLOC's academic integrity modules and summarised key strategies for paraphrasing (see Figure 10).

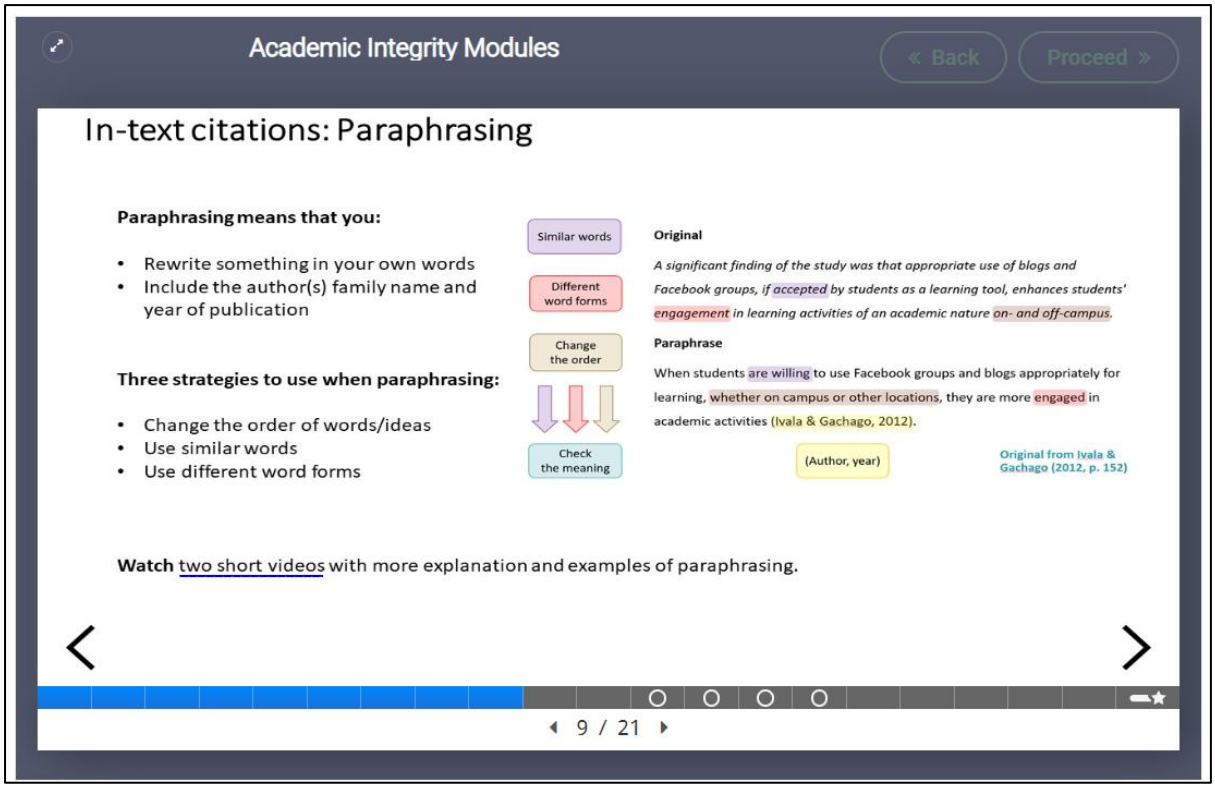


Figure 10. How to paraphrase

I concluded by recommending that Richard work through the five self-access academic integrity modules available on YLOC (see Figure 11).

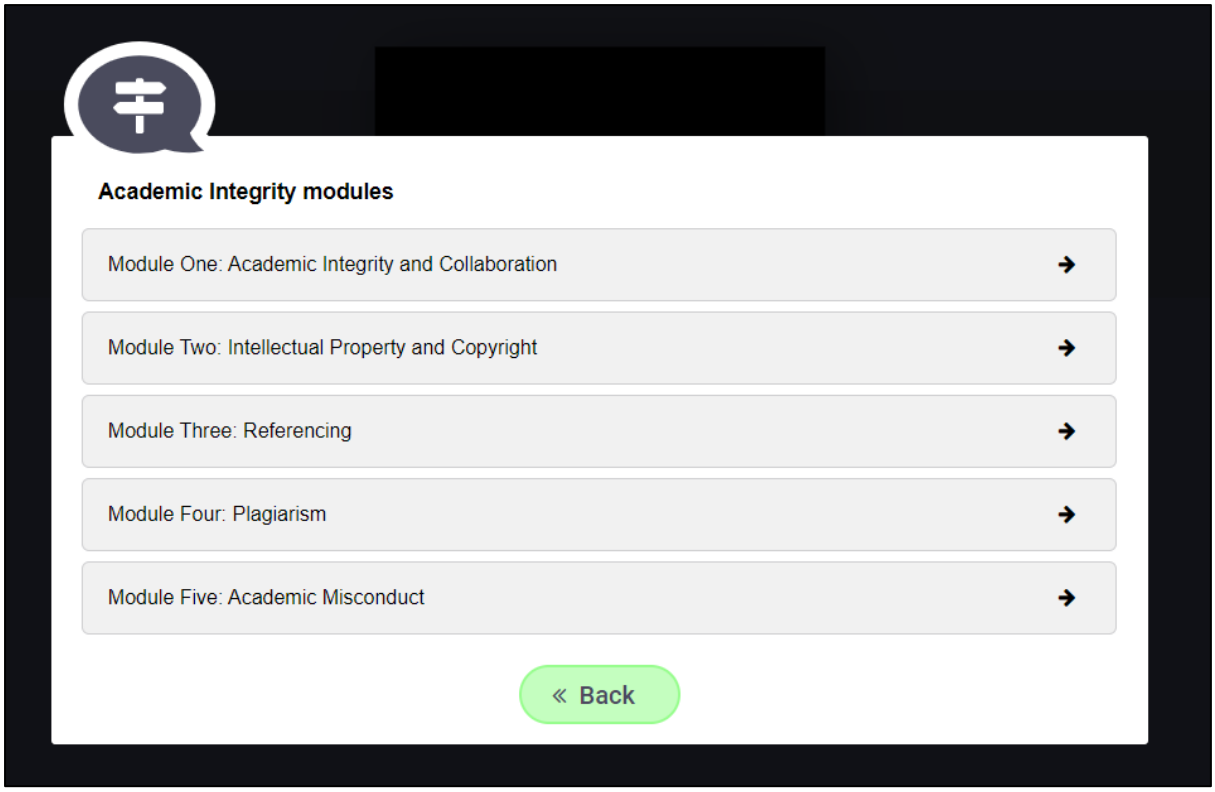


Figure 10. Academic integrity modules

This integration of digital tools reflects Malik's institution-related competencies, which emphasise the advisor's role in guiding students through institutional systems and resources. It also aligns with Shulman's (1986) pedagogical content knowledge, particularly in teaching disciplinary conventions and ethical reasoning.

Relational Competencies

Throughout the consultation, I maintained a tone that was firm yet supportive. Richard expressed relief at discovering practical resources and appreciated the opportunity to revise his work. I encouraged him to share these resources with peers, reinforcing a sense of community and shared responsibility. This values-based approach reflects advisor reflexivity (Lillis & Scott, 2007; Magyar, 2012), positioning the consultation as a collaborative space where ethical reasoning is co-constructed rather than imposed. This approach aligns with inclusive pedagogy and pastoral care principles (Gurney & Grossi, 2023), recognising that ethical learning is both cognitive and affective. By framing the consultation as a dialogue rather than a reprimand, I aimed to foster reflective learning and academic resilience. This

supports the development of student agency and contributes to a values-based advising practice.

Outcome and Reflection

The consultation resulted in a clearer understanding of academic integrity and appropriate AI use. Richard committed to revising his assignments and completing the YLOC integrity modules. His response indicated increased confidence and a shift toward more ethical academic engagement. This shift toward ethical agency reflects heutagogical principles (Hase & Kenyon, 2007), which position students as self-determined learners capable of navigating complex academic environments. The session affirmed the value of one-to-one advising in fostering reflective learning and student agency.

While Richard's consultation centred on ethical academic practice and the responsible use of digital tools, the next vignette shifts focus to the challenges faced by neurodivergent learners. In particular, it explores how relational advising and structured pedagogical support can foster academic confidence and autonomy for students navigating learning differences.

Vignette 3: Henry – Support for a Student Diagnosed with Dyslexia

Henry was referred by AUT's Student Services, a division providing specialised pastoral support for disabled, Deaf, and neurodivergent students (Auckland University of Technology, n.d.).

Conceptual Competencies

In preparing for this consultation, I discovered that Henry was struggling with many aspects of academic writing, including time management and reading (Mortimore & Crozier, 2006; Pino & Mortari, 2014). My response focused on establishing a respectful and structured advising relationship, modelling academic processes, and scaffolding strategies for independent learning.

The consultation began with a review of the assignment task, a literature review. We started by looking over the assignment and the lecturer's feedback together. I helped Henry make sense of what was expected by linking the task to the learning goals and marking guide.

To show how to break it down, I talked through my thinking step by step, pointing out the key ideas. This modelling acknowledges the complexity of academic writing and the role of struggle in learning (French, 2016), affirming that uncertainty and failure are not signs of deficit but integral to the development of academic resilience.

Informational Competencies

To support Henry's understanding of academic processes, I introduced tools available through YLOC, starting with a systematic approach to approaching the assessment task (see Figure 12).

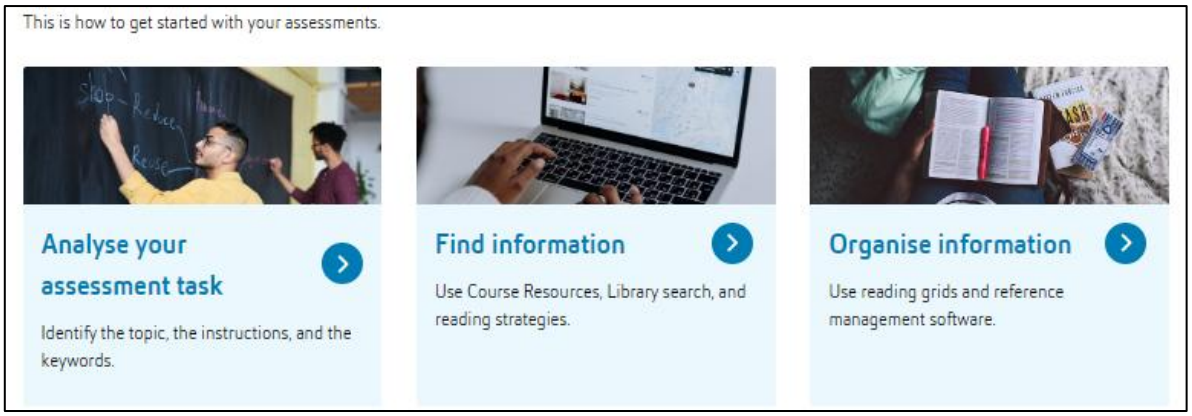


Figure 12. YLOC resources on how to approach assessment tasks

We explored visual resources such as a Gantt chart for time management (see Figure 13).

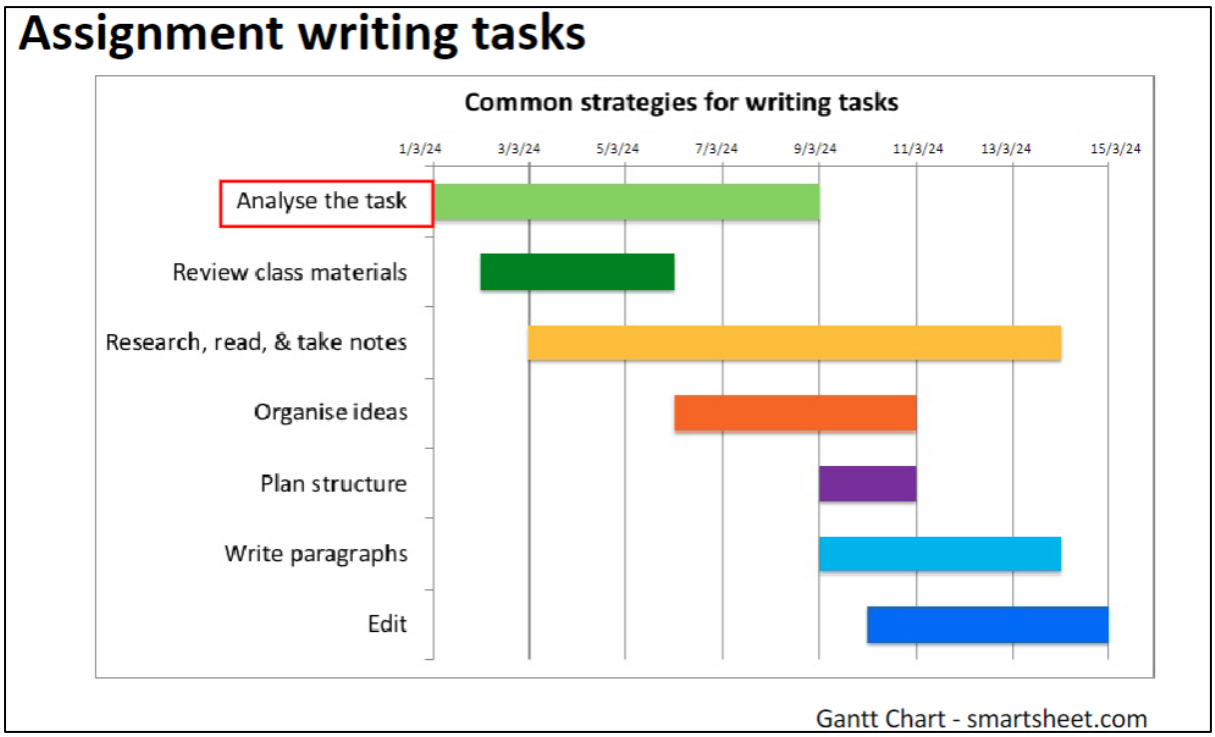
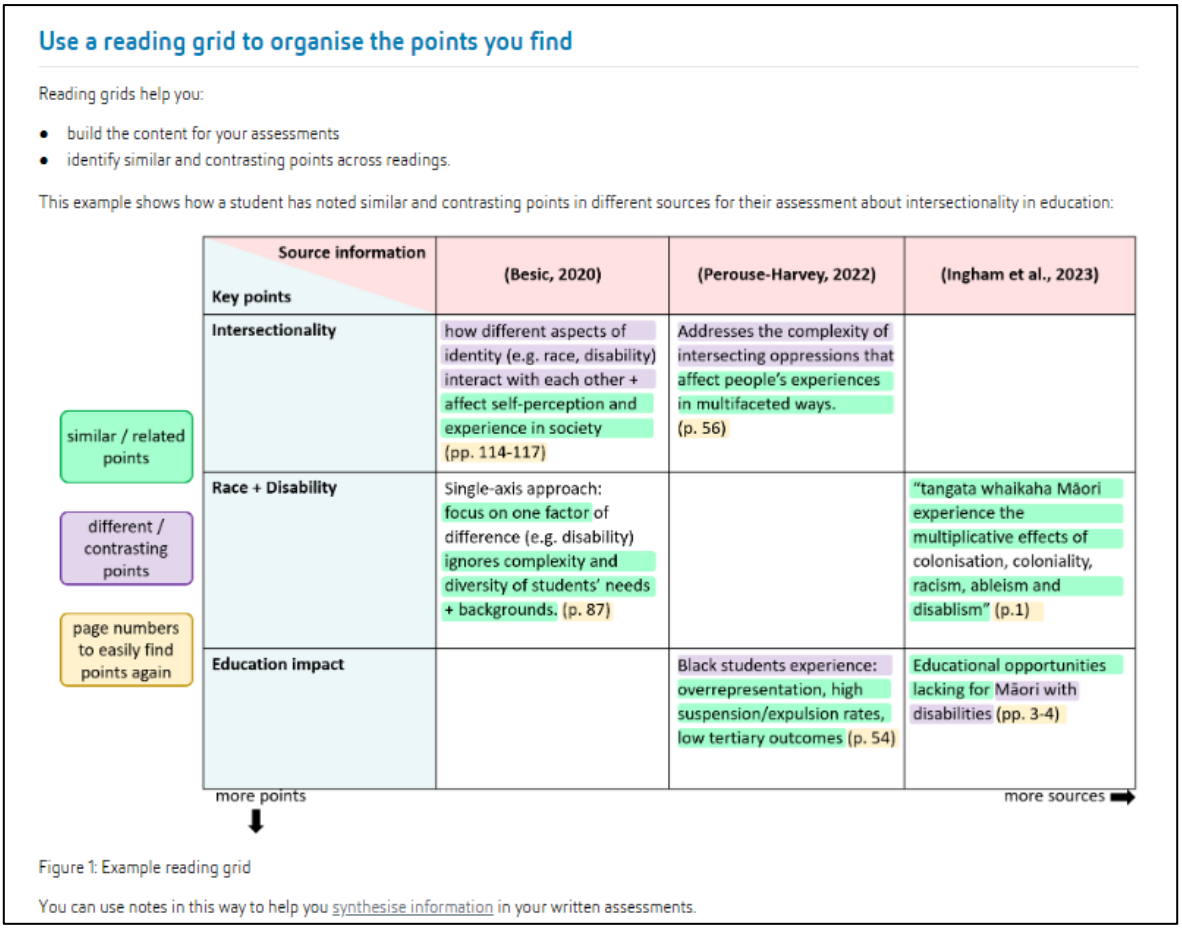


Figure 13. Gantt chart for assignment planning

We also discussed various reading strategies, including the mechanics of setting up a reading synthesis grid to organise literature (see Figure 14).



Use a reading grid to organise the points you find

Reading grids help you:

- build the content for your assessments
- identify similar and contrasting points across readings.

This example shows how a student has noted similar and contrasting points in different sources for their assessment about intersectionality in education:

similar / related points

different / contrasting points

page numbers to easily find points again

Source information / Key points	(Besic, 2020)	(Perouse-Harvey, 2022)	(Ingham et al., 2023)
Intersectionality	how different aspects of identity (e.g. race, disability) interact with each other + affect self-perception and experience in society (pp. 114-117)	Addresses the complexity of intersecting oppressions that affect people's experiences in multifaceted ways. (p. 56)	
Race + Disability	Single-axis approach: focus on one factor of difference (e.g. disability) ignores complexity and diversity of students' needs + backgrounds. (p. 87)		"tangata whaikaha Māori experience the multiplicative effects of colonisation, coloniality, racism, ableism and disablism" (p.1)
Education impact		Black students experience: overrepresentation, high suspension/expulsion rates, low tertiary outcomes (p. 54)	Educational opportunities lacking for Māori with disabilities (pp. 3-4)

more points ⬇

more sources ➡

Figure 1: Example reading grid

You can use notes in this way to help you synthesise information in your written assessments.

Figure 14. Using a reading synthesis grid

These resources provided structured, multimodal support for Henry's learning and reflect a commitment to equity and inclusive access (Haggis, 2006; Sotardi & Friesen, 2017). They also enabled me to introduce targeted strategies (such as visual planning tools, scaffolded reading techniques, and step-by-step modelling) that were responsive to his needs as a neurodivergent learner and helped foster independent learning and academic confidence.

Relational Competencies

Henry arrived at the first consultation frustrated and defensive. My initial goal was to establish a respectful and focused interaction. I acknowledged his diagnosis and affirmed my experience working with neurodivergent students. I also set clear boundaries, offering support contingent on mutual respect and engagement.

This affective dimension emphasises empathy, trust-building, and responsiveness. It also aligns with inclusive pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning principles (Ako Aotearoa, 2025; CAST, 2024; Meyer et al., 2014), which advocate for flexible, student-centred approaches to learning design.

Throughout the session, I encouraged Henry to identify distractions, manage time effectively, and adopt a metacognitive approach to study. By modelling academic inquiry and providing structured tools, I aimed to foster student agency and academic resilience.

Outcome and Reflection

We scheduled follow-up consultations, and over time, I observed a marked shift in Henry's approach to learning. He became more focused, engaged, and optimistic about his academic progress. This outcome illustrates the transformative potential of relational advising when paired with structured pedagogical support. By affirming his identity, modelling academic processes, and integrating multimodal resources, the consultation fostered student agency and academic resilience, key indicators of effective IC practice.

Discussion: Competencies in Practice

The three vignettes presented in this study illuminate the nuanced competencies required for effective ICs in tertiary learning advising. In practice, conceptual and informational competencies often intersect, particularly when theoretical frameworks are applied through institutional tools and resources. Through an autoethnographic lens, I was able to surface tacit knowledge, pedagogical responsiveness, and the interplay between institutional resources and relational advising. These practitioner insights can contribute to the co-construction of a national competencies framework by demonstrating how conceptual, informational, and relational competencies manifest in real-world practice. This includes recognising when a student is ready to move on, interpreting emotional cues, and adapting pedagogical strategies in real time, subtleties that Nosrati et al. (2025) also identify as central to the complexity of ICs and the need for nuanced, practitioner-informed models. Though difficult to capture empirically, these dimensions are central to effective ICs. These competencies are not only pedagogical but also ethical, shaping how advisors model fairness, respect, and responsibility in one-to-one learning spaces. Eaton (2024) reinforces this view,

arguing that academic integrity extends beyond preventing misconduct to include instructional ethics and relational responsibility. This perspective positions TLAs as key actors in creating learning environments where integrity is embedded in everyday practice.

One key finding is the importance of pedagogical responsiveness, i.e., the TLA's ability to tailor support to students' cognitive, emotional, and cultural needs. Whether guiding a student through genre unfamiliarity, clarifying academic integrity expectations, or scaffolding strategies for neurodivergent learners, each consultation required a dynamic blend of knowledge, empathy, and institutional awareness. It aligns with evidence-based teaching practices that enhance learner outcomes in Aotearoa (Keesing-Styles, 2023).

Another key finding is the importance of integrating online resources in ICs. One of the key implications of this study is the need to expand the current focus on student-related competencies to include institution-related competencies. Malik's (2021) proposed framework rightly emphasises the student-facing aspects of advising, but the vignettes demonstrate that effective consultations also depend on the advisor's ability to navigate and integrate institutional resources. The use of YLOC was central to each consultation, providing structured, multimodal support that extended beyond the advising session. Familiarity with such tools, and the ability to model their use, should be considered a core competency for TLAs.

A third finding relates to the relational dimension of advising: building trust, affirming student identity, and fostering agency. This aligns with Hamilton and Bak's (2025) exploration of the affective dimensions of ICs, which emphasises the importance of emotional presence and relational depth in supporting student development. Given the systemic inequities and diverse learner needs of the tertiary environment (Charlton & Martin, 2018), TLAs must be equipped to engage with students holistically, recognising the social, emotional, and institutional factors that influence academic success; this is especially important when working with Māori and Pacific students, whose learning experiences are shaped by distinct educational and historical contexts (Chu et al., 2013; Te Puni Kōkiri, 2018).

In synthesising these insights, this article affirms the pedagogical value of ICs and advocates for a competencies framework that reflects the full complexity of TLA practice (Stevenson & Kokkinn, 2009). In a tertiary landscape shaped by neoliberal logic, where efficiency and individual accountability are often prioritised, consultations risk being framed

as transactional fixes (Chanock, 2007). By recognising and codifying these competencies, we can challenge that framing, strengthen the professional identity of TLAs, and enhance the quality of academic support across the sector.

Conclusion

This article has argued that ICs in tertiary learning advising are pedagogically rich encounters that require a clearly articulated set of professional competencies. Through an autoethnographic exploration of three consultations, I have identified how conceptual, informational, and relational competencies manifest in practice, each shaped by institutional context, student diversity, and the evolving demands of academic literacies.

The vignettes show how TLAs use tacit knowledge, pedagogical responsiveness, and tools like YLOC to support student learning. They also highlight the importance of integrating asynchronous tools such as YLOC into advising practice, reinforcing the need to expand current competency frameworks to include institution-related competencies alongside student-facing ones.

By synthesising practitioner insights and situating them within established frameworks (NACADA, 2024; United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring, 2019), this article can contribute to the co-construction of a national competencies model for TLAs in Aotearoa (Malik, 2021). The findings affirm the value of reflective, context-sensitive advising and position TLAs as key agents in fostering equity, academic confidence, and independent learning.

Future research needs to demonstrate the impact of ICs, particularly given the existential threats posed to TLA teams by emerging Gen AI technology (Imran & Almusharraf, 2024; Zhan et al., 2025). This suggests an urgent need for TLAs to demonstrate impact, not just through anecdotal evidence or practitioner belief, but through systematic research that can be communicated to institutional stakeholders. Senior managers and decision makers are likely to be impressed not only by numerical data, but by triangulated evidence that clearly articulates the unique value of ICs (Bassett, 2025; Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, 2020). To this end, studies could build on this reflective, practitioner-focused study by incorporating a diverse range of student perspectives and voices (Haggis, 2006; Smith, 1999), exploring through a phenomenological lens how learners experience ICs, and how they perceive the value of institutional resources such as YLOC.

Such inquiry would usefully complement UX research such as Bassett et al., (2023). An orientation to the student voice is important for TLAs to gain a more holistic understanding of advising interactions and could inform the development of student-centred competencies and inclusive advising practices (Chanock et al., 2025; Sotardi & Friesen, 2017). Empirical studies could then explore how ICs contribute to student outcomes in ways that GenAI tools and third-party services cannot, particularly in surfacing tacit challenges, fostering trust, and supporting equity-priority learners. Comparative, mixed-methods research that includes student performance data, usage analytics, and qualitative feedback would help clarify the distinctive pedagogical value of ICs and inform future service design. Such research is likely to be enhanced by practitioner insights such as those shared in this article, and in the reflections of Bak (2025). Future research could explore how ICs foster presence, agency, and meaning-making, dimensions that are difficult to quantify but central to student transformation. Such inquiry might adopt meditative or autoethnographic methodologies to capture the tacit, embodied, and affective knowledge that characterises effective advising practice.

This study advocates for a competencies model that reflects the full scope of TLA practice, one that is pedagogically grounded, institutionally aware, and committed to inclusive, student-centred learning. By recognising and codifying the nuanced competencies involved in ICs, we can strengthen the professional identity of TLAs, present robust arguments for the retention of ICs, and enhance the quality of academic support across the tertiary sector.

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