



Holding our disciplinary ground: Disciplinary writing in the age of audit

Sharon McCulloch

s.mculloch@lancaster.ac.uk

Lancaster University, UK



The Dynamics of Knowledge Creation: Academics' writing practices in the contemporary university workplace

Literacy Research Centre, Lancaster University
Departments of Linguistics and of Educational Research
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Sharon McCulloch



Mary Hamilton



Karin Tusting



David Barton



Ibrar Bhatt



Theoretical perspectives

Writing practices as:

- sustained through participation in a social context
- socially and institutionally situated

(Barton, 2007; Barton, Hamilton & Ivanič, 2000; Tusting, 2003)



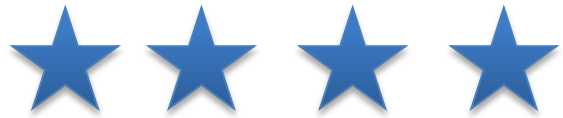
Audit and accountability

The logo for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014. It features the text 'REF2014' in a large, white, bold, sans-serif font. The '2' and '0' are stylized with a double outline. Below this, the words 'Research Excellence Framework' are written in a smaller, white, bold, sans-serif font. The entire logo is centered on a solid teal background.

REF2014
Research Excellence Framework



In terms of significance, rigour and quality



World leading



Internationally excellent



Internationally recognized



Nationally recognized

Impact beyond academia



Isaac Newton struggles to write the economic impact section of his 'gravity' proposal.



Research questions

How are academics' writing practices shaped by socio-material aspects of their situation, including recent changes in HE in the UK?

How are managerial practices shaping and coordinating writing work?



Research design

| MARKETING | HISTORY | MATHS | TOTAL |
|------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| 19 | 15 | 15 | 49 |



Holding our disciplinary ground

Marketing



I'm on probation at the moment, a four year probationary period. During that time I have to publish two papers at three star.

Emma



Now back when I started it was “Just get a couple of twos, maybe a couple of threes, if you get included in the REF that’s brilliant.” Now you need, as a junior member of staff or any member of staff in this department, you need to be able to get a four star journal.

Charles



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So because of the research I do [...] I'm not a positivist, I don't do modelling. I have no way of engaging with that world [...]. Now I target management journals, which is one way of hitting a four star.

Diane



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History





There's quite a high premium, on the monograph that literally is a monograph, so written by a sole author

Verity



[the monograph] is regarded as the core part of our discipline, and what it is to write history, and to do something creative with our discipline, is under attack, because 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.

Rebecca



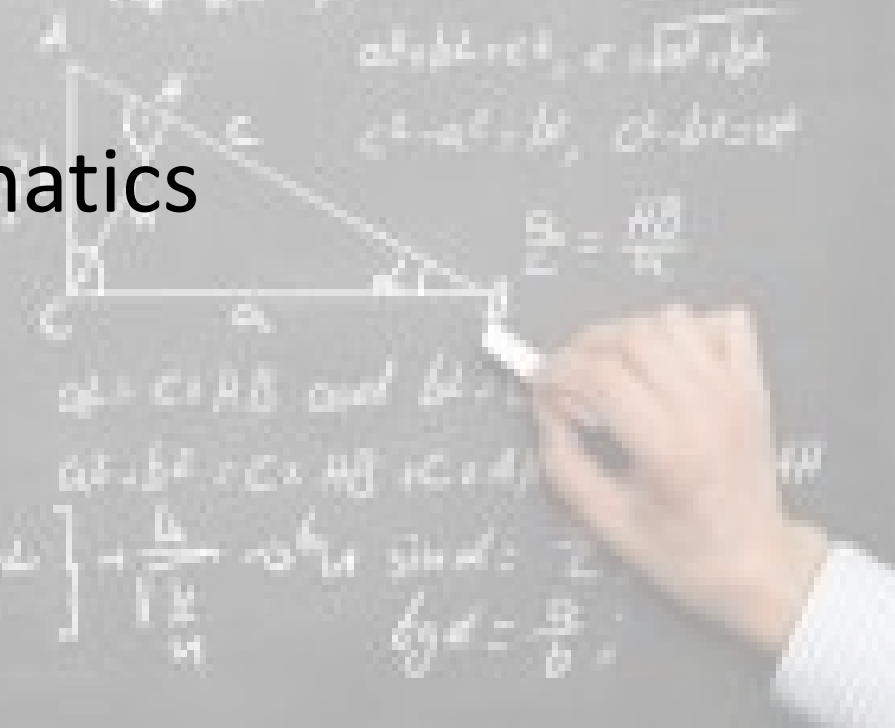
Increasingly, because we're encouraged to think about impact, we're being stretched away from the monograph.

Rebecca



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Mathematics





I mean, for mathematicians, hardly anybody can understand what our research is about.

Ian



I've been vice president of Institute X and so there's a policy side of what I do as well. I also do popular maths things. I see that all as part of the same job.

Robert



A lot of the work is grey literature where people have written blog pieces. I think that's opened my eyes to what's possible in that area but yes, if there's time – I think it's always a question of time. Again, that work is not valued by the university as far as I can see.

David



Summary

- REF places very tough *quality* and *quantity* demands on academics' writing
- Impact element of REF can conflict with the rest of REF
- Academics expected to find time for writing new genres for new (lay) audiences

Conclusions

- Managerialist imperatives around what kinds of writing are most highly-valued are not always coherent with disciplinary values
- This tension can, in the worst cases, be a source of serious anxiety