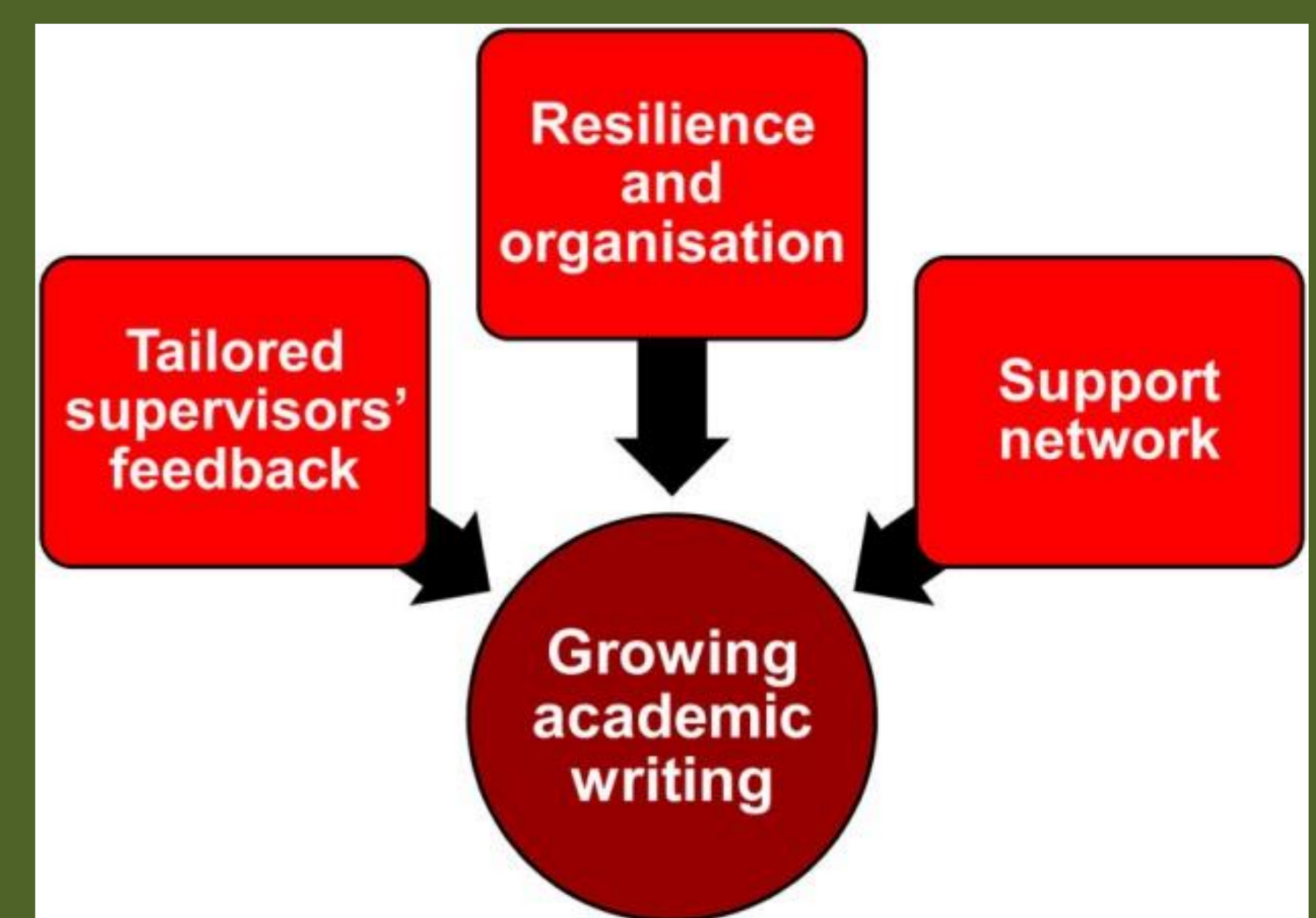


Embedding academic literacy in supervising and supporting international RHD students in thesis writing

Ha Nguyen, Academic Skills

Rationale

- Whether to embed? Embedding teaching of academic writing in disciplinary discourse is the most effective way to help students improve writing skills (Maldoni & Lear, 2016)
- How to embed? Balance institutional expectations and students' needs (Li, 2008)
- Need student-centred approaches to thesis writing
- Embedded academic writing guidance works for both international and home students



Odena & Burgess, 2017

Discrepancies between supervisors' and students' expectations of thesis writing and learning

Supervisors

Think students lack structural and rhetorical understanding of thesis expectations

Correct language mistakes rather than commenting on structure or content

Expect students to be independent and therefore don't give strategic writing advice. Assume academic writing skills can come to students unaided.

Students

Think they lack English proficiency

Don't expect editing and proofreading from supervisors. Need strategic advice on differences between academic conventions/cultures and potential issues when writing in a second language

Want to be independent but need guidance on independent learning strategies

(Li, 2008; Salter-Dvorak, 2014)

Challenges in academic literacy facing thesis writers

Cultural

- Western academic writing convention requiring students to change their way of thinking (Li, 2008). E.g. statement of main idea first, explanation later vs. deliberate delay of conclusion; direct vs. indirect critique
- Voice
- Cultural capital

Emotional

- Imposter syndrome
 - Self-doubt; doubt of their own competence
- (Odena & Burgess, 2017)

Academic skills

- Effective reading
- Understanding of the real problem: Often not grammar but structure and critical writing
- Strategic planning for writing and revision

Suggested strategies for embedding academic literacy

- Culturally sensitive pedagogies
- Treat international and home students as same but different. Principles that apply to native-speaker students apply to EAL students as well, academic writing being meaning-making in context.
- Embed awareness and negotiation of challenges to thesis writing in course design
- Encourage a writing process; embrace both writing (how-to) and writing up (reflexive).
- Embed writing strategies in disciplinary discourse; raise students' awareness of and confidence in themselves as research writers.
- Encourage critical reading, note-taking and writing as a continuity
- Realise the interplay of language, culture and identity
- Encourage students to claim a third place; avoid deficit model
- Negotiate institution and student needs, empower students to be negotiators themselves.

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