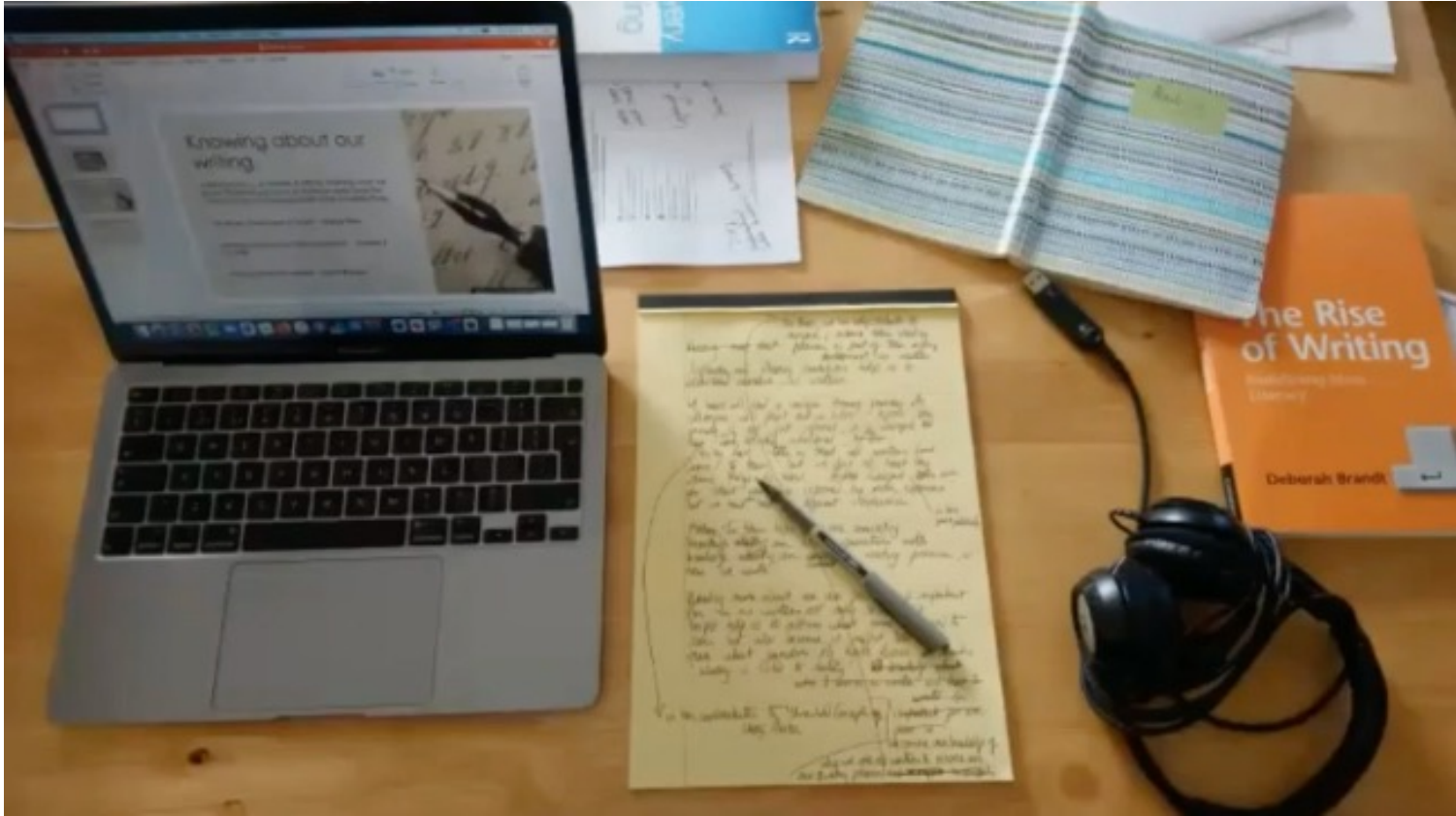


**Maynooth  
University**

National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

**‘Why write?’ Writing as Engaging Pedagogy  
and Empowering Process  
8 December 2023**

# Teaching and Learning, and Writing



# Theme of the conference and theme of the presentation

‘Engaging Pedagogy and Embracing Innovation’

‘Why write?’ Writing as Engaging Pedagogy and Empowering process.

What I really want to say is about the place of writing in HE ... that writing, and students developing as writers, can be used as engaging pedagogy and empowering process to help us to achieve some of the purposes of higher education.

# Education

‘the educational purpose of higher education is to bring students into a transformational relationship to knowledge that changes their sense of who they are and what they can do in the world’ (Ashwin, 2020, p. 3) ‘education ... allows us to see ourselves and the world differently’ (Ashwin, 2020, p. 127)

... what students are expected to ‘know, do and be’ (Brown and Sambell, 2022)

‘three domains of purpose’ – qualification (knowledge and skills), socialization (‘(re)presentation of cultures, traditions, and practices) and ‘subjectification’ (Biesta, 2020, p. 92)



# Focus of the session

- to explore the contemporary role of writing in higher education
  - in the discipline
  - to relate/connect
  - to know oneself
- to make a case for writing as engaging pedagogy and empowering process



# Approach



To share some ideas, stop and think, together – ‘Academic work is engaging with the minds of others’ (McArthur, 2023a)

To write – ‘medium is the message’

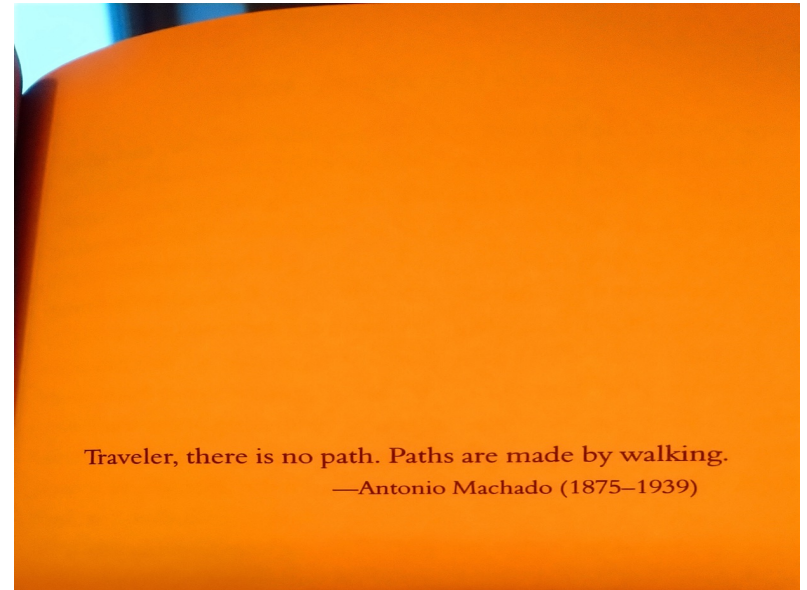
To connect the various ideas that we’ll explore with our practice – current and future

To enjoy the morning

# Your intentions

What are your learning intentions for this session and for today?

What do you need to do to achieve these?



# Why write? Why does this question matter (now)?

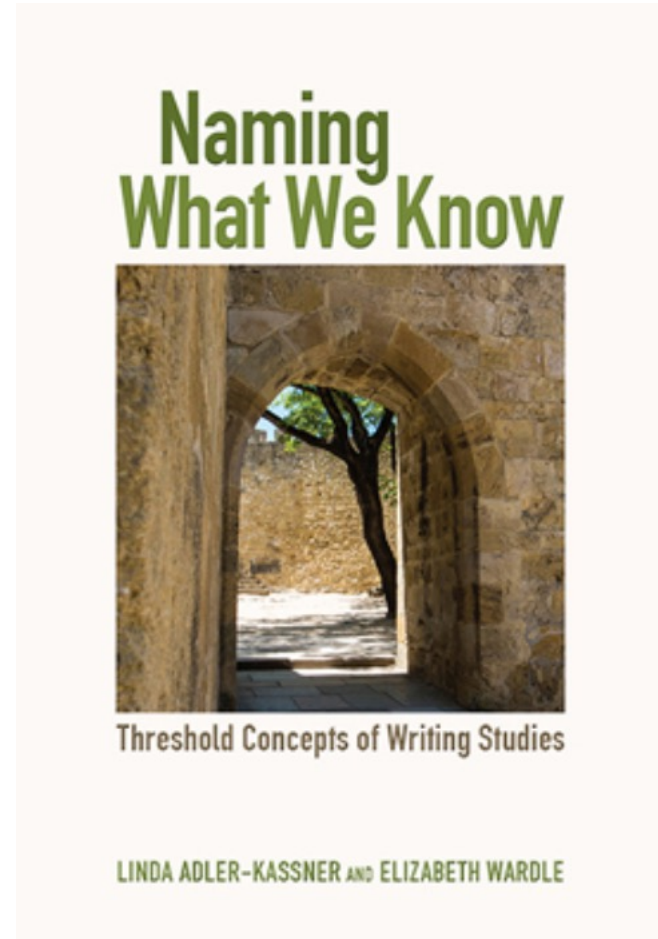
Context of GenAI, assessment, purpose of higher education; questions about:

- what types of writing do students do in university and for whom?
- what is the purpose of the writing we assign for assessment?
- what does academic integrity mean in terms of writing (now)?
- where does a student's voice start and finish?
- what writing will/do students do beyond university?
- how do our current writing challenges relate to assessment and the purpose of higher education?

# Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies

‘as final-for-now definitions of some of what our field knows’ (Adler-Kassner and Wardle, 2015, p. 4)

Using elements of this framework as a way of considering some of the affordances of writing, and thinking about how can we continue to use writing for engagement and empowerment in our T, L & A





# How does writing function in your discipline?

Shared Padlet doc –  
collaborative writing – your/our  
shared answer to this question  
and/or your response to others

<https://bit.ly/ICEP8Dec>

Linking our ideas, as generated  
in the group, with the research  
in this space



# Writing as a tool or technology

‘Writing Is a Technology through Which Writers Create and Recreate Meaning’ (Brooke and Grabill, 2015, p. 32)

Affordances of tools of the technology

‘Writers may prefer different tools and/or environments depending on their affordances, yet it has become more difficult to separate the scene of writing from the tools we use to produce it. This is because writing, as it always has been, is a technology for thinking ...’ (pp. 33-34)



# ... for thinking and generating ...

‘Writing is a knowledge making activity’ (Estrem, 2015, p. 19)

‘writers use writing to generate knowledge that they didn’t have before .... We write *to think*’ (Estrem, p. 19, emphasis in original)

‘I still think, but because writing has become impossible for me, the real activity of thought has in some way been suppressed.’ (Sartre, 1975)

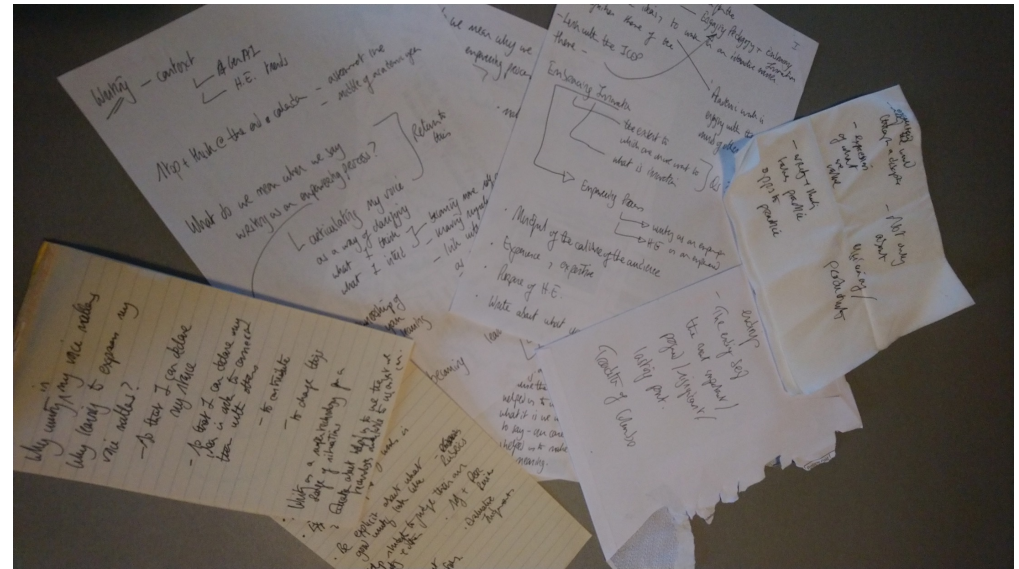
.... surface and capture ideas

... generate knowledge ...

make meaning for others

and for ourselves.

Link with writing-to-learn.



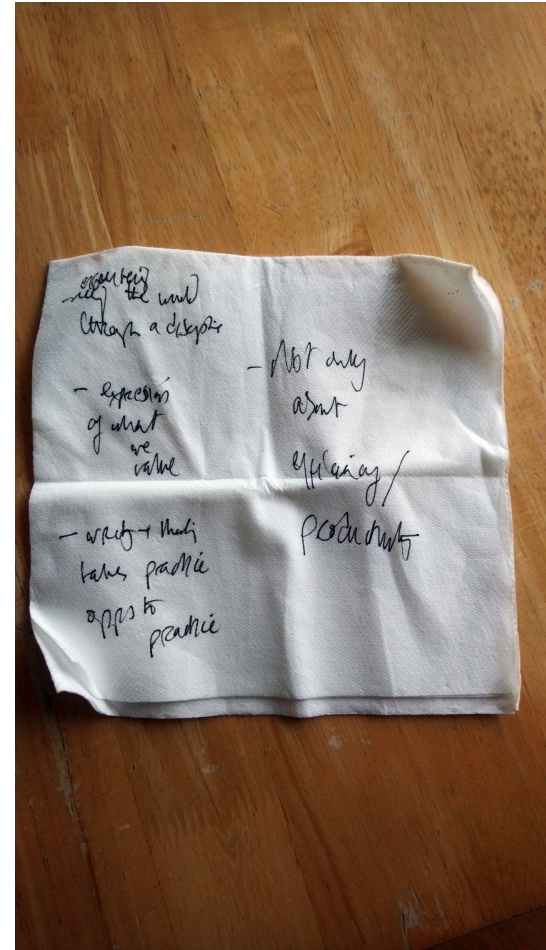
# Engaging pedagogy and empowering process

Because we are educating students (towards what they know, can do and who they are) through and in disciplines, we want to help them to develop as writers in the disciplines by

- Using **writing to learn**, ‘generative’ writing strategies in class and beyond, informal writing, engagement with ideas, experimentation, practice, with a purpose (assessment *for* learning)
- Providing **opportunities to write** including across genres (approaches to assessment)
- Encouraging writing to show **the progress of thought and writing processes** (journaling/drafting) (assessment of/for/as learning)
- Tracing and sharing **how writing works in our disciplinary genres** (beyond referencing but including researching and linking with critical reading)
- Talking about our **own writing processes**
- Articulating writing expectations within modules and **programmes**
- Examining **the role of GenAI** regarding the development of the work of the discipline

# Some characteristics of writing to learn

- 'think harder ... question ... be more reflective ... find gaps in their knowledge'
- 'the text is not as important as engagement with the material'
- Informal and creative
- 'begin and end abruptly'
- 'can contain errors'
- 'spontaneous or unfinished'
- 'input-based writing because it is *on the way to learning*'
- mixed with dialogue





# Writing to learn ideas

- Freewriting
- Connotations
- Metaphors
- List and prioritise
- Keywords
- Abstracts
- Dialogue
- Read and react
- Process analysis
- Blue-sky writing
- Limericks

## **Supporting Student Writing**



*and Other Modes of Learning and Assessment*



## **A Staff Guide**

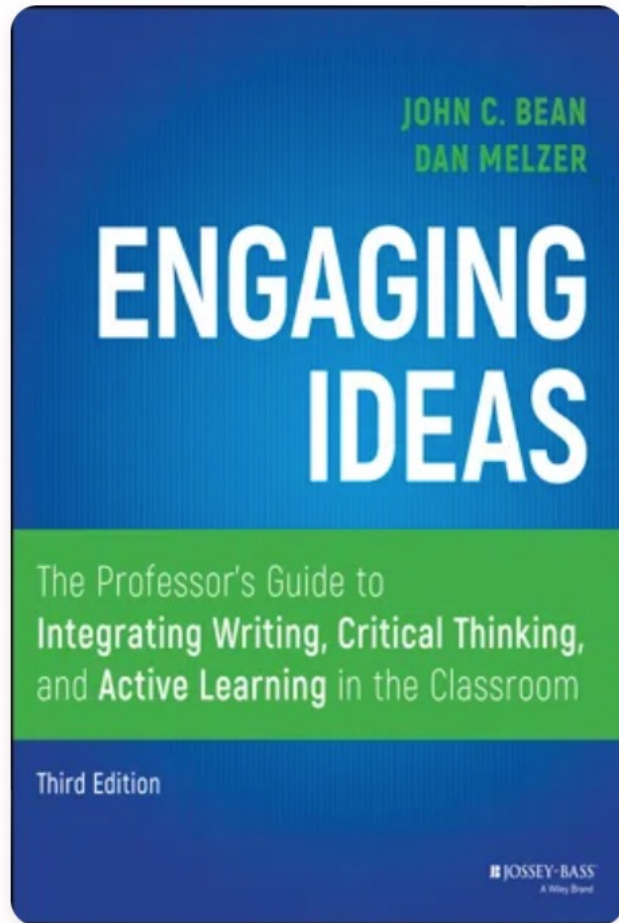
**Sandra Abegglen**  
University of Calgary

**Tom Burns**  
London Metropolitan University

**Sandra Sinfield**  
London Metropolitan University

Designed by  
**Veronica Piras**

# Writing to learn ideas



- Mind the GAPS
- Admit slips
- Annotations
- Glossary of terms
- 'Ladybird' version
- Responding to a text – questions for the author
- MCQ writing
- Problem solving
- Explain a graph
- Blog - read and reply
- Proofreading
- Different voices and genres

# Writing-Enriched Curriculum

WEC 'is a facilitated process designed to support the integration of relevant writing and writing instruction into departmental curricula and to increase the rate at which students' writing meets local faculty expectations' (Flash, 2021, p.18)

## Writing-Enriched Curriculum

Writing-Enriched Curriculum or WEC 'is a facilitated process designed to support the integration of relevant writing and writing instruction into departmental curricula and to increase the rate at which students' writing meets local faculty expectations' (Flash, 2021, p.18). Using WEC scholarship and practice, CTL aims to collaborate with colleagues to support the development of student writing. This approach to student writing development is located in the discipline and in academic departments, is enquiry driven and is supported by CTL colleagues. In our intentional move towards a WEC approach we are building on our staff-facing work to date where we have collaborated with academic colleagues in a range of interventions to support student writing. In practical terms, the WEC function in CTL will, in the first instance

- support staff with the integration of writing-to-learn into their teaching
- work with staff to develop discipline-specific writing resources
- provide professional development sessions for staff around exploring WEC
- collaborate with staff on module-/semester-/year-long discipline-specific academic writing interventions for students
- engage in research on WEC and related topics.

Work with Departments – collaboratively working to build understanding and share expertise in order to support students as writers.

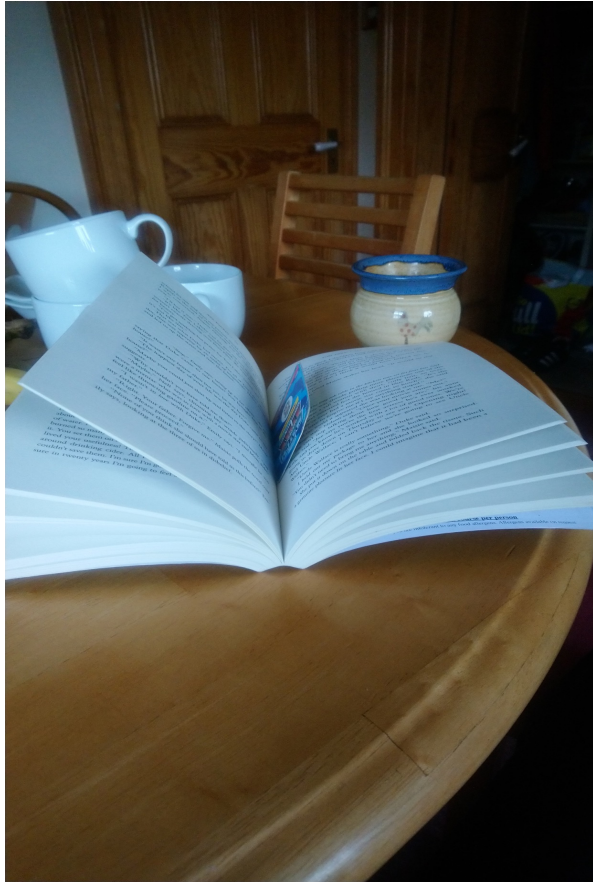
# Focus of the session

- to explore the contemporary role of | writing in | higher education, particularly re assessment
  - in the discipline
  - *to relate/connect*
  - to know and become oneself.



# Writing for connecting and relating ...

‘Writing is a social and rhetorical activity’ (Roozen, 2015, p. 17)



To communicate and connect with a reader, (who brings something to the text), for a particular purpose, through a particular form.

‘writers are engaged in the work of making meaning for particular audiences and purposes, and writers are always connected to other people.’ (p. 17)



# ... for 'enacting disciplinarity' (Lerner, 2015, p. 40) ...



- disciplinary discourse
- genres (and research methods)
- conventions and norms

# ...and constructing 'Disciplinary and Professional Identities' (Estrem, 2015, p. 55)

- Discourse communities
- Ways of seeing, saying and being



# Engaging pedagogy and empowering process

Because we are educating students (towards what they know, can do and who they are) through and in disciplines, we want to help them to be able to communicate/relate within and beyond the disciplines by

- helping students to become aware of an **audience** particularly when we move from generative to transactional writing
- identification of how the purposes, genres, conventions, norms, in discipline writing and beyond, correspond with **reader** expectations and the desired impact of the text
- consideration of how writing processes reflect the existence of a **reader**
- writing for a range of **audiences**
- exploration of **collaborative** writing/co-authoring

# Writing for readers

- Dialogic approaches to feedback
  - Reader responses (Elbow)
  - Student role in feedback
    - Using feedback in next assignment
    - Responding to feedback
    - Requesting specific feedback
    - Incorporating self-assessment
    - Engaging in peer review
- Sharing *our* experiences of feedback
- Being mindful of the affective impact of feedback
- Writing for different audiences (authentic assessment)
- Co-creation of assessment criteria and rubrics



Feedback and Feedback Literacy >



Self and Peer Assessment >

# Focus of the session

- to explore the contemporary role of | writing in | higher education, particularly re assessment
  - in the discipline
  - to relate/connect
  - *to know oneself.*





# Writing to know oneself

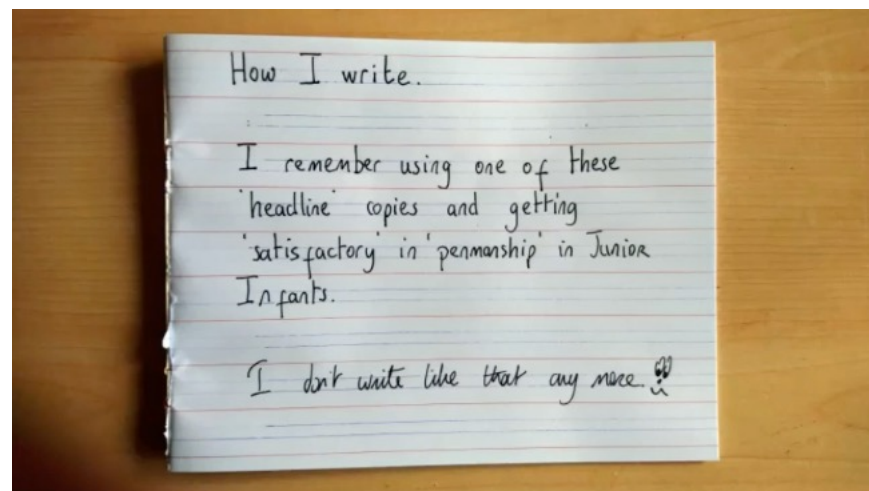
‘Writing is linked to identity’ (Roozen, 2015, p. 50)

‘The expression of meanings in writing makes them more visible to the writer, making the writer’s thoughts clearer and shareable with others, who can attempt to make sense of the words, constructing a meaning they attribute to the writer.’ (Bazerman, 2015, p. 22).

‘Writing is therefore first and foremost an act of self-witnessing and self-knowledge’ (Colyar, 2009, p. 429)

# Writing to know oneself

- Writing and thinking going hand-in-hand
- Meaning making, of the world and ourselves
- Unique to each person (depending on prior learning, prior writing, practice, disposition etc.)
- Cannot be disentangled from who we are (literacy histories, memories about writing, personal writing practices and processes, link with writing and formal education etc.)
- Writing as articulating my voice



# Writing to know oneself

Writing requires attention for thinking and doing/representing  
(drawing on Emig, 1977)

‘Attention ... just is life: your experience of being alive consists of nothing other than the sum of everything to which you pay attention’  
(Burkeman, 2021).

‘How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.’  
(Dillard, 1990, p. 32)

# Engaging pedagogy and empowering process

Because we are educating students (towards what they know, can do and who they are) we want to empower students as they encounter the world to be able to respond to what is being asked of them, according to their values, in the myriad of situations in which they will find themselves, professionally and otherwise.



Writing is useful in this process.

# Engaging pedagogy and empowering process

- writing to articulate what I think and how I will act
- incorporating evaluative judgement into teaching, learning and assessment e.g. through understanding what is being asked of one in a situation, processing feedback, self-awareness, self-assessment, 'internal feedback' (Nicol, 2021), students' feedback agency (Nicol, 2023)
- challenging students to consider ethical questions associated with their discipline and how they are/will be
- using authentic approaches to assessment which include tasks that matter, to students and others, and that could effect change (McArthur, 2023b)
- providing opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and how it is impacting on what they know, can do and who they are



# Writing exercise with some of the ideas

- Experience of generative writing – generating knowledge
- Writing to think – to remember
- Live experience of your writing process
- Connecting with an audience – relating, communicating
- Encountering and responding to a writing situation
- Challenge and risk of writing
- Hearing/Seeing (and sharing?) my voice/who I am
- A focus of your attention
- Fun 😊












# Final messages

- that writing and students developing as writers can be used as an engaging pedagogy and empowering processes to help us to achieve some of the purposes of higher education using
- that writing is a tool/technology that we use to transform our worlds and ourselves, including through interaction with others
- that writing helps us to bring our attention to a situation
- that different writing situations demand different responses from writers
- that we can use writing to articulate ‘what we really want to say’ to others and ourselves.

# Resources

## Maynooth University Assessment and Feedback Hub

		
<a href="#">Assess for Success Guides</a>	<a href="#">Approaches to Assessment</a>	<a href="#">Feedback and Feedback Literacy</a>
		
<a href="#">Authentic Assessment</a>	<a href="#">Principles, Policies and Frameworks</a>	<a href="#">Self and Peer Assessment</a>
		
<a href="#">Using Rubrics to Promote Learning</a>	<a href="#">Academic Integrity &amp; Artificial Intelligence</a>	<a href="#">Get in touch</a>

# Acknowledgements

Dr Orla Hanratty, Maynooth University

Dr Claire McAvinia, TU Dublin

Dr David Mc Cormack, Maynooth University

# References, reading and resources

- Adler-Kassner, L and Wardle, E. (eds.) (2015). *Naming What We Know. Threshold Concept of Writing Studies*. Logan: Utah State University Press.
- Abegglen, S., Burns, T., and Sinfield, S. (2021). *Supporting Student Writing and Other Modes of Learning and Assessment. A Staff Guide*. Calgary: University of Calgary. Available at: <https://dx.doi.org/10.11575/PRISM/38898>
- Anson, C. M. (2022). Value of writing to learn. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/571381780/0552e4bf04>
- Anson, C. M. (2022). How to integrate writing to learn into teaching. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/571382428/9134a157b7>
- Ashwin, P. (2020). *Transforming University Education. A Manifesto*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Bazerman, C. (2015). 'Writing Expresses and Shares Meaning to Be Reconstructed by the Reader' in in Adler-Kassner, L. and Wardle, E. (eds.) *Naming What We Know. Threshold Concept of Writing Studies*. Logan: Utah State University Press, pp. 21-23
- Bean, J. (2011). *Engaging Ideas : The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing Critical Thinking and Active Learning in the Classroom*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bean, J. and Melzer, D. (2021) *Engaging Ideas*. 3rd edn. Wiley. Available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/2671311/engaging-ideas-the-professors-guide-to-integrating-writing-critical-thinking-and-active-learning-in-the-classroom-pdf>
- Biesta, G. (2009). 'Good education in an age of measurement: on the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education', *Education Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21, pp. 33–46 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-008-9064-9>
- Biesta, G. (2020) . 'Risking ourselves in education: qualification, socialization, and subjectification revisited', *Educational Theory* 70 (1) pp. 89 – 104, <https://DOI:10.1111/edth.12411>
- Brooke, c. and Grabill, J. T. (2015). 'Writing is a Technology through Which Writers Create and Recreate Meaning' in Adler-Kassner, L. and Wardle, E. (eds.) *Naming What We Know. Threshold Concept of Writing Studies*. Logan: Utah State University Press, pp. 32-34.
- Brown, S. and Sambell, K. (2022) *Assess for Success – Curriculum Design Essentials*. Maynooth: Maynooth University. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygb3QWhLTa4&list=PLqRybQ51Folv75wklH5JPX8lKeN5MLpI9&index=3>
- Brown, S. and Sambell, K. (2022) *Designing Authentic Assessment. A Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' Guide*. Maynooth: Maynooth University.



# References, reading and resources

Burkeman, O. (2021). *Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Centre for Teaching and Learning (2023). Writing-Enriched Curriculum. Available at: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/centre-teaching-and-learning/wec>

Colyar, J. (2009). 'Becoming Writing, Becoming Writers', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 15 (2), pp. 421-436. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800408318280>

Dillard, Annie (1990). *The Writing Life*, New York: Harper Perennial.

Dron, J. (2023). *How Education Works. Teaching, Technology and Technique*. Athabasca: AU Press. Available at: [https://www.aupress.ca/app/uploads/120320\\_Dron\\_2023-How\\_Education\\_Works.pdf](https://www.aupress.ca/app/uploads/120320_Dron_2023-How_Education_Works.pdf)

Eaton, S. E. (2023). *6 Tenets of Postplagiarism: Writing in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*. Available at: <https://drsaraheaton.wordpress.com/2023/02/25/6-tenets-of-postplagiarism-writing-in-the-age-of-artificial-intelligence/>

Elbow, P. (n.d) The Democratization of Writing website Available at: <http://peterelbow.com/handouts.html>

Estrem, J. (2015). 'Writing is a knowledge making activity' in Adler-Kassner, L. and Wardle, E. (eds.) *Naming What We Know. Threshold Concept of Writing Studies*. Logan: Utah State University Press, pp. 19-20.

Estrem, J. (2015). 'Disciplinary and Professional Identities Are Constructed through Writing' in in Adler-Kassner, L. and Wardle, E. (eds.) *Naming What We Know. Threshold Concept of Writing Studies*. Logan: Utah State University Press, pp. 55-56.

Emig, J. (1977). 'Writing as a Mode of Learning', *College Composition and Communication* 28 (2), pp. 122–28. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/356095>

Farrell, A. (2022) *Self and Peer Assessment. A Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' Guide*. Maynooth: Maynooth University.

Flash, P. (2021). 'Writing-Enriched Curriculum: A Model for Making and Sustaining Change' in Anson, C. M., and Flash, P. (eds.) *Writing-Enriched Curricula: Models of Faculty-Driven and Departmental Transformation*. The WAC Clearinghouse; University Press of Colorado, pp. 17-44.

Goodyear, P. (2023). 'An education in educational technology', *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 39 (3) pp. 1- 14. <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.9082>

# References, reading and resources

Lerner, N. (2015) 'Writing is a way of enacting disciplinarity' in Adler-Kassner, L. and Wardle, E. (eds.) Naming What We Know. Threshold Concept of Writing Studies. Logan: Utah State University Press, pp. 40-41.

Maynooth University Writing Centre and Regional Writing Centre, University of Limerick (2017) Writing to Learn: in-class writing activities. Available at:

[https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/Writing%20to%20Learn%20Booklet%20July2017\\_1.pdf](https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/Writing%20to%20Learn%20Booklet%20July2017_1.pdf)

McArthur, J. (2023a). 'Rethinking authentic assessment'. Presentation in Maynooth University.

McArthur, J. (2023b). 'Rethinking authentic assessment: work, well-being, and society', Higher Education, 85, pp. 85–101.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00822-y>

Roosen, K. (2015). 'Writing is a social and rhetorical activity' in Adler-Kassner, L. and Wardle, E. (eds.) Naming What We Know. Threshold Concept of Writing Studies. Logan: Utah State University Press, pp. 17-19.

Sambell, K. and Brown, S. (2022) *Feedback and Feedback Literacy. A Maynooth University 'Assess for Success' Guide*. Maynooth: Maynooth University.

Nicol, D. (2021). 'The Power of Internal Feedback: Exploiting Natural Comparison Processes.', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 46 (5), pp. 756–778. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2020.1823314>

Nicol, D. and Kushwah, L. (2023) 'Shifting feedback agency to students by having them write their own feedback comments', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2023.2265080>

Sartre, J., & Contant, M. (1975). 'Sartre at seventy: An interview'. (P. Auster & L. Davis, Trans.). *The New York Review of Books*, 22(13), pp. 10-17.

Wegerif, R., & Major, L. (2023). *The theory of educational technology: Towards a dialogic foundation for design* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003198499>