Paving the Pathway: building research writing capacity for pre-doctoral candidates

Juliet Lum
HDR Learning Skills
juliet.lum@mq.edu.au
Where we’re going

1. The *Macquarie Model* PhD pathway

2. The Research Communications unit

3. First run: design, delivery and evaluation

4. Revisions & possibilities
A new PhD Pathway: the MQ model

- replaces Honours

- is recognised internationally (consistent with the ‘Bologna model’: 3+2+3)

- offers more intensive & comprehensive research training

http://hdr.mq.edu.au/information_about/research_training_degrees
The Research Communications unit

- The “flagship unit” of the MRes program
- Compulsory for all MRes students
- Taught centrally
- Taken in Year 1
- Graded (high stakes)
Design challenges

• mixed discipline cohort
• early timing
• multiple expectations
• mixed culture cohort
• mixed ability cohort
• staffing

… and no precedent for this sort of course!
So, how did we do it?!
MRES700 aims to help [students] to understand the relationship between research communications and disciplinary knowledge creation, and to develop skills appropriate to the effective communication of academic research. During the course of this unit, [students] analyse, reflect on and practise different academic genres in a variety of modes (written, oral and visual), across disciplines and for both specialised and general audiences.
MRES700 aims to help [students] to understand the relationship between research communications and disciplinary knowledge creation, and to develop skills appropriate to the effective communication of academic research. During the course of this unit, [students] analyse, reflect on and practise different academic genres in a variety of modes (written, oral and visual), across disciplines and for both specialised and general audiences.
MRES700 aims to help students to understand the relationship between research communications and disciplinary knowledge creation, and to develop skills appropriate to the effective communication of academic research. During the course of this unit, students analyse, reflect on and practise different academic genres in a variety of modes (written, oral and visual), across disciplines and for both specialised and general audiences.
Unit description

MRES700 aims to help [students] to understand the relationship between research communications and disciplinary knowledge creation, and to develop skills appropriate to the effective communication of academic research. During the course of this unit, [students] analyse, reflect on and practise different academic genres in a variety of modes (written, oral and visual), across disciplines and for both specialised and general audiences.
Delivery (2013)

13 week unit: 1 hr lecture + 2 hr tutorial/week

Staffing: 1 lecturer & 5 tutors

Tutorial tasks & textbook (Swales & Feak 2012)

Online components: ilearn unit; Turnitin; eReserve
# Assessment tasks (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short written task</td>
<td>Extended definition (own choice of term)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis task</td>
<td>Features of a journal article (choose from 3 set texts); Cohesion analysis (set text)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended written task</td>
<td>Article Critique or Comparison of 2 articles (own choice of text)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>10 min presentation in pairs “Research Communication practices in your discipline(s)”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation: responses

What students liked

What students didn’t like
Revisions

- discipline streaming
- timing
- staffing
- textbook & tutorial tasks
- assessment tasks
- online interaction
- range of genres & audiences
Other possibilities

• ↑ streaming (↓ “plenaries”); ↑ discipline specialist involvement
• ↓ teacher-centric delivery of content; ↑ student-driven learning activities
• ↑ online discussion forums for reflections & resource sharing
• ↑ communicating research in non-traditional genres (blogs, tweets, interview, animation…)

… How would you do it?
Questions / Suggestions

juliet.lum@mq.edu.au