

As diversity of the student population grows in the tertiary education sector, and the media of communications become more multi-modal, the nature of literacy in university curricula both changes and needs more explicit development. We cannot assume that students have an appropriate level of academic literacy, or can develop it in the given time without it being given careful attention. Various models for the development of students' academic language, including their writing, are in play and under scrutiny, but the broad trend seems to be away from extra-curricular attempts to address literacy development, and towards seeing this as a responsibility best shared and addressed within the disciplines. The phrase 'developing academic literacy in context' was used to label a collaborative project through which a group of writing specialists from different countries (many of whom are represented in this volume) share experience of improving students' academic learning of specific disciplines (see Purser et al., 2008). The focus in this chapter is on the thinking behind the approach – what is, and what drives collaborative, curriculum-integrated literacy development, what difference it makes to student learning, and how opportunities for it can be created. After a general account of why we focus on contexts where language is experienced as a problem, the chapter reflects on specific challenges and successful practices at a university where a curriculum-integration approach to academic literacy development has been taken for over a decade. We all want to help students get the most out of their studies and ensure disciplinary knowledge is maintained, but what educational practice looks like on the ground is shaped by so many different perspectives, motivations and voices, there never will be one way to teach academic writing. Trends in teaching practice respond to a range of contextual factors and current conditions, including: what incoming students do and do not seem to know about academic learning and presentation in the forms expected in higher education; what educators know about language communication; the degree to which insights into language development influence educational practice and policy; the current goals, directives and incentives of employing institutions around the management of diversity, language proficiency and teaching innovation; and the policies, legislation and funding arrangements of national governments in relation to the provision of educational services, the recruitment of students, and various other aspects of social welfare, employment, international trade and nation building.