

The value (but not bliss) of ignorance: A 'humanities' adviser reflects on supporting 'science' research students

Michael Stein
Edith Cowan University

This abstract outlines some of the benefits of language and literacy advisers possessing limited disciplinary or contextual knowledge when engaging with students to develop their communication skills. This abstract recounts the author's transition into his current employment role, supporting students engaging in science, engineering and health science research at Edith Cowan University (ECU), where the adviser's own disciplinary background is in the humanities.

The abstract outlines some of the advantages of being a non-disciplinary specialist in supporting student literacy and language development, specifically in encouraging self-editing skills, developing independent learning and fostering academic integrity. The abstract identifies the value of pedagogical and methodological 'ignorance' in relation to research content, as specifically manifest in sciences where there is an emerging trend towards thesis by/with publication.

The author applies a reflective approach within this abstract, identifying the specific value and advantage of scientific 'ignorance', of providing non-contextualised and non-disciplinary advice to research students. The abstract positions this non-contextualised support as an effective way to foster independent learning and assist students to identify and expand their communication skills rather than to expect these skills to be rendered into a contextual or discipline specific formula.