

Writing-in-the-Discipline With Instructional Scaffolding in an RN-to-BSN Nursing Research Course

As returning-to-school adult learners, RN-to-baccalaureate (RN-to-BSN) students bring to the classroom their practice experiences useful for the foci of research papers. Preparing a nursing research appraisal paper calls for refreshing or acquiring critical inquiry and technical writing skills, as well as honing library search skills. As a learning method, writing helps learners think critically about course material (Bean, 2011). For RN-to-BSN learners, writing represents crossing a professional threshold as they relate nursing research to the expectation of scholarship for evidence-focused practice, as well as recognize writing and publication as a contribution to the discipline and society (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2008).

The model of writing-in-the-discipline (WID), defined as writing as a means to learn course concepts pertaining to nursing research, served to guide the development of technical writing skills learning activities (Bean, 2011). The application of instructional scaffolding progressed learners to greater independence in finding and using writing resources (Rosenshine & Meister, 1992). By way of context, the instructional scaffolding occurred within a 16-week semester web-based nursing research course with a primary goal of preparing learners to evaluate research drawing from the cycle of science (posing the question to dissemination).

The course design included sequential modules, with each module including an introduction, learning objectives, lectorettes, videos, website links, handouts, and assigned readings. Three levels of instructional scaffolding supported the main paper assignment with twofold learning objectives: 1) to apply basic technical writing for a research study appraisal and 2) to develop a technical writing toolkit appropriate at the BSN level (Table 1).

The first level of the scaffold engaged

Instructional Scaffolding	Module Learning Activities
First-level scaffold: Use library databases to obtain a research study	Week 1, Preparation Module: Scholar-to-Be Library Library guide nursing resources video and searching help Research studies by design checklist (e.g., experimental) and research study appraisal
Second-level scaffold: Technical writing	Week 4, Preparation Module: Scholar-to-Be Writing Exemplar paper with introduction, body, and conclusion Campus Writing Center: online consult scheduling Technical Writing 101 (e.g., paper with comments, purpose statement, paraphrasing, and appraisal language) APA Style (e.g., APA Style Blog [https://apastyle.apa.org/blog])
Third-level scaffold: Personal writing plan	Week 12, Module 12: Professional Development Discussion posting (opens Week 1): My Writing Toolkit and Future Plans for Writing

Note. APA = American Psychological Association; WID = writing-in-the-discipline.

learners to locate nursing research studies from selected library databases and to obtain one single, primary research study pertaining to a nursing situation of interest. This activity, located within a learning module focused on library searching, provided links to exemplar single primary research studies. A reading assignment from the course text included a checklist for typical research study elements and research study appraisal.

The second level of the scaffold focused on the rudiments of technical writing for authoring the assigned two- to three-page paper that included an introduction, a body showing an appraisal of a single study, and a conclusion with implications for practice and recommendations for future study. Exemplar sections of the paper components beside sections of a single, primary research study displayed comments showing logical flow and study appraisal. Papers were developed with two scheduled drafts using

feedback from a text-matching to existing publications software program (e.g., Turnitin®) that also provided grammar checking. Scheduling draft due dates provided time for campus writing center consultation.

The third level of the scaffold captured perspectives about writing by calling for a personal writing skill improvement plan. In this discussion learning activity, students were asked to reflect on future writing plans and discuss what they added to their writing toolkit. Learners from the spring 2019 semester ($N = 30$; 25 respondents) reported they valued the writing consult ($n = 15$); increased database use ($n = 6$); created a writer's workspace, such as a desk area ($n = 4$); found other writing resources, such as Grammarly® app (<http://www.grammarly.com>), proofreaders, writing texts, and voice dictation ($n = 11$); indicated plans for writing improvement ($n = 4$); and had topics for clinical care papers ($n = 3$).

Lessons learned included the importance of providing a collection of campus resources for writing, explaining WID in the course syllabus, providing announcement prompting reminders on preparation module resources throughout the course, and opening the discussion at the start of the course to foster resource sharing. Future evaluation of course writing improvements and graduate surveys of learners' outcomes, such as publication, is warranted.

References

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