



## “Not another curriculum initiative!” Justifications and challenges concerning the embedding of academic literacies in university programme curricula

**Speaker:** Neil Murray, *Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick, UK*



*Neil Murray is a Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Warwick, UK. He is also an adjunct member of the Research Centre for Languages & Cultures at the University of South Australia, where he was previously Head of Language and Literacy and heavily engaged in government-driven regulatory initiatives around English language assessment and provision in the higher education sector. He has 35 years of experience directing and lecturing on English language education and applied linguistics programmes in Italy, Japan, the UK and Australia and his research interests include English language policy in higher education, academic literacy, language teacher education and language assessment. He has published widely and is author of *Standards of English in Higher Education* (Cambridge University Press) and co-editor, with Angela Scarino, of *Dynamic Ecologies: A relational Perspective on Languages Education in the Asia Pacific Region* (Springer).*

**Date:** Thursday, March 14, 2024

**Time:** 10:00 – 11:15 a.m. (EST – Ottawa, Canada)

**Bimodal Presentation:** **Online** or **In-person** (after registering, you will receive the zoom link and the room number by email a few days before the event.)

**Registration:** Please [click here](#) to register.

**Organized by:** Canadian Centre for Studies and Research on Bilingualism and Language Planning (CCERBAL), Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI), University of Ottawa

**Language of the presentation:** English

### Abstract

In the last 15 years or so there has been an emerging realization in the field of English for academic purposes, and among applied linguists, that traditional models of academic literacy support in universities need to be reassessed in light of changing attitudes, contexts and agendas. Most obviously, the internationalization of universities, a cause and consequence of the globalization of the sector, has meant that the student demographic has become more linguistically and culturally diverse than ever before; this includes students originating from diverse educational systems and cultures. Along with this development, the widening participation agenda has been increasingly prominent in university strategy as governments emphasize the need for a more skilled workforce able to grow their economies and make them more competitive. In some cases, national targets have been set, along with quotas that encourage universities to enroll a proportion of students from socially and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and to which funding conditions are attached. The resultant change in the student population has meant that universities today can make fewer assumptions about the academic literacy skills with which students come to their studies, especially given that English language gatekeeping tests are no guarantee of their ability cope with the particular literacy demands of their individual disciplines. This raises questions about how best to address the needs of these students and, critically, whether their needs are fundamentally different from those of the student population in general.

This talk will look at the issue of embedding academic literacy within the curriculum, a response to these and related questions and which has been gaining significant momentum over recent years, following a lot of formative work in Australia. Based on his personal experience of embedding and the reports of others recounted in the literature, the speaker will make the case for embedding, before looking at some of the key challenges those embarking on any such initiative are likely to encounter. He will go on to look at two models of embedding and the particular obstacles that arise in each case, before concluding by offering a prognosis. By focusing on the challenges involved in embedding academic literacy in the curriculum, the intention is not to present a picture of a hopeless endeavour but rather to offer an honest assessment of the complex nature of the territory that can serve as a point of reference for those who may be about to navigate through it.

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