

What graduate writers need . . . and how to provide it

Nigel Caplan

University of Delaware
nacaplan@udel.edu



Christine Feak

University of Michigan
cfeak@umich.edu



<http://gradconsortium.wordpress.com>

Where to start

- Needs Assessment/Analysis
 - What is it?
 - Identification of learners' communicative needs to inform curricular design
 - Emphasis on methodological triangulation (Long, 2005; Serafini et al. 2015)
 - interviews
 - questionnaires
 - relevant literature
 - materials

Where to start

- Needs Assessment/Analysis
- Why?
 - Most writing faculty are not experts in the writing of other disciplines
 - They are not likely to know what writing students need produce (Starke-Meyerring, 2011)
 - Genres vary across disciplines more than we might realize

Where to start

- Needs Assessment/Analysis
 - Who should be involved? (Bocanegra-Valle, 2016)
 - Insider and outsider sources
 - Students
 - Faculty
 - Including EAP faculty and other specialists
 - Writing Center consultants
 - Writing consultants embedded in various schools or departments
 - Recent graduates

Where to start

- Needs Assessment/Analysis
 - Other resources
 - Published and unpublished literature
(e.g., Brooks-Gillies et al., 2015; Casanve & Hubbard, 1992; Cooper & Bikowski, 2007; Dong, 1998; Simpson et al., 2016; Trice, 2003)
 - Selected Journals
 - *ESP*
 - *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*
 - *Journal of Second Language Writing*
 - [Consortium on Graduate Communication](#)

Is Needs Assessment Feasible?

- Difficult to accomplish in practice due to time, budget, staffing and access constraints.
- Curriculum design following SOOP
 - Seat of one's pants



Writing Support for Whom

- Support for enrolled graduate students, if any, generally targets dissertation writers
- But graduate enrollment is growing fastest in Master's programs



Graduate Student Enrollment

Discipline division	Bachelor's degrees			Master's degrees			Doctor's degrees		
	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
	1,840,164	787,231	1,052,933	751,751	301,575	450,176	175,038	85,104	89,934

Source: The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

The primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations.

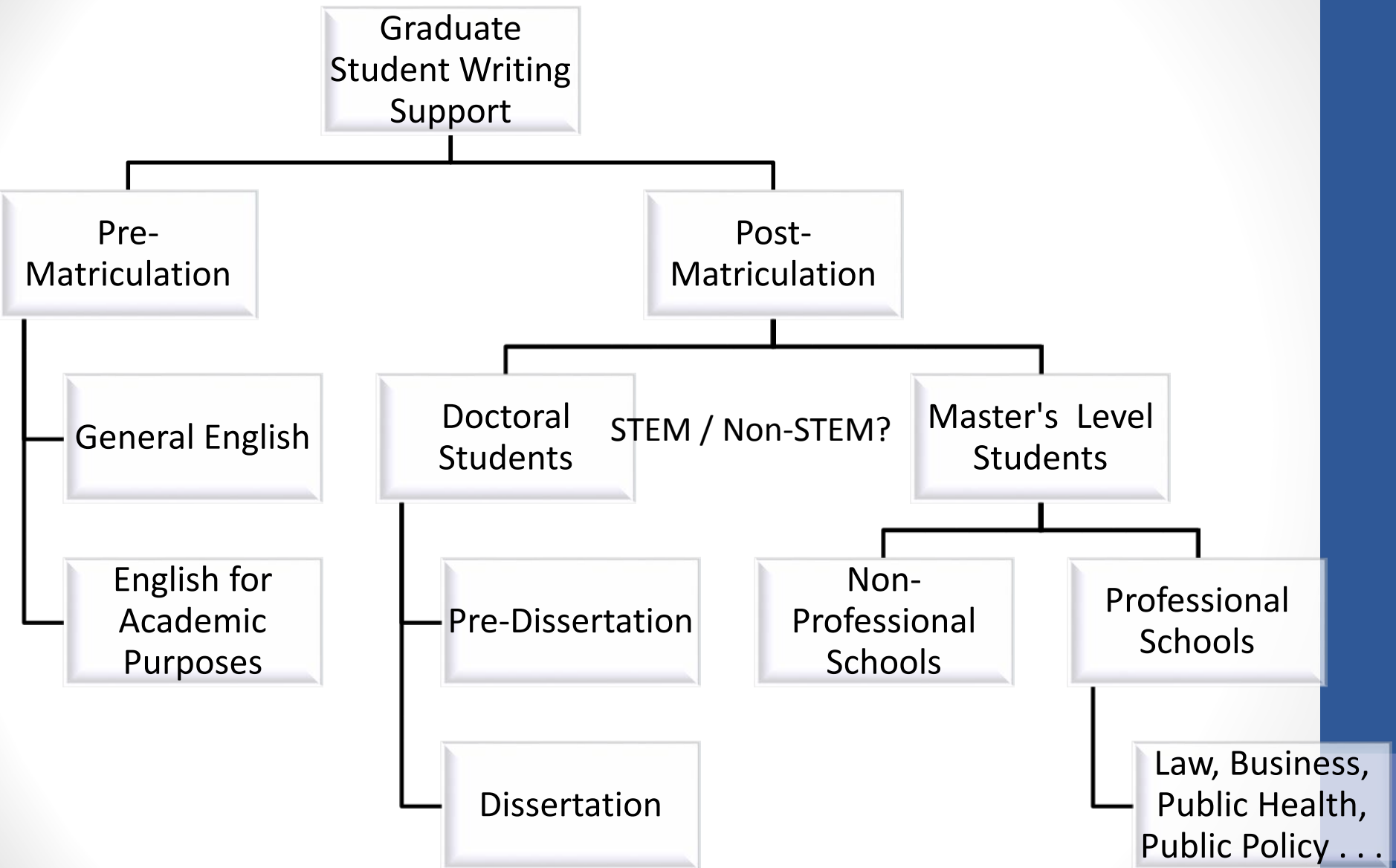
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_318.30.asp

Writing Support for Whom

- Patchwork of support (Caplan & Cox, 2016)
 - For international students
 - One English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writing course in the 1st or 2nd semester
 - Often required
 - Often for students not “ready” for the writing they are probably already required to do
 - May not be all that valuable
 - Limited or no support for students deemed “proficient”

Writing Support for Whom

- Patchwork of support for proficient students
 - Writing centers catering to graduate students
 - Dissertation boot camp
 - Writing groups

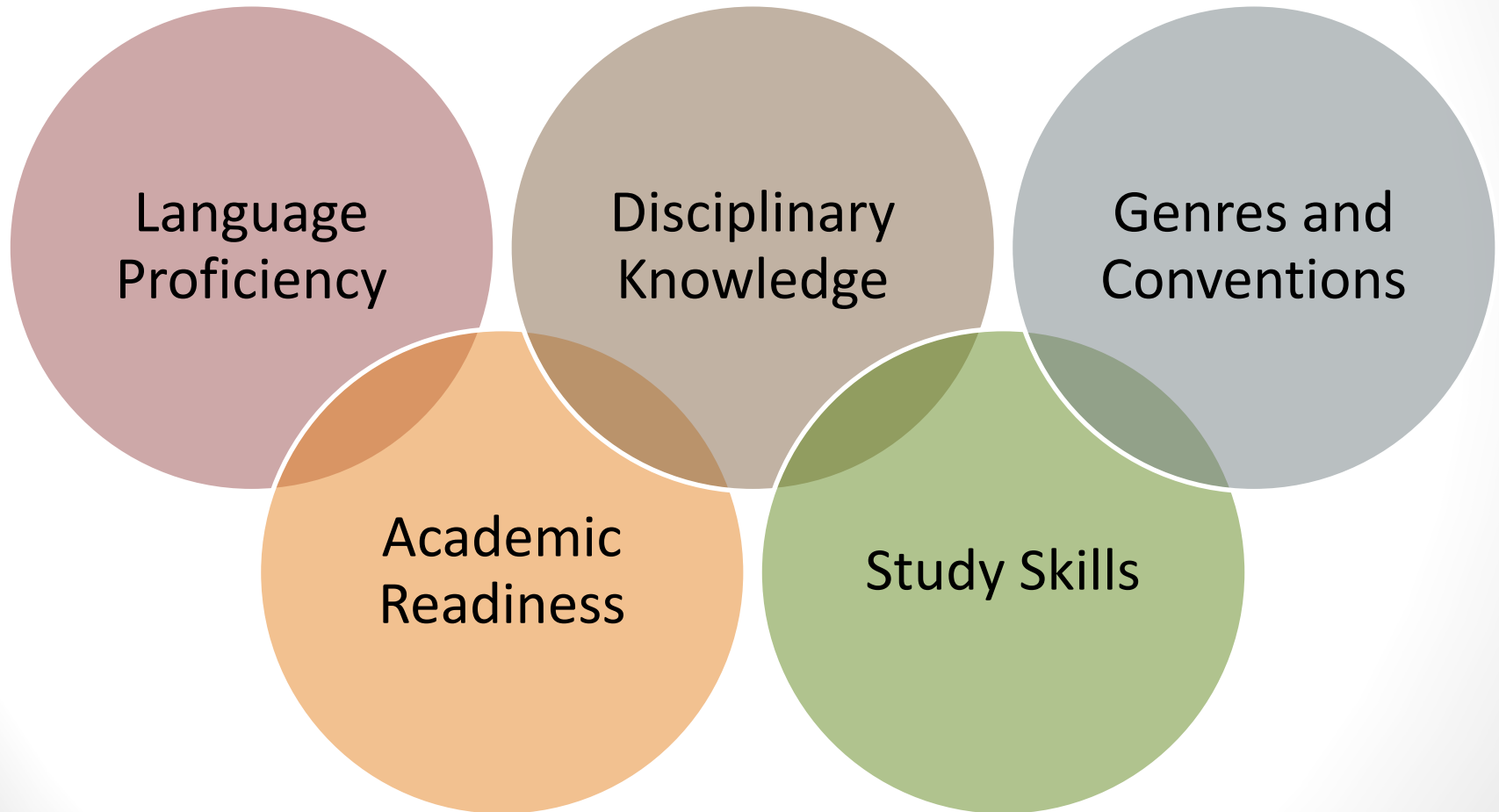


Pre-Matriculation Course Design

- Prospective graduate students
- Conditional (provisional) admissions programs
- Pathways/Accelerator programs
- Pre-sessional programs



Competing demands





Design Principles

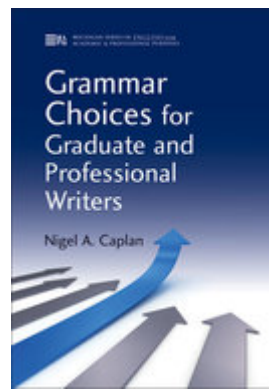
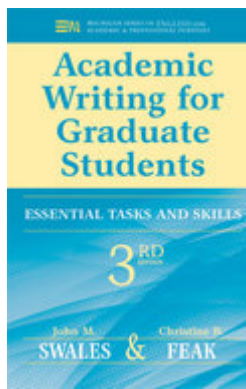
- Professional development not linguistic inoculation
- Sustained theme
- Individual/group projects
- Genres ... of course
- General academic and field-specific vocabulary
- Review and expansion of functional grammar

Syllabi and a course design bibliography available at:

<http://gradconsortium.wordpress.com> → Resources

Example 1: Reading/Writing for MBA Students

- Results of needs analysis (case analysis, shorter papers, short-answer questions, reading load, variation in genres)
- Major assignment sequence (proposal / summary / synthesis / annotated bibliography / report or case study)
- Case analysis genre chain (HBS case / discussion / analysis)
- Other genres: summary+response, data commentary, short-answer textbook questions
- Four rotating themes: Technology, Globalization, Ethics, Health
- Materials



<https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/>

Example 2: Fulbright English for Graduate Studies



Example 2: Fulbright English for Graduate Studies

- Common theme: Ethics
- Biostatement as precourse writing (*thanks, Chris!*)
- Group projects roughly by discipline
- Research Paper Introduction: CARS model (Swales, 1990)
- TED-style talk
- Academic integrity and research ethics built into the theme
- Lectures and discussions related to content
- Focus on awareness of conventions, genres, strategies

Sketch of a Grammar Curriculum

- Clause structure and types of verbs
- Clause combination
- Clause embedding
- Verb tense and voice
- Noun phrases: articles, quantifiers, nominalization
- Hedging and boosting
- Resources for cohesion
- Linguistic awareness (grammar blog)
- Self-editing skills



Questions for you

- Who are your pre-matriculation students?
- What skills, language resources, and genres do they need?
- What do they know? What can they do?
- Can they be taught together or in disciplinary classes?
- How much can you realistically achieve in the time available?
- What are the core competencies?
- How will they be assessed? How good is good enough?

Post-Matriculation Support-- Chris



Challenges in Providing Post-Matriculation Support

- EAP writing courses focusing on typical academic writing are important. But...
- Writing demands for the new generation of students are changing.
- It's becoming more challenging to determine *what* to teach, for whom

And *when*.



Post-Matriculation Support

- Program Decisions Affecting Writing and Other Communication Support
 - Required participation
 - Time and timing
 - Location
 - Workload
 - Grading
 - Skill focus
 - Instructor engagement in academic writing

Post-Matriculation Support

- Program Decisions Affecting Writing and Other Support
 - Building proficiency?
 - How do we deliver support aimed at developing proficiency?
 - How do we know what level of proficiency students need?

An “A” Paper

1st Year Student in Biology

The appearance of microarray allows us to do thousands of southern blotting in parallel. However, that doesn't mean the importance of this technique only limit to speeding up the way we do southern blotting. In fact, the capacity of microarray to test thousands of genes at once make it the most appropriate way to show gene expression profile at certain development stage, compare expression profile between cells in disease and healthy cells, and test the change in the transcription network controlled by certain transcription factor etc. While researcher taking advantages of this technique, they must be careful about its down side. One down side of microarray, which has been improved to some extent, is that mismatching between samples and probes leads to false-positive results. Another thing that researcher should be care of is that how they standardize and statistically analyze the data. Improper data processing will lead to misinterpretation of the data. At last but not least, microarray is still a relatively costly experiment.

BIO.G2.05.1 Application of Microarray Analysis in Drosophila

An “A” Paper

3rd Year Student in Economics

There has been a large body of research regarding underreporting real outputs to the IRS to evade or to avoid corporate tax. There have been also large amount of research on the relationship between the overstatement of the reported output and management compensation. While we have plenty of works done for either of the falsifications, however, it is relatively in recent years that both falsifications are dealt as an agent's simultaneous decision problem under information asymmetry, or in principal-agent problem context.

ECO.G3.01.1 A Model of the Discrepancy between Corporate Income Tax Report and Output Announcements

Post-Matriculation Support

- Should we focus on the genres that students are expected to produce?
- Or the ones we know about?
- Is our writing focus broad enough?

Considerations Underlying Master's Level Writing Support

- Master's Level Writing Genres
 - Nursing: Patient pamphlets
 - Public Health and Social Work: Professional philosophy statements

Considerations Underlying Master's Level Writing Support

- MBA
 - Case studies
- Geology (Earth and Environmental Science)
 - Business-type reports and delivering oral presentations, which may be based on team investigations
- Natural Resources
 - Master's Projects / Practicum rather than thesis

Considerations Underlying Master's Level Writing Support

- Master's Projects
 - interdisciplinary group projects
 - faculty advisor
 - analysis of and solutions to a real-world environmental problem
 - individual analysis and group reporting
 - interdisciplinary analysis

Considerations Underlying Doctoral Level Writing Support

- Advisors want students to
 - say something new
 - construct texts using discourse knowledge (knowledge about creating texts, about different genres, etc.) along with known content
- But students need guidance on how to add a “rhetorical dimension” to their content knowledge
 - knowing “when, where, to whom and how to communicate” (Jacobs, 2007, p. 62).
- Otherwise, they remain in the safe space of knowledge telling and focusing on what is known.



Considerations Underlying Doctoral Level Writing Support

- Advisors, especially in the Humanities and Social Sciences want students to reveal a depth of thinking
 - Nuance



Considerations Underlying Doctoral Level Writing Support

- Advisors may be unable provide the right kind of mentoring
- Why?
 - Bad memory
 - Gaps in their discorsal expertise
 - Tacit writing knowledge that they cannot access
 - Time
 - Inability to assess whether a student's current knowledge and writing ability align with the scope and difficulty of the writing task(s) at hand (adapted from Feldon et al. 2015).



Considerations Underlying Doctoral Level Writing Support

- Advisors may be struggling
- EAP writing instructors often have “the rhetorical tools to make explicit what is hidden” (following Jacobs, 2007, p. 78).
 - help writers see and understand the rhetorical patterns that are the foundations of the disciplines
 - make the tacit more explicit, even if not completely so

Considerations Underlying Doctoral Level Writing Support

- Knowledge that students possess will not on its own make an effective, coherent story
 - even if they populate a model with it
 - even if they have the right moves
 - even if they use some very nice academic phraseology
 - (. . . is a matter of increasing concern / However, less is known about . . .)



Considerations Underlying Doctoral Level Writing Support

- Despite incomplete knowledge of the rhetoric of each discipline, we can
 - help doctoral students unpack the genres and rhetoric of research writing
 - support their efforts to write successfully in multiple domains.

Considerations Underlying Doctoral Level Writing Support

- Writing demands in the pre-dissertation semesters differ from those in the dissertation writing semester
- Pre-dissertation semesters
 - Course papers
 - Project reports
 - Preliminary or qualification Exams

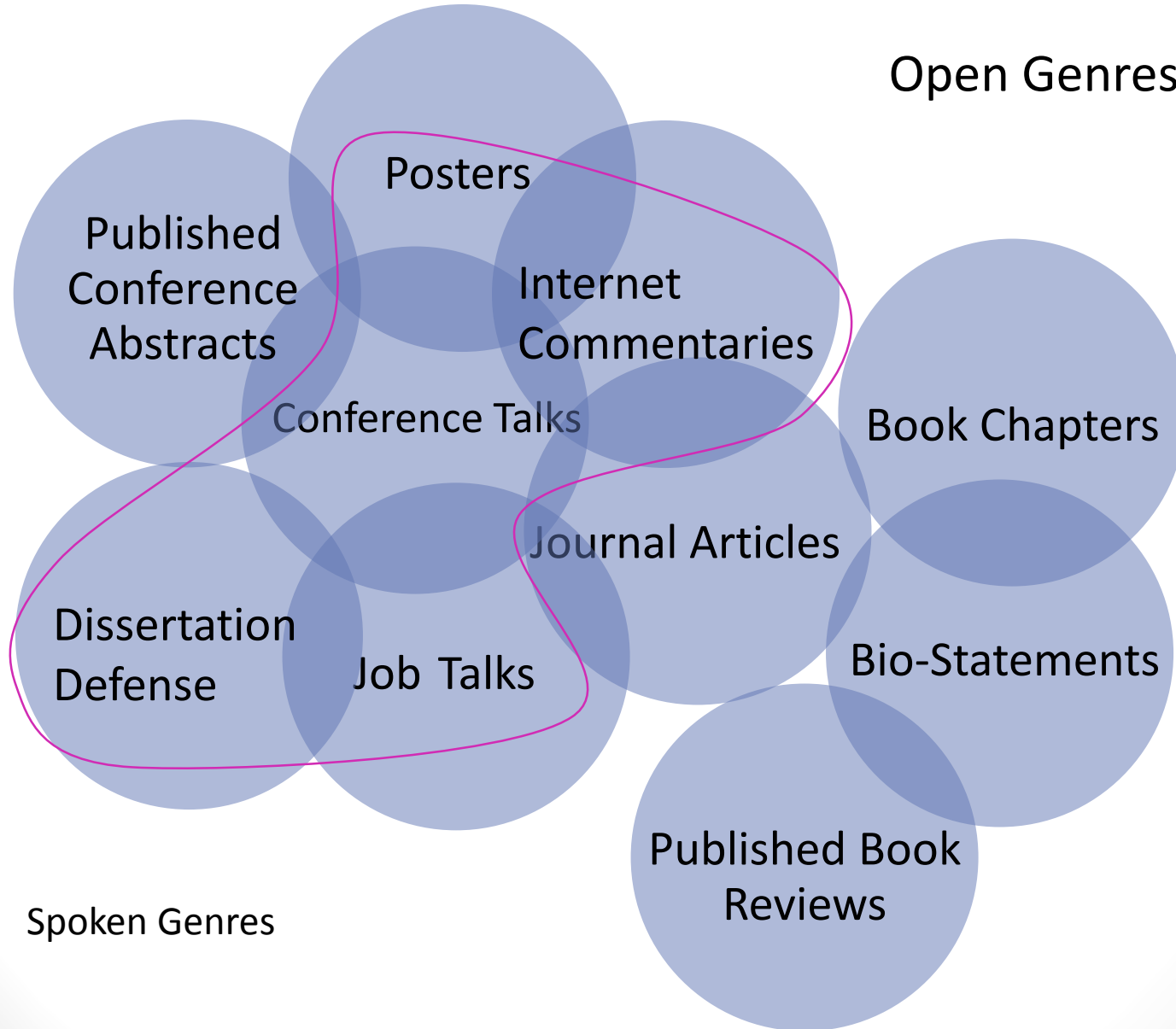
Considerations Underlying Doctoral Level Writing Support

- Doctoral student writing does not follow a predictable timetable. (Jane Freeman)

Doctoral Level Communications

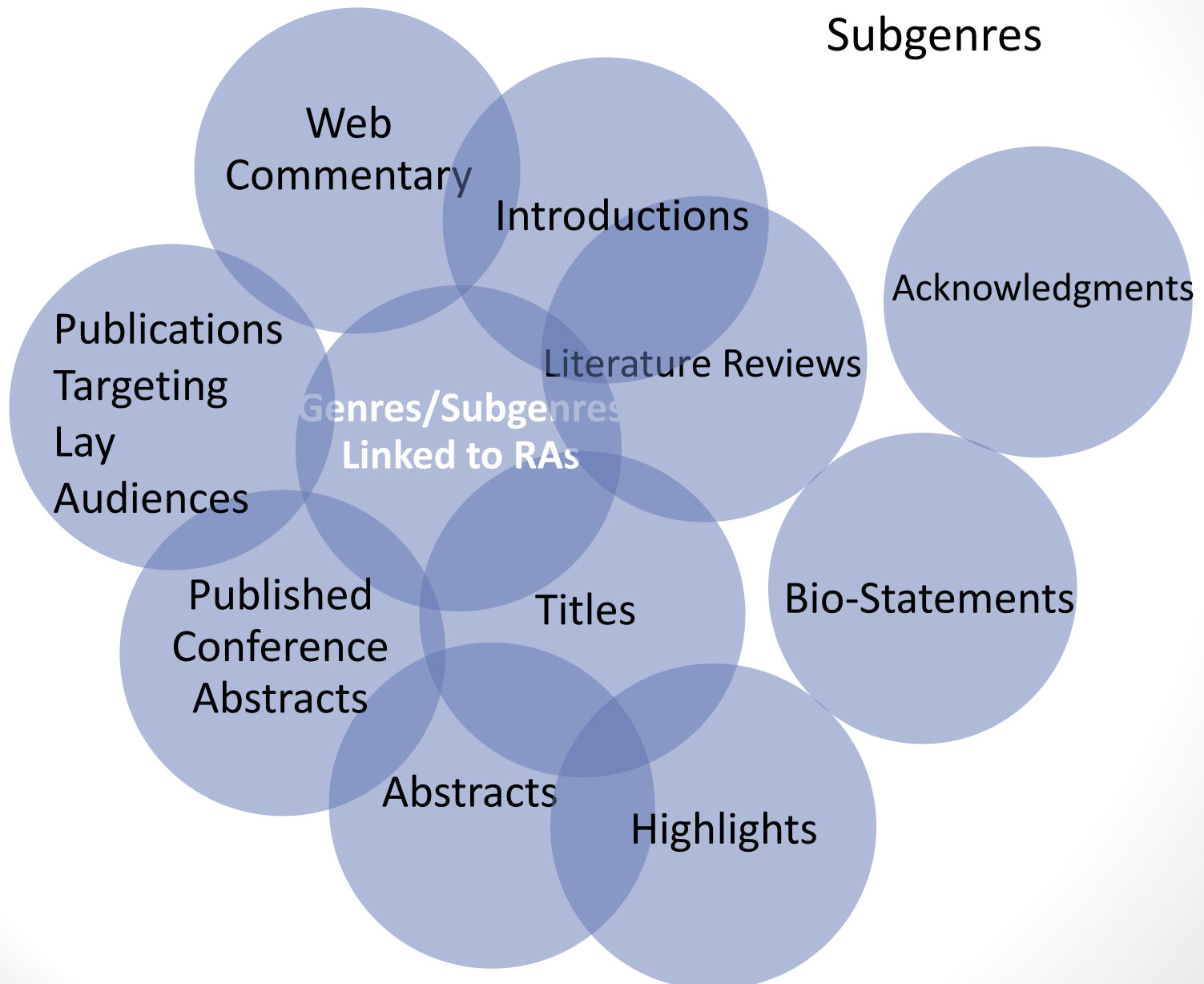
- Multifaceted
- Open Genres
 - Genres that we can easily see and find

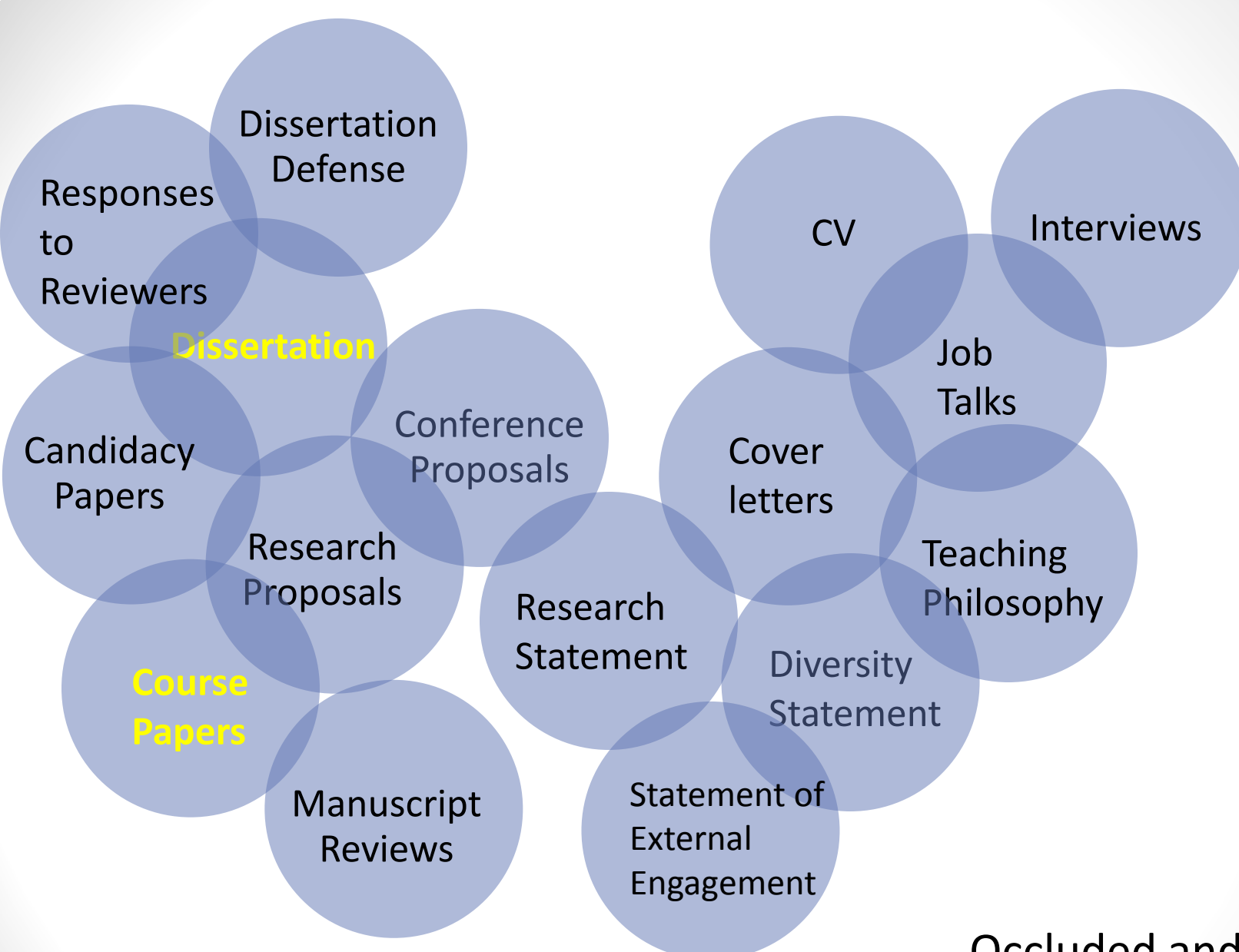
Open Genres



Spoken Genres

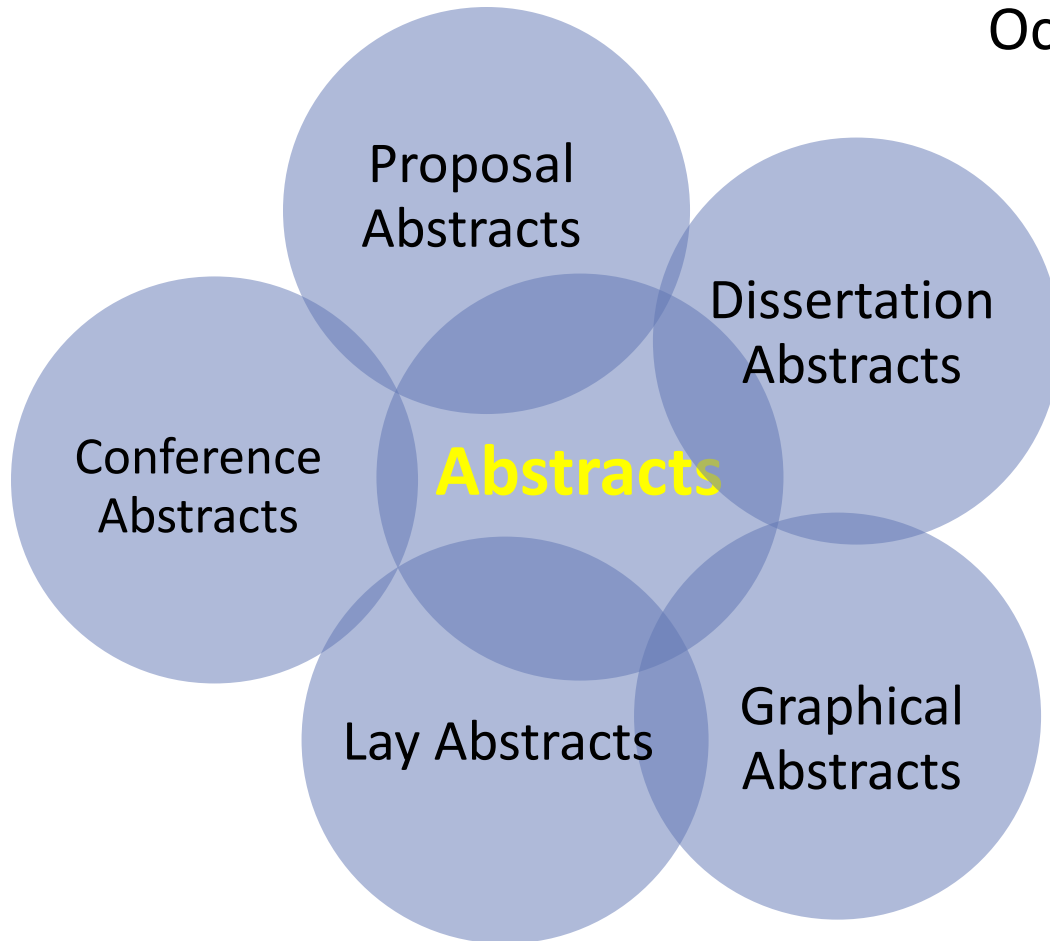
Open Genres / Subgenres





Occluded and Supporting Genres

Open and
Occluded Abstracts



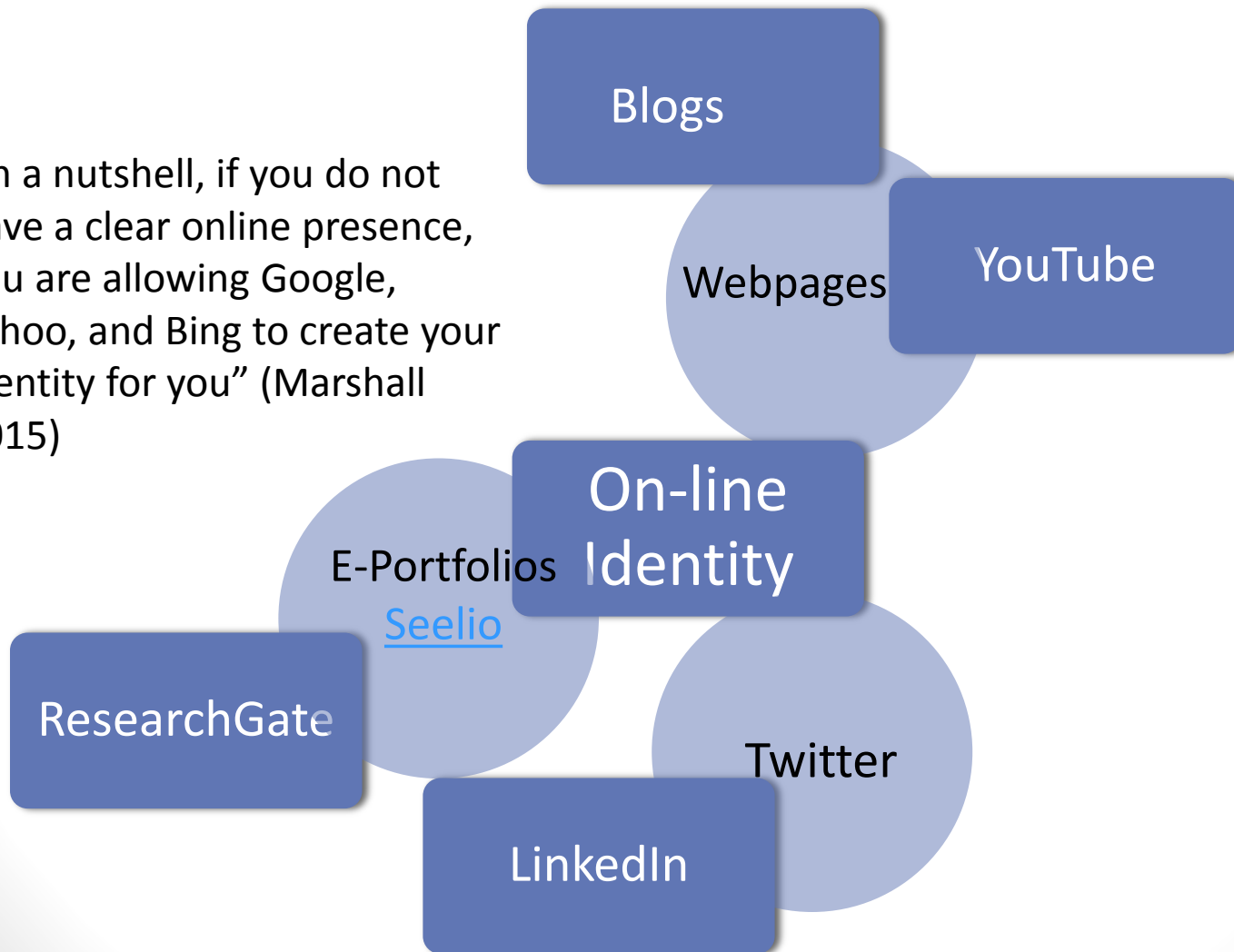
Doctoral Level Writing

- Online self-presentations
- Establishing an identity
 - Content
 - Design
 - Reader interactivity
- Curating that identity



Curating an On-line Identity

“In a nutshell, if you do not have a clear online presence, you are allowing Google, Yahoo, and Bing to create your identity for you” (Marshall 2015)





Other Topics

- Stance and Engagement
- Rhetorical Patterns
- Strategic Grammar and Vocabulary Choices
- Editing

An Example from the ELI: ELI 620/621

- Dissertation Writing and Writing for Publication
- Open to all PhD students at the University of Michigan
- Current students (N=18)
- Current students
 - 9 have achieved candidacy
 - 6 plan to finish in Spring or Summer 2017
 - About one-fourth are domestic students educated in the U.S only
 - Low percentage compared to other years
 - 16/18 report receiving insufficient guidance from advisors

An Example from the ELI: ELI 620/621

- Disciplines
 - Education
 - Nursing
 - Cognitive Psychology
 - Nuclear Engineering
 - Mechanical Engineering
 - Electrical Engineering
 - Information Science (Human Computer Interaction)
 - Survey Methodology

An Example from the ELI: ELI 620/621

- What is the best way to design a course for students who are from very different disciplines and are at very different stages of their degree programs?
- Is needs analysis feasible?
- What should the syllabus look like?
- Where do my expertise and the the students' needs (and interests) intersect?

An Example from the ELI: ELI 620/621

- Course [Survey](#) focused on genres and sub-genres

An Example from the ELI: ELI 620/621

- Sample [Syllabus from ELI 621](#)
- Sample [Syllabus from ELI 620](#)
- Sample [Syllabus from ELI 620 2011](#)

References (Full bibliography at <http://gradconsortium.wordpress.com>)

- Brooks-Gillies, M., Garcia, E. G., Kim, S. H., Manthey, K., & Smith, T. (2015). Graduate writing across the disciplines: Introduction [Special issue on graduate writing across the disciplines]. *Across the Disciplines*, 12(3). Retrieved from http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/graduate_wac/intro.cfm
- Carroll, L. A. (2002). *Rehearsing new roles: How college students develop as writers*. Carbondale: SIU press.
- Casanave, C. P., & Hubbard, P. (1992). The Writing Assignments and Writing Problems of Doctoral Students: Faculty Perceptions, Pedagogical Issues, and Needed Research. *English for Specific Purposes*, 11(1), 33–49.
- Cooper, A., & Bikowski, D. (2007). Writing at the graduate level: What tasks do professors actually require? *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 6(3), 206–221.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2007.09.008>
- Dong, Y. R. (1998). Non-native graduate students' thesis/dissertation writing in science: Self-reports by students and their advisors from two US institutions. *English for Specific Purposes*, 17(4), 369–390.
- DePalma, M. J., & Ringer, J. M. (2011). Toward a theory of adaptive transfer: Expanding disciplinary discussions of “transfer” in second-language writing and composition studies. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 20(2), 134-147.
- Feldon, D. F., Maher, M. A., Hurst, M., & Timmerman, B. (2015). Faculty Mentors', Graduate Students', and Performance-Based Assessments of Students' Research Skill Development. *American Educational Research Journal*, 52(2), 334-370.
- Ferris, D. R., & Hedgcock, J. (2004). *Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Jacobs, C. (2007). Towards a critical understanding of the teaching of discipline-specific academic literacies: Making the tacit explicit. *Journal of Education*, 41(2007), 1-24.
- Long, M. (2005). *Second language needs analysis*. New York: Cambridge.

References (Full bibliography at <http://gradconsortium.wordpress.com>)

- Marshall, K. (2015). How to maintain your digital identity as an academic. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://m.chronicle.com/article/How-to-Curate-Your-Digital/151001/>.
- Serafini, E. J., Lake, J. B., & Long, M. H. (2015). Needs analysis for specialized learner populations: Essential methodological improvements. *English for Specific Purposes*, 40, 11-26.
- Simpson, S., Caplan, N. A., Cox, M., & Phillips, T. (Eds.). (2016). *Supporting graduate student writers: Research, curriculum, and program design*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Starke-Meyerring, D. (2011). The Paradox of Writing in Doctoral Education: Student Experiences. In L. McAlpine & C. Amundsen (Eds.), *Doctoral Education: Research-Based Strategies for Doctoral Students, Supervisors and Administrators* (pp. 75–95). Springer: Netherlands. Retrieved from http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-94-007-0507-4_5
- Trice, A. G. (2003). Faculty Perceptions of Graduate International Students: The Benefits and Challenges. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 7(4), 379–403. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315303257120>
- Walvoord, B. E., McCarthy, L., & Robison, S. (1990). Thinking and writing in college. *Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English*, 21.
- Wardle, E. (2009). " Mutt genres" and the goal of FYC: Can we help students write the genres of the university? *College Composition and Communication*, 765-789.