

# Introduction to the Second Edition

## The Changing Scene

The first edition of *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* (henceforth *AWG*) was published in 1994. In the ensuing decade, a number of important developments have taken place in graduate education. E-mail and the Internet have become much more widely used, especially in distance education. The American practice of requiring graduate students to take courses as part of advanced research degrees has been adopted by more and more countries. Coauthorship of papers written by graduate students and their professors is on the increase. Doctoral students are attending and presenting at more conferences and are doing so at earlier stages in their Ph.D. programs. Those with overall responsibility for graduate education, such as graduate schools, are offering more workshops for graduate students, many of them concerned with strengthening communication skills in some way. Finally, the traditional distinction between native and non-native speakers of English is becoming less and less clear-cut. In the research world, in particular, there are today increasing numbers of “expert users” of English who are not traditional native speakers of that language.

When *AWG* was originally published, the number of courses in academic writing for graduate students was both rather small and largely restricted to entering international graduate students. Today, we believe, the number and range of these courses have both increased, although perhaps few research universities can offer the *five* levels of writing courses for graduate students that currently exist at the University of Michigan. As part and parcel of these developments, research in *English for Academic Purposes* (EAP) has also grown, particularly through dissertation studies on various aspects of academic discourse.

## Approach and Organization

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A second edition of an EAP textbook usually indicates that the first one has enjoyed some success. And this has also been the case with *AWG*. As a result, we have retained the basic approach of the first edition.

- This book has evolved out of both research and teaching experience.
- It is as much concerned with developing academic *writers* as it is with improving academic *texts*.
- It is targeted primarily, but not exclusively, at those whose first language is other than English.
- The general approach is analytical and rhetorical: users are asked to apply their analytical skills to the discourses of their chosen disciplines and to explore how effective academic writing is achieved.
- The tasks and activities are richly varied, ranging from small-scale language points to issues of how graduate students can best “position” themselves as junior researchers.
- The book is fairly fast paced, opening with a basic orientation and closing with writing an article for publication.
- With the help of the accompanying *Commentary*, students and scholars should be able to use this volume profitably on their own.

We have also retained the original organization. Initially, we thought we would reorganize the units, combine some, and perhaps add new ones. However, after reading through surveys from heavy users of the book, we realized that this may do more harm than good. The surveys revealed that any changes we made to the overall organization of the units would please some, but alienate others. Thus, we decided to keep the eight-unit organization.

- The first three units are essentially preparatory; they prepare the way for the more genre-specific activities in later units.

- Unit One presents an overview of the considerations involved in successful academic writing, with a deliberate stress on early exposure to the concept of positioning.
- Units Two and Three deal with two overarching patterns in English expository prose: the movement from general to specific and the movement from problem to solution.
- Unit Four acts as a crucial link between the earlier and later units, since it deals with how to handle the discussion of data.
- Units Five and Six deal with writing summaries and critiques, respectively.
- Finally, Units Seven and Eight deal with constructing a real research paper, that is, one that makes an original contribution to knowledge.

## Innovations

However, within this retained basic approach and structure, there have also been a number of important changes. Certain older sets of data and older texts have either been updated or replaced. Data from the first edition that was simplified, adapted, or reconfigured has been replaced with authentic data, with the exception of a couple of our favorites, such as the test-retest data in Unit Four. The title of a table or figure with data that is not authentic is followed by a ‡. The range of disciplines covered has increased with textual examples from areas such as nursing, marketing, and art history. We have retained the citation formats used in these examples for authenticity. On the other hand, the amount of material dealing with discourse analysis/applied linguistics has been reduced; indeed, our own “miniproject” that featured so strongly in Units Seven and Eight has been relegated to Appendix Four. Both of these changes have principally come about because of comments made by reviewers, instructors, and other commentators. Among other changes, the work on definitions has been considerably expanded in Unit Two, and Unit Six now includes work on book reviews. Throughout, new findings from discourse analysis have been incorporated, perhaps especially in the final two units.

*AWG* has been designed as a *first* course in graduate-level writing and is most suited to the first two years of graduate education. (It has

also been successfully used with advanced undergraduates.) For the later years, the University of Michigan Press published in 2000 our *English in Today's Research World: A Writing Guide (ETRW)*. This deals with more advanced topics such as conference presentations and posters, aspects of writing dissertations or theses, and various types of academic correspondence, including fellowship applications and letters of recommendation. Because of this second volume, this edition of *AWG* no longer closes with a preliminary look at conference abstracts.

## The Teaching Context

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We have designed this textbook to be used for graduate students who come from a broad range of disciplines. After all, this has been our primary experience as writing instructors at Michigan's English Language Institute. Even at our large research university, the logistic problems of organizing and staffing courses along disciplinary lines mean that such courses remain the exception rather than the rule. Although it is often believed that disciplinary courses are "better" or "more efficient," it is our experience, especially with students in their second year or beyond, that a multidisciplinary class has several advantages over a "monodisciplinary" one. The former turns attention away from whether the information or content in a text is "correct" toward questions of rhetoric and language. In this way it encourages rhetorical consciousness-raising. It also leads to interesting group discussion among members who come from very different parts of the university. This kind of class can also create a special—and more tolerant and lighthearted—community among its members, since students are much less likely to be competing with others from their own departments.

Irrespective of whether the teaching context is multidisciplinary or not, *AWG* is a text that instructors should use selectively. Often, there is more material than can really be handled in a timely and efficient manner. Further, instructors should be encouraged to substitute activities and, more particularly, texts more suited to their own particular circumstances. In effect, we look upon our fellow instructors more as distant partners and collaborators in an educational enterprise rather than as people expected to obediently

follow the course we have set out. In the same light, we have not tried to impose our own beliefs (which are by no means identical in every case) about how *AWG* should actually be taught. We have nothing to say about such matters as error analysis, NNS peer feedback, the role of revising, or product-process approaches to teaching academic writing. So, rather than a traditional teacher's manual, *AWG* is supported by a slim companion volume carefully entitled *Commentary*. This consists of synopses of what each unit attempts to achieve, further discussion of certain points, occasional teaching hints, and sample responses to the more controlled tasks. The *Commentary* should therefore also be useful for students and scholars using *AWG* in self-study situations.

## Thanks to Others

Finally, we turn to those who have helped us prepare this second edition. We would like to acknowledge the insights of all those who took the trouble to write and publish reviews of the first edition and to complete the penetrating anonymous surveys forwarded to us by the University of Michigan Press. Then there are the hundreds of graduate students who have taken our writing courses over the last decade and who have taught us much about what works and what doesn't. Feedback from our fellow writing instructors at Michigan (and at other places such as Ohio State University and University of Arizona) has also been an important input, and here we would particularly like to single out Sandra Rothschild, who over the years has offered many useful suggestions for revision; Alan Hirvela, who has opened our eyes to creative ways of using *AWG* and the *Commentary*; and Susan Reinhart, who took the trouble to read through and comment on a prefinal draft. We are also very grateful to Carson Maynard, who was an invaluable research assistant in the rushed final weeks of getting this manuscript ready for the Press.

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