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EDUCATION WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

CONTENTS

21. INTEGRATING INCLUSIVITY IN RESEARCH COMMUNICATIONS WORKSHOPS

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Abstract

This paper focuses on actions taken to promote inclusivity in workshops about communicating research both in the academy and beyond. The New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission's 2020 statement on Ōritetanga (equity) pushed for institutions to prioritise removing barriers to education for Māori, Pacific and disabled communities. Informed by ideas of universal design for learning, cultural competency, and literature surrounding postgraduate research training, the workshops discussed in this chapter cover inclusive ideas related to research communication. They aim to provide postgraduate research students with skills and awareness for communicating research in both academic and non-academic spaces.

Keywords

Accessibility, communication, intercultural, inclusion, postgraduate, research

Introduction

The principal focus of postgraduate study is on research and the production of research writing. However, postgraduate study is becoming more diverse and the audiences with which scholars must connect are becoming similarly so. Hence, the ability to communicate research effectively and to a range of audiences is also becoming crucial for academic success. Additionally, due to the increasing numbers of postgraduates and the lack of a proportional increase in tenured academic positions (McAlpine, 2017), there is a need for postgraduate students to acquire skills beyond delivering lectures and conducting research. This need informed the development of postgraduate research communication workshops at the University of Waikato/Te Whare Wananga o Waikato (UoW) which sought to support honours, masters, and PhD students in developing their ability to present to audiences from diverse backgrounds. These workshops also emphasised how to be mindful of accessibility when communicating research and encouraged students to advocate for themselves as presenters. The three core workshops of this series consisted of ‘Presentations, Audience, Speaking Environment’, ‘Visual Communication Skills’, and ‘Introduction to Conferences’.

An aim of these workshops was to acknowledge universities as diverse spaces and foster awareness of this diversity in postgraduate students. Sahin and Jenkins (2021) argue that programs “designed to encourage diversity have been identified as an influential factor in shaping university students’ attitudes toward cultural diversity” (p. 72). In this sense, the workshops were designed to promote skills for a modern tertiary environment, in particular emphasising that research is not just communicated in the academy and that graduates should possess an awareness of the broader social context. The approach is not dissimilar from Universal Design for Learning (UDL), with its focus on understanding an audience’s needs, preferences, and barriers to attending or engaging with the research (Merry, 2024). Furthermore, by working to develop skills in adapting to audiences, these workshops align with the University of Waikato’s graduate attributes: 3: Effective communication and collaboration, and 4: Competent in culturally diverse local and global contexts (The University of Waikato, n.d.).

University policy in terms of accessibility was another factor in the creation of the work-

shops and their delivery, as they were also created with the University of Waikato's commitment to equity in mind. These workshops particularly align with the second objective of the University of Waikato Academic Plan (2022–2026): “Make the University a more inclusive teaching and learning environment for all” (The University of Waikato, 2021, p. 2). In their approach to equity, the workshops promote the work of the University's Accessibility Services does to empower students, as well as offering support to international students (The University of Waikato, 2021, p. 4).

Additionally, this workshop series was intended to not only promote equity for students, but also encourage students to themselves become agents of Ōritetanga (equity) which involves the support of learner access and success for Māori and Pacific students, as well as for students with disabilities (TEC, n.d.). On top of these points, the workshops highlighted the importance of ideas inherent in the University's Disability Action Plan, especially Objective 3, “be an inclusive teaching and learning environment” (The University of Waikato, 2023, p. 15). The postgraduate workshops were designed to address the above key points of the Academic Plan, Disability Action Plan, and the goals of Ōritetanga in University of Waikato policy. Therefore, the workshops were underpinned by literature covering a range of subject areas including accessibility, accessibility studies, postgraduate education scholarship, and general advice on public speaking.

The last motivating factor behind these workshops was for students to feel comfortable asking for their own cultural safety or accessibility to be supported. As Elliot et al. (2020) note, “The ways, in which doctoral researchers are supported, need to reflect their identities and process of formation and growth as academics and persons” (p. 135). Workshops that support postgraduates' own identities can better foster their growth as researchers both in the academy, and outside it.

Literature review

Understanding and effectively communicating what transferable skills they acquire through the course of their study is vital for graduates' success in their chosen careers. A clear understanding of their skill set, combined with a record of training, and evidence of these skills, equips graduates to demonstrate their adaptability to a range of careers (Milos, 2019). Programs that encourage diversity and inclusivity are also crucial in shaping positive attitudes and preparing students for diverse work environments (Sahin & Jenkins, 2021). In addition to awareness of diversity, other transferable skills can also be developed for postgraduates.

The literature notes that the development of a broad range of skills is crucial for doctoral

students (Elliot et al, 2020; McAlpine, 2017; Milos, 2019, Sahin & Jenkins, 2021). Elliot et al. (2020) argue for the importance for doctoral students of developing a portfolio of skills, while acknowledging these will differ between candidates. McAlpine (2017) provides examples of what this portfolio might include, highlighting the need for students to develop fluency in various communication genres, teamwork, and cultural sensitivity. These skills are essential, as students are expected to demonstrate more while completing their studies in shorter times due to institutional and governmental oversight (McAlpine, 2017). Milos (2019) argues that higher degree research graduates are often perceived as overly specialised and unable to adapt to non-academic settings. Therefore, research skills training should include both discipline-specific knowledge and transferable skills applicable across various workplaces (Milos, 2019). In this sense, relying on supervisors to provide all the skills training may not be achievable, given their own time commitments.

The diversity of doctoral cohorts can mean varying skill sets among them, as well as a number of factors that warrant consideration with regard to their research communication skills training. Mello (2016) notes that a postgraduate student cohort's prior knowledge of postgraduate study varies considerably, affecting students' preparedness for advanced training. Diversity also encompasses differences in students' backgrounds, which can dictate their readiness to acquire new knowledge at the postgraduate level (Mello, 2016). This diversity is further amplified by global migration trends, leading to culturally diverse societies (Sahin & Jenkins, 2021). This diversity of postgraduates highlights the importance for doctoral students to connect with other researchers (Elliot et al., 2020). Leaning into and encouraging this diversity has noted benefits. Programs designed to encourage diversity have been identified as influential in shaping positive attitudes toward cultural diversity among university students (Sahin & Jenkins, 2021). Inclusive programs are more likely to succeed in fostering higher levels of positive attitudes toward cultural diversity on campus (Sahin & Jenkins, 2021). Therefore, as cultural differences grow and higher education internationalises, competency in intercultural communication becomes crucial.

There is also the need to use a broader inclusivity lens when engaging with research communication skills. Intercultural communication studies now include diverse methods and a focus on social justice, with disability cultures gaining prominence due to expanding definitions of culture, greater understanding of intersectional identities, and the recognition of context in culture (González & Donofrio, 2017). Integrating disability studies into curricula can promote ethical communication and innovative solutions to social issues, enriching the classroom experience for all students (Brockmann & Jefress, 2017). Jacklin (2011) emphasises that students with impairments may be the first to be affected by pedagogical practices that ultimately impact all students. Intersectional social forces position disabled individuals within hierarchical environments that are layered with dis-

crimatory practices based on various social identities (The University of Waikato, 2023). With these forces in mind, Brockmann and Jefress (2017) argue that to create an inclusive classroom, ableism must be addressed alongside racism and sexism.

The literature on communication and disability highlights the pervasive fear of saying something wrong, which can hinder effective interaction (Jenks, 2017). Jenks (2017) suggests that alleviating these fears involves learning together with students, allowing professors to make mistakes and focus on their areas of expertise. This collaborative learning approach can enhance our understanding of human interaction between individuals with and without disabilities.

Brockmann and Jefress (2017) also highlight that barriers faced by students with disabilities are often socially constructed, such as inaccessible buildings and a lack of support services. The architecture of educational institutions can communicate inclusivity or exclusion, with older buildings often posing challenges for accessibility (Brockmann & Jefress, 2017). This requires students to be aware of these factors, especially when a venerable institution considers their building structures to be the norm. Informing institutions of student accessibility needs is crucial to ensure that the practical implications of study requirements for all students are considered, and reasonable adjustments are made (Jacklin, 2011). A lack of awareness about accessibility can often be the result of avoidance or ignorance of the topic. By addressing learned behaviours of avoidance towards people with disabilities, a more inclusive environment can be fostered (Brockmann & Jefress, 2017). This requires educators demonstrate best practice and encourage students to advocate for both themselves and others. However, some students may not perceive themselves as disabled or see the benefits of adjustments (Jacklin, 2011). In this sense, taking the Universal Design for Learning stance of catering for a broad range of students to bring advantages to all participants can be helpful (Galkienė & Monkevičienė, 2021).

Even so, research communication does not just consist of skills development and awareness of diversity: it is also important to know how to put it into practice in specific situations, especially given the inherent culture of academia. One area where academic culture needs to be carefully navigated is conferences, which have their own rituals and protocol. Conferences play a pivotal role in the professional development and socialisation of doctoral researchers, with Elliot et al. (2020) emphasising that the essence of being a doctoral researcher lies in the act of connecting – not only with the research literature, but also interpersonally with teams, or broader collegial units. This connectivity is fundamental in building researcher identities, as well as personal and professional networks. These connections and networks serve as supports which can help with the negotiation of the hidden curriculum present in academia and demonstrate the need for active pursuit of these connections by doctoral researchers (Elliot et al., 2020). While

connections can occur through participation in other key academic events, conferences are among the most common and visible academic occasions which can assist with socialising students of higher research degrees.

Kuzhabekova and Temerbayeva (2018) further elaborate on the significance of conference participation, also viewing it as a critical experience that influences the socialisation process. They argue conferences provide doctoral students with opportunities to acquire essential knowledge, skills, and values through professional interactions with peers and senior colleagues. Kuzhabekova and Temerbayeva (2018) reason that in understanding how conferences impact socialisation at various stages of doctoral development, it is easier to understand which types of interactions are most beneficial. This in turn helps understand the roles different people involved in a research postgraduate's journey have in shaping these experiences, which in turn enhances the comprehension of a research postgraduate student's professional socialisation and can improve academic support strategies (Kuzhabekova & Temerbayeva, 2018). Conference attendance is also effective in preparing a research postgraduate (at master level, as well as PhD) for professional acculturation, where they will gain some similar experiences in terms of networking, public speaking, and time management.

Additionally, events such as conferences play a role in shaping postgraduate research students' researcher identities. Kuzhabekova and Temerbayeva (2018) state that participation in conferences has been shown to positively alter PhD students' self-perceptions as researchers, boosting their confidence in their studies and scholarly image, and increasing their commitment to effectively communicating their research to ensure its impact. Even so, attendance at a conference in itself is not sufficient for higher degree research students to receive these benefits. Kuzhabekova and Temerbayeva also note that the success of socialisation through conferences is significantly influenced by the amount of preparation and planning invested by advisers (2018). Meanwhile, the rise of predatory and low-quality conferences poses a challenge, particularly for early-stage students from non-Western contexts who may struggle to discern the quality of these events (Kuzhabekova & Temerbayeva, 2018). All these points indicate the need for specific guidance and training regarding conference attendance; Kuzhabekova and Temerbayeva argue this training should come from the thesis supervisors, though this does not need to be the case.

Research communication workshops

While the literature predominantly refers to research communication training as being for PhD candidates, these workshops took a broader approach. The target cohort was

any student who had completed undergraduate study and begun independent research projects. These workshops were in part hosted on the University of Waikato's Learning Management System (LMS), Moodle. An ad-hoc Moodle page, named 'Developing Research Skills' (DRS) served as a repository for workshop materials, additional videos, workshop schedules, and event promotion. The workshops covered predetermined topics based on skills that postgraduates were often identified as needing during the course of their research degrees. However, within the workshops themselves, students were encouraged to offer their own input, and materials related to the subject were often discussed with a sharing of experience. Given the varied levels of prior knowledge among postgraduates, as noted by Mello (2016), and the variety of skills they bring with them to study (Milos, 2019), the ability to learn from each other was valuable for students. These iterations of the workshops were delivered online using Zoom through an embedded link on the DRS Moodle page.

The rationale behind the workshops was to familiarise students with multicultural contexts and ideas of accessibility and inclusion, as well as help them be prepared for research communication both in and outside of academic contexts. Sahin and Jenkins (2021) argue that culturally diverse environments help to shape attitudes of cultural inclusion. By integrating ideas of cultural inclusion and modelling such behaviour in the workshops, students would be more acclimated to using the same approaches in their presentations. Meanwhile, the University of Waikato's Disability Action Plan 2023 (The University of Waikato, 2023), acknowledges the intersectional nature of accessibility and inclusion. By incorporating ideas of accessibility and inclusion alongside cultural competence and relevance, these workshops sought to refine student communication skills for modern academic and work environments.

Research degree students are increasingly needing to develop skills beyond their subject speciality to succeed both within and beyond the academy. McAlpine (2017) argues that research degree students must develop diverse communication skills, teamwork, and cultural sensitivity, often under tight timelines due to institutional and governmental pressures. Meanwhile, as noted above, Milos (2019) notes that many research degree students (particularly PhD students) are seen as overly specialised and struggling to adapt outside academia. Therefore, research training should include both discipline-relevant skills and transferable skills applicable across various sectors (Elliot et al., 2020; Milos, 2019). Graduates need to develop and effectively communicate their transferable skills to succeed in diverse careers, supported by documented training and evidence of these skills (Elliot et al., 2020; Milos, 2019). One of these key skills is communicating to non-expert audiences and audiences of diverse backgrounds.

Presentations, audience, speaking environment

Audiences have an array of motivations for attending a presentation. For presenters it is important to have some understanding of the audience prior to delivery of a research presentation (Smakman, 2024). Furthermore, being welcoming and accepting of others is a crucial element in thriving at doctoral level, as is candidates feeling they can bring their whole selves to the academy in the pursuit of postgraduate study (Elliot et al., 2020). The workshop 'Presentations, Audience, Speaking Environment' was intended to encourage students to not only think about their audience's needs, but also their own needs as a speaker. This workshop was initially adapted from content used in the Applied Linguistics course ENSLA202 Effective Academic Speaking. However, while ENSLA202 focuses on developing the skills of students who speak English as an additional language, this workshop was aimed at any student regardless of their dominant language. One of the core elements of the course is A.U.D.I.E.N.C.E. Analysis, derived from Lenny Laskowski's *LJL Seminars* (1996). Laskowski (1996) notes the importance of various factors to consider when speaking to an audience, which this workshop adapted and expanded to suit the research degree and inclusion aims.

A large proportion of the attendees across all the workshops were international students (typically over half), which highlighted the importance of inclusion when training for research communication. Sahin and Jenkins note that the increase in cultural diversity at academic institutions in the late 20th and into the 21st century necessitates the coexistence of customs, practices, behaviours, and traditions (2021). This workshop, in turn, emphasised the importance of cultural safety for both presenters and their audience, considering where research is being communicated, the audience background, and the content being presented.

In the workshop students would consider how presenting in an auditorium versus a classroom might differ, as well as what approaches should be taken if the audience is from the broader public or consists of specialised academics. Images of presentation spaces were shown to prompt students to respond with their own thoughts and considerations. This workshop then developed discussion towards considering the contexts of where and to whom presenters were speaking, including speaking spaces outside of the academy like churches and community centres. It also addressed the Aotearoa New Zealand context directly by discussing approaches to speaking at marae (traditional Māori meeting spaces) and in whareniui (the main buildings of marae), further developing the cultural understanding of the participants.

The workshop sought to emphasise that, in addition to considering the cultural safety implications of research communication, students must also factor in accessibility in order

to follow best practice. Sahin and Jenkins (2021) postulate that programmes which promote diversity are influential in improving attitudes towards cultural diversity. It is from this line of thinking that promoting accessibility practices in the workshops would have a similar impact. Jacklin (2011) argues that “students with impairments may be the first to be affected by pedagogical practices that ultimately may affect all students” (p. 99). This sentiment also echoes the insight of Universal Design for Learning that different learners have different ways to process information, so by catering for diversity, content is more easily shared with all learners, regardless of accessibility needs (Galkienė & Monkevičienė, 2021). Within this particular workshop, students were also encouraged to share their own experiences and strategies, utilising the diversity of the workshop participants and their prior knowledge which Mello (2016) emphasises. It also allowed the concept of ‘learning together’ recommended by Jenks (2017) to allow for different perspectives of accessibility to be readily shared. Overall students were encouraged to embrace diversity, aim to understand their audience, choose appropriate terms of address, and inquire about any accessibility supports needed (Smakman, 2024). By emphasising these points as best practice and supporting accessibility considerations, research students would also be able to improve delivery to their audiences in general. The emphasis on inclusivity and considering audiences was not restricted to this workshop; the points raised here were revisited in subsequent workshops as noted below.

Visual communication skills

The workshop titled ‘Visual Communication Skills’ focused on a number of examples where students could ensure their presentations were visually more accessible. Jacklin (2011) notes that student identification with accessibility can involve not identifying as ‘disabled’, or not seeing the value of adaptations or the possibility that they would be made. Given these perceptions of accessibility, this workshop aimed at normalising such concepts for effectively communicating with as broad an audience as possible while covering concepts involving text, colour, and vision. The workshop also discussed ideas of cultural sensitivity around images and the importance of diversity representation in image choices.

A pragmatic approach was taken to discussing how to engage with visuals with accessibility in mind. The session also addressed arguments surrounding the visibility of a presentation and how easily most adjustments can be made so that it appeals to a broader audience. The workshop reiterated a point from the literature for improving accessibility that if changes are easy to make, then they should be made (Brockmann & Jefress, 2017; Jacklin, 2011). One such example given in the workshop was about colour and colour contrast, such as using high colour contrast and colours that are less impacted

by colour blindness (Lidwell et al., 2010). To normalise this point, the facilitator would talk about their own experience with colour blindness and what colour combinations worked or did not work for them. The discussion around colour blindness included points about text and backgrounds, as well as colour choice for graphs. Students were therefore encouraged to consider that easy adjustments for accessibility should always be considered for future research presentations.

Another aspect of the workshop looked at the use of fonts in writing. This typically involved discussions around the use of dyslexia-friendly fonts, mostly highlighting sans serif fonts such as Arial or Verdana (Merry, 2024). These adjustments were presented as being not dissimilar from adjusting settings in a presentation when moving from one format to another, like Google Slides to PowerPoint.

In terms of cultural awareness in visual communication skills, one of the first points made referred back to the workshop 'Presentations, Audience and Speaking Environment'. This approach allowed for continuity between the workshops, further aligning them as a cohesive programme and not solely one-off events to attend. This portion of the workshop emphasised awareness of possible customs or prohibitions around images depending on the context of where they are speaking and what would be appropriate. An example typically given was the disclaimer placed in Australian presentations where Indigenous Australians are informed if content will display deceased persons (Kerin, 2016). Another example given was labels or naming conventions on maps, such as the Derry or Londonderry naming convention in Northern Ireland depending on which community (Catholic or Protestant) is viewing the presentation. This example allowed discussion on different communities' identities related to the naming of place. It also gave an example of a solution, as many organisations in recent years use Derry/Londonderry (or some variation thereof), rather than one name or the other (Abdelmonem & Selim, 2019).

Another point of cultural awareness was surrounding the choice of images. Participants were advised that an audience is more receptive if they can see themselves represented in images of persons in a presentation (if generic images are used). This can prevent unfortunate stereotypes or perceived bias of the presentation. Students were also informed of how locating images might prove difficult but carefully considered and prompted AI-generated images might be able to create the diversity sought. Practical advice was given here based on the facilitator's experience: how to attribute the image generator, the need to curate images to avoid biased images, and the choice of formats that are less likely to take an uncanny appearance (like a cartoon). This portion of the workshop also featured a live demonstration on how to use image generators, while showcasing their limitations.

Introduction to conferences

There is more to research communication than simply communication skills. Navigating significant events such as conferences requires a different set of knowledge or skills. In an attempt to highlight the hidden curriculum of academia for research postgraduate students, a key workshop was 'Introduction to Conferences'. This workshop built on points introduced in 'Presentations, Audience, Speaking Environment', but also provided discussion on connection and building networks.

Connection is a significant part of being a postgraduate researcher and learning the hidden curriculum of academia, as well as one method of developing a researcher identity (Elliot et al., 2020). In this sense, conference participation plays a key role in socialising researchers to an academic environment. It is also where many support structures and networks can be developed.

Conference participation is viewed as a kind of experience which may affect the process of socialisation by providing opportunities for a student to gain necessary knowledge, skills, and values via contextualized professional interaction with peers and senior colleagues in the field (Kuzhabekova & Temerbayeva, 2018, p. 182). In this sense however, it is also familiarising and preparing students for the 'field' (in a Bourdieusian sense) of the academic conference (Heffernan, 2022). This workshop, focused on introducing research students to conferences, covered many hidden curriculum aspects of conferences, such as the structure of a conference, what kind of sessions there are, and how sessions are run.

The discussion of these conference minutiae also included points about what to expect from different types of venues and hosts (like universities or government organisations), as well as how the venue and host are not always the same. The structure of the workshop covered the way many conferences are formed, with an example schedule provided. To ensure students were not left to make their own assumptions, reading over the schedule was accompanied by explanations of what keynotes are, how sessions are often run in parallel, as well as what a conference dinner is and entails. The granular level of detail follows the advice of Kuzhabekova & Temerbayeva (2018), who noted that the greater the level of preparation for research students attending a conference, the greater their socialisation and success at the conference.

The workshop's coverage of conferences also included aspects of the logistics for conferences, encouraging students to consider travel, costs, and time. There was also some discussion of cultural norms and parameters around conferences, especially international conferences, as well as the need to communicate any accessibility support that might be

required at a conference venue. Given the changes in academic conferences since the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was also important to discuss strategies for presenting and attending conferences online. This was a more in-depth discussion of online presentations compared to it being briefly touched on in the workshop ‘Presentations, Audience, Speaking Environment’. These points included the importance of presence and animated engagement, the need for visuals, as well as controlling the environment behind the camera in terms of what the camera shows and the microphone picks up.

The level of detail offered also included a frank discussion of conference protocol. These points included explaining the system of session ‘chairs’, as well as expectations of behaviour as a viewer, speaker, and as a person asking a question. In these instances, workshop facilitators shared their own experiences with conferences and how they have navigated these spaces. There was also discussion on the ideal times to approach speakers for further discussion and how to act between the sessions. In particular, networking was considered effective around snacks tables and lunches rather than conference dinners, due to the relative informality. Students were also advised that there might be variations between subjects, countries, and institutions on some of the points about conferences, covering ideas inherent in Bourdieu’s points about “field trajectory” and “status in academia” (Heffernan, 2022, p. 53, p. 61). These comments on variation between fields led to further discussion involving the differences between disciplines and what is expected in terms of dress code, which also connected back to the workshop ‘Presentations, Audience, Speaking Environment’.

Current outcomes

The design and delivery of these workshops had several positive effects beyond improving research postgraduates’ presentation skills, raising awareness of accessibility, and supporting students with attending conferences. In 2023, four of the presenters were finalists at the University of Waikato’s Three Minute Thesis competition, showcasing their research to a public audience on stage. Two of the workshop participants also went on to win best paper prizes at the annual Postgraduate Conference held at the University of Waikato. One of the prize winners shared in an email that they: “found them an immense help for my own developing skills at that time. Later that year I entered into my first conference with a presentation from my recently completed masters and ended up winning a prize” (email from workshop participant, 8 May 2025). The workshops were not just about the refining and development of skills. They also stated: “I know I was that much more confident heading into the conference due to [research communication skills] workshops” (email from workshop participant, 8 May 2025).

The development of skills is only one part of research communication, building confidence in the research students is also necessary. For postgraduate students who had never attended conferences before, Kuzhabekova and Temerbayeva (2018) encourage supporting PhD students to be prepared and confident to improve their overall experience and acculturation to academia. As indicated by the participant, Kuzhabekova and Temerbayeva's recommendations apply equally to master's students and doctoral candidates.

These workshops have also formed a foundation for course design. In late 2023, a course, called ENSLA500, was requested to develop English language skills for postgraduate research students. The research communication workshops formed the initial structure for the communication aspects of the course, in particular the topics of considering the audience and use of visuals in presentations. The course continued the workshops' aims of acculturation and inclusivity. The course also expanded on the workshops' aims by adding discussions of gender-neutral language and tailoring the language used to its audience. Another addition for cultural inclusivity that was inherent in both the written and spoken aspects of the course was the inclusion of the idea of contrastive rhetoric (Kaplan, 1967). Contrastive rhetoric involves acknowledging differences in the structure and formation of argument within both formal academic writing and oral presentations. By incorporating Kaplan's (1967) ideas, students could better understand and discuss cultural variation within academia. While this theory has its limitations, it served as a starting point for students to share their own experiences with the rhetorical style of academic traditions from their own contexts and how to adapt to Anglosphere research writing and communication. This line of discussion furthered the intercultural communication aspect of the course while drawing on the diverse experiences of the postgraduate research students, building on the ideas mentioned by Milos (2019). The course ran for the first time in B trimester 2024 (July–November), consisting of six PhD candidates and a masters thesis student. Most PhD candidates passed, as did the master's student, with the course receiving overall positive feedback, in particular the research communication aspects of the course.

Conclusion

These postgraduate research communication workshops, designed with a focus on diversity, accessibility, and inclusivity, have supported students with developing skills to effectively present their research to a wide range of audiences. By fostering an environment that values cultural competence and accessibility, the workshops not only supported students' presentation skills, but also their ability to navigate the complexities of academic and professional settings.

The workshops' emphasis on understanding audience needs, visual communication, and conference participation has been instrumental in preparing students for the multifaceted demands of their academic and future professional careers. The integration of universal Design for Learning principles and the promotion of self-advocacy also encouraged students to become proactive in addressing their own needs and those of their audiences. In addition, it helped with encouraging students in the construction of their identities as researchers and academics. This holistic approach to research communication training aligns with the University of Waikato's commitment to equity and inclusivity, as outlined in both its Academic Plan (2021) and Disability Action Plan (2023).

The positive outcomes observed, such as the success of workshop participants in academic speaking environments and competitions, and the development of new courses based on the workshop content, underscore the effectiveness of this programme. The workshops have not only enhanced individual student capabilities, but have also contributed to the broader academic community by promoting a culture of inclusivity and excellence in research communication.

As these initial forays into research communication workshops consisted of only three topics, there is an opportunity to continue refining and expanding the research communication training at University of Waikato to address the needs of postgraduate students. This includes incorporating feedback from participants, staying abreast of emerging trends in research communication, and ensuring that the workshops remain accessible to all students. Possible new workshops could include poster design, communication through social media, and presentation skills when being interviewed. By further developing this training programme, the University of Waikato can continue to support the development of well-rounded, culturally competent, and effective communicators who are prepared to make meaningful contributions to their fields and society at large.

The postgraduate research communication workshops represent a vital component of the University of Waikato's efforts to foster academic excellence and inclusivity, as well as support postgraduate research students in their socialisation to academia and development of researcher identities. Through these workshops, students gain valuable skills that extend beyond the confines of their institution, enabling them to effectively share their research and preparing them for diverse career paths beyond their study.

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