

Writing about Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

Creating and Contributing to Scholarly Conversations
across a Range of Genres

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PART 3

CLARIFYING YOUR PURPOSE AND PREPARING TO DRAFT

Introduction to Part 3

This part of the book explores some of the topics that we argue can be precursors to starting to write and engage in productive dialogue with potential co-authors, editors, reviewers, and readers. We begin with a discussion of motivations for writing, because clarifying your purpose will help you identify how and for whom you write. Your motivations are closely related to your ever-evolving identity as a learning and teaching scholar, which we discussed in [part 2](#). Also related to your motivations is the question of whether you write on your own or in collaboration with colleagues or students. Exploration of this topic raises issues of ethical authorship.

If you are the kind of person who writes better within clear parameters, there are several key questions you may want to address before you start writing, including: Who can benefit from reading what I plan to write? In which outlet should I seek to publish? What is an appropriate working title for the piece of writing I am working on? What might a short summary of the piece include? Whatever you write will, of course, only be initial drafts, and you should expect to keep returning to and revising them as you write.

We recognize, however, that people vary in how helpful they find this type of planning before starting to write. If you are the kind of person who writes better with fewer parameters to start with, you may want to leave these questions until after you have drafted your piece, or at least are well down the writing road. Others find it helpful to draft their answers to these questions early for some writing, but

later for other kinds of writing. Our approach varies. Mick and Kelly tend to favor the early planning route, while Alison varies in which strategy she follows. These approaches are not mutually exclusive, of course. Regardless of what approach you take, what is crucial is that any position or argument that you adopt early on is modifiable as the writing proceeds. All should be open to change, including the title, until the moment of submission. Otherwise, the learning opportunities are going to be severely diminished.

One other topic that is important to consider before starting to write is what publishing genre is appropriate. This question is so central to this book that the whole of [part 4](#) is dedicated to exploring it. You may find reading [chapter 11](#), which discusses the main features of eleven different genres, helpful at an early stage in your planning.

Key questions you might want to address before you read [part 3](#) and then keep in mind while you are reading include:

- What is your motivation for writing?
- What kind of approach or structure—following guiding questions or exploring through the writing itself—works best for you as a writing process?
- Which genre are you preparing to write for and how might that influence your writing?