

## **What do we do about policy? – not just a rhetorical question**

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For this keynote, I was asked to use it as a platform for introducing and contextualising conference themes and opening a conversation about them.

I will start with opening remarks about the changing terrain of HE as the context in which teachers of academic writing should respond, but I am not going to say much about ‘internationalisation’, marketization of HE and emphasis on student experience, since you will have heard so much about them already. Moreover, different institutions define them in different ways. If you review university websites, these topics are all there in strategies, but how these are implemented will surely be different from place to place.

Of the three themes identified for this conference, I feel we can tick the ‘pedagogy’ box – we know what to do – and the ‘practice’ box – we know what to get other people to do – but what about policy – are we influencing this enough?

What discourses do we use? For example, I coined the term peer-formativity in order to address but also interrogate the idea of ‘performativity’, but others may see this as a corruption of both the term and the collective idea. So, we can use that language and these concepts, but how do we get them heard at the policy table?

This conference is an important opportunity to think about these questions, share our answers and, perhaps, develop new ones. What rationales can we develop? How can we speak to policy makers to let them see the value of our interventions? How will leaders and line managers hear terms like, ‘non-surveillance’ writing retreat for staff and ‘freewriting’ for students? Even when we demonstrate increased ‘productivity’, the response may be that it’s quality, not quantity, of writing that matters. We can redefine ‘quality’ all we like – for example, thesis writers find it helpful when quality is defined as a set of layers, so that they can set achievable ‘quality’ targets for specific writing tasks – but there I go again solving the rhetorical problem, using a *practical* solution. This is not what leaders and managers want to hear. So, I ask you the question: how can we mutually engage leaders and line managers in our conversation about teaching academic writing?