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among remote-learner PME students**

Item Type	Article
Authors	O'Dowd, Irene;Byrne, Ann
Download date	2026-06-18 08:39:08
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.13012/100

Bridging the online support gap: developing academic referencing competences among remote-learner PME students

Irene O’Dowd and Ann Byrne

Abstract

In Hibernia College, students are expected to take primary responsibility for maintaining academic integrity in their studies. However, lecturers and support staff have an important role to play in educating students about academic integrity and helping them develop the skills needed to practise it. This paper describes a project initiated by the Digital Learning Department (DLD) to improve the College’s online referencing supports, in response to the high volume of referencing queries being received daily by the Digital Librarian. Recent changes to the focus of capstone research projects on the PME programmes, combined with the move to fully online instruction during the Covid-19 pandemic, further highlighted the urgency of ensuring that these resources met students’ needs. The project consisted of a comprehensive update of the College’s core Referencing Guide and the delivery of a series of drop-in webinar workshops where referencing queries from students could be dealt with directly and specific problem areas addressed. The paper outlines the principles informing both the updating of the Referencing Guide and the structure of the online workshops. A preliminary analysis of library logs and student feedback survey data provides early indications of student engagement with and responses to these new supports.

Introduction

Hibernia College delivers Professional Master of Education (PME) programmes in primary and post-primary education via blended learning. One of the goals of the programmes is to develop in students, as teachers of tomorrow, a sense of themselves as practitioner-researchers with the skills needed to conduct research into their own professional practice and critically engage with educational research. The development of academic writing skills is therefore an integral part of the students’ professional and pedagogical formation. Essay-based assignments and a 10,000-word dissertation form the major part of student assessment, foregrounding academic writing as a key skill for student success and requiring students to be able to develop an argument, synthesise knowledge and evaluate evidence. Since 2020, the focus of the dissertation project has switched from data collection to an extended literature review, which places greater emphasis on students’ ability to handle secondary sources. This

has likely been a factor in an increase in the number of student queries related to referencing that are being received by the Hibernia College library – estimated at up to a third of the total number of library-related queries received.

According to Thesen (1994, quoted in Hendricks and Quinn, 2000, p.448), ‘the convention of referencing is what characterises the academic essay more than any other feature’. The ability to draw from different sources, and acknowledge them by referencing them, has long been viewed by academia as essential to the construction of knowledge in academic writing. Referencing is linked to the evaluation of scholarship and weighing up its relationship to one’s own espoused position. It is a keystone concept that underpins many aspects of academic success, from competent library use and handling sources in general, to academic integrity, evolving one’s identity as a researcher, expressing one’s thoughts, dealing with evidence, information literacy and critical thinking. Hendricks and Quinn (2000, p. 81) highlight these and other reasons to show why referencing is important, not least the fact that it is ‘through integrating the ideas from sources with their own ideas that writers of academic essays construct knowledge in the discipline about which they are writing’. Postgraduate study, in particular, involves acknowledging the role of others’ work in shaping one’s own opinions, and thus postgraduate students are commonly expected to be able to take primary responsibility for maintaining academic integrity¹ through proper use and acknowledgement of academic sources. Referencing is obviously a key skill in this endeavour.

However, many students struggle with academic referencing practices throughout their undergraduate years and often still need support at postgraduate level (Moore, 2014). In spite of this, many academics tend to view referencing as a minor component of academic writing, one that is necessary but ‘not difficult in itself’ (Buckley, 2015, p.352). In academic writing skills courses and other support structures, referencing is often reduced to a mechanical process and imparted to students via referencing convention documentation and guidelines on academic misconduct. MacGowan (2005, cited in Delahunt, Everitt-Reynolds, Maguire and Sheridan, 2012) suggests that this approach may undermine the development of academic writing more broadly. In fact, lack of confidence in referencing skills can become a major source of anxiety and fear for many students, not least due to its becoming increasingly linked to academic misconduct. Students in higher education are receiving the message that the main point of academic writing and especially referencing is to avoid plagiarism

¹ In this paper, the term ‘academic integrity’ is understood to refer to ‘the avoidance of intentional, unintentional and self-plagiarism through correct citation and referencing practices’ (Marsh and Campion, 2018, p. A214).

(Delahunt, Everitt-Reynolds, Maguire and Sheridan, 2012). This leads to high levels of concern about unintentional plagiarism, with over three-quarters of students reported as being worried about this in a survey by Delahunt et al. (2012). Buckley (2015, p.352) observes that ‘the focus on plagiarism and punishment loads the [referencing] task with anxiety, yet overlooks the foundation of good academic practice: the sharing and attribution of ideas in order to develop and create something novel’.

As Buckley (2015) suggests, the linkage of referencing and plagiarism in academic writing skills instruction is not only a cause of anxiety for students but also a potential impediment to their broader academic development. Lea and Street (1998) highlight this concern in their research on academic literacies, finding that students were often unclear about the distinction between plagiarism and acknowledging the authority of the academic texts they were reading. Misunderstanding of the ‘why’ of referencing led students to think that ‘they as students had little useful to say’ and that they were unable to ‘write anything that they had not read in an authoritative source’ (Lea and Street, 1998, p.167). Research by Delahunt et al. (2012) found that a majority of students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that they were reluctant to make their own points if they can’t reference them. The ‘avoidance of plagiarism’ approach to teaching referencing skills risks reducing it to this practice alone and to mechanical concerns of how to ‘do it correctly’ only from a technical viewpoint. This may contribute to a poor understanding of the role of referencing, and can impact students’ sense of agency and impede them in their ability to be self-motivated, independent learners (Gravett and Kinchin, 2020a).

As such, referencing instruction should ‘encourage the notion of referencing as a gate-opener rather than a gatekeeper to academe, as a liberator of voice, not a shackler, the use of referencing needs to be more obvious as a tool to the crafting of voice rather than a fiddly and alienating rule to be adhered to’ (Hutchings, 2013, p. 12). There is an increasing movement towards focusing on the quality of referencing from the point of view of a meaningful engagement with the literature rather than from a mechanical perspective (Vardi, 2012; Marsh and Champion, 2018; Gravett and Kinchin 2020a; Gravett and Kinchin 2020b). Marsh and Champion (2018, p.A219) suggest explaining to students that citation and referencing are ‘core scholarly practices’ and framing them as a means of ‘join[ing] the academic conversation’ by acknowledging and sharing work that has influenced their thinking.

While both academic and support staff have a role to play in teaching referencing skills, provision is frequently inconsistent, mechanistic and decontextualized. Gravett and Kinchin (2020a) point to the complexity of students' relationship with academic skills development and the risk of missing opportunities to provide effective scaffolding and support if this complexity is not considered. Lea and Street (1998) observe that there are frequently gaps between academic staff expectations and student interpretations of what is involved in student writing, and point to the importance of the asymmetrical nature of this relationship. They observed divergences in students' and teachers' understandings of plagiarism, students' levels of anxiety over unintentional plagiarism, and the undermining of their own voice – 'the relationship between plagiarism and correct referencing was not transparent' (Lea and Street, 1998, p.167). It may be unclear where the ownership of referencing support actually lies within an institution, increasing the risk of inadequate support for students in this key area. Marsh and Campion (2018) observe that staff in centralised services, such as the library, are often involved in supporting academic integrity, citation and referencing. However, they caution that this can lead to duplication of services or, conversely, 'a situation where some students may "fall through the cracks" because teachers and markers ... may assume students "should already know" something they have not yet been taught' (Marsh and Campion, 2018, p. A214).

There is increasing consensus in the literature that instruction in academic writing practices is more effective when it is embedded in the curriculum (see, for example, Gravett and Kinchin 2020b; Hendricks and Quinn, 2000; Marsh and Campion, 2018). However, the extent to which this is possible depends on context; there may be situations where a fully embedded approach to academic writing support is difficult to provide due to the nature of the programme. Ashton-Hay (2018, p.A83) argues that academic literacy support 'is necessary both as a quick fix and embedded in curricula'. Emerson, Rees and MacKay (2005) leave open the question of the relative merits of dedicated academic writing courses or curriculum-embedded instruction for referencing, emphasising instead the quality of the instruction.

Context of this study

Referencing in Hibernia College is supported in a number of ways. Because of the distance-learning, blended nature of the programmes, existing supports are predominantly digital. A Research Methods module is a compulsory element of both PME programmes, which aims to prepare students for writing their dissertation. The library is perhaps the main source of

referencing support, and the librarian is contactable by e-mail for student queries. The library has also recently taken ownership of the full Referencing Guide and the condensed Quick Reference Guide, which are accessible through the library site and the VLE. Additional asynchronous support is provided in the online Academic Writing Toolkit, located in the VLE as a non-compulsory course. Prior research into students' use of this resource suggests that the referencing content is by some distance the most frequently visited (O'Dowd, 2018). It is striking that referencing supports in Hibernia College have evolved mainly in non-embedded digital forms, with the Research Methods module the only element embedded in the curriculum.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned supports, the consistently high volume of referencing queries received by the Hibernia College librarian suggests that referencing is a major source of concern for students and one in which more support could be provided. However, enhancing referencing supports for Hibernia students needs to take into account a number of constraints. The intensive nature of the programmes, which cover a large amount of instruction in a relatively short time, makes it quite difficult to make time or space for dedicated referencing instruction within the crowded curriculum. Another factor to consider is the relationship between pre-service teachers and research. A study by van Katwijk, Berry, Jansen, and van Veena (2019) found that students in teacher education view the research methods aspect of their programmes as a means of developing critical thinking in their job as a teacher, but not necessarily as training for conducting formal research in future. It should be recognised that many pre-service teachers do not harbour academic aspirations and will prioritise acquiring the skills that they view as directly relevant to their profession. This has implications for how referencing support is provided; support should balance the relative lack of priority given to matters such as referencing with the requirement for an acceptable level of academic rigour in their assignments and dissertation.

Finally, as Hibernia College is a technology-enabled blended-learning college, students generally expect a digital experience – lecturer content that they can view remotely in their own time and revisit afterwards, readily downloadable and navigable resources, multimedia content that is responsive to their mobile devices when on the move, and so on. The Community of Inquiry Framework (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2001) emphasises the need for cognitive presence, social presence and teaching presence in online distance-learning contexts in order to sustain learners' motivation and self-regulation. This presence may take the form of human interaction, professional expertise, or an opportunity to raise particular

questions and obtain clarifications. This sense of presence was lacking in the referencing guidance provided through supports such as the Academic Writing Toolkit, the Referencing Guides, or even library e-mail support.

Taking all of this into consideration, the College's librarian and DLD's digital researcher initiated a project to enhance the library-related referencing supports. The initial aim of the project was to undertake a comprehensive update of the College's core online Referencing Guide, which was badly out of date and did not have a formal owner. This task led to a broader conversation about how to encourage use of the new Referencing Guide, which led to the creation of a series of online drop-in workshops for referencing queries. Each of these phases is described in more detail below.

Phase 1: Referencing Guide update

The first problem to be addressed in the update of the Referencing Guide was that several of the referencing guidelines it mentioned – particularly related to technology formats – had become obsolete and anachronistic and posed a credibility risk for the College. Almost all of the Guide's referencing convention examples were dated 2010 or earlier, making it obvious that it had not been updated since then. The structure and categories used in the Guide were confusing and inconsistent, and there were many gaps in the Guide's coverage of source types. The design of the Guide did not facilitate its use, with poor use of formatting for content signposting and navigation.

Three priority areas were identified for the update:

- Updating the referencing guidelines
- Updating the referencing examples
- Updating the structure and design for greater ease of use and a more user-friendly look and feel

As a first step, a review of the referencing queries received by the library established the most frequently asked questions in relation to referencing. These enabled the team to identify shortfalls in the Guide, such as where certain item types were not covered or where guidance was unclear or out of date. Queries were collated and grouped into categories. These categories informed changes to the Guide. For example, it became clear that there was little space given to general referencing conventions that were not specific to certain item types but rather were points of style, such as the order in which to place multiple citations within a

single set of brackets. Information on such general referencing conventions were either obscurely placed within the Guide or were entirely absent. A new ‘general points of note’ section, written and designed for high visibility and readability, was added to the beginning of the Guide to address this.

As well as analysing referencing queries, the team comprehensively reviewed the Referencing Guide itself, noting and correcting errors, omissions and outdated examples. This part of the work included an extensive review by DLD content editors. Shortfalls in the design of the Guide were also noted and improved with significant assistance from DLD multimedia designers. For instance, examples used in the Guide were not clearly labelled as either reference list or in-text examples. This was improved with the use of text, icons and colour coding (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2).

Web pages

Web pages with an author

Author (person who authored the page)
Year (when the site was published or updated – whichever is available)
Internet site name
URL and date accessed

Nolan, M. (2010) *Expad.ie*. Available at: <http://expad.ie> (Accessed: 1 June 2010).

Nolan (2010) discusses...

Fig. 1: Example of a Referencing Guide entry in the old version




Web pages	
	Author (person or organisation)
	Year (the page was published or site last updated)
	Title of page
	URL and date accessed
	Reference: Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) (2017) <i>Zero emissions challenge</i> . Available at: https://www.sfi.ie/challenges/zero-emissions/ (Accessed: 16 July 2020).
	In-Text: The zero emissions challenge (Science Foundation Ireland, 2017) aims to encourage novel solutions...

Fig. 2: Example of a Referencing Guide entry in the updated version

The overall design of the Guide was also out of alignment with the current style guidelines used for designing College documents. The cover page, table of contents, section demarcation and use of appropriate colour scheme were all updated accordingly. As well as the main Referencing Guide, the Quick Reference Guide was also reviewed and extensively updated. This document was originally intended as a useful, quick-reference summary of frequently used referencing conventions. However, upon review the Guide was found to fall short in terms of usefulness and clarity as it provided only information on referencing books, journals and websites. In addition, much of the document space was taken up with superfluous introductory information and images. As such, it required not only updating and redesign but also a reconsideration of the most useful and appropriate information to be included. It was decided to remove the superfluous text and images and use this space to provide more detailed guidance on a greater number of items to make it a more useful resource. A tabular format was used to present the information in the clearest possible way while maximising the available space (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4). These were simple design decisions that were informed not just by the team's professional domain knowledge but by consideration of their own prior experiences of being postgraduate students. Regular discussion of what they themselves would have found most helpful in the design of such resources was an important factor in ensuring the user-centredness of the redesign.

DEFINITIONS



In-text citation
In-text citations are located within the main body of your work. They contain brief information about the sources used; author, date and page number (if quoting directly from a source.) See examples below.

Reference list
A reference list is included at the end of a piece of work to indicate to the reader all materials 'referred' to by the author during that work. The list is presented in

GENERAL POINTS

All students are required to include a reference list at the end of their work, fully crediting any in-text citations they have made. A bibliography is optional, except for students working on their thesis who must include a bibliography also.

Proper consistent referencing is crucial because:

- References can be located and checked by the reader
- Referencing is a standard procedure for academic writing
- It is vital for avoiding plagiarism and to comply with copyright laws by acknowledging fully the use of somebody else's work
- Referencing demonstrates how much research has been undertaken and helps to strengthen the writer's argument

To help ensure consistent referencing, punctuation is also very important. See the formats and examples on the next page for punctuation rules.

Fig. 3: Example of content from the Quick Reference Guide pre-redesign

Document type	Referencing details	Reference list example	In-text citation example
Books			
Book with one author (print or main library resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Author Year (when the work was published) Title Edition (no need to add this if title is a first edition) Publication details (place and publisher) Series and volume number (if applicable) 	Westwood, P. (2018) <i>Inclusive and adaptive teaching: meeting the challenge of diversity in the classroom</i> . Oxon: Routledge.	'In schools, student populations are becoming much more diverse...' (Westwood, 2018, p.15).
Book with two or three authors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authors (all) Year (when the work was published) Title Edition (no need to add this if title is a first edition) Publication details (place and publisher) Series and volume number (if applicable) 	Share, P., Corcoran, M. and Conway, B. (2012) <i>Sociology of Ireland</i> . 4th edn. Gill and Macmillan.	Share, Corcoran and Conway (2012, p.10) refer to...
Book with more than three authors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authors (all) Year (when the work was published) Title Edition (no need to add this if title is a first edition) Publication details (place and publisher) Series and volume number (if applicable) 	Albiff, E., Liu, D., Moss, J. and...	This was covered by Albiff et al.

Fig. 4: Example of redesigned content in the new Quick Reference Guide

Phase 2: Drop-in workshops

The drop-in workshop series was conceived as a means of giving students the opportunity to have their queries answered in person and in real time; as an opportunity to inform students regarding some key referencing related topics; and as a way of promoting and modelling use of the Referencing Guide. A logical structure to achieve these aims was decided upon, whereby the first portion of each session would comprise instruction on a referencing-related topic, with the later portion devoted to students' queries. The review of referencing queries that informed the updating of the Referencing Guide was also analysed for important themes that indicated the most common gaps in students' referencing knowledge. which became the topics that the workshops would cover. Eight workshop topics were identified, as follows:

- Referencing and plagiarism – what is/isn't common knowledge
- Identifying different document types
- Constructing references from scratch (general rules)
- Critically evaluating sources – what's appropriate to reference
- Differentiating between peer-review and non-peer review journals (how do you know/find out)
- Referencing library items versus referencing web resources - some general rules and exceptions.
- About authors (e.g. books with various authors, how to deal with that in-text, chapters in edited books, when to use an organisation and when to put an individual author, what to do when there is no author)
- Referencing multimedia (videos, TV and movies)

Focusing on topics relevant to referencing during the drop-in workshops was seen as an opportunity to deepen students' understanding of the meaning, value and purpose of referencing, and thus move beyond a focus purely on mechanics and concerns of plagiarism. The face-to-face aspect of the workshops, as well as the focus on student queries, is also supported by the literature, which highlights the lack of appropriate scaffolding and direct support for referencing (Gravett and Kinchin, 2020b). Gravett and Kinchin (*ibid.*) further emphasise the difficulties students face in their skills development when referencing feedback is vague and indirect. Providing the opportunity for students to ask questions in an appropriate space, where detailed guidance could be offered was key to the purpose and value of the workshops.

Research methodology

Following the completion of the Reference Guide updates and the delivery of the first drop-in workshops, we addressed the question of how to gauge students' engagement with and reception of these new supports. To answer this question, preliminary explorations of engagement with the updated Referencing Guide and the drop-in workshops were conducted using learning analytics and survey methods respectively. Learning analytics is 'the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of data about learners and their contexts, for purposes of understanding and optimising learning and the environments in which it occurs' (Siemens and Gašević, 2012). For the purposes of exploring levels of engagement with the Referencing Guides before and after the update, trace analytics on the number of views each

document received were aggregated and graphed for analysis. This use of descriptive statistics provided a high-level snapshot of user engagement before and after the initial rollout. To gain more detailed insight into how the supports were being received by students, we circulated a short, non-compulsory and anonymous survey to attendees at the end of each referencing workshop to elicit feedback on their experience. Responses to Likert rating questions in the survey data were graphed, and comments from free-input text fields were analysed for salient themes using thematic-analysis methods. The research was conducted within the parameters of the College’s research ethics guidelines, which align with those of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018).

Findings and discussion

As a preliminary proxy measurement of engagement with the updated Referencing Guide and Quick Reference Guide, the view/download data for both Guides was graphed for comparison across a time series from February 2020 to May 2021 (Fig. 5). February 2020 is the earliest possible date for which such data could be gathered, as the software used to capture this data was installed during that time.

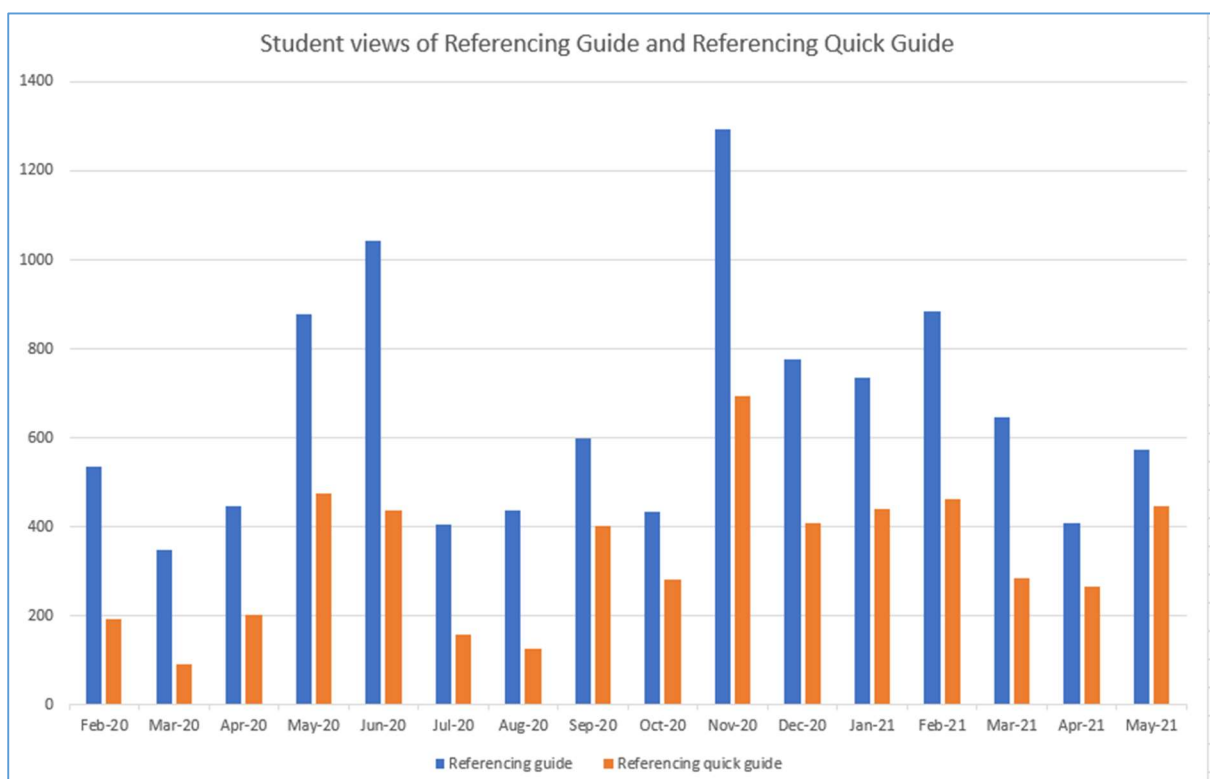


Fig. 5: Number of views/downloads of Referencing Guide documents over time

Several factors may influence the pattern of engagement with the Guides, but it is possible to point out some interesting items from the overall activity trend in the graph. The peak in

viewing numbers (approximately 1300 views) during November 2020 can be attributed to the launch of the updated Referencing Guides, which was communicated to students by the library. This peak, as would be expected, falls off somewhat in subsequent months; however, the level of views remarkably stayed above 600 until March 2021. Another interesting feature of the graph is the increased number of views of the Quick Reference Guide in the period from November 2020 to May 2021, compared to low levels of activity throughout most of 2020. The May 2021 data series even suggests that views of the Quick Reference Guide could conceivably catch up with those of the full Guide². While more data would be required in order to draw a definitive conclusion on this, the activity patterns following the Guide updates do appear to indicate increased engagement with the Guides compared with the patterns observed pre-update.

Turning now to the survey data, the numbers of survey respondents for the three drop-in workshops were as follows:

- Workshop 1: n=35 (of 163 participants)
- Workshop 2: n=18 (of 78 participants)
- Workshop 3: n=11 (of 51 participants)

Survey respondents therefore accounted for a consistent 22% to 23% of total attendees at each webinar. Attendance at the webinars lessened over time, which could be attributed to factors such as a busier academic calendar as the year has progressed, calendar clashes with other webinar events, or simply less interest in the workshop topic as advertised beforehand. The high level of attendance at the first workshop may be indicative of a surge of interest in the launch of a new referencing support, but it may also signify specific interest in the first workshop's topic, 'Referencing and Plagiarism'. As we have seen in the literature (Delahunt et al., 2012; Buckley, 2015; Gravett and Kinchin, 2020a), the topic of plagiarism is a major source of referencing anxiety, so it is not surprising that attendance at this workshop was high.

The survey's first question used a Likert scale to elicit respondents' overall rating of the workshop, ranging from 1 to 10 with 10 being the best possible score. For all workshops, respondent ratings were predominantly in the 8 to 10 range, suggesting a high level of student satisfaction with their experience of the workshops (Figs. 6, 7 and 8).

² At time of data collection, the full data for May 2021 were not available.

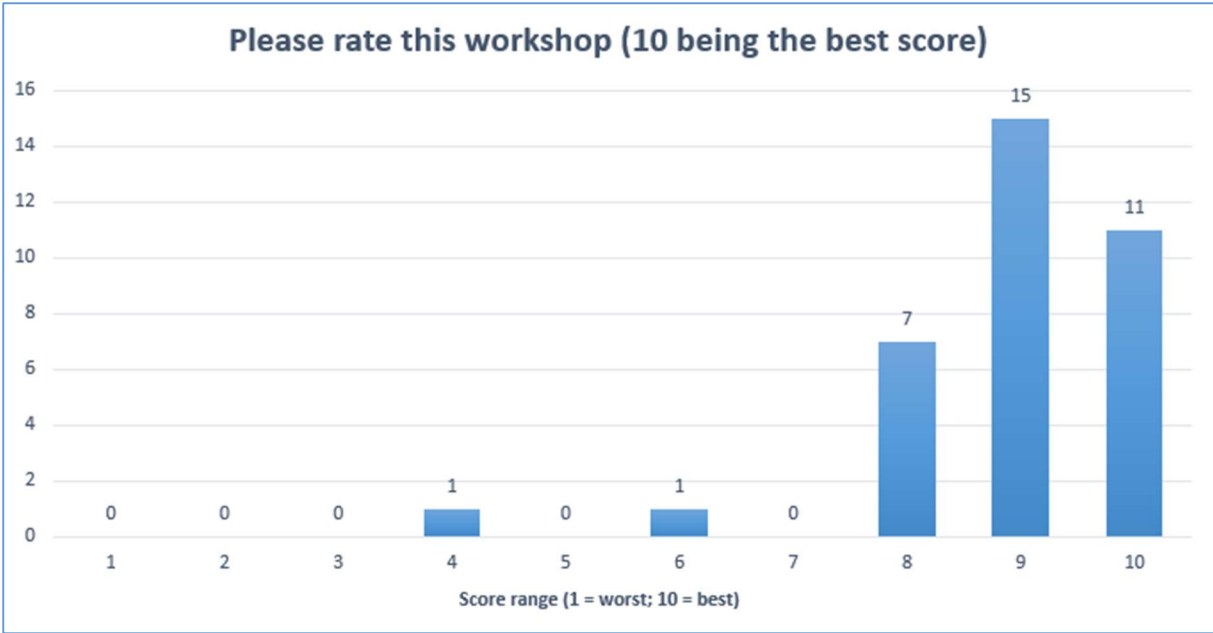


Fig. 6: Workshop 1 rating

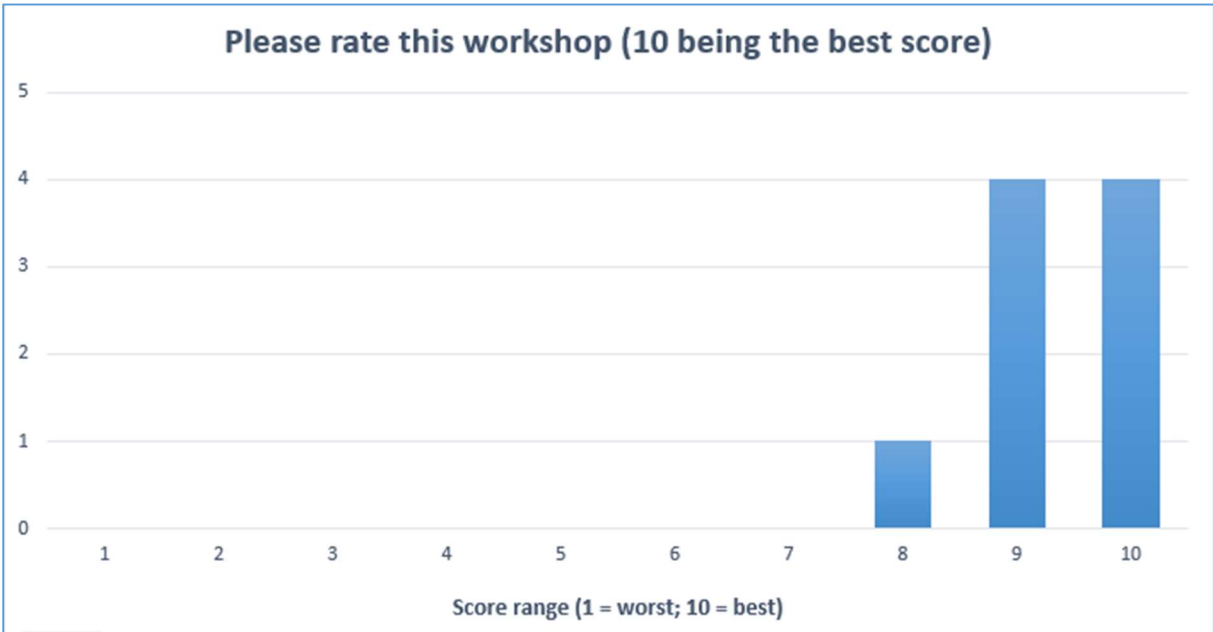


Fig. 7: Workshop 2 rating

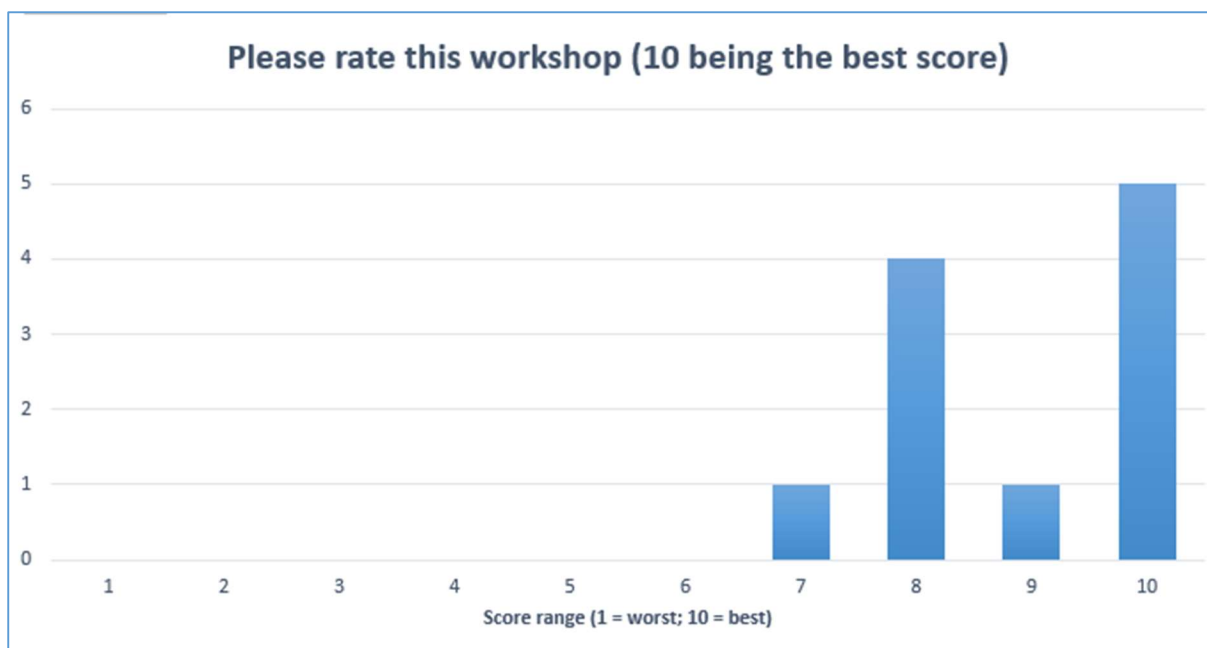


Fig. 8: Workshop 3 rating

Text responses from three free-input questions were analysed to identify recurring themes. For the question ‘What did you like about this workshop?’, frequently used words and terms were extracted from the responses across all workshops and these were used to create a word cloud. The result (Fig. 9) shows the most frequently used terms as ‘informative’, ‘helpful’, ‘clear’, ‘answered’, ‘guide’, ‘reference’ and ‘examples’. These provide a useful indication of what is most important to students in referencing support: helpfulness, clarity, information, having their questions answered, and providing examples to aid understanding.

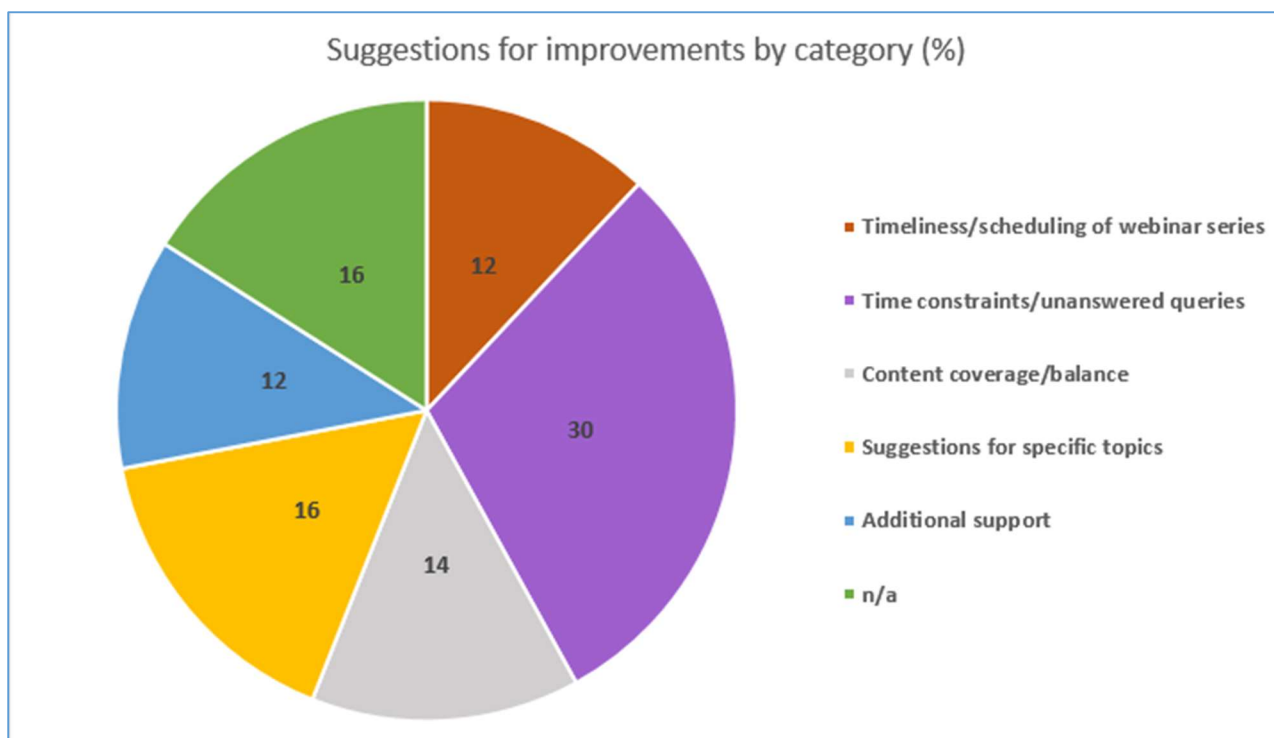


Fig. 10: Suggestions for improvement broken down by category

The thematic analysis found that the greatest number of suggestions (30%) were related to the format of the workshops themselves, specifically the use of time. Due to time limitations, the first workshop ended with some student queries left unanswered, and even though the facilitators invited attendees to e-mail unanswered queries to them for response after the workshop, some attendees were disappointed not to have had their questions answered in person. A common feeling was that too much time had been spent on presentation of content, which took away from time spent on student queries. The facilitators took this on board and, in subsequent workshops, cut down the volume of presentation content to ensure that the bulk of workshop time was devoted to student queries.

16% of responses included specific topic suggestions for future coverage, while 14% of responses were about the instructional composition of the webinars. Many comments in the latter category asked for greater use of examples in illustrating referencing concepts. Smaller numbers of comments (12%) focused on support suggestions such as setting up a discussion forum for referencing or making workshop recordings and slides available as an online resource. While the latter would be straightforward to implement, setting up a forum brings institutional challenges. The historical track record of forum uptake in the VLE is discouraging, with many forums becoming moribund before too long due to lack of activity. Online forums need to be monitored and facilitated in order to be successful (Garrison,

Anderson and Archer, 2001) and, without a clear line of responsibility or ownership of referencing support, such moderation and facilitation is unlikely to be maintained. Another 12% of comments, presumably from earlier cohorts, mentioned the timing of the rollout of the webinars relative to where they were in their own journey, with some expressing regret that the workshops did not happen sooner or that there were not more of them scheduled.

Study limitations and future directions

Some limitations of this study should be noted, particularly with regard to the interpretation and generalisability of its findings. The survey responses, as mentioned, are from around 22% of all workshop attendees; the survey was not compulsory and therefore we cannot say that it fully represents all feedback and experiences among attendees. It should also be remembered that students most likely to attend referencing workshops are those students who struggle with referencing and require more support, whereas students who do not find referencing difficult and are not in need of extra support in this area will be less likely to attend referencing workshops. Nonetheless, per the College's commitment to inclusivity and Universal Design for Learning principles (CAST, 2018), a need that is identified, even for a minority of students, is a need that should be met as it potentially benefits all students. With regard to the Referencing Guide download statistics, we cannot draw any solid conclusions from the fact that download activity increased following the launch of the updated Referencing Guides, or from the increase in views of the Quick Guide. Future research could include exploration of how students use the Guide via more detailed analytics, as well as the collection of qualitative data on students' use behaviours and motivations.

While the improvements in referencing support here described are a good starting point in terms of providing a greater degree of scaffolding to students, there are a number of additional avenues still to be explored to enhance this support further. The Referencing Guide itself is an ongoing concern. Updates are needed on a regular basis as gaps are identified, as examples become outdated, and as new additions become relevant. Furthermore, as Hibernia College expands its programme offerings, the Reference Guide will need to develop accordingly so that it is appropriate for a variety of learners in multiple disciplines. Another possible future direction for the Guide could be a move away from a PDF document to a web-based design, allowing for enhanced functionality, searchability and accessibility.

The drop-in webinar series is a valuable ongoing resource for students. However, barriers to attendance have been identified and this, as well as their being non-compulsory, means that not all students are availing of the same instruction. To address this and in line with student feedback, we intend to make the recorded webinars available as a persistent online resource for students, along with the accompanying presentations. As previously discussed, the literature (Gravett and Kinchin 2020b; Hendricks and Quinn, 2000; Marsh and Campion, 2018) emphasises embedded instruction in academic writing as the most effective approach. While barriers to this approach at Hibernia College have already been highlighted, this may be an area for future exploration, especially as the College expands to include new programmes and new types of learners. Particularly in terms of future undergraduate students as opposed to postgraduates, explicit instruction with regard to academic writing may become a core concern rather than a desirable addition. As such, an embedded approach may be more appropriate for this kind of learner. Working closely with faculty would be key to the success of such an approach.

Issues surrounding student engagement with discussion forums in Hibernia's VLE have previously been outlined. However, the appeal of a discussion forum to replace e-mail in addressing student referencing queries is not to be underestimated. Creating a designated online collaborative space for students to bring their referencing queries could potentially improve the level of scaffolding and support in this area and enable students to learn from each other (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2001). From an administrative perspective, the ability for all students to view responses and search the forum would greatly minimise the level of repetition in responding to the same query type repeatedly from multiple students. As Hibernia College continues to explore new technologies and new methods for engaging with students online, it is likely that a suitable collaborative platform will emerge that enables support staff and faculty to address these needs.

Conclusion

This study aimed to obtain insight into students' engagement with and experience of two enhancements to Hibernia College's academic referencing supports: a substantially updated Referencing Guide and a new series of facilitated online workshops for referencing queries. Patterns of students' online activity in viewing the redesigned Guide documents, measured via number of views/downloads, showed an overall increase in the period following the update and a noticeable increase in the number of views of the Quick Guide. While this is

encouraging as an indication of engagement, a direct causal relationship with the redesign cannot be inferred from the present analysis. Students' experience of the referencing workshop series thus far, according to survey data, has been very positive. While there were some suggestions for improvement in how future sessions could be structured, there was a general sense among students' feedback that the workshops were a much-needed addition to the existing academic writing supports provided.

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