

Introduction

Student nurses have long reported finding academic writing challenging, with particular difficulty understanding the concepts of analysis, discussion, evidence, synthesis and feedback (Knowles 2007; Duffy et al 2009;). For some this has resulted in poor standards of written work and an inability to develop critical and analytical writing skills (Elander et al 2006; Gimenez 2008;). This experience is reflected at Edinburgh Napier University (ENU) where the latest [National Student Survey](#) (Edinburgh Napier University 2013) indicates students do not understand what is required of them in academic assessments. At ENU there has been sporadic provision of generic academic and reflective writing skills sessions, not specific to nursing.

Research Question

Does a three day course of intensive academic and reflective workshops improve students' understanding at the end of Year 1 of a Bachelor of Nursing (Child Health) Programme?

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the intensive workshops is to enable students to be active partners in their learning and improve their understanding of the structure and level of academic and reflective writing, prior to commencing Year 2 of the Bachelor of Nursing (Child Health).



Method

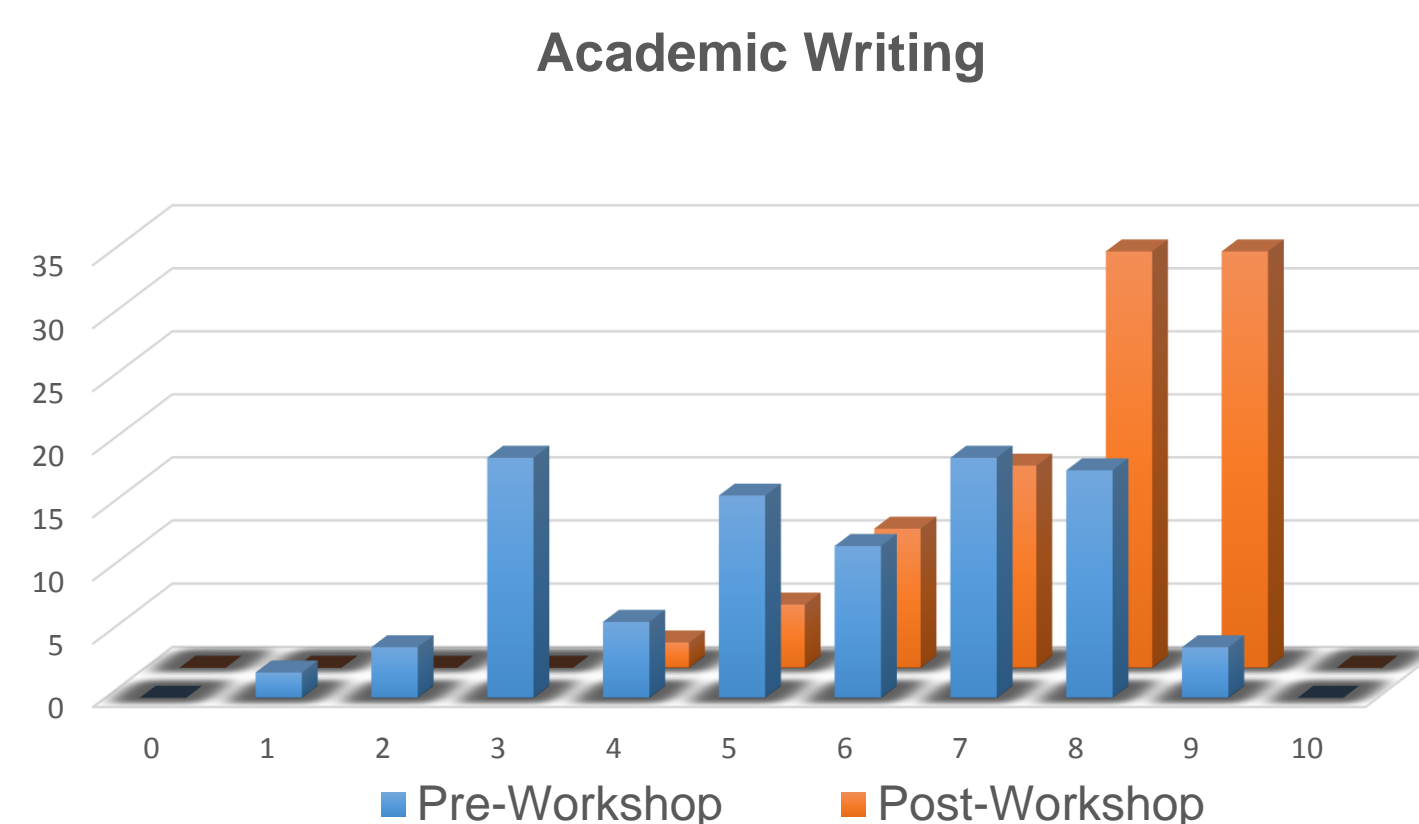
A comparative descriptive design using pre and post questionnaires was adopted. A non-probability purposive sample of Year 1 Child Health students (n=62) was used and students self-selected to participate in the study.

Workshops

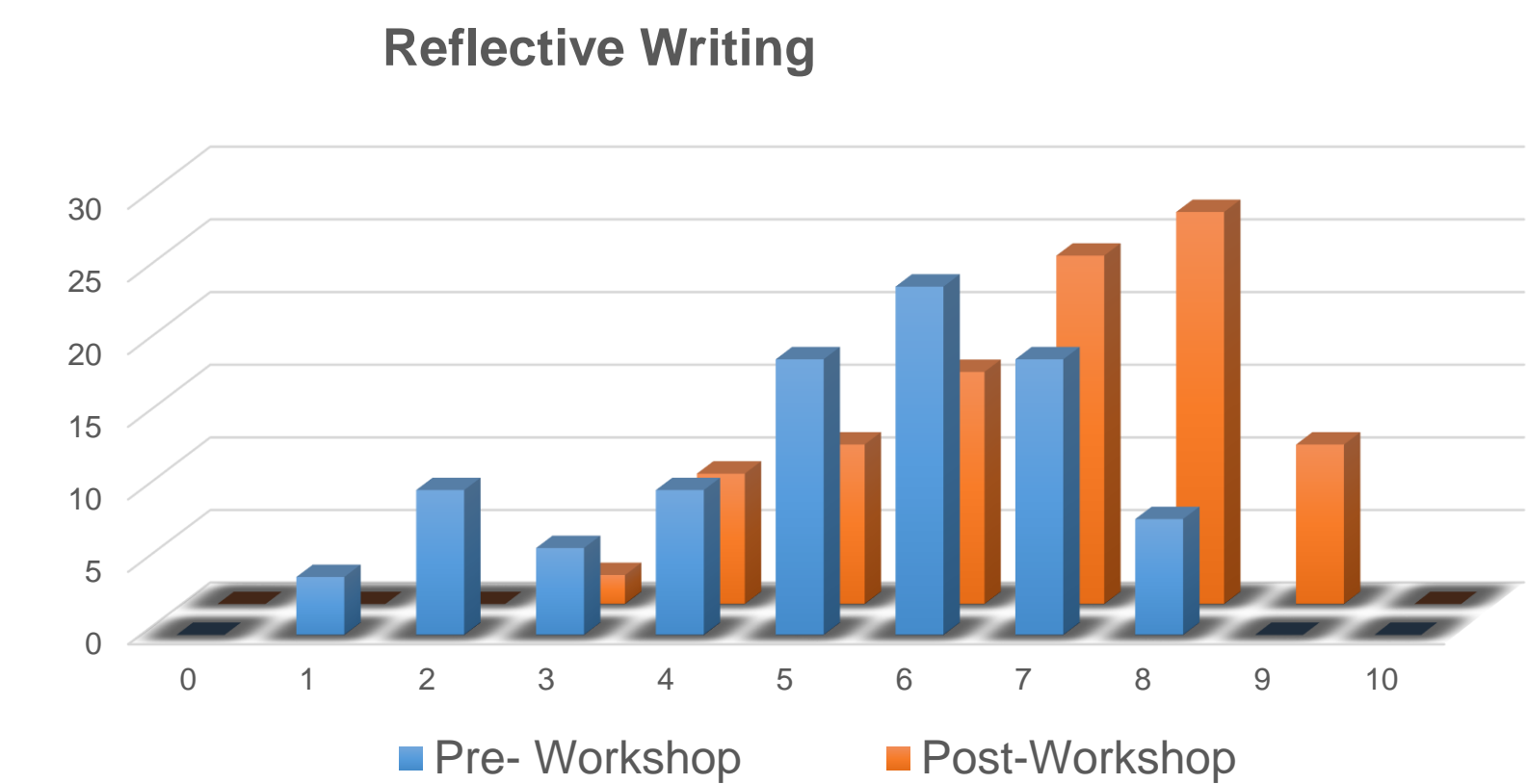
- Day 1**
 - Lectures on academic writing, critical thinking and evidence. Practical, scenario-based groupwork exploring the concept of academic writing.
- Day 2**
 - Feedback on groupwork from previous day. Lecture on essay structure and marking criteria. Practical, scenario-based groupwork and essay marking.
- Day 3**
 - Lecture on reflective writing- theory and structure. Students write a reflective essay. Group feedback on reflective essay writing. Exploring evidence-based practice in preparation for Year 2.

Findings

How would you rate your current level of understanding of ACADEMIC WRITING



How would you rate your current level of understanding of REFLECTIVE WRITING



As seen in the diagrams above, the students' perceive their understanding of academic and reflective writing to be better post workshops.

Recommendations

This was a pilot study, and as such further, more in-depth studies are recommended. Limitations were identified and require careful consideration.

Further studies need to consider the quantitative outcome of students' essay marks, and the correlation between their perception and reality.

The implementation of the study highlighted issues with the questionnaires that need to be rectified for future studies.

Building on the descriptive comparison method, it would be beneficial for observing statistical significance to undertake a paired analysis in future.

More emphasis on effective referencing techniques and use of evidence is required in the workshops.