Writing in engineering at Chalmers University of Technology

Integration, progression, peer assessment of disciplinary writing to promote learning

Magnus Gustafsson,
‘Academic Writing from bachelor to PhD’,
Bergen, October 7, 2010
Levers & Philosophy

Disciplinary discourse

Writing in the Disciplines
Genre theory
Activity theory
ESP practice
(Belcher, Cheng)

Employability

Constructive alignment
Bologna Agreement
Dublin descriptors
Graduate employability
(Cranmer)

Academic literacy

4 approaches
(Lea & Street; Barrie)
Learning to write
Writing to learn
(Young)
Departmental writing culture

Mobility
Activities

Integrated (yrs 1-3)

Electives (MSc, PhD)

Chalmers Open Communication Studio

Teachers, Industry

2-3 courses in all 9 BSc programmes
1-3 courses in 13 MSc programmes
~480 BSc thesis tutorials

English 60
English for engineers ~120
Technical writing ~30
Fiction ~15
Academic writing ~45

Teaching in English Workshops; Seminars, Comissioned courses
Technical communication for chemistry

• 6 ECTS credits over the 3 years
  1,5 Swedish with Industrial chemistry yr 1
  3,0 English proficiency (writing) partly with Separation technology 1, yr 2
  1,5 Technical communication with Separation technology 2, yr 3
Our assignment alignment

- Industrial chemistry and Separation technology
- Deep / surface learning: Engaging with and sharing knowledge, WTL/LTW, Peer assessment
- Awareness of situation, genre, terminology, structure, style, and audience

Technical communication

Language proficiency

Integrating content and language

Improving student learning

Swedish / English Style, grammar (written, oral)

One example!
Writing assignment alignment

• A timeline of sorts

  Commentary  Seminar 1  Exchange  Seminar 2  Project yr 3

• The informative-cum-argumentative seminar 2 text relies on the previous development of language proficiency and academic writing functions employed in for example the commentary, the first seminar text and the exchange

• The third year project (FSP011) relies heavily on the previous set of assignments
The clown of writing!

Learning to write → Writing → Product

Writing to learn

Process

Reporting: exams reports essays posters articles

Studying: (b)logs, journals notes, wikis e-mail

Learning through writing – alignment to promote learning
And...

on that happy note

I shall shut up!

Any immediate questions we need to address before the joint discussion?
References


Organisation & Funding

2009 budget of SEK550 000 funded through Committee of undergraduate education

Run by the Centre but staffed by students

12 peer tutors spring and fall 2009
8 hours/week and tutor
6 hours/week for director
Partial funding for premises

Separate Cross-campus
Non-programme
Non-credit
Compulsory?
Levers & Philosophy

History and context

- Changing student profile
- Bologna requirements
- Dean’s decision
- Coordinator complaints
- Pressure on electives

Strategies

- Peer learning (Boud et al)
- Peer tutoring (Gillespie & Lerner)
- Supplemental instruction
Activities 2008/2009

Fall 2008 Peer tutor seminar

- 12 peer students in seminar
- Understanding tutoring
- Mock tutorials
- Technical communication
- Projects

Fall 2008 – spring 2009

- 180 sessions
- Peer tutor projects (wiki, faq, student cultures, Programme surveys annotated links, flyers etc)
2008/2009
What did we learn?

Fall 2008 Peer tutor seminar

Fall 2008 – spring 2009

Two schools of tutor training
More proficiency work

Difficulty of getting the word out and students in...
Tutor profiles – more or less autonomous
Student / Organisation expectations
Tutor versatility!

2010
Where are we?
DUMP!
Budget 2009

Course budget: 80%
Commissioned: 8%
Faculty funding: 7%
Grants: 5%
Full overhead = -30%

Annual report 2008

4100 Students (12000)
105 Credits (ects)
11 Staff
10 papers/posters
3 PhD students
2 chapters
2 Internal reports
4 approaches conceptualising academic literacy

- Lea & Street 1998 (UK)
- Barrie 2006 (Aus)

Study skills
Academic socialisation
Academic literacy

Conceptions:
Precursor
Complement
Translation
Enabling
Do activities meet outcomes?

- Summary, commentary, presentation, seminars 1, 2
- Exchange, Report
- Technical communication
- Language proficiency
- Industrial chemistry and Separation technology
- Deep / surface learning
- Engaging with and sharing knowledge
- WTL/LTW
- Peer assessment
- Collaborative writing
- Mini-lectures??
- Individual writing
- Language Lab work
- EngOnline
- Swedish / English Style, grammar (written, oral)
- Integrating content and language
- Improving student learning
- Awareness of situation, genre, terminology, structure, style, and audience
- Improving student learning
- Integrating content and language
Does assessment meet outcomes?

- Summary, commentary, presentation, seminars 1, 2
- Exchange, Report

- Industrial chemistry and Separation technology

- Deep / surface learning
  - Engaging with and sharing knowledge
  - WTL/LTW
  - Peer assessment

- EngOnline, Lab work, Individual writing, collaborative writing, Peer assessment, Mini-lectures

- Awareness of situation, genre, terminology, structure, style, and audience

- Language proficiency

- Technical communication

- Integrating content and language

- Improving student learning

- Oral presentations

- Continuous assessment

- Peer assessment

- EngOnline exam

- Swedish / English Style, grammar (written, oral)
Welcome to Chalmers Open Communication Studio (CHOCS)!
What is Chalmers Open Communication Studio (CHOCS)?

The Studio is a resource for individual students or groups of students who want…

- to work on assignments in different courses.
- to improve their writing and oral presentation skills.
- a place to focus on language and communication.

CHOCS can give you the opportunity to become better writers and communicators within your field.
A typical 45 min session can help you to…

- sort your ideas and get started on a written assignment.
- revise a commented text.
- solve problems with
  - language
  - grammar
  - other related issues

Also, this is a great opportunity to get feedback from someone outside your field.
We can help you with...

• Lab reports
• Technical writing
• Written assignments
• Bachelor’s theses
• Master’s theses
• Oral presentations
• Poster presentations