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Title:

Hidden impacts of precarity on teaching: Effects on student support and feedback on academic writing

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Abstract:

Research on precarity in higher education has focused on how academics themselves experience this, but less is known about how staff precarity affects teaching and learning. This extended literature review explores how precarious working conditions affect practices aimed at supporting students' writing, such as teaching discipline-specific writing, providing feedback on drafts, and giving guidance about plagiarism and the use of AI. The most significant factors in academic malpractice relate to the quality of teaching and learning, but little time is spent inducting students into the norms of disciplinary knowledge creation, and this is exacerbated by precarious working conditions for subject lecturers. Teaching academic writing and referencing often falls to sessional English language or academic skills tutors, who lack time or disciplinary knowledge to deal with malpractice. These manifestations of precarity, affecting both casualised subject lecturers and academic support tutors, are likely to mean fewer opportunities for students to develop their writing skills and engage with knowledge in meaningful ways.

Introduction

Changes in higher education associated with neoliberalism and massification (Courtois and O'Keefe 2015; Tight 2000) over the past few decades have led to greater reliance on casually employed staff in many countries in the Global North, including the UK. Most universities have experienced increased student numbers overall as well as a higher proportion of international students. For example, in 1971, 9.9% of school leavers globally attended university, but this had grown to almost 33% on average by 2013 (Marginson 2016). According to Sá and Sabzalieva (2018), between 2000 and 2014, numbers of international students rose by 48% (in the USA), 81% (in England), 110% (in Australia), and 226% (in Canada). Despite a short-term drop associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, numbers have increased again, with the percentage of international students in the UK rising from 24% in 2017 to 31% in 2021 (HESA 2023). This expansion of higher education and internationalisation has led to larger class sizes and a student body with more diverse and complex needs. Universities in the UK have also seen changes in the ways they are funded,

receiving a smaller proportion of their funding from government block grants, and a larger proportion from tuition fees (Anderson 2016). The positioning of students as fee-paying customers may change their expectations around teaching, feedback and assessment (Heffernan 2018; Woodall, Hiller and Resnick 2014), yet at the same time, greater dependence on variable sources of income such as tuition fees means that universities strive to cut staffing costs by outsourcing much of their teaching to casually employed staff.

Across the higher education sector worldwide, casualisation of employment means that in many contexts the majority of teaching is done by staff employed on fixed-term, often teaching-only, contracts (McComb, Eather and Imig 2021). In the UK, University and College Union (UCU) reported in 2020 that 33% of academic staff were employed on fixed-term contracts, while 13% were employed on hourly-paid contracts, rising to 42% for teaching-only staff (UCU 2020). This concentration of teaching work in the hands of precariously employed staff indicates that teaching and learning are aspects of academic work where any effects of precarity may be felt particularly acutely. Despite this, relatively little is known about the interaction between precarity of employment and quality of teaching and learning in higher education.

Although the term *precarity* can refer to insecure or unpredictable aspects of the human condition (e.g. Butler 2016), it is most widely used in reference to precarious work; conditions of insecure or contingent employment that is temporary or hourly-paid, and over which the employee has little control regarding working hours and conditions. It is in this sense that we use the term *precarity* in this article, to refer to the working conditions of teaching staff on short-term or hourly-paid contracts.

Much of the research on precarity in higher education has focused on how this is experienced and negotiated by the academics who work in such conditions. Studies in Australia and the UK (Hattam and Weiler 2022; Leathwood and Read 2022; Lopes and Dewan 2014; Mason and Megoran 2021; Richardson, Wardale and Lord 2019; Spina et al. 2022) have shown that precariously employed academics experience material disadvantages such as job insecurity and lack of such benefits as pensions, sick leave, holiday pay and entitlement to redundancy pay. Heffernan's (2018) survey of sessional academics across Australia, New Zealand, North America, the UK and Ireland also found that they often lack opportunities for professional development. In Australia and the UK, studies have found that sessional academics experience feelings of invisibility (Hattam and Weiler 2022) and

illegitimacy (Read and Leathwood 2020). It seems likely that these conditions have an impact on the extent to which they can perform to the best of their abilities as well as implications for the quality of the support and feedback they can provide to students. Teaching about and providing feedback on writing is a particularly important element in supporting students' learning given the central role of writing in higher education. It is the link between this and precarious employment that is the focus of this literature review article.

As academic writing is a key feature of university life for students and one of the main ways their learning is assessed, it is crucial that they learn how to communicate their ideas through writing in ways that are valued in their discipline. To do this, they need to receive useful, constructive feedback. In his extensive meta-study synthesising the findings of more than 50,000 studies on what influences students' learning, Hattie (2009) found that feedback and student-teacher relationships were the two factors with the greatest positive influence. Although Hattie's study focused mainly on learning at school, research in higher education contexts has also claimed that feedback on assessment has a more significant impact on student satisfaction and achievement than any other aspect of teaching and learning (Bailey 2009; Merry et al. 2013; Richards, Bell and Dwyer 2017). It is therefore important to understand how feedback practices may be affected by the changes universities have experienced in recent decades which have created and exacerbated the precarious working conditions of many academic teaching staff.

This article reviews key literature in the area to explore how precarious working conditions play out in practices aimed at supporting students' writing, such as teaching discipline-specific writing skills, providing feedback on drafts, and giving guidance on using AI and avoiding plagiarism. First, we explore how factors such as time, digitalisation, physical space, and professional development opportunities can affect precariously employed academics' ability to develop strong relationships with students and provide them with appropriate support and feedback. In this we focus particularly on Anglophone countries in the Global North, where higher education tends to follow a market-driven model of governance (Lažetić 2019). We then discuss the importance of academic writing to students' learning, the central role that referencing and citation play in this, and the need for teaching staff to have adequate time and disciplinary knowledge to teach this effectively. We highlight how teachers' ability to provide formative feedback on writing is constrained by precarious working conditions and finally, we explore how such conditions also impact teachers' ability to deal with academic malpractice appropriately.

Structural conditions that constrain 'teaching excellence' in higher education

Expectations of 'teaching excellence' in higher education

It has been noted that universities increasingly rely on sessional staff for teaching subject content and academic skills (e.g., Parfitt 2018; Leathwood and Read 2022; Heffernan 2018). Sessional staff are often expected to seamlessly fit into these roles and perform to the same standard as established colleagues on permanent contracts, even though they are unlikely to receive the same level of integration and support (Smith and Coombe 2006; Heffernan 2018). Like permanent academic staff, they are also expected to deliver 'teaching excellence', a concept which remains highly controversial in academic circles (Skelton 2009). According to Skelton (2009) 'excellence' should be related to how teachers enact their personal teaching philosophies and realise their values and ideals in their practices.

However, it has also been established that academic work is shaped by the structural conditions of the workplace, including policies and procedures, material contexts such as office space, workload allocations, and departmental and institutional cultures, which determine what academics can and cannot achieve (Englund, Oloffson and Price 2018; Brew et al. 2018). Therefore, it seems that 'excellent' teaching is also facilitated by the material conditions of a work environment (Skelton 2009; Ashwin 2022). While these impact on all staff, it is likely that the effects on precariously employed academic staff will be even stronger. Given that staff employed on such contracts often play a pivotal role in supporting students with study skills and through feedback on their work (Knott et al. 2015) the need for provision of conducive working conditions for them to perform effectively seems obvious. Despite this, factors such as lack of time, space and staff support and development may all have a particular impact on how such staff can engage with their teaching and interact with their students.

Time and digitalisation

It has been shown that the sense of not having enough time impacts on the support relationships staff can develop with their students (Leathwood and Read, 2022; Lopes and Dewan, 2014). The pressure to 'keep up' and manage time effectively is seen as an individual's responsibility within a system that commodifies time as a resource which can be quantified and allocated (Walker 2009). Academic staff on precarious contracts are rarely consulted on the time allocated to their roles and are frequently in danger of being 'short-changed' in terms of time allocation for their duties (Lopes and Dewan 2014).

Staff on hourly paid contracts may also find that they are allocated work only when full-time staff workloads are full (Leathwood and Read 2022). As Leathwood and Read (2022) note, this resonates with a 'just-in time' economy which results in staff teaching courses that they have not had adequate time to prepare for and teach to the best of their ability. As well as last minute teaching schedules, staff may be given pre-existing materials to teach and not have time to develop these according to their own ideas and values. This hinders their innovation and creativity and results in a sense of dissatisfaction or even discomfort with their teaching (Leathwood and Read 2022; Lopes and Dewan 2014). Needless to say, such tensions are likely to impact on students' learning and the knowledge they take away from taught sessions.

Time restrictions also have implications for the ways in which casualised academic staff can support students. As noted by Lopes and Dewan (2014), there are numerous duties around actual contact time which are often not accounted for, such as reading formative drafts of work and holding student tutorials. Formative feedback, for instance, provides students with valuable input through which they can develop their work and gain higher grades (Awdry and Newton 2019). Providing high-quality feedback and supporting students with difficulties takes time (Hattam and Weiler 2022) and sometimes training by more senior members of staff (Smith and Coombe 2006). Furthermore, Awdry and Newton (2019) show that time allocated does not reflect how long it actually takes to write meaningful feedback for students to improve. If permanent staff are not allocated sufficient time for marking, those on hourly or temporary contracts may not receive any paid time at all for giving meaningful written feedback or support in office hours or one-to-one tutorials (Smith and Coomb 2006).

Staff therefore are faced with situations in which they may allocate time to support students, but when they realise they will not be paid for this, some may be reluctant to continue (Awdry and Newton 2019; Smith and Coombe 2006). Leathwood and Read's (2022) study exemplifies how such decisions may play out. For instance, some of their participants built support time into contact time and finished class a little early to accommodate individual meetings, while others gave their own time because they cared about students and wanted to support them. One effect, therefore, of precarity is that teaching staff on precarious contracts may not be able to provide the support they would like to because they are not allocated an appropriate number of hours to do so, or they may sacrifice their own time in order to satisfy their teaching principles.

Digitalisation has shaped academic work and impacted on how teaching and research roles are conducted (Woodcock 2018). While many of these impacts have been beneficial, technologies have also resulted in an increase in duties academics are expected to perform (Ross and Savage 2021). Indeed, it is generally taken for granted that academic work is centred around computer technology, and with advances in supposedly user-friendly software packages, elements of work once done mainly by administrative staff have been added to academic workloads (Ross and Savage 2021) including those on casualised contracts.

Technologies are also integral to the communication between academic teaching staff and students and, as pointed out by Woodcock (2018), these relationships are often mediated by digital technologies, for instance, by email and Teams messaging. While this accommodates more flexibility for staff in terms of being able to work on or off campus, it also brings an expectation of availability and speed (Woodward 2018). In effect, aided by technologies, academic staff are expected to manage and respond to more tasks in less time. This can be problematic for all staff, but especially difficult for those on hourly paid contracts who are only paid for certain hours but may feel pressured to respond to communication and demands outside of these (Ross and Savage 2021). As well as being unfair, it may be unfeasible for those juggling different jobs. This is illustrated by Courtois and O'Keefe (2015) in a study of universities in Ireland, where some staff had other jobs, and therefore could not always respond immediately to student (and other) queries.

Indeed, in contexts such as the UK, students as consumers have come to demand certain levels of attention and service (Ross and Savage, 2021). This expectation of availability is likely to impact on the relationships hourly-paid staff can build with students and the support they offer. However, if students are not satisfied with the support they receive, it can reflect negatively on the teaching staff. Linked to this, student expectations of gaining higher grades, or what Ross and Savage (2021, 507) refer to as "I paid for my A" adds to the pressure on teaching staff. In particular, students may demand more feedback and require additional support outside of teaching hours, which often means that staff spend time offering emotional support as well academic guidance (Ross and Savage 2021). As teaching staff on precarious contracts are always concerned about being re-hired each year (Megoran and Mason 2020), they are likely to be under considerable pressure to demonstrate student satisfaction on their courses and therefore offer their unpaid time to do this.

Lack of space and material resources

In order to provide student support, academic staff also require office space to hold tutorials in a quiet and confidential environment. Pedagogical spaces have been shown to have a considerable effect on students' sense of security, trust and belonging in academic environments (Motta and Bennett 2018). In addition, providing space for meetings outside of class enables lecturers to get to know their students (Leathwood and Read 2022) which in turn nurtures the development of caring relationships of benefit to both students and staff (Schrock 2020). However, some studies have shown that academics on precarious contracts may not be given such office space in which to base themselves (Leathwood and Read 2022; Lopes and Dewan 2014) and are expected to find alternative spaces for student tutorials. This often results in meetings being held in public spaces, such as coffee shops (Leathwood and Read 2022) which has implications for confidentiality, relationship building and discussing sensitive issues in comfort. In their study, Lopes and Dewan (2014) also report that lack of an office base meant that some staff had to carry all their belongings with them and were not even allocated a pigeonhole. Related to the issue of office space, is access to material resources such as printing and photocopying. Lopes and Dewan (2014) also reported that some staff paid for their own photocopying and printing while other staff were automatically provided with such resources. Such acts further demonstrate the marginalisation of sessional staff within certain institutions and highlights the significance of resources integral to academic work.

Lack of support

In addition to the issues discussed so far, access to continuing professional development (CPD) may be another factor restricting the teaching capability of staff on precarious contracts (McComb, Eather and Imig 2021). In their study set in Australia, Hattam and Weiler (2022) show that while much of the study skills teaching and support is done by sessional staff on casual or temporary contracts, there are few opportunities in the workplace to support their development. As their participants indicated, such conditions lead to feelings of insecurity, being undermined and undervalued. In addition, sessional teachers are rarely provided with CPD that would help them to enhance their teaching skills and build their expertise in their field. Indeed, as pointed out by Heffernan (2018), many sessional academic teaching staff have grown used to this lack of support and have no expectation of such opportunities. This clearly has implications for their teaching, the quality of lessons and ultimately student achievement (McComb, Eather and Imig 2021). In view of this, Hattam and Weiler (2022) argue that paid CPD should be integrated into sessional staff remuneration

and provided as a standard part of their contract. Given the importance of their role in terms of student support, this would seem a wise investment on the part of universities.

As discussed at the beginning of this section, universities are keen to promote the ambiguous concept of 'teaching excellence' among their staff and to implement teaching award schemes to showcase 'excellent teaching'. However, as Skelton (2009) points out, it would be more productive for both academic staff and students if universities invested instead in developing *excellent teaching conditions* in which academic staff would have the time, resources and support to focus on providing quality teaching thus enhancing the learning experiences of their students.

The importance of supporting academic writing development at university

While it is clear that lack of time, space and access to support in the form of CPD are likely to affect the quality of teaching that sessional staff can provide, less is known about how such working conditions play out specifically in practices aimed at supporting students' writing. Several studies from the USA have found that academics on adjunct (sessional) contracts tend to award higher grades when marking students' work (Kezim, Pariseau and Quinn 2005; Moore and Trahan 1998; Sonner 2000; Tashchian, Kalamas Hedden and Forrester 2022) in part because the renewal of their contract might depend on receiving positive student evaluations. While these findings are concerning, it is also important to consider how we support students with academic writing before they reach the point of summative assessment. To enable students to improve the writing through which their learning is assessed, students need guidance on *how* to engage with knowledge through writing and they need teachers who can provide formative feedback as part of that process. This includes understanding the uniquely intertextual nature of academic writing and how this relates to knowledge creation.

Academic writing is one of the main ways that university students demonstrate and are assessed on their learning; it is a high-stakes activity for them and one that they need support with. Hirvela and Belcher (2021) for example, have argued that argumentative writing is essential for success across various disciplines, being one of the most common genres for assessment in higher education (Nesi and Gardner 2012). Despite this, argumentative writing has been found to be rather neglected in secondary school teaching around the world (Graham 2019). Academic writing is not only highly consequential for students, but also differs in several important respects from other forms of writing typically

encountered outside of academia, meaning that students new to university are likely to be unfamiliar with many of its conventions and will need time to learn these.

One unique aspect of academic writing is that it is explicitly intertextual. First, it is expected that an academic text will draw heavily on reading of source material and, second, this reading must be signalled through referencing. These concepts may be new to students from certain cultures who may not have learned about referencing and citation in school (Liu et al. 2016). Even students from Anglophone countries may be wholly or partly unfamiliar with referencing. Chanock (2008), for example, found that her student participants had been taught little about referencing in secondary school, and academics in Gravett and Kinchin's (2021, 381) UK-based study described referencing as 'completely new' to their students.

It is important to note that referencing is not simply, or even primarily, about avoiding plagiarism but about the way knowledge is valued and communicated. In academia, knowledge claims must be grounded in evidence and arguments built around these. Students must therefore learn which types of sources are appropriate to be cited, what constitutes a valid claim to knowledge, what rhetorical purposes citations can serve, and what is considered common knowledge not requiring citation. None of this can be taught quickly or in isolation from the epistemic norms of the discipline, as they are not easily transferrable technical skills. To understand the accepted ways of talking about and writing about existing and new knowledge, students need to spend time with members of their disciplinary community, typically their tutors, doing exactly that: talking and writing about knowledge claims. For example, in a study investigating the application of an academic literacies model for developing writing in two British universities, Lea and Street (2006) reported that interaction, both with other students and with tutors, was fundamental to enabling students to understand the types of knowledge they would need in higher education. Recent research has critiqued the assumption that any ideal way of providing feedback exists independent of the discipline (Esterhazy 2018; Gravett 2022). Specifically, Gravett (2022) contends that research on feedback often focuses its cognitive or affective dimensions, which treats feedback as a neutral, decontextualised practice. In fact, as one aspect of teaching and learning, feedback is a situated, relational process that is influenced by the conventions of the discipline (Esterhazy 2018) and shaped by relationships between students and staff. These relationships are themselves subject to asymmetrical relationships of power, availability of resources, including time, space, access to and engagement with digital resources. These, as discussed above, can interact with precarity to hinder the ability of staff with precarious

contracts to provide high quality feedback on writing. Understanding feedback as relational and discipline-specific also underlines the need for writing tutors to have disciplinary knowledge.

Issues in supporting students' writing

Learning about academic writing and how to use source material effectively is such a complex and time-consuming process that one might expect universities to invest significant time and effort in supporting students to develop as academic writers. The reality is, however, that academic writing is not explicitly taught on many degree programmes (Gravett and Kinchin 2021) due to a perceived lack of time on subject modules (Jaidev and Chan 2018), expertise or willingness on the part of subject lecturers to teach academic writing (Hallett 2021; McGrath, Negretti and Nicholls 2019; Olsson et al. 2021). This means that supporting students with academic writing and referencing skills often falls to casualised sessional staff such as English language or academic skills tutors (Crossman 2022). In some cases, these staff are employed directly by profit-making companies rather than the university itself, with salaries lower than those of permanent contracts (Holmwood and Servós 2019). This has implications for the extent to which writing and referencing can be contextualised, the degree to which the needs of international students can be taken into account, and the level of formative feedback that can be provided.

Decontextualised academic skills teaching

English language and academic skills tutors tend to be trained in linguistics or teaching English to speakers of other languages rather than being disciplinary insiders. This means that their ability to engage students in discussion about their writing that is grounded in the epistemological norms of knowledge creation may be limited unless they are provided with appropriate support or training in their students' disciplines. In the absence of such training, sessional staff may have to choose between 'muddling through' with the knowledge they have or spending unpaid hours researching and preparing new materials. Even if they try their best by focusing on the various formatting conventions for different referencing systems, this is likely to be challenging for both teachers and students. For example, a writing support tutor may well be qualified in applied linguistics or an education-related discipline, where Harvard, APA or other forms of so-called 'name-date' referencing systems are common, but teaching students from diverse fields such as law, which use systems like OSCOLA (the Oxford University Standard for the Citation of Legal Authorities), involving superscript

numbering and footnotes. These are very different systems and sessional staff may not be provided with teaching materials, so they face an additional burden of trying to learn the requirements of the new system. As a result, the students may be learning about referencing in a rather impoverished way, from a teacher who is unfamiliar with the epistemic norms that underpin these practices.

Even if a student follows citation systems as instructed by a teacher, their writing might still not fully meet the expectations of their subject lecturers since referencing norms also vary across disciplines in other ways. For example, epistemic norms in different disciplines means that academic writing can vary in terms of where citations typically occur within a text or the extent to which quoting directly is expected (Shi 2012). Shi also found that academics in science and arts disciplines held different views about how and why translated text should be acknowledged, or whether information in the introduction of a paper required citation to the same extent as that in other sections. This may lead to situations where sessional staff overlook inappropriate referencing that students' subject lecturers would frown upon. A decontextualised approach to teaching referencing is also likely to emphasise the avoidance of plagiarism at the expense of deeper understanding of the rhetorical role source material plays in knowledge creation. Asking students to follow referencing rules or teaching them the mechanical aspects of referencing without discussing why these norms exist is unlikely to enable them to write effectively or use source material in a meaningful way to inform their own argument (McCulloch and Indrarathne 2023; McCulloch 2012).

The need for effective formative feedback

Another important element of learning to write well is receiving formative feedback. Lea and Street (2006) highlighted the importance of feedback on writing in facilitating the kinds of interaction that enable students to engage with how knowledge is valued in their discipline. If feedback is to be effective, it should be a two-way process where students are supported to make sense of the feedback and use it improve their own writing, as well as potentially their study strategies and approach to the task (Henderson et al. 2019). The conceptualisation of feedback as a process is important because studies show that students learn through a process of drafting, receiving feedback and re-drafting, and that it takes time to build confidence and self-efficacy (Gonzalez and Donnelly 2022). These aspects of developing academic literacy happen, in the main, outside class time after a piece of writing has been done. Feedback on

draft work or discussion of written feedback is often given on a one-to-one basis in academics' office hours, which has implications for the ability of precariously employed teaching staff to support students appropriately, since, as noted above, they may not have access to office space and may not be paid for holding office hours.

Henderson et al. (2019) noted that good feedback is facilitated in part by institutional cultures and not simply through individuals' practices. They found, for example, that providing teaching staff with examples of high-quality feedback, training and resources could inculcate good practice. However, they also noted that these measures influenced feedback practices over time rather than having an immediate effect. Precarious employment could therefore limit a team's capability for establishing a culture of effective feedback since staff need to be involved for long enough to go through the whole cycle of reflecting on their own practice, attending and reflecting on CPD activities, then engaging in forward planning to implement and evaluate changes. Many sessional teaching staff are paid only for the hours they teach or find that their contract ends on the day of their last class, making such reflexive practice difficult.

The impact of precarity on students' academic malpractice

As discussed above, many aspects of precarious working conditions for staff mitigate against students being provided with adequate support and feedback for academic writing. These conditions may mean that students end up struggling with writing, feeling unsure what is expected of them, or falling behind with assignments. Given that most genres of writing at university require students to draw on multiple external sources of reading, this lack of support puts them at risk of submitting work that fails to meet the required standards in terms of the way source material is used and referenced, whether intentionally or unintentionally, or submitting work produced by AI (artificial intelligence).

Many empirical studies have shown that students frequently have only partial understanding of how to do referencing (McCulloch and Indrarathne 2023; Shi 2010; Li and Casanave 2012), which can lead them to commit what is sometimes called 'unintentional plagiarism' (Sun and Hu 2020). Others have shown that lack of understanding of the rhetorical purpose of citation in the creation of disciplinary knowledge is associated with poor ability to paraphrase (Thompson, Morton and Storch 2013), depending too heavily on direct quotation (Keck 2014) or using sources uncritically (Wette 2017). Such aspects of academic writing are intertwined with issues of identity and authorial voice and take time to

develop. If they do not benefit from the time spent with tutors discussing their writing and adequate guidance on these matters, students may unintentionally plagiarise or be tempted to commit other forms of academic malpractice such as commissioning work or using AI in inappropriate ways. If students are struggling with writing, they may be tempted to use AI tools such as ChatGPT. This can be done ethically and effectively to generate ideas or provide a starting point for an assignment (Steele 2023), but for this to happen, teaching staff need to guide students, and need to be confident in their knowledge of ChatGPT. This requires an investment of time, both for building up one's own knowledge and for passing this on to students. Those on precarious contracts may be unable to invest the extra time needed additional to contracted hours.

Plagiarism, particularly if it is considered to be intentional, and inappropriate use of AI are seen as serious threats to knowledge creation and the penalties can be severe. Students need tutors who can spend time explaining this and supporting students on how best to use AI and what its limitations are. Texts produced by ChatGPT, for example, may appear to address a given topic, but with closer scrutiny may lack critical analysis and be weak in terms of presenting a coherent argument as required for academic work (Dwivedi et al. 2023). Furthermore, Chat GPT typically reproduces text without reliable citation and unless more closely scrutinized this could lead to issues of plagiarism (Van Dis et al. 2023).

Evidence suggests that the most significant causal factors in academic malpractice relate to the quality of teaching and learning. For example, Bretag et al. (2019), in a large survey of university students in Australia, found that the most significant variable associated with cheating was dissatisfaction with the teaching and learning environment. Specifically, students who reported having cheated also reported lower agreement that they received sufficient feedback on their work and that they understood assignment requirements. This underlines the importance of support and input from tutors in nurturing good academic practices.

As discussed above, institutional culture plays a role in facilitating excellence in teaching and feedback, but it can also have negative effects where staff feel undervalued and excluded. There can be relatively high turnover of academic staff on precarious contracts (Heffernan 2018; McComb, Eather and Imig 2021) which can make it difficult to establish a culture of academic integrity within an institution. This can affect staff and students alike and make malpractice more likely. Sessional lecturers employed on temporary contracts or on a part-time basis may not have the opportunity to develop strong relationships with their

students and therefore establish clear expectations around academic integrity. Precariously employed staff may only see students for a single semester, and as such may not be able to get to know their own students and nurture their development. Henderson et al. (2019) found that positive staff-student relationships were one of the conditions that enabled effective feedback, but noted the importance of continuity so that teaching staff were able to monitor students' progress over several assessments. If staff and students only know each other for a short time, both may feel less invested in the relationship. Students may feel less connected to an institution or its values if they cannot build stable relationships with their tutors, which can make it easier for them to engage in plagiarism.

Related to the issue of continuity of relationships is the question of the ability of precariously employed staff to identify or deal with cases of plagiarism or malpractice. Firstly, sessional and temporary staff may need more training in these matters. Research indicates that sessional staff lack adequate CPD in general, and they do not feel that the training they receive is relevant to them (Heffernan 2018). Richardson, Wardale and Lord (2019) for example, interviewed 15 sessional staff in business schools in Australia and found that even if CPD was offered, staff could not always attend since they were teaching at that time, or they were not paid for attending training sessions. Evidence also suggests that precariously employed staff lack knowledge of institutional policies and procedures on academic malpractice. Smith and Coombe (2006) conducted interviews, focus groups and a survey of both sessional and permanent staff in Australia and found that sessional staff lacked knowledge in several areas that affected their marking of written work. For example, they were unfamiliar with plagiarism policies, the typical distribution of grades, whether they could fail students and what the implications of this would be. They received very little training and, in some cases, did not receive a marking rubric or marking criteria (Smith and Coombe 2006). AI tools such as ChatGPT have also raised complex new issues for tutors to deal with when marking, since in order to mark written assignments, they need to understand how ChatGPT works and how to identify where it has been used in written assignments. In many institutions to date, such guidelines remain unclear and while tools such as Turnitin offer AI detection, their accuracy seems uncertain (Alimardini and Jane 2023). Using AI detection is thus an additional step when marking assignments making the process potentially more time consuming. There is a danger, therefore, that for those on temporary or hourly paid contracts this investment of time may be outside of paid hours, unless they are included in staff training sessions and renumerated accordingly.

Precariously employed teaching staff are often not provided with regular support, are not fully integrated into the academic community in the department and may not be paid to attend or even invited to staff meetings where information about academic integrity and plagiarism policies is shared (Lopes and Dewan 2014). It is unsurprising, given these working conditions, that such staff are unsure how to respond to instances of suspected malpractice.

Even if precariously employed staff know what they should do about instances of plagiarism, AI use or other malpractice in their students' writing, they may lack the motivation or time to take action. Sessional staff may feel stressed or burnt-out or have a feeling of being undervalued. Heffernan (2018) and Richardson, Wardale and Lord (2019), for example, found that feelings of being marginalised and disrespected were commonplace. Such feelings can create a negative work environment, which may in turn engender lower motivation to spend time checking written work for plagiarism. In a survey of more than a hundred casually employed staff in Australia, Sonner (2000) found that adjunct faculty felt less sense of obligation than securely employed staff to detect and deal with malpractice when it came to academic integrity**.**

Checking written work for plagiarism or AI use, and following up if it is detected, are extremely time-consuming, and although all academics experience time pressure, these pressures may be particularly acute for precariously employed teachers. If staff are overworked or juggling several different posts, they may be unable to dedicate as much time and attention to detecting plagiarism as permanent staff, which can lead to poor practices regarding referencing and using source material being tolerated. For example, the precarious academics in Lopes and Dewan's (2014) study reported reducing the time they spent checking students' written work for plagiarism because they were not paid for it. Sessional staff are typically paid either per hour or per paper for marking written work, but calculations of workload seldom allow for the fact that some papers take significantly longer to mark because one must scrutinise Turnitin reports, possibly run suspect phrases through search engines, and, if malpractice is suspected, escalate the matter to an academic integrity lead or similar. In many universities, dealing with malpractice such as plagiarism or AI use entails several emails and at least one meeting between the academic integrity team, the student and the tutor to discuss the case, followed by repeated opportunities to resubmit work. This admin burden, as well as follow-up tutorials or feedback to help the student to re-draft work in a more appropriate way falls to tutors partly because universities may be reluctant to lose

students. Their income is dependent on students' tuition fees and performance in league tables is linked to retention, among other factors, which means that they go to some lengths to avoid failing students. This has implications for sessional staff, who may be faced with the choice of using their own time and making what Richardson, Wardale and Lord (2019, 629) call 'discretionary effort' or deciding to turn a blind eye.

Concluding comments

The massification and market-driven model that has been applied to higher education particularly in Global North and Anglophone countries have led to increased precarity for many academic teaching staff and this inevitably has knock-on effects for the quality of teaching and learning at university. This is not to imply that the precariously employed staff do not teach well. Many sessional and temporary teaching staff do an excellent job of facilitating student learning, often through subsidising their own time. However, particularly when it comes to providing constructive formative feedback on academic writing, which is complex, discipline specific, and very time consuming, precarious working conditions do hamper their ability to do their best work and increase the potential for malpractice by students. Conditions such as lack of time, physical space, CPD and support (including training) curtail teachers' ability to spend the time with students that is so important in enabling them to discuss ideas and engage with potentially transformative knowledge (Ashwin 2016). Furthermore, precarious working conditions operate to the detriment of high-quality teaching about academic writing, which would include embedding writing within its disciplinary context and foregrounding the role of source material in advancing knowledge claims rather than focusing on efforts to detect and punish plagiarism.

The teaching of writing lies at the heart of what it means to engage with knowledge in meaningful ways. An understanding of both higher education as a whole and of academic writing specifically as primarily developmental and relational processes rather than 'products' would be more fruitful for facilitating students' sense of agency and identity in their writing, which in turn may militate against the temptation to engage in malpractice. Students need to learn about the epistemic processes through which knowledge is accumulated (McKenna and Boughey 2022), which requires discipline-specific scaffolded support, including opportunities to discuss ideas with their tutors and receive constructive developmental feedback on their writing.

Likewise, a conceptualisation of the teaching of academic writing as a collective endeavour enabled by supportive working conditions may help universities to see the importance of supporting their staff to provide such feedback and guidance on writing. Appropriate CPD can counter feelings of marginalisation (Heffernan 2018) and strengthen teacher identity (van Lankveld et al. 2017) so it is important that precariously employed staff, who are more likely to feel undervalued, are included in development opportunities.

This article contributes to an understanding of the ways that the structural conditions of precarious employment constrain the kinds of support, feedback and guidance academics and writing tutors can give to students regarding their writing. It has shed light on the limited extent to which discipline-specific writing skills can be taught in conditions of precarity and the impact of this on the provision of formative feedback on draft writing and the ways students learn to use source material. These factors may together contribute to a climate in which malpractice becomes more likely.

6,739 words (excluding references)

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