



## TeachECONference2021 Session: Teaching Economists to Write – Q&A

In this document we summarise the discussion around the topics that arose in the Zoom Q&A and chat. The presenters have jointly contributed to this write-up which we hope is useful to those who attended and those who are picking up the ideas at a later date.

### Panel

Chair: Carlos Cortinhas (University of Exeter)

### Speakers:

- Janice Kinghorn (Miami University), Ling Shao (Miami University)
- Paul Winghart (University of Northwestern – St Paul)
- Anthony Underwood (Dickinson College)

### 1. Incorporating Writing to Learn in an Economics Curriculum

Speaker: Janice Kinghorn (Miami University), Ling Shao (Miami University)

Q1) Do you have students provide feedback to each other on their writing?

Ling Shao: I usually don't do peer review in my large intro classes because the writing assignments are short and once and done. In my upper-level class, I sometimes require students in the same group to review and provide feedback on their teammates writing. My understanding from the literature is anonymous peer review seems to generate more candid and useful feedback than otherwise.

Q2) In intermediate micro, on exams & assignments I ask for a lot of text explanations & explained examples, and struggle to get students to see when they are not making a clear and complete argument. Do you have any advice about how to communicate that these are objective values in writing, i.e. to get students to not think "I just didn't say it the way you wanted me to"?

Ling Shao: I think it takes a lot of practice for most students to be able to make logical and complete arguments. Probably you can be more explicit about the value of clarity and thoroughness when you present micro theories and models. In addition, offer some practice problems in class for students to work on and invite the whole class to evaluate select responses



together. Seeing a variety of good and bad responses should help students improve their own thinking and writing.

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### 3. Writing in the Discipline and Reproducible Methods: a process-oriented approach to teaching empirical undergraduate economics research

Speaker: Anthony Underwood (Dickinson College)

Co-author: Emily Marshall (Dickinson College)

Project Resources: <https://blogs.dickinson.edu/underwood/teaching-resources/>

Published Paper: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00220485.2018.1551100>

Q1) Do you think fourth-year honours theses should be graded in the same way as the projects in your class, i.e. with a much higher weight on process elements than on the final product?

Anthony: I think so, in part because the final project will ultimately be much improved. In my course, my "easiest" grading is the final paper since they are so polished by then.

Q2) Which year do you target for this work? And do you provide them with different research questions and data?

Anthony: Thanks. Good question. These are mostly juniors and seniors (and have taken basic econometrics as a prerequisite). I do not provide data and questions, but give them many potential data sources and spend a day on how to think of effective research question.