Success in Academic Writing
Trevor Day
Palgrave Macmillan (2013)
Review by Carol Matthews

When this book landed on my desk I wondered ‘Do we really need to add yet another student guide to academic writing to the mountain of such books?’ Once I began reading I realised what an accessible and useful guide to academic writing this is. Its table of contents supplies all the chapters one expects; on researching, note-taking, planning, drafting and referencing. Nothing remarkable there. The book is remarkable, however, in two ways: accessibility and the inclusion in chapter two of Day’s own IPACE method of understanding how to approach writing an assignment, developed in his role of writing coach.

The book’s accessibility resides firstly in its conversational yet rigorous tone. Intended for undergraduates, it is designed to read more like a chat with a tutor than a formal text book. Success in Academic Writing can be read from cover to cover or ‘dipped into’ as the reader chooses; the stipulation being that one reads chapter one first. The processes of writing are related in clear, knowledgeable language. What really sets this guide apart from the rest of that mountain is Day’s IPACE practical method of preparation for written assignments. Developed from Hickman and Jacobson’s SPACE model of 1997, IPACE (identity, purpose, audience, code and experience) is a method of establishing authorial ‘voice’ by identifying the reasons for writing any particular task, what is being written, by and for whom in a very practical and innovative exercise.

Whether clarifying the reasons for formal academic writing, its nature and conventions, or explaining critical thinking and the art of composition, Day’s practical experience and craftsmanship combine to make this a book that students and academics alike can return to time and again and never fail to learn something or find inspiration. Do we really another guide to academic writing? In short: in this case, yes, we definitely do.