



Academic writing skills for today's competitive professional environments

Deborah Nováková
Head, CERGE-EI Academic Skills Center

Academic writing: a growing field of study

Writing (and speaking) skills were overlooked in the past, especially at graduate and post graduate levels.

Globalization – more international students studying in Anglophone countries – brought more attention.

More attention led to more research in the field, and nearly all western university students now have the resources to produce higher quality texts (oral and written) on a broad scale. This applies to native and non-native speakers of English.



The International Writing Centers Association (2013) counts that there are now over 1,000 Centers like ours in U.S. and Canadian universities – and equal numbers in the U.K.

The point is not that we are few among many; the point is that we are extremely important to help prepare our students for today's international job market, where they must compete with students who have had Academic Writing training.

<http://writingcenters.org/>



Size and scope

More than 300
students from over 30
countries study at CERGE-EI every year.



Highly competitive academic environment = growing
specialized expertise in academic writing teachers

CERGE-EI Academic Skills Center Faculty:

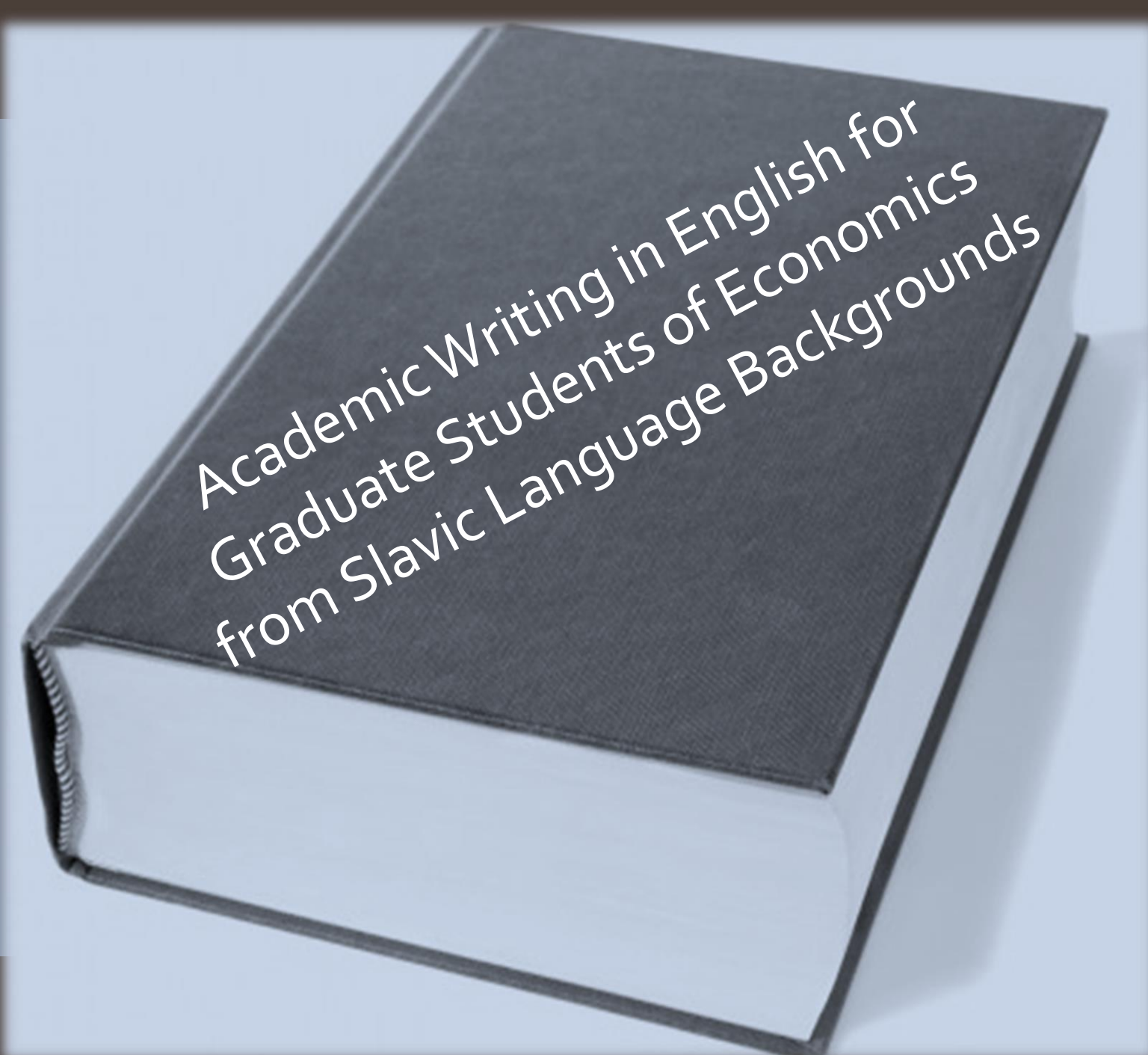
Related Master's degrees from Western universities

Academic interests and experience

- What is 'academic writing?'
- The answer will be different for every institution and every faculty.

In our CERGE-EI case: graduate students of Economics

Provide courses and individual instruction to help intermediate and advanced writers and speakers of English structure complex data, develop and express extended arguments, and position their work as a contribution to ongoing research and debate in their field.



- Is there a textbook?
- What would the title of 'your' textbook be?

Literature related to our CERGE-EI Academic Writing Program:

- Economics Rhetoric
- Economics Education
- General English Language Writing
- Applied Economics, especially for Science Writing and First Language Influence

- The American Economic Review. Available at: <https://www.aeaweb.org/journals/aer>
- Cochrane, J. (2005) Writing Tips for PhD Students. University of Chicago
- Englander, K. (2014) Writing and Publishing Science Research Papers in English.
 - Mankiw, G. (2006) Random Observations for Students of Economics: How to Write Well.
 - McCloskey, D. (2000) Economical Writing, Waveland Press, Illinois.

A few examples of literature we refer to

Our Core Courses

- Academic Writing 1
- Academic Writing 2
- Combined Skills (presentation of a paper)

Courses are mandatory, impact student GPA, linked to content study

Our Core Courses

- Usually 12-14 students per class
- Each student writes on his/her own choice of topic in the field of Economics (more challenging for the teachers, but more meaningful for the students)

Focus on
setting
reasonable
standards
balanced with
an individual
approach

- The Academic Skills Center faculty work to define reasonable, consistent standards for each graded writing task that apply to all students on a course.
- We balance this by providing individual feedback in consultations and by providing detailed feedback on student papers.



Students are responsible for the quality of their writing

In consultations, students are expected to arrive with questions prepared. They are responsible for identifying where they think their writing needs improvement.

We do not read or correct draft work for them.

Academic
Writing 1:
Expressing
Analysis

Genre Awareness

We consider ways that writing in this context differs from other types of writing and from writing at the Master's and undergraduate level.

We explicitly consider ways formal writing in English differs from formal writing in Slavic languages.

Academic Writing 1

We study text organization, and
constructing effective introductions and
conclusions.

Academic Writing 1

We highlight language for expressing analysis and framing stances towards the work of other writers.

Academic Writing 1

Language Accuracy

Special attention is paid to (avoiding) common
English errors

Academic
Writing 2:
Writing about
one's own new
ideas

- Academic Position Paper Task
- Synthesizing one's own new idea/s into existing literature
- Expressing 'confident uncertainty'

Academic Writing 2

- Students process their writing through continuing revision of draft work from the idea stages to the final version, in response to peer and instructor feedback on draft texts.

Academic Writing 2

- The course also includes specialized workshops on articles (a, an, the), punctuation, and writing abstracts.

Combined
Skills:

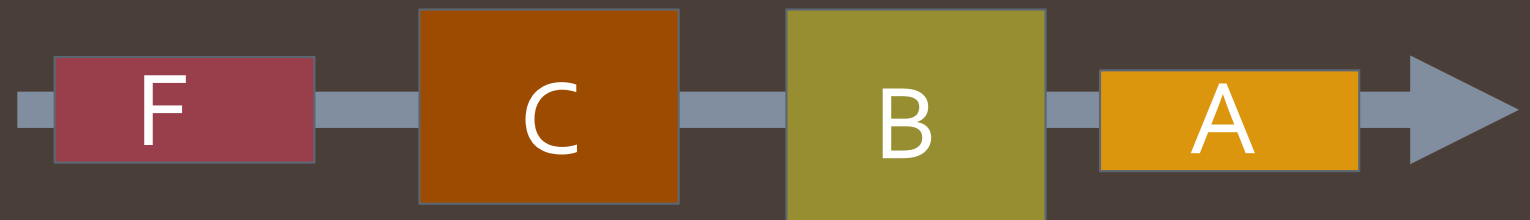
Write and
present a
research
proposal

- Individual, may collaborate with Economics professors through the process.
- Student-led classes and explicit presentation practice that considers the differences between teaching and presenting, and the challenges of presenting to a neutral (not necessarily friendly) audience.

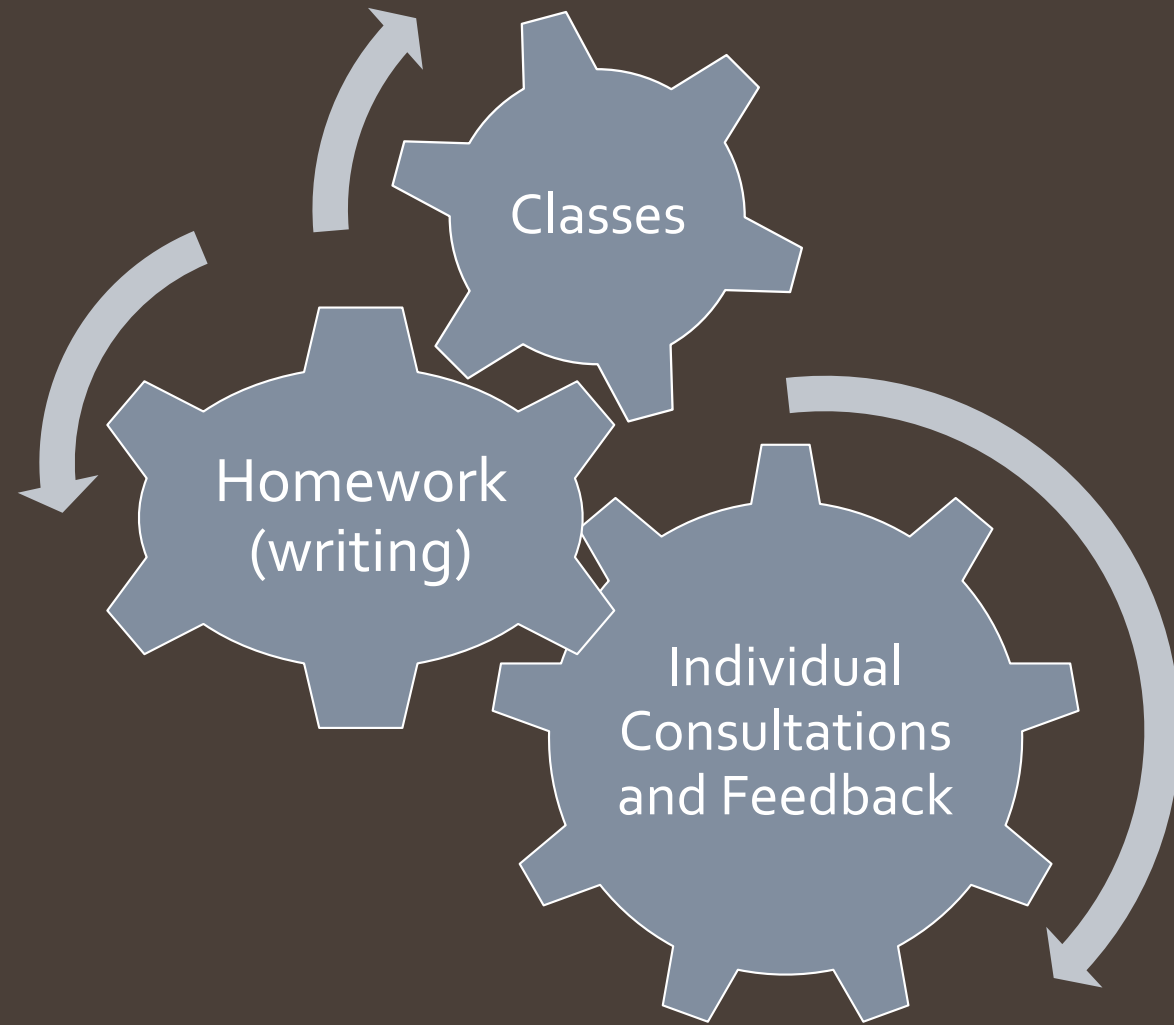
What students
have to do to
pass

Produce specific writing tasks to a reasonable
standard, applying the main principles taught
on the course.

For Combined Skills, there is also a graded
presentation.

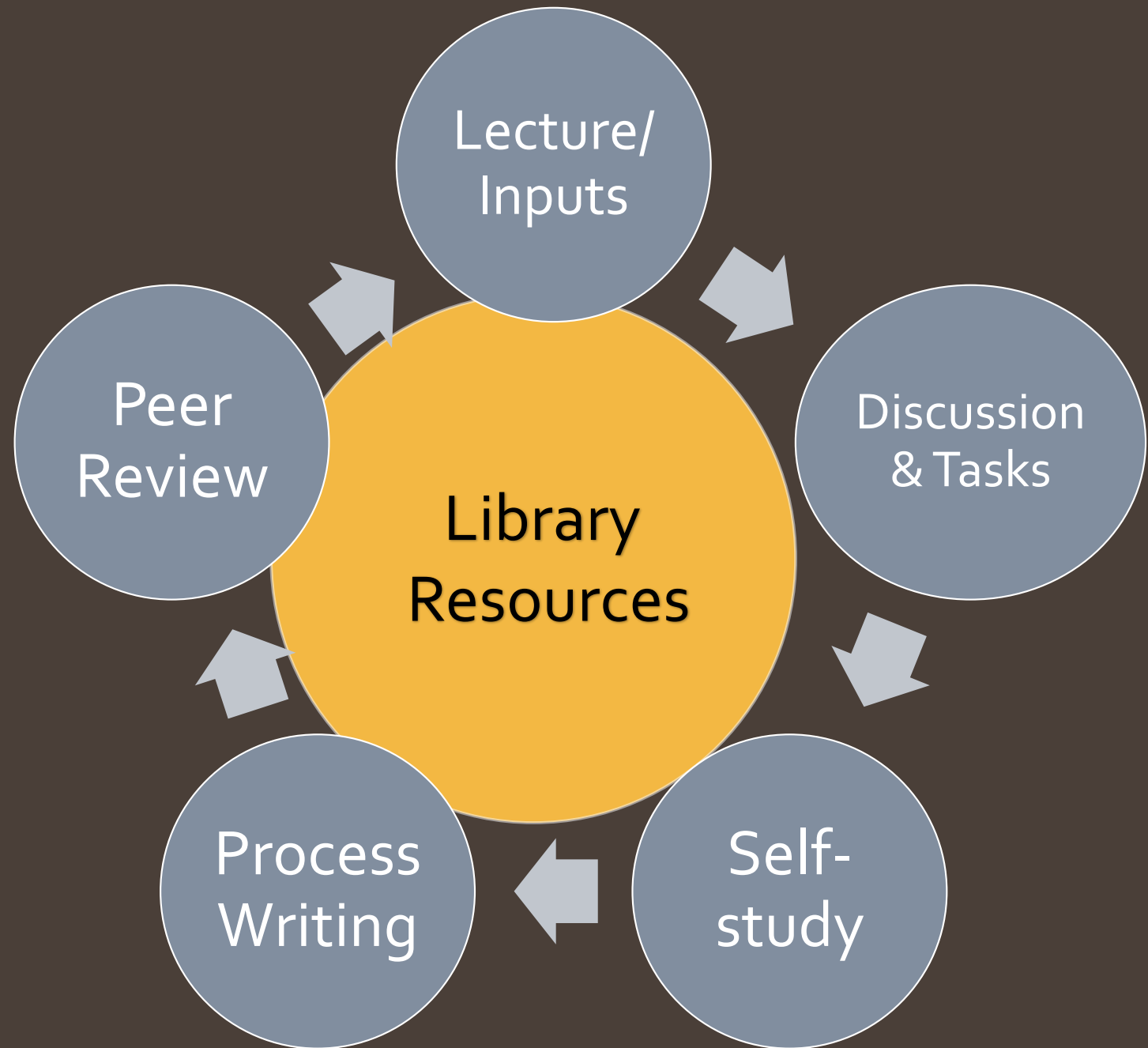


Our main
learning
channels



Library Workshops

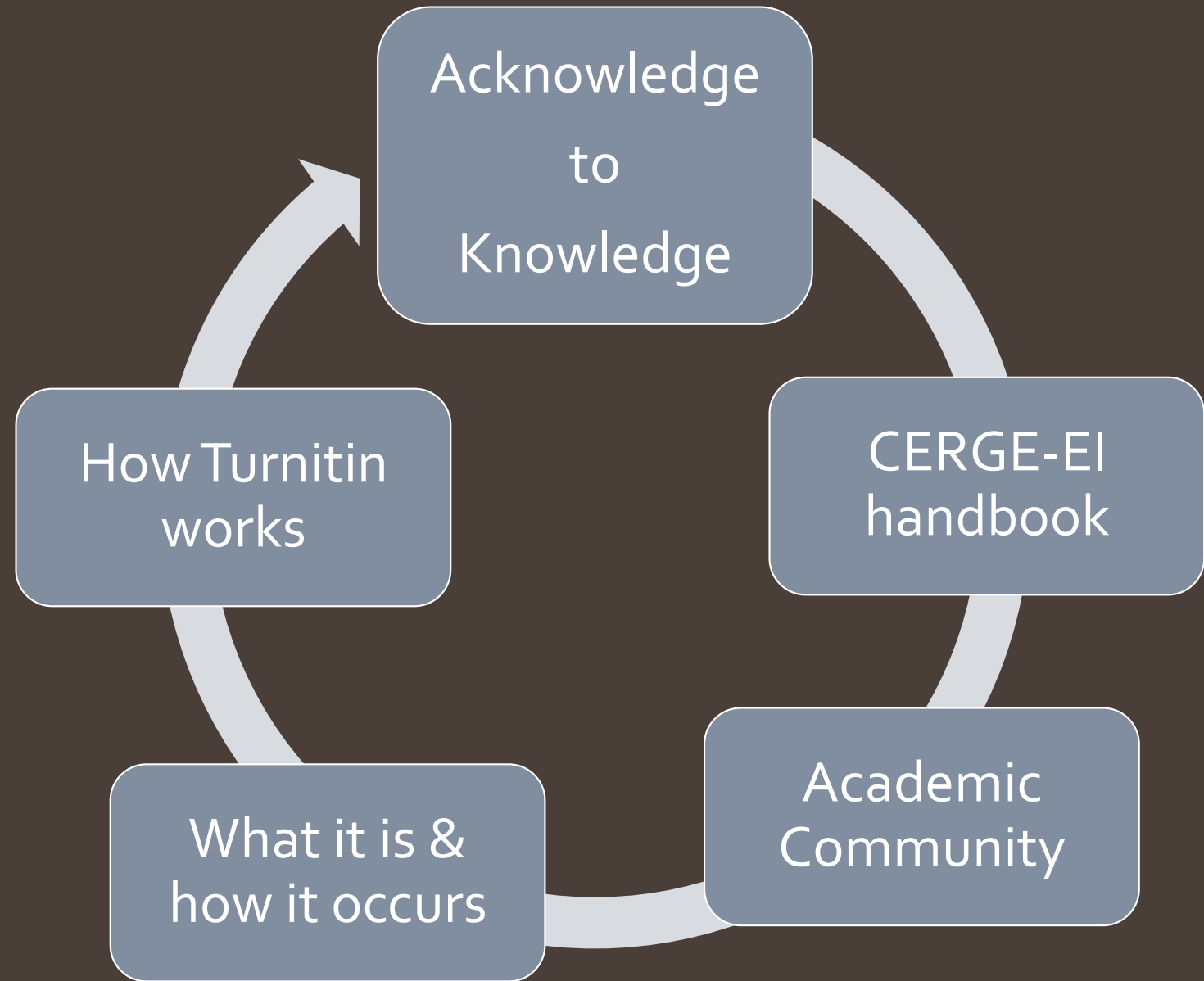
Our main lesson platforms



Our main aids

Learning is supported by a Moodle platform
and use of Turnitin as a teaching tool.

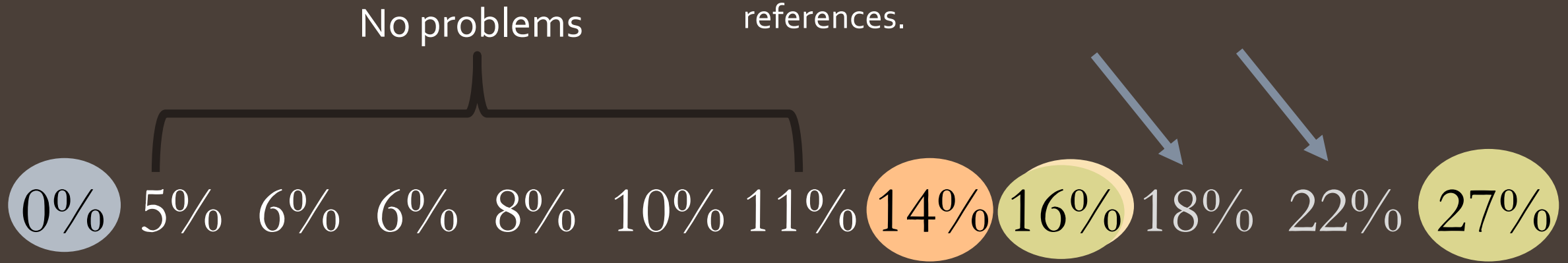
Approach to plagiarism



What we say
to our students
about how
Turnitin works

Turnitin does not detect plagiarism.
It shows us what text is from other sources.
A professor must judge if there is plagiarism.

18 and 22 were fine – writers included some properly cited charts and graphs from the original and all the references.



14% “More paraphrasing needed (too much direct quotation).”

16% “Insufficient in text referencing.”

27% “Matching score indicates overreliance on wording from original text.” In this case the grade was lowered by one letter grade.

First summary

ORIGINALITY REPORT

55%

SIMILARITY INDEX

51%

INTERNET SOURCES

48%

PUBLICATIONS

39%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	home.cerge-ei.cz Internet Source	25%
2	Submitted to Charles University Student Paper	15%
3	209.197.108.139 Internet Source	7%
4	Sautmann, Anja. "Contracts for Agents with Biased Beliefs: Some Theory and an Experiment", American Economic Journal Microeconomics, 2013. Publication	5%
5	repec.iza.org Internet Source	2%
6	Joseph Price. "GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE RESPONSE TO COMPETITION.", Industrial & Labor Relations Review/00197939, 20080401 Publication	2%

Not quite so bad as it looks....

³ Gender Gap in Performance under Competitive Pressure: Admissions to Czech Universities

by Štěpán Jurajda and Daniel Münich

A Critical Summary

Jurajda and Münich paper "Gender Gap in Performance under Competitive Pressure: Admissions to Czech Universities" (2011) observes the presence of gender performance gaps under varying degrees of competition in the case of admissions to Czech Universities. The paper in part provides concurrence with the evidence provided by Niederle and Vesterlund (2010), and further extends the findings of Gneezy, Niederle and Rustichini (2003). When compared to Örs, Palomino and Peyrache (2008), Jurajda and Munich (2011) extend their analysis from one selective school to all available universities, thus attaining the ability to control for varying degrees of competition.

The paper observes the 1999 Czech end-of-four-year-program test scores (hereafter referred to as "Maturita") in the fields of Mathematics and native Czech, and merges the latter with the 1999 administrative register of applications to Czech Universities, thereby analyzing the admission performance of all of the university applicants in 1999 who have available Maturita scores. Authors employ least-squares female-dummy coefficients from admission regressions employing respective subjects' Maturita test scores, the secondary-school type, the average success rate of students from a given secondary school in admissions, and a full set of dummy variables for the subject-of-study of university programs.

The paper seeks to establish whether men outperform women of similar ability, as measured by the Maturita test scores, and of similar secondary-school quality, as measured by school average university admission rate, in university admissions. Indeed, large and statistically significant gender gaps favoring male admissions are found for very competitive university programs (where admission rate is below 19 per cent), suggesting that women are significantly disadvantaged in their access to selective schools. When observing the most able

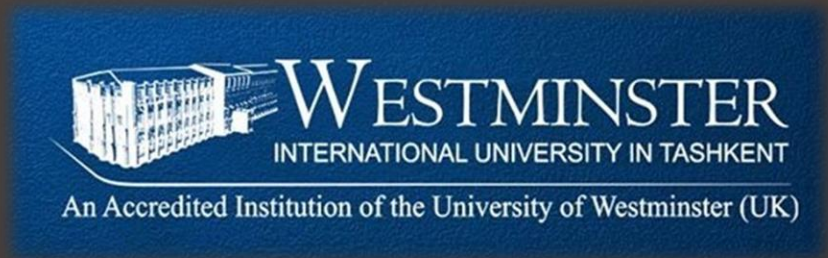
Title, references, citation all OK.
Too much reliance on text from the original at the sentence level in paragraph 2 & 3

and the least able group of applicants alone, women again perform substantially worse. Evidence shows, however, that there is no gender gap in the case of university applications with comparatively higher admission rates (above 19 per cent).

REFERENCES

- ⁴ Gneezy, Uri, Muriel Niederle, and Aldo Rustichini. 2003. "Performance in Competitive Environments: Gender Differences." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 118(3): 1049-74.
- ² Jurajda, Stepan, and Daniel Munich. 2011. "Gender Gap in Performance under Competitive Pressure." *American Economic Review: Papers and Proceedings 2011*, 101(3): 514-18.
- ² Niederle, Muriel, and Lise Vesterlund. 2010. "Explaining the Gender Gap in Math Test Scores: The Role of Competition." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 24(2): 129-44.
- Örs, Evren, Frederic Palomino, and Eloic Peyrache. 2008. "Performance Gender Gap: Does Competition Matter?" Center for Economic and Policy Research Discussion Paper 6891.

Using their own
prior work:
'Recycling'



We tell them: "If you happen to be a student from ISET,
or from Westminster Tashkent,
and you submitted a paper there,
and you use some parts of it in a paper submitted to
CERGE-EI,
we will see exactly what you are re-using."
This is ok if approved in advance!!!

Relative
success

We have very few ongoing problems with
student plagiarism

Other
Academic
Skills
Center
Services

Assistance with MA theses
Individual consultations for Dissertation
Proposal Workshop preparation
Editing for working papers and other
institutional works
Open hours – anyone connected with CERGE-
EI is welcome to drop by with any face-to-face
work (not extensive editing)

Academic writing is impossible
without library staff and resources.

The CERGE-EI Jan Kmenta Library supports the success of our student's writing by providing top-quality international resources.

As a part of our Academic Writing courses, the library provides workshops on a range of library skills from basic to very advanced, and on using the most up to date resources.

And the future..... Digital course development:
We look forward to collaboration with
our library on this!



CHARLES
UNIVERSITY



The Czech Academy
of Sciences



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

