

Date: 4 December 2025

Key ideas from the interview:

Publication positioned as “extra”:

- Publishing is framed as something done *after* the degree, not during.
- This creates distance, anxiety, and lack of ownership.

Writing as assessment vs communication:

- Writing is often oriented toward examiners, not wider audiences.
- This encourages defensive, minimal writing rather than exploratory or public-facing work.

Confidence and academic identity:

- Many PG students don't see themselves as knowledge producers.
- Practice-based researchers feel especially marginal to academic norms.

Fragmented institutional support:

- Writing workshops exist, but publication pathways are unclear.
- Supervisor support is uneven and depends heavily on individual experience.

Risk, fear, and misconceptions:

- Students fear publishing too early or exposing unfinished ideas.
- Peer review is misunderstood as punitive rather than developmental.

Writing as research practice:

- Writing should be understood as a mode of thinking, not just a skill.
- Supporting writing supports researcher identity formation.

Need for normalisation:

- Early, open conversations about publishing would reduce anxiety.
- Visibility of diverse publishing formats would expand student possibilities.

Transcript (edited):

AT: Thank you for meeting with me today. I'm interested in understanding how postgraduate students are supported, particularly around writing and publication.

XX: Supporting PG students is complex because writing sits at the intersection of so many pressures—academic expectations, confidence, time, and institutional structures. On the publication side, it's often seen as something additional, rather than integral to postgraduate study.

For many students, publication feels like something you do *after* the degree, not during it. That framing already creates distance and anxiety.

AT: Is that something you see consistently?

XX: Yes, very much so. Students are often focused on survival—meeting deadlines, confirmation, final submission. Writing becomes instrumental: “What do I need to pass?” rather than “What do I want to say publicly?”

There's also a lack of clarity about audiences. Academic writing is usually positioned as something only supervisors or examiners will read.

AT: How does that affect confidence?

XX: Significantly. If the only imagined reader is an examiner, writing becomes defensive. Publication requires a different mindset: you're entering a conversation, not just being assessed.

Many students don't see themselves as contributors to knowledge. That's especially true for practice-based researchers, who may already feel marginal to traditional academic norms.

AT: How do institutional structures support—or limit—that shift?

XX: **Support exists, but it's fragmented. There are workshops on writing skills, but fewer spaces to talk about *why* you might publish, or how to navigate editorial cultures.**

Supervisors play a huge role, but not all supervisors publish regularly themselves, or they publish in very narrow ways. That limits what students imagine as possible.

AT: So publication isn't embedded structurally?

XX: No. It's optional, informal, and uneven. Students who publish often do so because of individual encouragement or chance opportunities, not because there's a clear pathway.

There's also a risk culture: students worry that publishing too early might "use up" ideas or expose unfinished thinking.

AT: Is that fear justified?

XX: Sometimes, but it's overstated. Learning to write for publication can actually clarify thinking and strengthen the thesis. But that benefit isn't well communicated.

What's missing is a developmental model: publishing as part of learning, not just as output.

AT: What would better support look like?

XX: Normalising publication conversations early. Making visible the range of publishing formats—journals, edited volumes, experimental platforms.

Also, demystifying peer review. Students imagine it as brutal and rejecting, rather than dialogic.

AT: Do you see writing support as separate from research training?

XX: It shouldn't be. Writing *is* research. But institutionally, it's often treated as a skill to be fixed, rather than a mode of thinking.

For PG students, especially in the arts, writing is tied to identity. Supporting writing is supporting how students see themselves as researchers.