The Argument of Fact

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X Marks the Spot

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                  ┌─────────────────────┐
                  │   Subject and       │
                  │ specific topic or   │
                  │      issue          │
                  └─────────────────────┘
                   ↙                 ↘
┌──────────────────┐    →    ┌──────────────────┐
│  Wider audience  │    X    │ Supervisors and  │
│  and readership  │    ←    │ academic peers   │
└──────────────────┘         └──────────────────┘
                   ↖                 ↗
                  ┌─────────────────────┐
                  │   Writer and co-    │
                  │   authors (you)     │
                  └─────────────────────┘
```
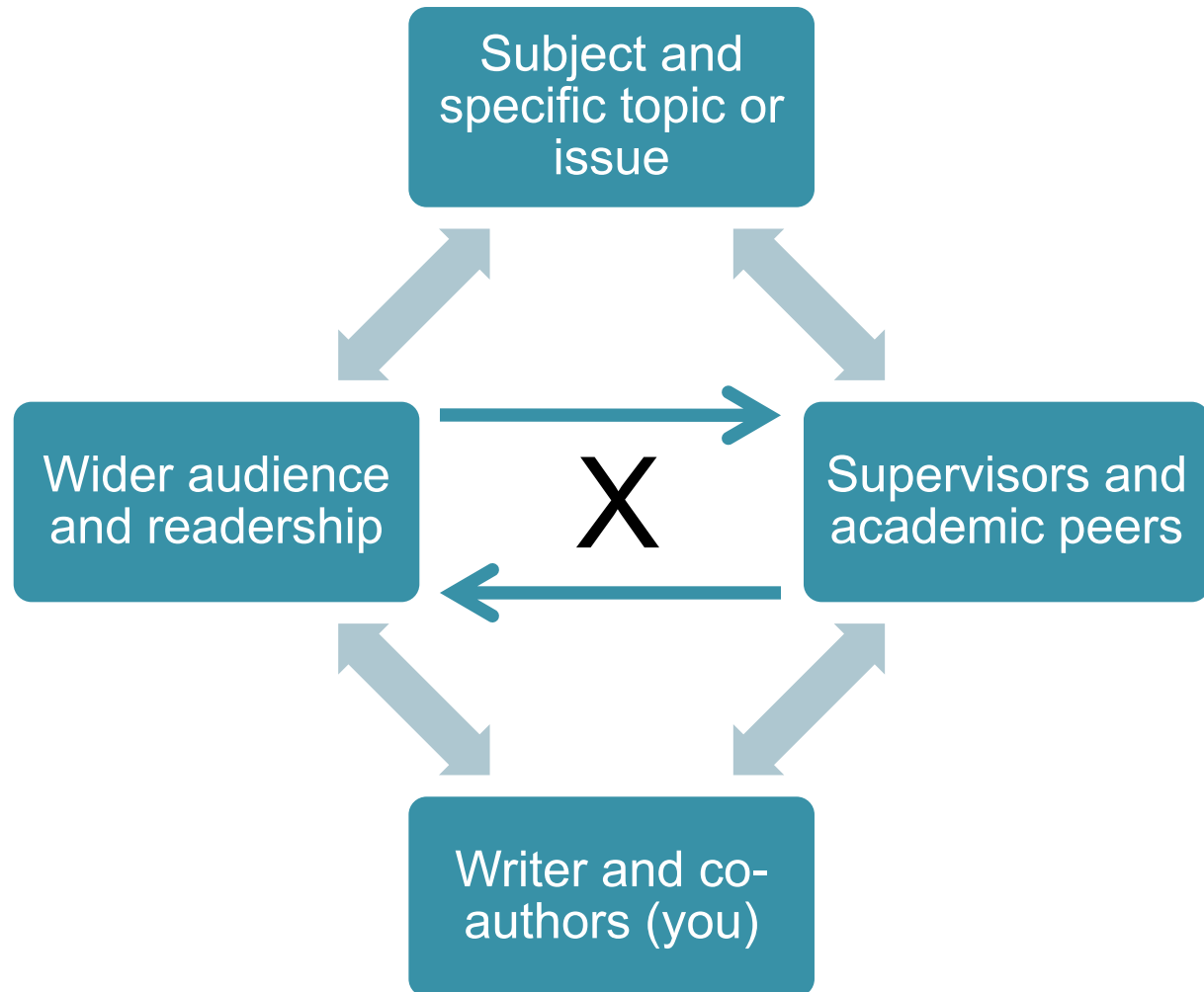
Defining X

- In terms of your own concerns as a writer, you may identify various aspects of:
    - Argument
    - Structure
    - Language
    - Text

- Clarity emerges from a careful blending of all elements or "layers"—as we can have a different focus each time we draft, read, revise, discuss, edit…

Issues in PG writing

- A high level of expertise is expected in subject knowledge

- The ability to create and interact with written and oral arguments around that subject is also expected

- Interaction is much easier than creation

Publishable writing

- During the research process you may be expected to submit papers for publication and presentation

- As such publishable level work is an ideal, but is problematic for a number of reasons

For example

- Text adapted from academic research may be too wordy or complex different audience levels
- Complexity of argument: what does your audience need?
  - Inquiry
  - Convincing
  - Persuading
  - Negotiating

Crusius and Channell (1998)

- Will a more general or commercial audience ever be as critical—and have access to giving you such feedback—as your supervisors, external examiner and academic journal editors?

Thesis writing

- The thesis is possibly the most complex piece of writing you will ever do, as it is seen as a means of entrance to a high level academic community

- It is often categorised by long chapters (up to 80 pages or more), extended in-depth arguments that carry high levels of convincing and persuasion

- These often need greater sub-structures, sequencing and modification of register (formalities of style)for a more general, commercial or academic audience

Discussion

- What issues are of current interest or concern in your own writing?

- This could be related to the previous questions or it could be from any other area of your current work.

Establishing clarity: the argument of fact

- One of the most important features of academic writing is making it "readable"

- Good academic writing should be easy to read without the need for too much re-reading

- To establish a logical, informative structure for increasing readability, we rely, consciously or unconsciously, on the argument of fact

A clear focus

- The argument of fact develops layer by layer as we work through the text

- It is a simple information structure through which we create clear reasoning in each stage of a developing argument

- Paragraphs are supposed to contain one main idea, but the reality of this is much more complex and problematic. Look at the text "Incidence and Continuity of Statehood" as an example

- They are more likely to contain layers of information that are sequentially developed or have other argumentative arrangements

- **Existence** →
a description of a situation that you want to discuss

- **Definition** →
the necessary focus on that situation in terms of the purpose of your idea

- **Quality** →
the elaboration on that focus in terms of the overall value of the topic in your argument

Example of "Existence"

- Microcomputers have proliferated rapidly in the business world during the past few years.

Example of "Definition"

- Almost every functional area within the modern organization is dependent on microcomputers for an increasingly significant amount of information processing tasks.

Example of "Quality"

- However, given the availability of microcomputers, it does not automatically follow that they will be used.

Full text example

- Microcomputers have proliferated rapidly in the business world during the past few years. Almost every functional area within the modern organization is dependent on microcomputers for an increasingly significant amount of information processing tasks. However, given the availability of microcomputers, it does not automatically follow that they will be used.

Lakhanpal, B. (1994). "Assessing the Factors Related to Microcomputer Usage by Middle Managers". *International Journal of Information Management,* 14/1, Pp. 39-50.

- How would you continue this idea? With a new paragraph? Or would you add more information in a new layer in the same paragraph? Or would you further expand on the sub-arguments within to give it more depth?

References

- Crusius T.W. & Channell, C.E. (1998). *The Aims of Argument: A Brief Rhetoric (2nd Edition).* Mountain View Ca: Mayfield

- Huckin, T.N. & Olsen, L.A. (1991). *Technical Writing and Professional Communication for Nonnative Speakers of English.* New York: Mc Graw Hill.