

## Poetic Ways of Knowing: Reimagining Literature Reviewing as a Compassionate, Collegial, and Community-Oriented Practice in Higher Education

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### Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

### Abstract

This paper introduces *collaborative feedback poetry* as a vigorous, creative, and ethically engaged method for literature reviewing in higher education. Developed through an intercultural collaboration between a senior academic and an early career lecturer, collaborative feedback poetry involves composing poems in response to published higher education inquiries. Rooted in poetic epistemology, the approach reframes reviewing as an imaginative, relational practice, centring compassion, collegiality, and scholarly community. The paper engages with key contributions to poetic literature reviewing and extends them through co-creation, reflexive dialogue, and aesthetic response. The conclusions highlight the potential of this method to disrupt academic hierarchies, deepen critical reading, and humanise research engagement. Pedagogically, the approach offers generative possibilities for research development, enabling students and supervisors to engage literature with care, creativity, and critical insight. This work challenges dominant discourse by positioning the literature review as a site of vigour, empathy, and community-building in higher education.

### Full paper

This paper presents *collaborative feedback poetry* as a vigorous, creative, and responsive approach to engaging with research literature. Rooted in poetic epistemology and arts-based qualitative inquiry, our work reimagines the literature review as a space for care, connection, and co-creative meaning-making.

Developed through a collaboration between a senior academic and an early career academic, the study shows how literature reviewing—often framed as a solitary,

information-gathering exercise—can foster empathetic, inclusive, and hopeful academic practices.

## **Aims, Originality, and Theoretical Grounding**

This study emerged from a shared concern: that literature reviewing, as typically practised, often reproduces detached, instrumental modes of academic engagement. In contrast, we aimed to develop and explore a method that could embody and promote care, relationality, and reflexivity in engaging with scholarly work—particularly in higher education research concerned with identity, equity, and power.

The central research question was: *How can literature reviewing in higher education be reimagined as a creative and compassionate academic practice?*

The study draws on and extends the tradition of *poetic literature reviewing*, as informed by scholars such as Prendergast (2006), Morrissey (2016), and Jack and Illingworth (2024). Building on these contributions, this paper introduces *collaborative feedback poetry*: a method that invites scholars to work together in responding to existing research through composing poetry to engage empathetically and imaginatively with the source texts.

## **Methodology and Process**

The method was developed through an intercultural academic partnership. Each of us selected published poetic inquiries in higher education—studies that used poetry as both methodology and representation. The experienced academic responded to doctoral students' poetic work; the early career academic engaged with poetic inquiries by senior scholars. These texts addressed themes such as racialisation, exclusion, mental health, and the emotional toll of neoliberal academia.

We composed original feedback poems that wove our interpretations, questions, and affective responses with phrases, metaphors, and forms drawn from the source texts. These poetic artefacts were shared, discussed, and reflected on in monthly collaborative

sessions. This iterative process generated new poetic knowledge and deepened relational connection and pedagogical insight.

### **Vigour, Compassion, and Collegiality in Practice**

Collaborative feedback poetry exemplifies what Faulkner (2016) calls *vigour*: a form of scholarly rigour that is affective, aesthetic, and ethically engaged. Composing feedback poems required close reading, conceptual synthesis, creative experimentation, and emotional attentiveness. This work required vulnerability and trust, cultivating compassion in scholarly practice by affirming that to read a research paper is not merely to analyse its content but to encounter its voice, values, and vulnerabilities. In responding poetically, the researcher becomes a witness, interlocutor, and co-creator of meaning.

The method also enacted a model of collegiality across power differentials, cultures, and academic roles. The collaboration became a space for mutual learning and epistemic generosity. The poems themselves embodied this ethic—carrying the rhythms, hesitations, and commitments of two people reading and feeling together.

### **Engagement with Higher Education Scholarship**

This work is explicitly situated within higher education research. It responds to the need for methodologies that have the capacity for grappling with complex issues such as racialised exclusion, institutional trauma, and the affective dimensions of academic labour. By engaging with published poetic inquiries about lived experiences in academia, this study contributes to the literature that affirms higher education as a site of knowledge production, identity formation, care, and resistance (Fitzpatrick, 2021; Leggo, 2020).

Moreover, this study offers an intervention in how postgraduate and early career researchers are taught to engage with literature. Rather than privileging extractive models of citation, it models an approach rooted in attentiveness, responsiveness, and mutual respect.

## **Significance and Contribution**

The contribution of this work is conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical. It introduces a creative approach to engaging with research literature in ways that honour the emotional, ethical, and epistemological dimensions of higher education scholarship. It extends the tradition of poetic literature reviewing, demonstrating how this can contribute to more compassionate and collegial academic cultures.

Crucially, it offers a methodology that aligns with our values in higher education: care, mutual learning, and community. In doing so, it challenges dominant discourses that reduce scholarship to competition and output, offering instead a vision of academic life grounded in attunement, creativity, and connection.

## **Conclusion**

This paper responds directly to the SRHE 2025 call to challenge the discourse of higher education by presenting a method that centres compassion, enacts collegiality, and builds scholarly community through literature engagement. *Collaborative feedback poetry* is an invitation to reimagine academic work as a relational, creative, meaning-making practice: a way to know, feel, and imagine otherwise.