

A Potential Diagnostic Tool to Identify HDR Students Requiring Writing Support

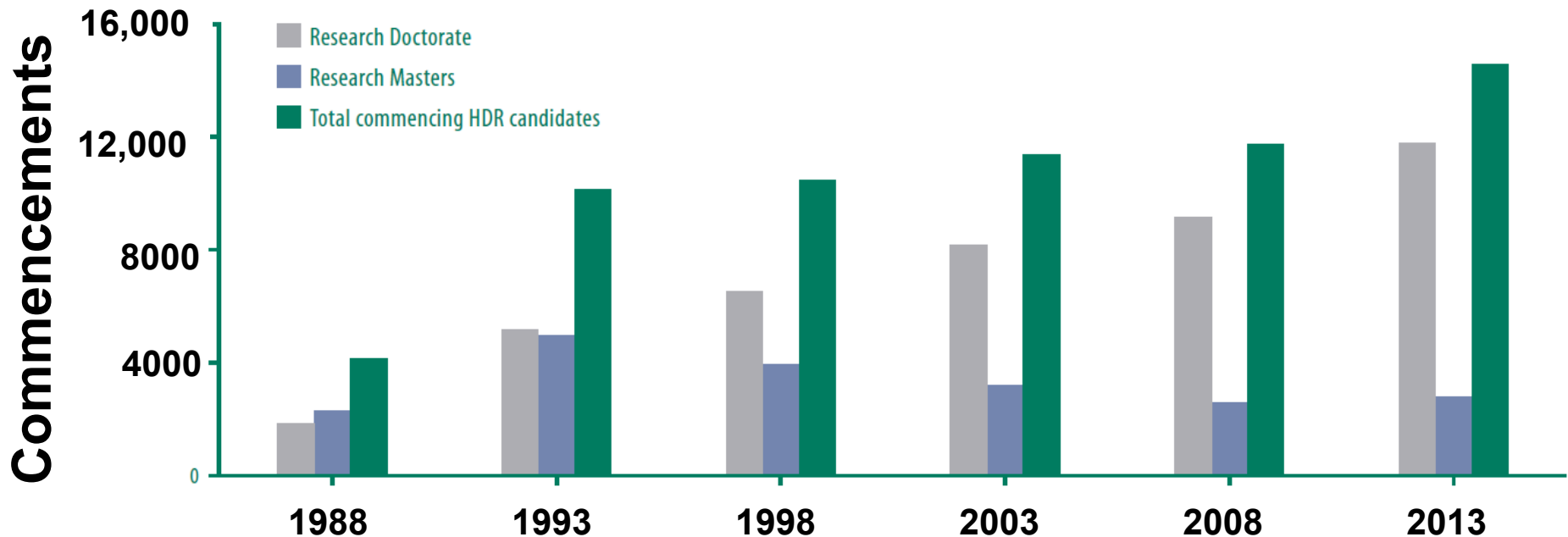
Dr Adèle Thomas



Setting the Context

- More HDR candidates

Commencing HDR candidates between 1988 and 2013



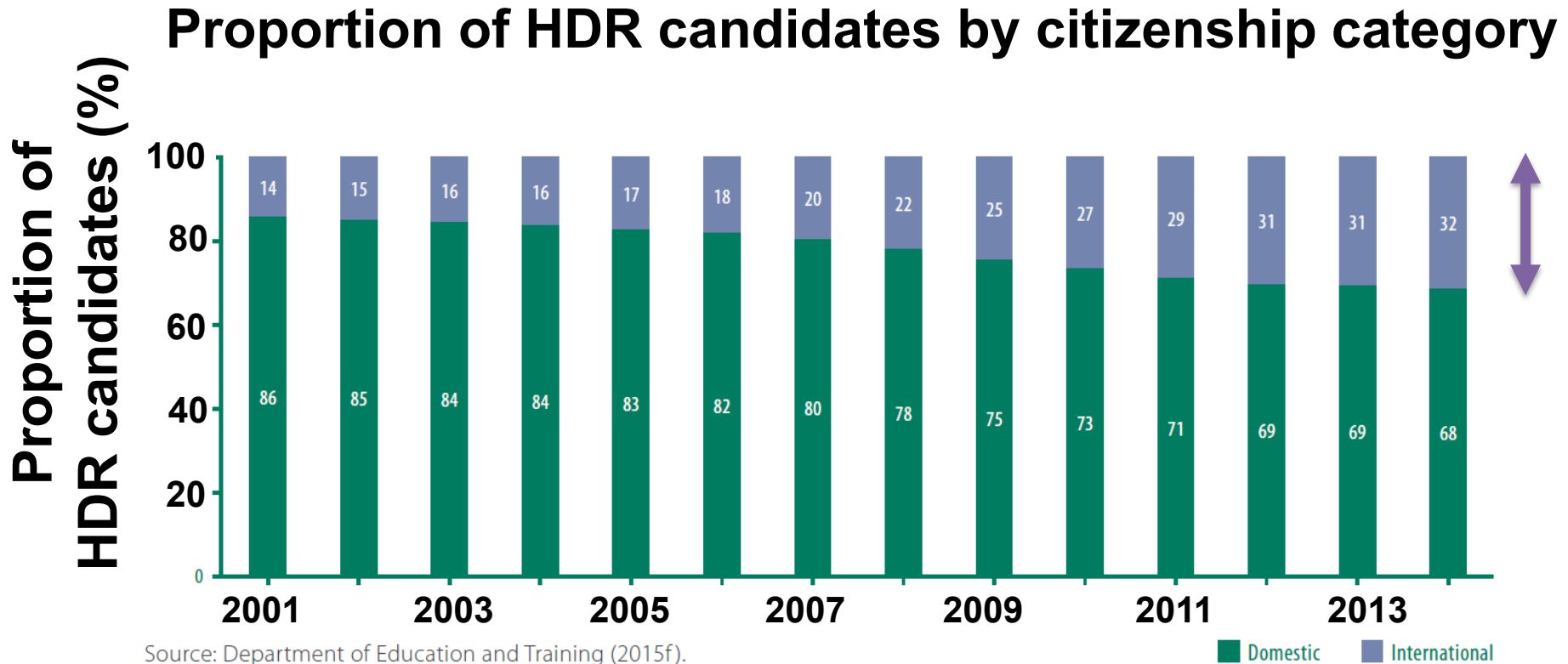
Source: Data from Larkins (2011) and Department of Education and Training (2015j).

ACOLA, 2016

- 6 fold increase in research doctorate candidate intake
1838 -> 11,894

Setting the Context

- Higher proportion of international students



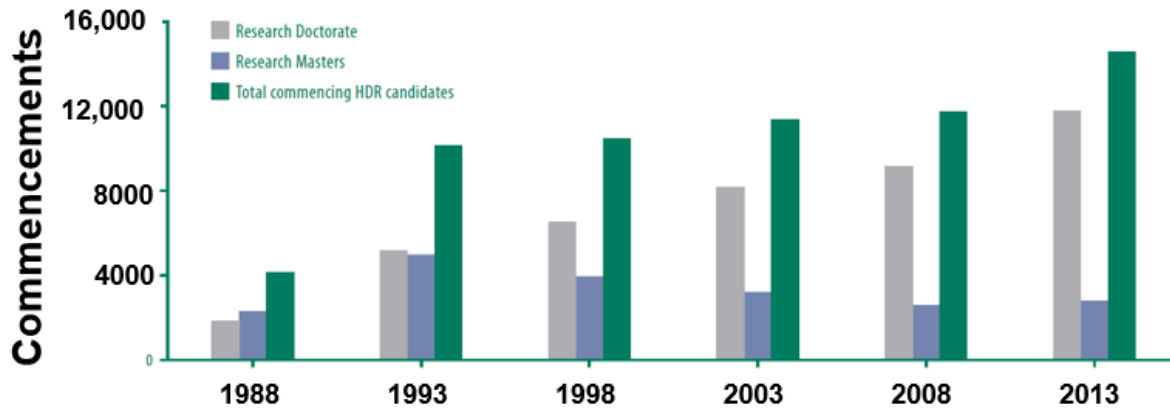
ACOLA, 2016

- International HDR candidates more than tripled
6249 -> 20,284 enrolments

Setting the Context

- Equivalent increase in supervisors?

Commencing HDR candidates between 1988 and 2013



Source: Data from Larkins (2011) and Department of Education and Training (2015).

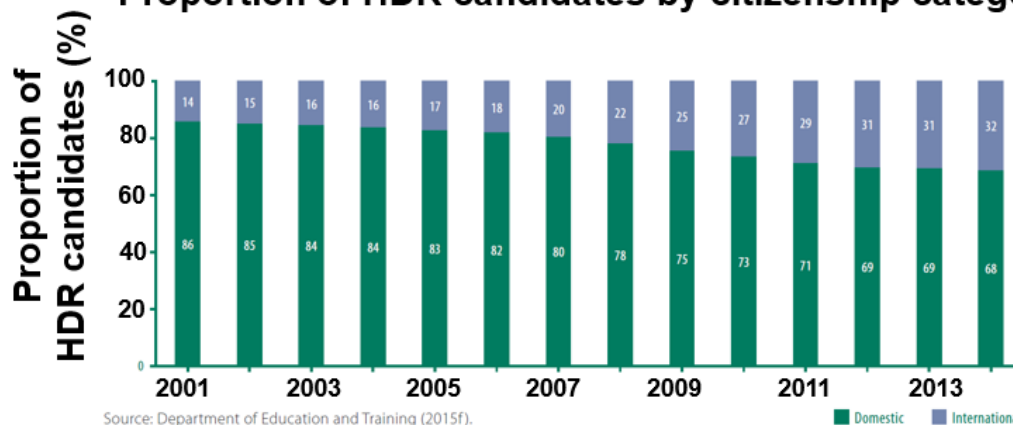
ACOLA, 2016

↑ HDR
candidates

≠

Number of
supervisors

Proportion of HDR candidates by citizenship category



Source: Department of Education and Training (2015).

■ Domestic ■ International

ACOLA, 2016

Setting the Context

- Context at Macquarie University

- 1464 enrolled HDR students
- HDR Learning Skills Team: 3 HDR learning advisors

Faculty	% Domestic of Faculty Total	% International of Faculty Total	% of Total HDR Enrolment	
Science & Engineering	40	60	32	} *
Medicine & Health Sciences	57	43	7	
Arts	79	21	27	-
Business	63	37	12	} *
Human Sciences	67	33	22	

Candidate Writing Support

-
- HDR Learning Advisors
 - Writing workshops/courses
 - Writing groups
 - One to one consultations

Candidate Writing Support

- HDR Learning Advisors

- Writing workshops/courses
- Writing groups
- One to one consultations

8%

3%

+ **10%**

21%

Candidate Writing Support

-
- HDR Learning Advisors 21%
 - Writing workshops/courses
 - Writing groups
 - One to one consultations
 - Other writing support 5%
 - Peer writing assistance program
 - Research Enrichment Program:
Writing workshops/seminars ?
 - Best scenario: supporting just 30% of our HDR candidates
 - **~1000 candidates not receiving any writing support**

Study Questions

1. Are we providing writing support to the HDR candidates who most need our support?
2. Is there a quick tool that we can use to identify those HDR candidates who may need more writing support to successfully complete their doctoral thesis?

A Potential Diagnostic Tool

- Identify students in most need of writing support

- Writing Self-efficacy Scale

Grounded in [Bandura's theory of perceived self-efficacy \(1977\)](#)

- A person's self-perception of writing ability will affect their subsequent writing growth

Personal efficacy beliefs influence:

what activities are attempted

the amount of effort invested

perseverance when threatened by obstacles

the amount of stress experienced

the quality of eventual performance

A Potential Diagnostic Tool

- Identify students in most need of writing support

- Writing Self-efficacy Scale

Grounded in [Bandura's theory of perceived self-efficacy \(1977\)](#)

- A person's self-perception of writing ability will affect their subsequent writing growth

Personal efficacy beliefs are based on:

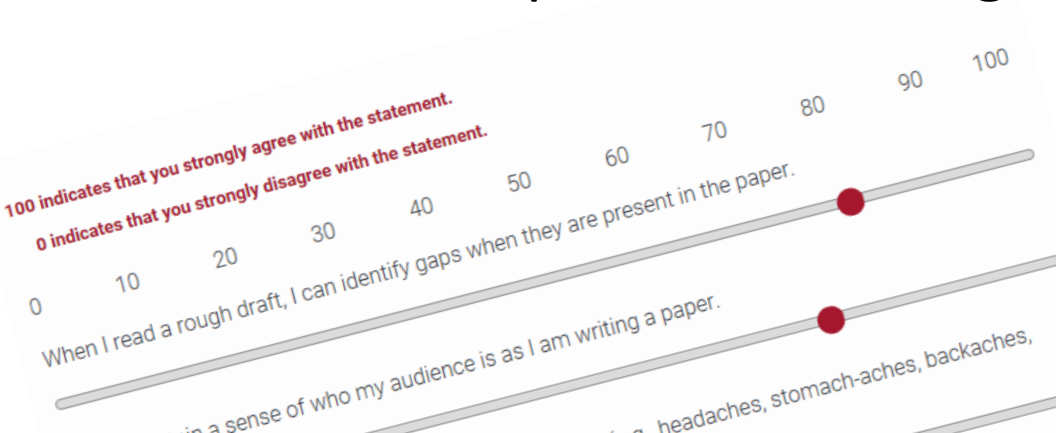
- previous writing performance (mastery experience)
- perception of writing performance compared to peers (vicarious experience)
- feedback from supervisors and peers (social persuasion)
- internal feelings experienced during writing (physiological states)

A Potential Diagnostic Tool

- Identify students in most need of writing support

- Writing Self-efficacy Scale

- Developed & validated by Schmidt & Alexander (2012)
- Designed for university students attending a Writing Centre
- 20 items
- All items positively orientated “I can” statements
- 0-100 response scale of agreement to statements



		Level of Agreement (0-100) 0 = strongly disagree 100 = strongly agree
9	When I read drafts written by colleagues, I can provide them with valuable feedback.	
10	When I have a pressing deadline for a paper, I can manage my time efficiently.	
11	I can attribute my success on writing projects to my writing abilities more than to luck or external forces.	
12	When a student who is similar to me gets praised about his/her writing and/or a paper published, I know I can write a paper worthy of praise and/or publication.	
13	Once I have completed a draft, I can eliminate both small and large sections that are no longer necessary.	
14	I can write a paper without experiencing overwhelming feelings of fear or distress.	

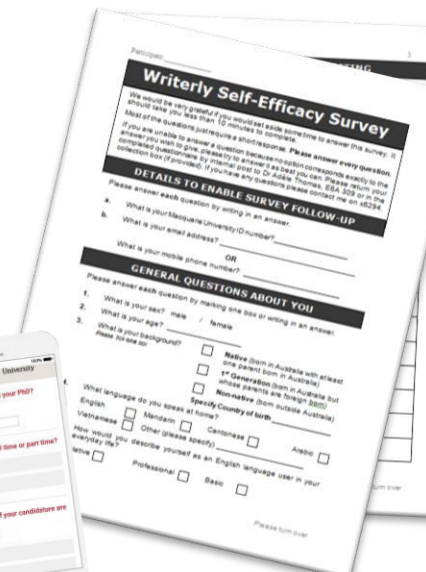
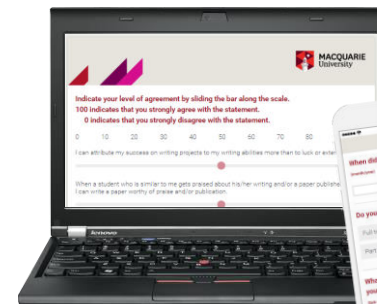
A Potential Diagnostic Tool

Survey Administration

- Start of candidature (Central Commencement Program)
- Start of HDR writing courses
 - Paper-based
 - Online via Qualtrics

Study Aim

- Access scale sensitivity
- Identify writing self-efficacy level of candidates attending HDR writing courses

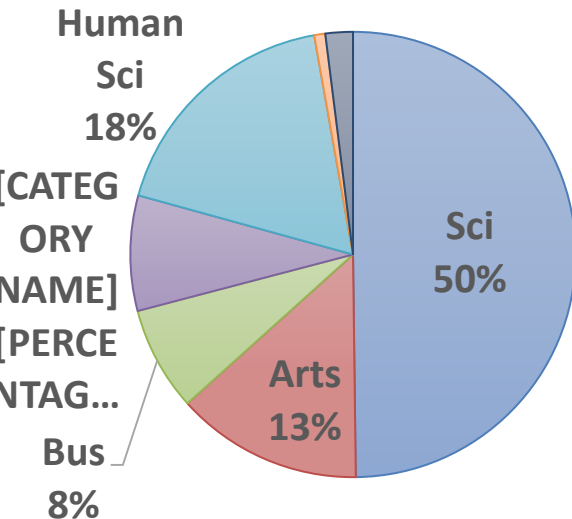


Findings

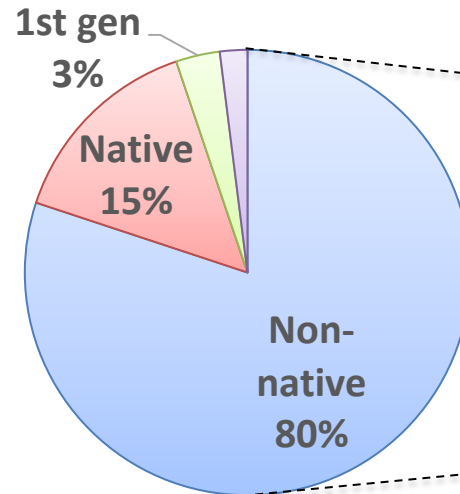
- All surveys completed

- 251 individual candidates completed survey
 - 65% in 1st year or study

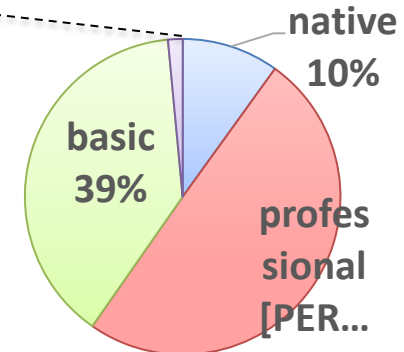
Faculty



Cultural Background



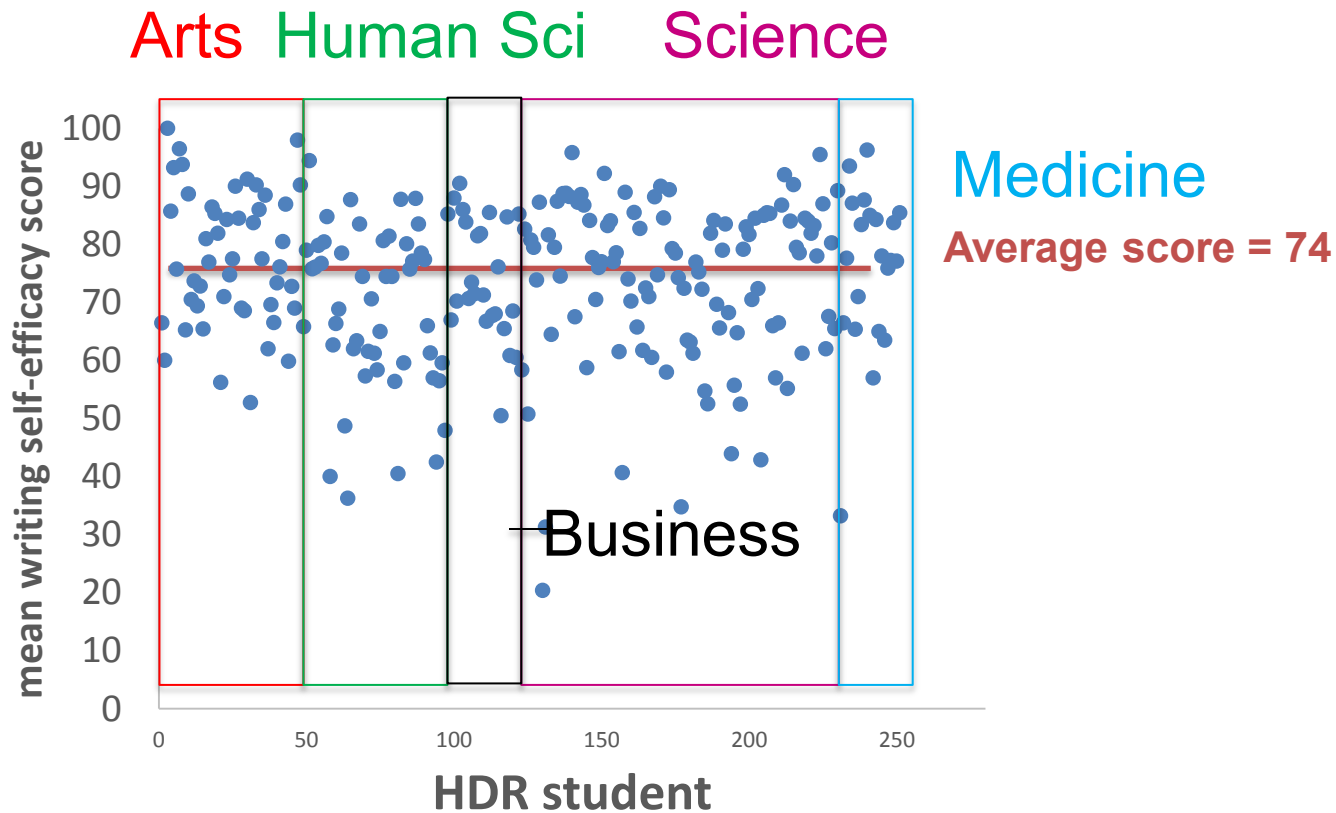
Language Proficiency of Non-native Candidates



Findings

- Writing Self-efficacy ratings

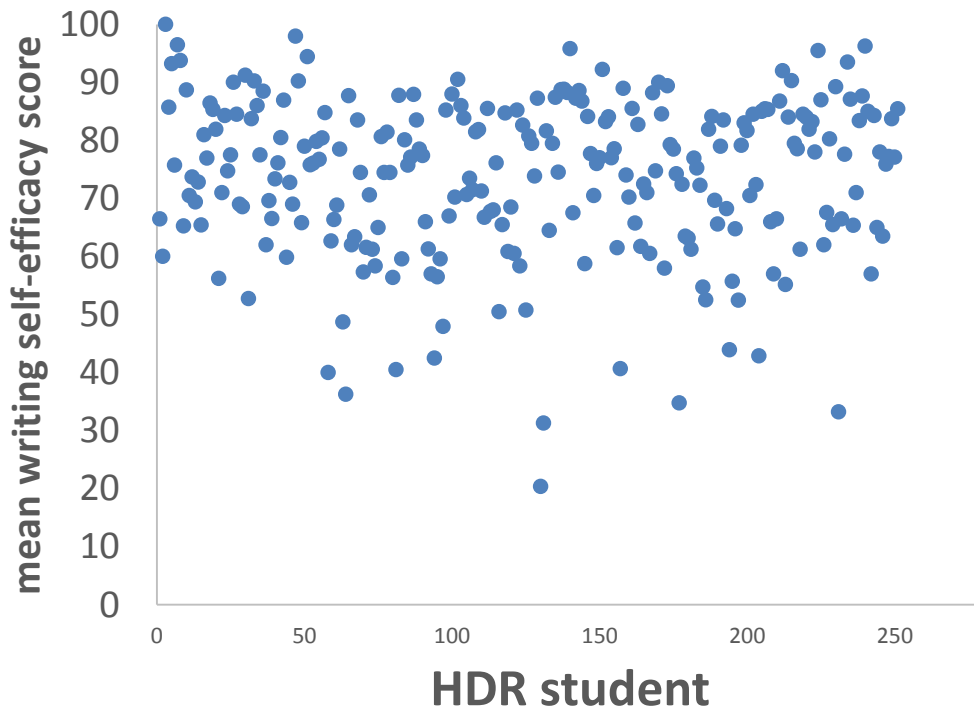
Scatter of Mean Writing Self-Efficacy Score



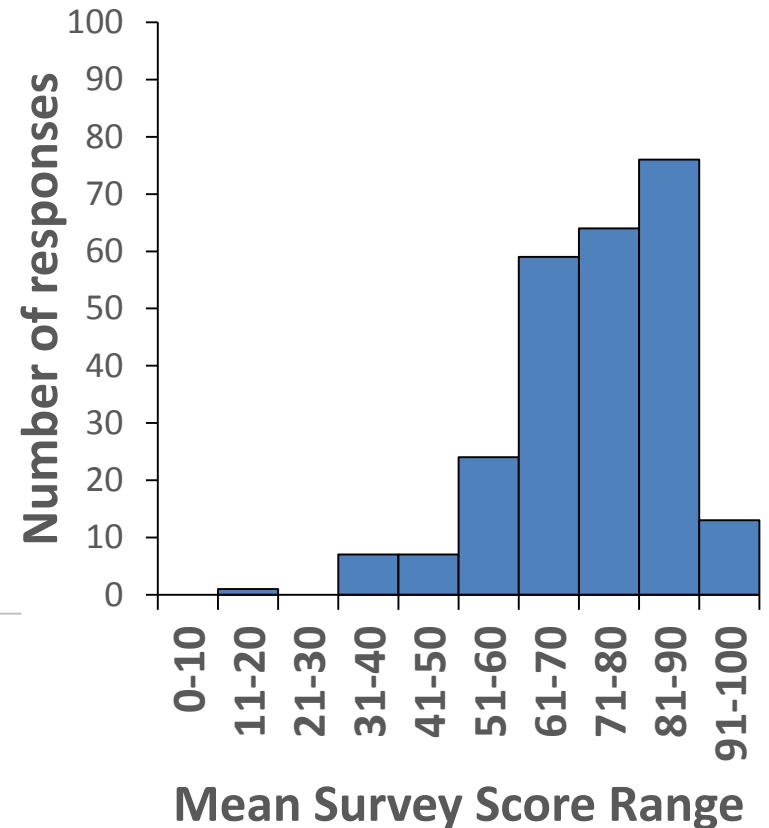
Findings

- Writing Self-efficacy ratings

Scatter of Mean Writing Self-Efficacy Score



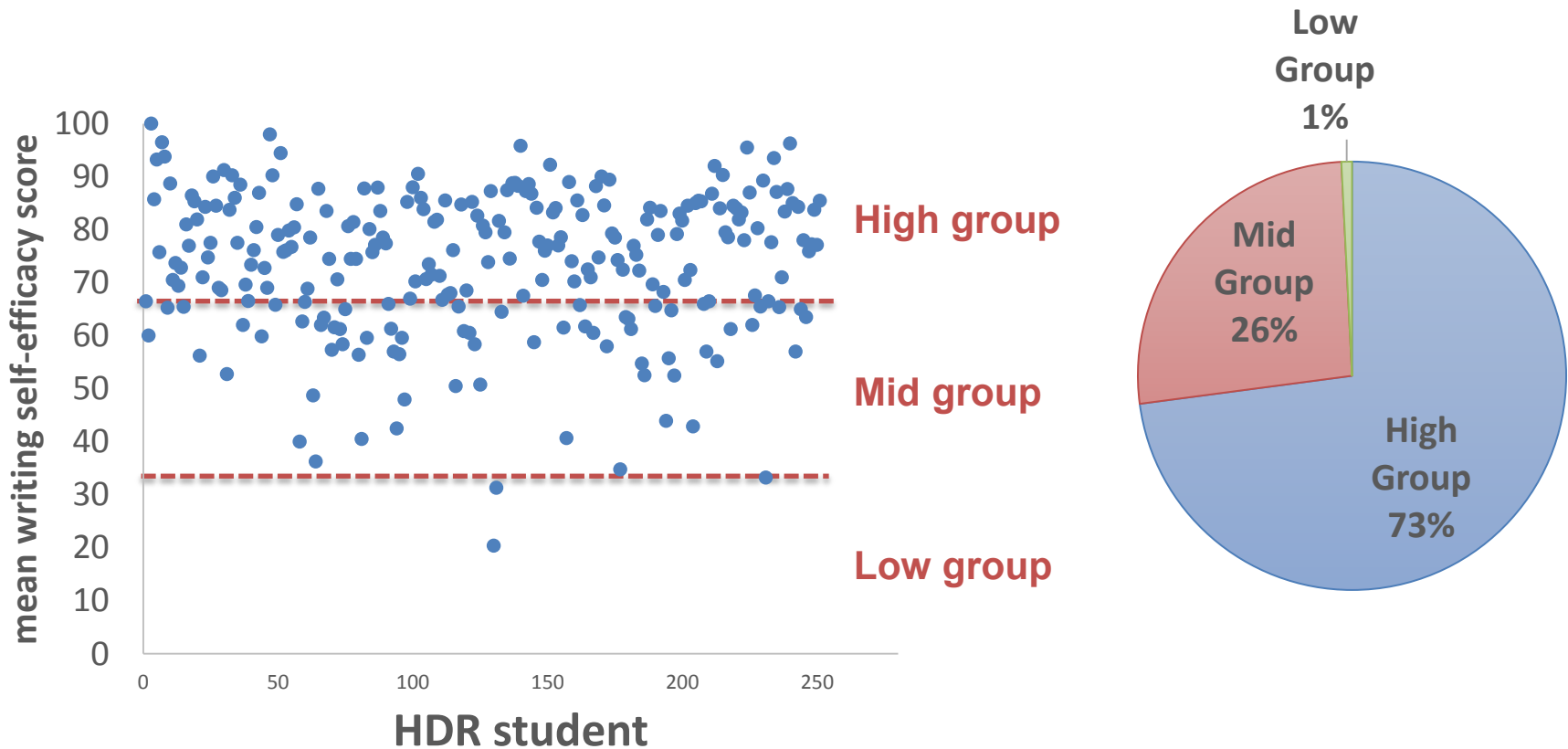
Distribution of Writing Self-Efficacy Scores



Findings

- Writing Self-efficacy ratings

Scatter of Mean Writing Self-Efficacy Score

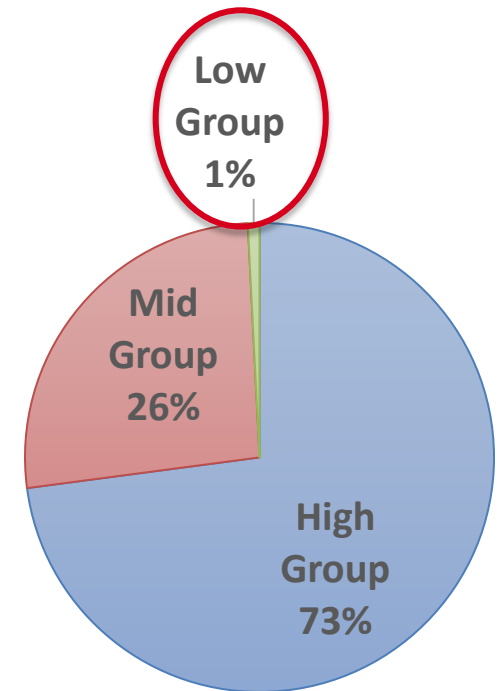


Findings

- Writing Self-efficacy ratings

Low-Group Characteristics

- 2 candidates (male & female)
- Both German
- English proficiency: Native & Professional
- Human Sciences
- (Psychology & Educational Studies)



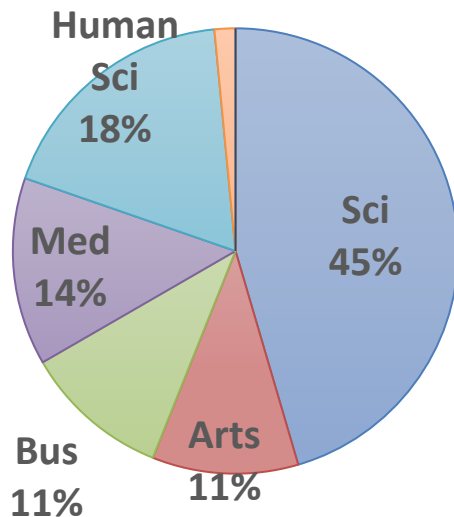
Findings

- Writing Self-efficacy ratings

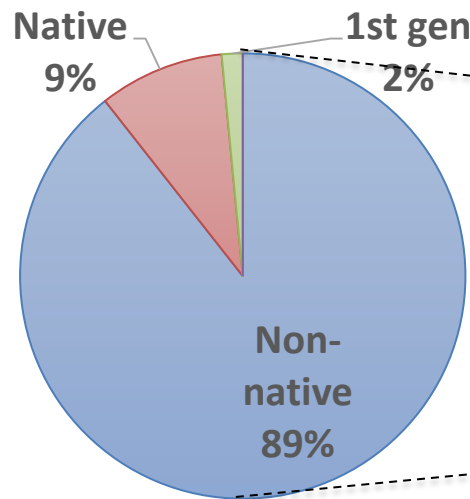
Mid-Group Characteristics

- Similar distribution from each faculty as overall survey completion
- Slightly more non-native candidates than overall survey completion
- Language proficiency of non-native candidates, slightly lower than overall survey completion

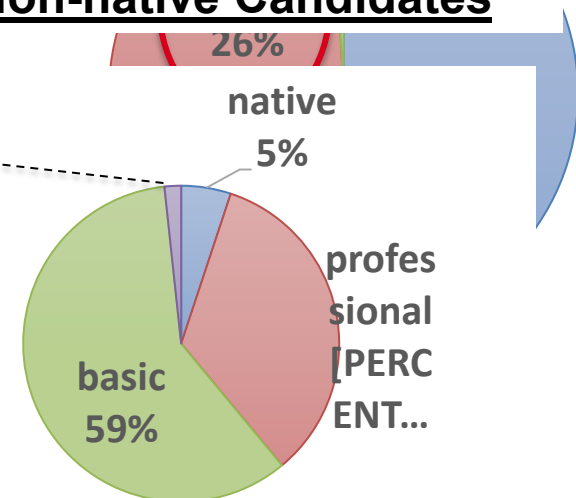
Faculty



Cultural Background



Language Proficiency of Non-native Candidates



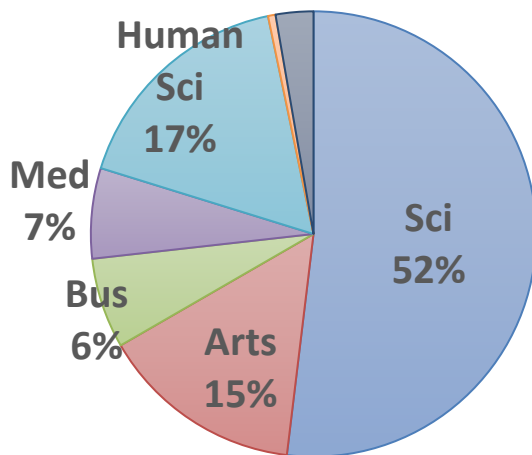
Findings

- Writing Self-efficacy ratings

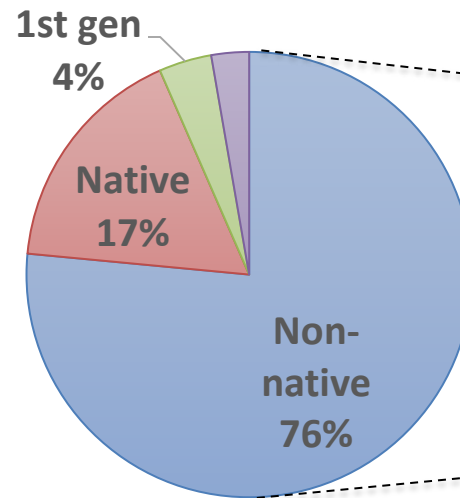
High-Group Characteristics

- Similar distribution from each faculty as overall survey completion
- Less non-native candidates than mid-group
- Language proficiency of non-native candidates higher than mid-group

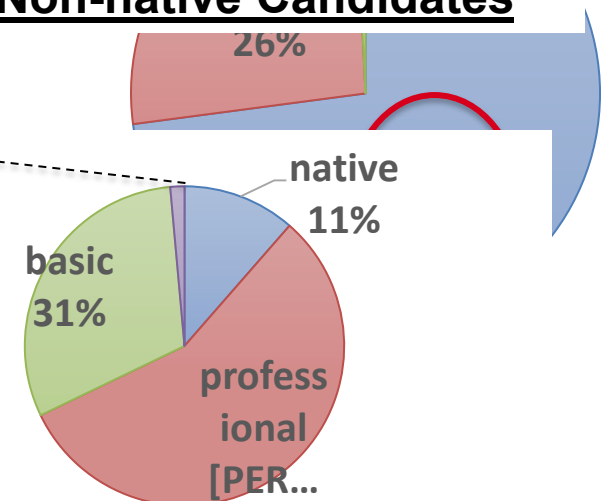
Faculty



Cultural Background



Language Proficiency of Non-native Candidates

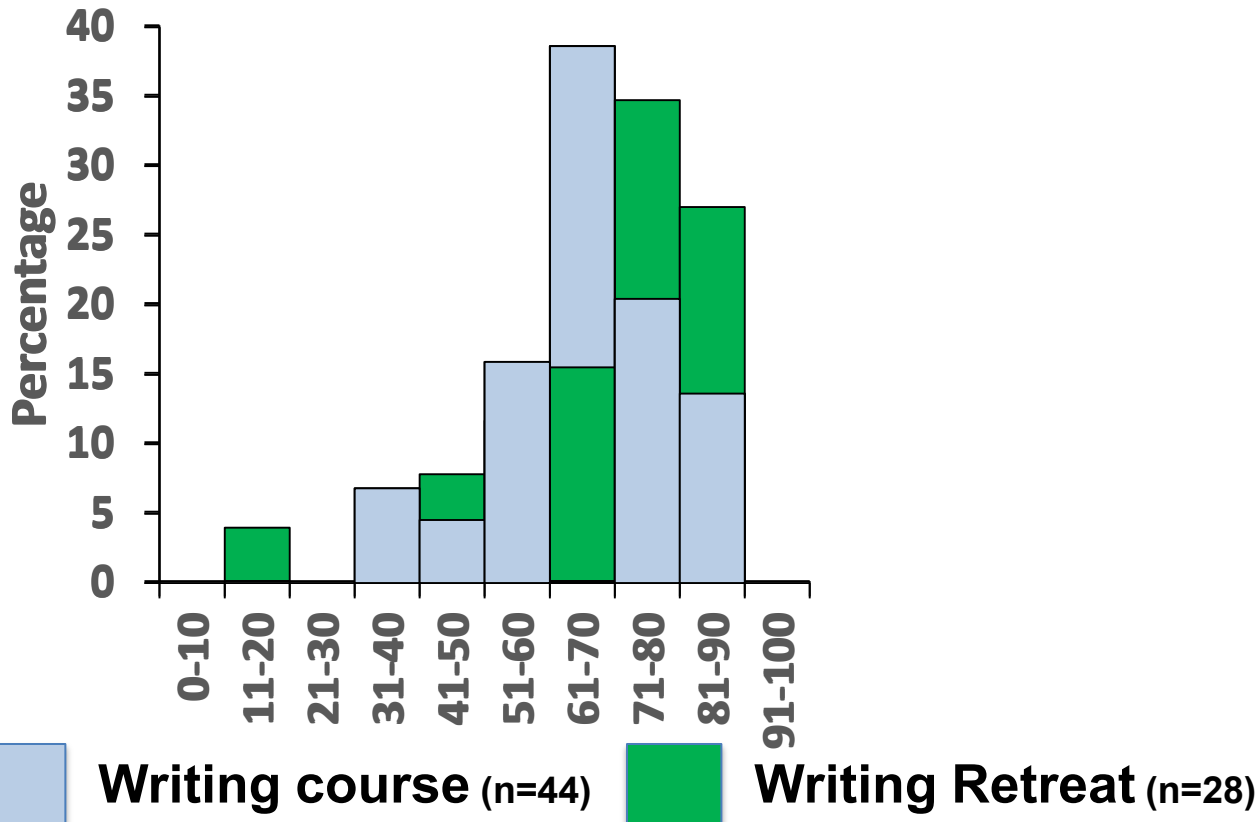


Findings

- Writing Course & Retreat Characteristics

- Candidates attending writing retreats had higher writing self-efficacy scores

Distribution of Scores (%)

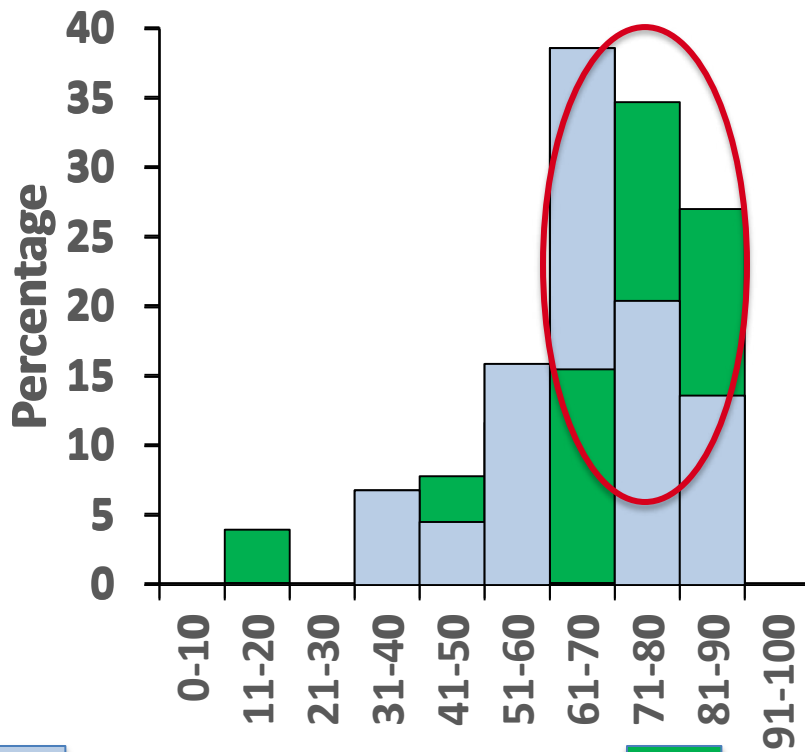


Findings

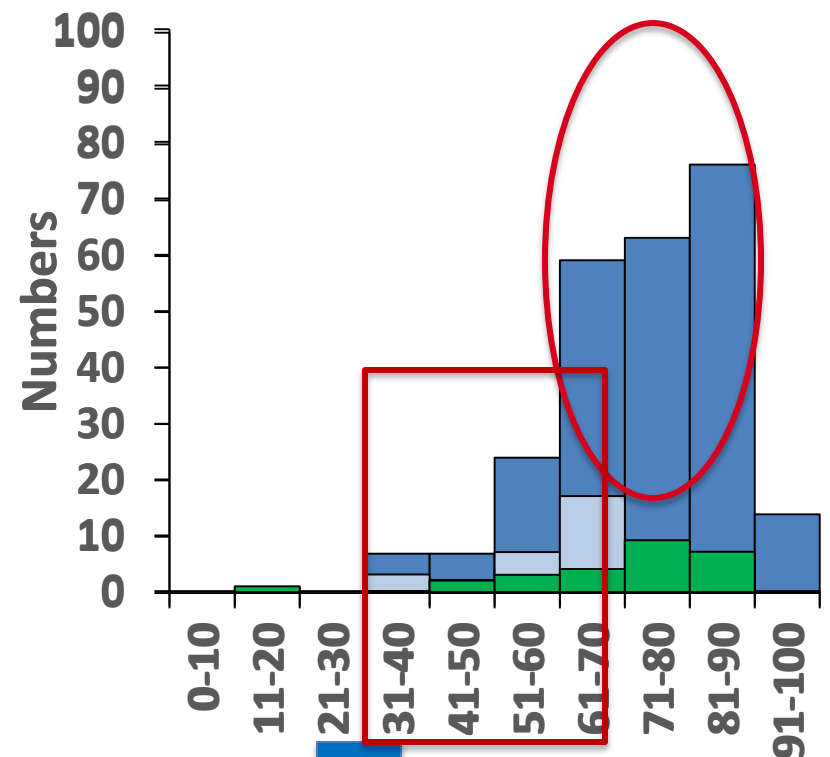
- Writing Course & Retreat Characteristics

- Candidates attending writing retreats had higher self-efficacy scores
- Range of candidates we're supporting in writing courses & retreats is OK
- Need to support **more** HDR candidates

Distribution of Scores (%)



Distribution of Scores (Number)



All surveys (n=251)

-
1. Are we providing writing support to the HDR candidates who most need our support?
 - ✓ Yes, BUT we need to provide support to MORE HDR candidates
 2. Is there a quick tool that we can use to identify those HDR candidates who may need more writing support to successfully complete their doctoral thesis?
 - ✓ Yes, this writing self-efficacy could identify HDR candidates who need more writing support

Areas for Discussion

1. How do you ensure you are providing writing support to the students that need it most?
2. What online writing support do you provide?
3. Do you have a blended online & face-to-face approach to supporting writing?
 - How have you designed this blended learning approach?