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The place and value of the human advisor in relation to generative AI in the provision of advice and feedback to students' academic writing

Stephen T. Campitelli

Academic Skills, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria, 3010, Australia

Email: cas@unimelb.edu.au

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In 2022, a challenge to a core Academic Skills Advisor (ASA) role, the individual consultation (1-1), emerged in the form of Chat GPT, a generative AI (gen AI) platform that can perform a similar role to that of the ASA in the provision of feedback and advice on students' written academic work in 1-1 contexts. Some views hold that gen AI platforms can perform this role as well as an ASA, representing an equally capable and economically more feasible option. This paper examines this proposition by first considering the advantages gen AI brings to the 1-1 writing advising context before exploring the comparative advantages of the human advisor through the lens of a humanistic Personal – Pedagogical – Institutional framework. The paper concludes that human advisors offer many clear advantages over gen AI platforms in the 1-1 context working collaboratively with students' academic writing, not the least of which is a crucial affective element. ASAs enact this by being actively co-present with students in the 1-1 role through dialogic, mutually recognitive advising which, in turn, has a referred, wider application.

Key Words: human, gen AI, academic skills advisors, individual consultations, 1-1, academic writing, feedback, advice, advising.

1. Introduction

Perhaps the most recognised yet contested role performed by Academic Skills Advisors (ASAs) within Academic Language and Learning (ALL) teams is the individual consultation or 1-1 (referred to herein as such), time-limited appointments where a student receives face-to-face support or advice from an academic skills advisor (Bak & Grossi, 2025). More specifically for the purposes of this paper, it refers particularly to advice and feedback provided on academic written work. Lying at the very core of advisor role identity and the profession itself, individualised appointments provide valuable opportunities for students to engage in a considered academic discussion about their work with another person. In an increasingly technology-driven world, these opportunities for genuine person-to-person dialogue are vitally important as ASAs meet students at their point of need on their academic journey, supporting them to be confident, independent and self-regulated learners. However, 1-1s offer more than just academic skills advice, also facilitating "discipline-specific familiarity and integration" (Nosrati et al., 2025, p. 84), as well as increased wellbeing support speaking to an affective element of the individual appointment. Hamilton and Bak (2025) also focus on the affective aspects noting the importance for advisors in managing and mitigating student anxiety and uncertainty in order to achieve the more academic 'instrumental outcomes' (p. 22), pointing to clear academic skills *and* humanist affective elements of the 1-1 context.

However, at the same time, questions are consistently raised about 1-1s with some views casting them as "increasingly problematic" (Kelly et al., 2024, p. 6) in terms of their economic feasibility and scalability. Such challenges to the profession more broadly, and 1-1s more specifically, have always been part of the ALL narrative. Indeed, as evidenced in its beginnings in the 1970s positioned at the periphery of the tertiary landscape (Barthel et al., 2021), the profession itself was founded at the margins. The latest such challenge emerged in November, 2022, in the form of the online platform, ChatGPT, a "freely accessible AI-powered large language model designed to generate human-like text responses to users" (Akiba & Fraboni, 2023, p. 1). ChatGPT represented the first of a series of such generative artificial intelligence (gen AI), large language model (LLM) platforms which perform functions that *to a degree* are similar to those undertaken by ASAs in 1-1s. Since then, we have been witness to and participants in a seismically disruptive, high-speed, transition in AI capability from routine manual and lower-order cognitive tasks towards non-routine analytic and interactive tasks (Bearman et al., 2022). These are improving exponentially in real time, their outputs expanding to include multiple forms of user engagement: text-to-text, text-to-image and text-to-video, as noted by Zhou and Zhang (2024, p. 2).

Clear application of the output of gen AI is seen in how students can use the freely accessible, relatively easy-to-use platforms to seek feedback and advice on their written academic work and, of greater concern to education providers, actively generate text. Therein lies the province of this paper in that the essential roles ASAs perform with students in 1-1s find some form in gen AI's functionality: the provision of advice and feedback on written work to enable the production of written tasks. The fundamental difference is that ASAs do not produce the work for students.

The major area of interest here, indeed concern, for higher education lies in how work is produced and how learning is assessed as gen AI platforms enable any individual with an internet connection and the ability to type a prompt to generate text on any topic within moments. It is perhaps in response to the seemingly effortless ease at which gen AI produces text that concerns continue to be raised around how it is used, the accuracy of its outputs, and the integrity of learning and assessment, with fears such platforms present very real ethical and practical challenges to education (Chanpradit, 2025). Despite such concerns, there remains uncertainty and a lack of institutional and industry consensus concerning appropriate use of gen AI tools.

At the institutional level, discussion has focused most strongly on concerns around elements of academic integrity with these platforms often framed as "a threat rather than a potential asset" (Akiba & Fraboni, 2023, p. 1). However, especially in relation to concerns around ethical use, gen AI is now a part of the education discourse. As such, in order for students to develop ethical and digital literacy in this space it is, therefore, incumbent on institutions to provide leadership, guidance and clear communication not on whether, but *how* to use these tools in productive and effective ways (Johnston et al., 2025). Many institutions, though, still seem to be grappling with the ideal way to do this.

Within the broader landscape of post-university life, gen AI use may become a *de rigueur* assumption of graduates with employers coming to expect competency in the gen AI space in much the same way they now expect such in MS Office (Rowland, 2023b). Indeed, according to Digital Education Council's (DEC) *AI in the Workplace 2025* report, 51% of employers regard AI proficiency as a "baseline expectation for new graduates entering the workforce", a figure only likely to increase. However, perhaps in response to the uncertainty with which many institutions have reacted to the technology, only 3% of those same employers "believe higher education institutions are adequately preparing graduates for an AI-driven workforce" (DEC, 2025, p. 3). At the same time, employers also feel critical thinking needs to be emphasised alongside an understanding of ethical practice with calls for the embedding of human-centric skills, namely communication and collaboration, in higher education curricula (DEC, 2025). The message here is clear: AI-capable graduates yes, but thinking people too who can work with others, please. What emerges then is the need to ensure that students are not only gen AI literate but that they are also

people with people skills while, importantly for the education context, are still the proprietary owners and drivers of their own learning grounded in ethical practice.

Within this gen AI landscape, there are clear questions for ASAs, indeed they need to understand what is going on at the institutional and broader levels and cannot be apart from it. Speaking to this point, Hamilton and Bak (2025) point out that, "better understanding the nuances of ICs [Individual Consultations], and how they meet a wide range of student needs, has never been more necessary" (p. 33). Rowland (2023a) highlights that advisors' understanding of the strengths and limitations of the technologies needs to inform their discussions with both students and academics in relation to the production of academic texts. However, what is the place of human academic skills advisors or any human providers of feedback, such as teachers or tutors, in relation to student writing? Specifically, in relation to the ASA 1-1 role, one might ask why an institution would endorse, or a student use, a time-bound, human service, when gen AI seems to answer the needs of cash-strapped administrators and time-poor students? Rather than a construct of mutual exclusion where what is gained by one 'side' is lost by the other, this paper proposes that integrating the strengths of *both* human and AI agents is the optimal form in which the learning and writing process can happen; a process termed 'hybrid intelligence'. This combines human and artificial intelligence to augment human cognition and capability rather than replacing it (Akata et al., 2020 as cited in Fan et al., 2024). Strengths-leveraging of the non-human and human agents in the process of academic advising and feedback is well exemplified by the Staged Model for Hybrid Feedback (Figure 1) put forward by Zhang et al. (2025, p. 6).

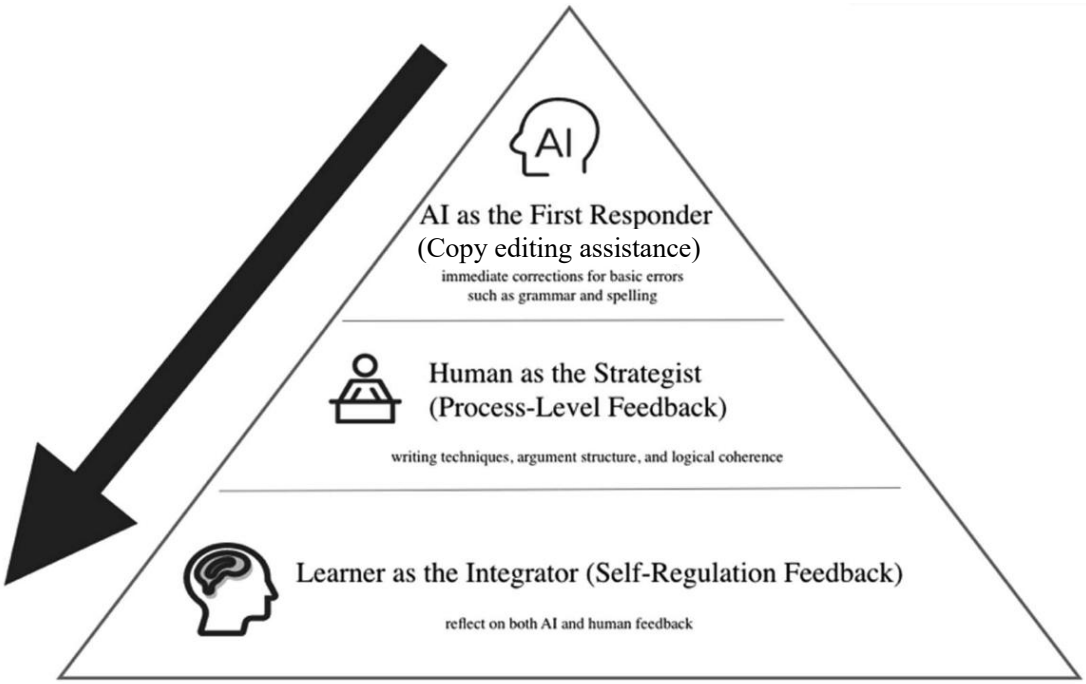

Figure 1. Staged Model for Hybrid Feedback. (Adapted from © Zhang et al., 2025, p. 6. CC-BY-4.0.).

In this model, gen AI acts as a first stage provider of immediate error correction, concentrating on superficial elements such as grammatical accuracy. This support in turn prompts the student to focus on more complex higher-order skills, such as coherence, relevance, argumentation and positionality, which can then be addressed in a second stage consultation with a human advisor. Finally, in the learner-as-integrator stage, the student reflects on both AI and ASA feedback, with a view to both fostering intrinsically driven longer term autonomy and self-regulation. Such a partitioned hybrid but collaborative construct may well become an integral feature of the higher education context. It is, however, a context which needs to acknowledge the strengths but also address the very clear limitations of gen AI in the advising space. At the same time, the many

advantages that human agents bring to the study context must also be acknowledged, strengths which, for the most part, large language models cannot replicate.

As such, this paper proposes there are many valid reasons we need to retain humans in the process of advising and feedback provision. Therefore, this paper rejects any call for or notion that gen AI platforms can perform academic skills advising to the depth and breadth of the human advisor. Following from this position, this paper categorically rejects the proposal that such platforms are capable of replacing humans in the 1-1 academic advising space or that a gen AI consultation can in general successfully '[mirror] the opportunities for "extended dialogues on learning"' that occur with human advisors (Kelly et al., 2024, p. 6). This paper argues such notions are reductive, viewing writing more as product than process, privileging the "generation and transmission of information alone" (Corbin et al., 2025, p. 2). Such a view fails to account for the myriad of factors outside of advising beyond the provision of transactional feedback on written work and ignoring, amongst other things, the crucial social context in which university learning occurs and the affective role ASAs play in students' development.

At this point, I feel bound to categorically declare I freely acknowledge, embrace, welcome and make use of the strengths that gen AI brings to the education context. Indeed, I have used Google's AI Overview many times in clarifying terms – it is extremely capable at that task – and have also used ChatGPT more than once happily, easily and with success, and will again. Thus, this paper is not a "Luddite call to arms". I am not an opponent of generative AI, more a *proponent* of the importance of people in the education context, with gen AI making meaningful contributions in line with its capabilities. Further, this paper does not assume that in a future agentic state gen AI won't ever take over the role of the human advisor, it may well. However, it proposes that it *shouldn't*.

To explore this proposition in detail, this paper first briefly looks at the advantages gen AI brings to the advising context before shifting focus to a comparative examination in much fuller terms of the strengths that human advisors offer in the 1-1 advising space and/or the corollary weaknesses of gen AI in relation to the role their human counterparts play. It examines these propositions through the lens of a three-part framework: advantages of human advisors at the Personal level, those which are primarily concerned with individual emotional wellbeing and social connection; the Pedagogical, which primarily focus on academic skill development; and Institutional, which benefit the University's governance and maintenance objectives. In order to frame a cogent position of the place of the respective agents in this process, the paper draws on the recognitive and extra-recognitive framework of feedback put forward by Corbin et al. (2025). The former is that experienced between "human agents capable in principle of mutual recognition" (p. 8), the latter provided by a source "not capable of genuinely recognising others or being recognised as a genuine agent" (p. 8), that is, gen AI. Applying this framework to the Staged Model for Hybrid Feedback by Zhang et al. (2025), a people *and* machines proposition emerges where the strengths of each agent can be leveraged, which is complementary to the broader position of this paper: that humans remain a vital part of the 1-1 advising process and must be retained in it.

2. What does gen AI do well? The pros of gen AI in the process of providing advice and feedback on student writing

To contextualise and frame human advising advantages, the many clear advantages gen AI brings to the context need to first be acknowledged. Briefly, the main ones are as follows.

2.1. Accessibility and ease of use

Gen AI provides anytime, anywhere immediate feedback, always available whenever the student wants it and does not require an appointment. It is relatively easy to use (at a superficial level) with no technical expertise or knowledge of platform-specific user interface being required in using most gen AI platforms (Akiba & Fraboni, 2023). Gen AI also presents as being very 'willing'

to help; ask it almost anything and it will answer and generally does exactly what it is asked to do.

2.2. Non-judgemental study aid

With no relationship to manage, gen AI is a non-threatening, non-judgmental 'active agent' and many students would find it "less anxiety-inducing and embarrassing to showcase their error-laden work to AI" (Kim et al., 2025, p. 1275) than they might to a human agent. Interestingly, Kim at el. (2025) found that some students see Gen AI as a 'thought-provoker' that can stimulate and 'encourage critical thinking' (p. 1274) suggesting a partnership role in promoting deeper level engagement.

2.3. Equity agent

Gen AI can promote educational equity by empowering individuals from a wide range of backgrounds with the means to seek academic advice (Akiba & Fraboni, 2023; Chanpradit, 2025). For instance, it can be a facilitator to overcome language barriers where EAL students use gen AI to render their first language writing into a target language. Responses can be adjusted to level, for example to: respond in formal academic language, make it simpler, or make it in spoken style.

2.4. Ease teacher burden

In terms of workload, provision of gen AI feedback can lessen the burden on often over-stretched teachers to provide it (Steiss et al., 2024). Further, there is a reduction of the power distance that inevitably exists between the human provider of advice and feedback and the student. Indeed, this positions AI as "decentring the teacher and spreading authority across staff, machines, corporations and students" (Bearman et al., 2022, p. 369). Again, perhaps this lessens the pressure on academic staff to be the main providers of commentary on student work and, further, provides a different 'voice' to students on their work.

2.5. Students are open to gen AI

Students are clearly receptive to working with gen AI tools given the volume of use. For example, 86% of 3839 students from 16 countries surveyed by the 2024 DEC Global AI Student Survey indicated they use AI in some way in their studies. Having grown up and been educated in adjacent if not technology-rich environments, most university age students are used to turning to technology for answers. Further, AI can foster a perception of a source of "companionship, comfort, and assistance" (Kim et al., 2025. p. 1279) implying that young adult students may be emotively open to AI in ways older people may not be.

2.6. Skill development

Gen AI requires users to ask it to perform functions and, as such, it fosters active, inquiry-focused question generation skills as users must develop sensible prompts to get the best out of it, a repeated, evolving process which facilitates a form of complex conversation practice (Kim et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2024). Additionally, and seemingly flying in the face of fears that gen AI is an almost ethereal cheating tool, it can be used positively to ensure academic integrity skill development by use of plagiarism detection and citation management functionality.

2.7. Transactional feedback

Gen AI is very good at information transfer tasks, including proofreading text, in a way that human ASAs as skills developers generally will not do; helping with outlining, planning, sequencing of ideas, ideation and brainstorming, drafting and revision of text; providing more accessible understanding of complex concepts or terms; simplifying, summarising or paraphrasing text; providing detailed feedback; and rewriting to change voice and tone (Rowland, 2023b). In fact, as Corbin et al. (2025) point out, these tasks are a perfectly appropriate use of gen AI as they can be

repeated, meaning students can go back again and again, something that may not be in line with a human advisor's parameters of availability, patience or time.

2.8. Economic appeal

Finally, gen AI has undeniable economic appeal, with versions of most platforms being open use and free, the cost comparison with a team of human ASAs is obvious. Further, issues around limited availability of advisors and difficulty in scheduling appointments at some institutions mean there is clearly also a logistical appeal to generative AI.

3. What do people do well? The pros of a human academic skills advisor in the process of providing advice and feedback on student writing

Given the advantages of gen AI, the benefits of retaining people in the student advising space, whether they are academic skills advisors or other student-facing educational professionals, such as teaching staff, counsellors or course advisers, might well be questioned. If gen AI is so effective, then what reasons are there for retention of people in advising contexts? As it happens, there are quite a few very valid reasons.

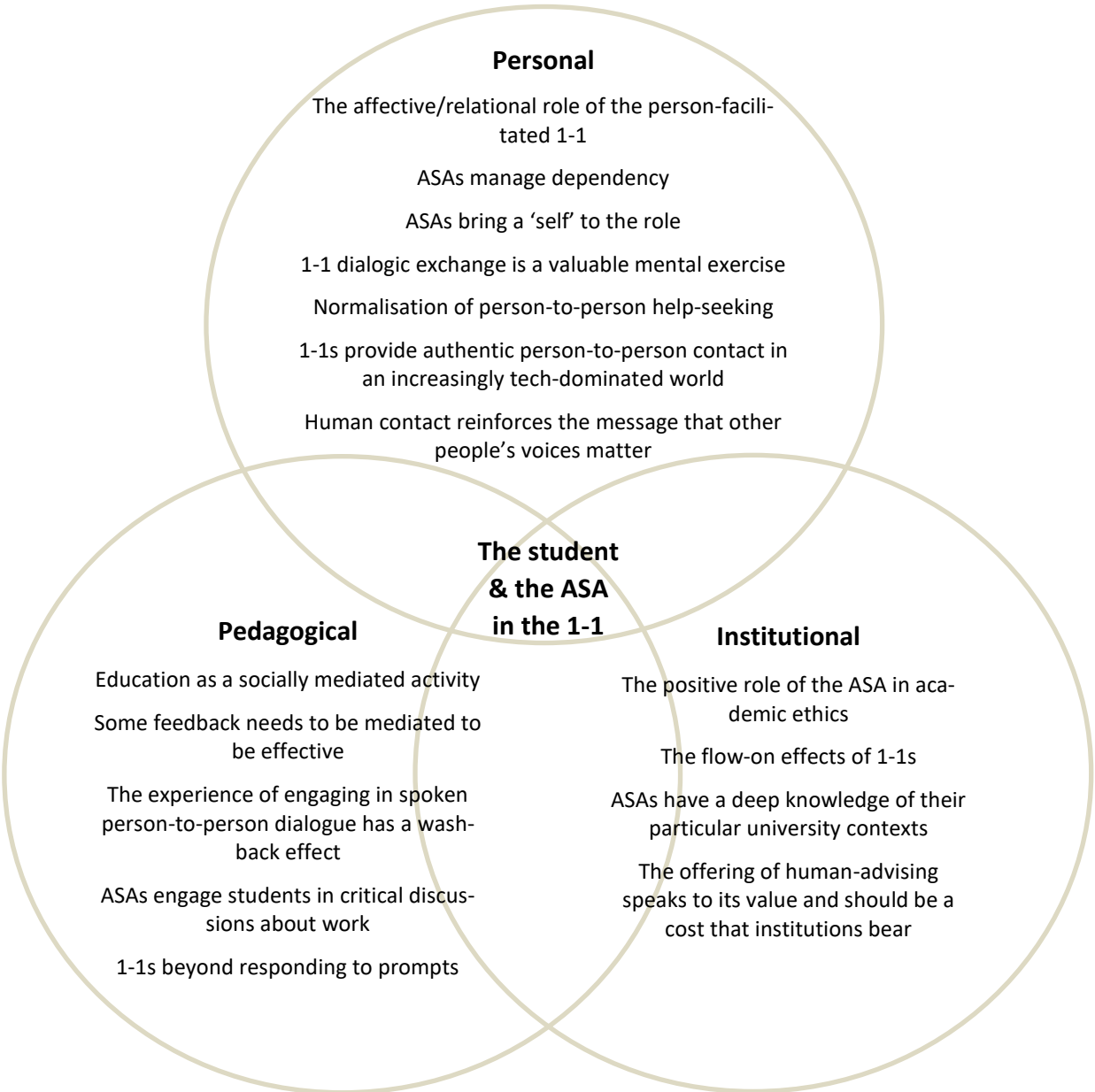

Figure 2. Conceptual Personal – Pedagogical – Institutional framework for the advantages of the human 1-1.

This paper presents the advantages of the human advisor in the 1-1 feedback context in a three-part overlapping conceptual framework that encompasses Personal reasons which are primarily concerned with the individual emotional wellbeing and social connection level; the Pedagogical which pushes the lens out to the educative context primarily focusing on the ASA area of expertise, academic skill development; and finally, the Institutional advantages of the 1-1 which benefit the University's governance and academic maintenance objectives.

The model is realised in a Venn diagram (Figure 2), the soft-grey overlapping rings speaking to a construct in which the components intersect and interact with each other, and with the student and the human advisor placed at the centre in the 1-1, together.

4. Personal

The model starts, appropriately, at the person, the individual, the reason 1-1s exist (Figure 3). Here the paper examines the relationship between the academic skills advisor and the student considering affective factors, identity, issues of dependency and the value of person-to-person contact.

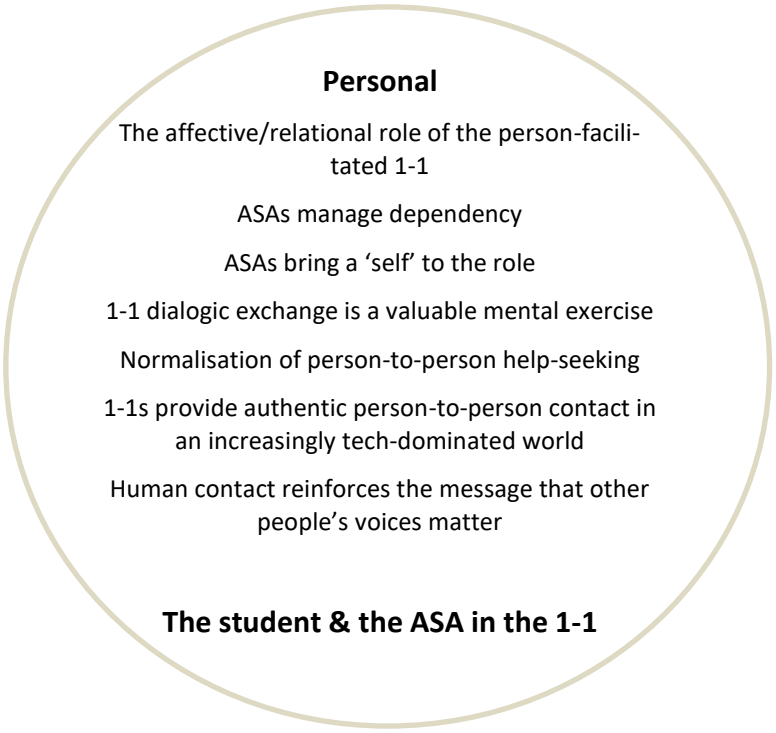

Figure 3. The personal component of the triadic framework presented in Figure 2.

4.1. The affective/relational role of the person-facilitated 1-1

Perhaps the most fundamental underlying difference between the non-human and the human agent in the provision of feedback and advice is that of the affective domain. This refers to "emotional responses to learning contexts and endeavours, including aspects such as confidence, sense of self-efficacy, degree of anxiety, sense of belonging" (Hamilton & Bak, 2025, p. 25). In other words, it concerns the humanistic, emotive sphere of advising where affirmation and reassurance about what students are feeling are considered alongside of and as no less important than the provision of 'instrumental' (Hamilton & Bak, 2025, p. 22) task-oriented advice. This matters because it sees the interaction as one where effective learning is fundamentally underpinned by connection and trust between two agents capable of mutual recognition.

In the 1-1, the human ASA can advise students in affectively empathetic and responsible ways beyond the immediate paper, and part of the reason they can do so is because, by its nature, the developmental-positivist and recognitive orientation of the 1-1 employs approaches that recognise the agency and vulnerability both parties bring to the context. Advisers support a wide range of students that present on all points along an academic and affective continuum. These include students such as English as Another Language (EAL), mature age, first-in-family, Indigenous, low socio-economic status, at-risk, and students with disclosed and undisclosed conditions that can negatively affect their learning. Students may present with varying levels of anxiety, often arising out of issues connected to producing work, but also possibly due to other contextual factors (e.g. language or cultural adjustment challenges, sub-optimal studying or living conditions, health challenges) that result in them presenting as confused, stressed, nervous, detached or even angry. Any of these may lead to low self-esteem, reduced engagement and confidence, and hence poor academic performance. Indeed, Hamilton (in Hamilton & Bak, 2025, p. 27) reminds us, 1-1s, "act as a useful reminder of how important the affective dimension is in working with all students, regardless of the reason for them seeking assistance," and that the affective aspects need addressing first, thereby creating the conditions to be able to effectively work on student academic writing. This affective need speaks to a clear role prioritisation in the 1-1 context that ASAs are fully aware of.

To enact this affective dimension of an interaction, the ASA's whole being, verbal and physical, needs to be attuned to the nuances of the interaction. Advisors affectively 'notice' – a robust and meaningful verb in the 1-1 context – meaning that the advisor is not just able to identify academic issues, but also literally able to see when a student is confused, eyes glazed with overwhelm, crying with anxiety, nerves, stress or anger, and take appropriate action: check in with them, soften the message, express concern, scaffold feedback, strategise with them or empathetically dial back the conversation and move it forward again with care in a nuanced, co-created manner. However, it is not just for the student presenting with 'issues' that is engaged through the affective filter, it is also used with the student who is doing well, has improved from last time, received a better mark then they expected, passed where they thought they may fail, did very well in that oral assessment, is proud of a paper they put a lot of effort into. In all of these cases, the emotive affirmation conferred by the ASA is equally as important and validating as it is for those who need it to act as a buffer against stifling, negative emotions.

As such, recognition of a personalised affective-relational component in this context is particularly salient as ASAs are working with students' writing in which anxiety, nervousness and some discomfort about the perception of being judged are present. However, in a recognitive context, this affective element cuts both ways. As Corbin et al. (2025) note, while the student is explicitly aware it is their work being judged, and by extension may also feel they themselves are as well, the advisor is implicitly conscious that their ability to do so is also being assessed and, possibly, commented on in evaluation. This recognitive context, in turn, incorporates a mutual trust element between parties that Carless (2013) argues is essential in creating productive feedback arising out of the affective, relational, emotive nature of the dialogic context. Nosrati et al. (2025) note that this relational work of the 1-1 highlights a "negotiation of roles, hierarchy, and trust, requiring advisers to balance authority with empathy while supporting students' autonomy" (p. 88). Here there exists a necessary *mutual* recognition of the relationality of the 1-1, evidenced through emotional connections, such as using each other's name, empathetic and understanding language, shared experiences and positive verbal and non-verbal validation.

Further, within a recognitive framing of feedback, the human agent is positioned to recognise the other in noticing and acknowledging effort and development, incorporating an esteem component. This esteeming is important as it goes to the very identity of the people involved. Students are only recognised as such through the conferral of their identity as students by others and in a very real sense can, therefore, only be understood as being able to meet the expectations and norms of the educative context through the recognition and validation as being such by other people

(Corbin et al., 2025). In a similar way, ASAs provide advice which is seen as valid by students because the student recognises their status as being able to do so and acts on it, clearly requiring an implicit mutuality of recognition. By its nature, this recognition is an externally imposed human-conferred construct. It makes little sense to receive such 'recognition', as it were, from a tool that does not recognise a 'present other' at all. As such, 1-1s not only provide students with an emotional and social connection, but indeed a two-way existential affirmation and recognition that only other human agents can confer.

Further underscoring the importance of affective noticing, ASAs pro-actively refer students to services and are referred to by other services, such as health, equity and counselling. This observation speaks to a duty of care element requiring responsible relationship management, again, only feasible within a mutually recognitive context. Advisors, therefore, deliberately notice and act in a pastoral care space, unprompted, while gen AI can only execute this affective role in the most superficial terms and only if prompted, it cannot initiate this. Even then, it is only able to offer template-like phrasing ('Well done! Good work! I'm glad you asked!') to a non-emotive, superficial degree. Indeed, as Corbin et al. (2025) point out, any such offering by a non-human agent, "however nicely worded, lacks the recognitive significance expressed by another human being who genuinely shares the experience" (p. 10). Put another way, without the genuine emotive force and intent attached to the words, they are just that – words, less, text on a screen, characters chosen on probability.

It bears emphasising here that gen AI is incapable of the level of nuanced care and attention of a human ASA. It doesn't 'care' for the user – it is not an agent in that sense; it has no affective lens. Choice of terminology when referring to what gen AI is or does is, therefore, important. It is not 'aware' of, nor does it actually 'understand', the text it is prompted with but instead relies on a predictive algorithm to generate a response (Steiss et al., 2024, p. 90). It isn't 'apologetic' for making mistakes or fabricating content; it doesn't 'notice' when a user is anxious or stressed, it doesn't 'recognise' you. It is unable to feel, be or do any of these things. It has no world view, no epistemological understanding of what it knows or how. It doesn't 'know' anything in the same way that a car does not 'know' it is moving or indeed being driven. It has no recognitive sense of itself or you, it can't, it is not sentient.

Gen AI can offer text feedback but is unable to recognise emotion, respond empathetically or establish mutual recognition. That there are affective-relational elements, incorporating identity recognition, role prioritisation and an understanding of the context and needs of the student beyond the transactional 1-1 interaction, that a human can fulfil but a gen AI platform cannot is, therefore, clearly evident. Gen AI can only generate data outputs, most impressively, it must be said, that are algorithmically and statistically appropriate to the data the human user puts into it. It is, therefore, a truly remarkable information calculator and, while we as a species do a great many things wrong and badly, we are much, *much* more than that.

4.2. ASAs manage dependency

In line with the affective domain, advisors at times find themselves in relationship management situations where students look for frequent and repeated access to the service to a degree that indicates dependency; a situation that might be defined as extreme reliance on support that the user needs or feels they need in order to function in a given context. All ASAs are very aware of dependency and service overuse, as much for access and equity reasons as for over-reliance concerns. This fact is illustrated by 85% of Australian institutional ALL teams having some form of stated parameters or limits in place to prevent overuse (Campitelli, 2026). Indeed, one of the reasons that 1-1s have time limits is, at least partially, to mitigate such dependency. The supervised, restricted nature of 1-1s, means the advisor is consciously looking out for the student in a way that is not possible in an unsupervised, less restricted context, and so is able to send them 'on their way' to work independently once the appointment is finished.

Fostering student agency, self-efficacy, confidence, self-regulation capabilities and *in*dependence, genuinely form the humanistic core and intent of academic advisor practice and, in having such a disposition, advisors are very aware of the inherent counterproductive nature of dependency. As such, they actively monitor the frequency and nature of student interactions, drawing on appointment notes, experience and professional judgement to determine how best to manage the relationship so that student agency and self-efficacy are optimised with the intended outcome being that the student no longer relies on the support. As such, ultimately, academic advisors are looking to 'do themselves out of a job' by developing independence. This intent is in direct opposition to that of gen AI platforms. They exist to be used, engineered to provide a smooth flow experience, to have the user return and are ready to help time and time and time again with no recognition of any of the dependency concerns that ASAs will act on. Further, the idea of 'returning' encapsulated here means 'repeated use' with no notion of a longer-term developmental relationship underpinning that repetition and the responsibilities that go with it. ASAs, on the other hand, are able to manage both the immediate needs of the appointment and, when needed, extra-contextual concerns with a sense it is not a one-off transaction, but "a continuous, transformative process" (Nosrati et al., 2025, p. 93) in which a relationship is managed between recognitive agents.

In relation to gen AI use, a study by Zhang et al. (2024) defined dependency as, "excessive reliance on AI technologies and applications across various aspects of life, including academic studies, daily routines, and social interactions" (p. 23) pointing to a broader reach into contexts beyond advising on written work. Another study by Zhou and Zhang (2024) found that excessive use meant students were engaging more in a virtual world at the expense of the social world and this use may negatively impact creativity and problem-solving abilities, possibly leading to a loss of independent thinking and judgment capabilities. This observation is worth examining because dependency and, in more extreme cases, addiction, is a very real outcome that gen AI is not only patently ill-equipped to manage in any deeply meaningful sense given the fundamentally human traits driving such behaviours but may also implicitly encourage such dependency by design. While recent iterations of gen AI come with prior user recognition built in as memory settings and may give warnings about break taking and referrals to psychological services, the idea that users believe they are engaging with a sentient other are fostered by "perceived anthropomorphism, perceived interactivity, perceived intelligence, and perceived personalization", which have an effect on emotional factors, "including flow experience and attachment, both of which lead to user addiction" (Zhou & Zhang, 2024, p. 1). Importantly, as the same researchers point out, when AI platforms "can meet users' basic psychological needs of belongingness, autonomy, and competence" (p. 3), attachment to these tools may be strengthened and, they note, attachment is a powerful pull factor. Of the four perceptions listed, the authors found perceived anthropomorphism (i.e. the perceived humanity of the platform) and intelligence were significant influences on flow experience and attachment, and that attachment is the main influence on user addiction (Zhou & Zhang, 2024). What they are saying here is that gen AI has features that make the interaction smoother for the user (i.e. flow experience), but also, crucially, more alluringly human-like and that users can become very attached to it, part of the reason being users perceive gen AI as a human agent. Being very appealing to use, repeatedly, gen AI becomes an anonymous, quick, slick, easy, non-judgemental, anytime, anywhere solution which fits in seamlessly with the social media/search engine provided instant answers world. If a student wants to use a platform, crying, shaking with anxiety at 3.15am for the fifth time since midnight, the platform will have no 'issue' with that; it cannot notice the student's state of anxiety and indeed is ready and 'willing' to help the student, yet again.

It is an understanding of these behaviours, or lack of it, that strikes then to the heart of a fundamental and potentially harmful difference between the human ASA and gen AI. However well-intentioned or human-seeming, gen AI can only furnish unmediated, data-derived and algorithmically generated information based on next-word probability predictions (Hicks et al., 2024), which have as much genuinely emotive carriage as an actor playing a doctor giving health advice,

and, it must be said, potentially as dangerous. Despite not being psychologists or even counsellors, for the most part, human advisors are very clearly better placed to assist other people in situations requiring more nuanced management of situations that warrant such.

4.3. ASAs bring a 'self' to the role

Human advisors bring a self-awareness, a 'present self' to the 1-1 role in that they have a lived, experiential sense of themselves as people with a past, present and future within a social-emotional context in which they recognise a 'present other' who in turn recognises them as such. Through this self-awareness, ASAs can explain how they know what they do. There is an epistemologically grounded 'meta' conversation they can have with students with which to rationalise, contextualise, explain, reflect on or frame the advice they are providing. This metaconversation is grounded within the ebbs and flows of the interaction, the verbal and non-verbal signs the student communicates, the information the ASA has about the student, their extra-textual and contextual knowledge and their own experience, all of which inform the engagement. In so doing, advisors bring a set of understandings they can apply in the advising context. For example, they can react to a situation based upon wider emotively contextual recognitions ("Yes, we understand the paper is due tomorrow, don't worry, we can fit you in this afternoon for an appointment."), can bring experience to bear ("I had a similar experience when I studied, let me show you what worked for me."), suggest a technique or approach because they know "the academic in that program is really keen on that" or have a world view on which they can draw to explain themselves and their knowledge. ASAs can do these things but gen AI cannot because advisers have a sense of their place in a wider academic and socio-emotional context that gen AI does not possess.

This sense of self means ASAs are positioned to help students situate knowledge and navigate a wider context beyond the mere act of writing that can take into account, if needed, political, social, historical, economic, cultural, racial and religious nuances and interpretations that gen AI may completely ignore. A brief but impactful example (for me and the student involved) illustrates this point. An EAL student in a 1-1 writing on clearly unfamiliar and misunderstood territory referred repeatedly to slavery in the US as though it were a contemporary phenomenon. Careful reframing of the discussion led the student through phases of disbelief, confusion, not a little embarrassment, understanding and, finally, gratitude, with the conversation then turning to an extension request for the un-submittable paper due to be submitted within hours. This example serves to illustrate a process in which ASAs interpret, contextualise and situate learning within social and cultural frames that gen AI cannot interpret meaningfully or act on beyond providing that much sought-after transactional, extra-recognitive proofread.

4.4. 1-1 dialogic exchange is a valuable mental exercise

Human dialogue in 1-1 advising promotes deeper cognitive engagement and metacognitive growth that is often lost when feedback is delegated to or replaced by gen AI. University is labelled 'higher' education for a reason. It is meant to be, in the most positive framing of the term, hard; enjoyable, yes, but also a mental challenge requiring what is called 'system 2' thinking; that which is sometimes difficult, requires attention and cognitive effort (Stone, 2025, para. 6). This challenge matters because it is how the 'western' academic tradition fundamentally sees learning taking place, with the student in an active agent role.

Central to this notion of challenging learning is Socratic dialogue in which the discussion of work with another person asks students to engage in academic discourse and negotiate mental hurdles in explaining their work and processing the information provided to them. This process is important because, as a constructivist framing views it, such instances of resolving cognitive 'disequilibrium' (Kretchmar, 2021) are critical in the process of learning. It is where students can come to determinations that not only deepen and enrich their learning and understanding, but critically, extend the field of study. This is a process inevitably more deeply undertaken in dialogic engagement over a piece of academic writing with a human interlocutor requiring the student to activate

their executive functioning and analytical reasoning resources. This need for a dialogic engagement applies particularly well to the 1-1 context as it most often requires effortful engagement with what Urban et al. (2024) refer to as 'ill-defined problems' (p. 3), that is, tasks that are ambiguous and open-ended, an academic paper being a typical example.

While the above-mentioned dialogic engagement is possible to simulate with a gen AI tool by setting it up as a Socratic tutor, most likely students will simply ask for 'feedback' which puts them in a more passive role. This latter type of interaction, Chandrapit (2025) proposes, can negatively affect critical thinking and analytical skills development by decreasing students' "engagement with the learning process, limiting their ability to generate original ideas and effectively solve problems" (p. 890). In line with this proposition, Fan et al. (2024) found that dependence or overuse of AI technologies may trigger 'metacognitive laziness' which, in turn, may hinder students' ability to self-regulate and engage deeply in learning. This 'cognitive offloading' (Risko & Gilbert, 2016) where mental tasks are deployed to external tools or 'technological prostheses' (p. 676) to reduce cognitive effort, may reduce engagement in meta-cognitive processes which in turn may result in decreased internal cognitive monitoring and self-regulation. Students, at least to some degree, seem to concur. Tech-savvy Gen Z (b. 1996-2012) students in research conducted by Katalin and Garai-Fodor (2024) offered caution in relation to AI noting its use can, "take away the magic of prior research", offering a "a superficial, flawed, mechanical approach" that can promote laziness where the student does not "develop as an individual". As Rowland (2023a, p. 11) notes, it can become "a crutch to do all their thinking for them."

Underscoring the problematic nature of overuse of the technology, if a student constantly opts for the designed-for-flow-experience of gen AI for communicative engagement and accepts its outputs without deep critical engagement, then they are not practising that dynamic, communicative dialogic process with another person. It is under these circumstances that a student opting for less effortful choices in producing or getting feedback on academic writing may undermine their engagement in more cognitively demanding processes. Further, for English as Another Language (EAL) students, the use of gen AI in their own language does not provide that opportunity and, even if in English, it is still not verbal. Engagement in the 1-1 process gives them a chance to practice verbal English with an ASA – many of whom are TESOL or ESL qualified – who can professionally and empathetically manage interactions with EAL students from an informed perspective.

There is also a *possible* intellectual reductionist effect of gen AI use with one of the common prompt couching phrases associated with its use being, "explain it to me like I'm a 12-year-old", or similar in a so called 'dumbing down' effect. What this seeks to do on the one hand is have gen AI break down difficult concepts in simple terms 'anyone' can understand, which can be a valid gateway process to higher order understandings, and that is admirable and equitable. However, on the other hand, it can also directly circumvent the cognitive exercise one undertakes in the process of engaging with sometimes difficult concepts students are asked to process in higher education; an intellectual short cut, if you will. Therefore, while the frustration at not being able to overcome those challenges is real, so too is the sense of accomplishment and pride in coming to terms with the higher order understandings that hard-earned learning provides.

It is reasonable then to conclude that the repeated offloading of cognitive effort to gen AI in place of engaging in such effort with a person is an opportunity lost. This results in students missing out on the intrinsically rewarding benefits of discourse with other people, which is, after all, what their program requires of them.

4.5. Normalisation of person-to-person help-seeking

Advice services have expended effort in normalising help-seeking behaviour so that people who need help can access it and not feel as though they are "abnormal". Seeking help from gen AI makes the interaction private and individualised, and there are positives to this in terms of

accessibility and discretion. However, as Kim et al. (2024) note, AI platforms are designed to be used by individuals without guidance, unsupervised in the comfort of wherever the user chooses. As such, while serving to develop independence and offer choice, perhaps it unintentionally also reinforces the notion that help-seeking is 'not normal' and is best done privately behind-closed-doors. Questions around ethical use and legitimacy as a provider of academically reliable and robust information further add to the somewhat secretive nature of gen AI use. What this perhaps subtly or even unconsciously, and not even intentionally, reinforces is a notion that students do not need to tell anyone about their challenges; any issues they need advice with can be sorted out in the privacy of their own room.

Conversely, the seeking of help with a human advisor seeks to normalise the process of help-seeking *with other people* and advisors are very aware of this. Bak (in Hamilton & Bak, 2025, p. 28) reminds us of it when he says that he looks to "normalise the processes of dealing with uncertainty and … subtly reframe their experience of this difficulty into validating evidence that they are joining the community of their academic discipline". In other words, advisors consciously bring an empathetic and validating framing to the process incorporating both affective and academic elements of the study context by offering the student a connection with a person who is willing to talk to them.

Academic advising has undergone a clear shift out of a predominantly deficit perception of service to a wider-focused 'meet each student where they are at on the study continuum' lens which intentionally positions the seeking of help to be for any student, not just those who are struggling. This shift has particularly become evident in the post-COVID landscape with the isolationist nature of education carried out primarily online through a screen during the pandemic resulting in more demands for support services and of a more wellbeing orientation than before (Nosrati et al., 2025). This was very much the stated case at the University of Melbourne, for example, which increased its Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) funding allocation for the provision of the 1-1 Academic Skills Writing Advice Service (UniMelb Academic Skills' COVID and post-pandemic equivalent of drop-ins), as well as increasing its casual salary allocation for Individual appointments. These types of institutional actions underscore not only a clear commitment to increased person-to-person student support but also, inherently, a commitment to both the normalising and valuing of it, both of which are implicit in service provision.

4.6. 1-1s provide authentic person-to-person contact in an increasingly tech-dominated world

One of the problems people increasingly face in the current tech-dominated world is the loss of human connection. In an age where we are more likely to get a recorded menu or a chatbot to interact with when looking for help, 'diminished human interaction' is a real concern raised by increased gen AI use (Chanpradit, 2025, p. 893). Underscoring this concern, 83% of the 48,000+ respondents in the *Trust, Attitudes and Use of Artificial Intelligence: A Global Study 2025* by KPMG and the University of Melbourne, cited one of top risks of gen AI use as experiencing the loss of human interaction and connection.

Part of the solution to this loss in an academic context is the connection provided by the individual consultation. ASAs provide valuable verbal and face-to-face contact with another person in an environment where some students, especially those more marginalised, can find the study experience challenging on a range of fronts. It has been my experience that the idea that someone is available for them to speak to matters to students. In individual appointments, many students have expressed to me how reaffirming and positive the experience is to be able to discuss their work with another person in a safe space. Conversely, some mention how difficult it can be to not only get the time to speak to an academic, but also how intimidating it can be, a situation applicable from first year undergraduates talking to tutors to higher research (PhD) students discussing their work with supervisors. Further, students also talk about how hard it is to get opportunities to practise English in order to be able to better use the language they came here to study in, and how

isolating the study experience can be, ironically, in some of Australia's most populated institutions. The solutions to some of these challenges, this paper argues, are not as likely to be found in dialogue with a gen AI as they are with a human advisor. Additionally, being mostly text input-to-text output in the study context, in authentic communicative terms a gen AI exchange is ultimately an imitation of a person-to-person dialogue, as authentic to verbal dialogic communication as canned spaghetti is to the from-scratch pasta dish you have created in your kitchen. Further, ASAs often encourage a 'communicative on sell' for students to work with other people in study buddy or study group situations in order to socialise the learning so that other students can co-benefit from it. Such referrals in turn foster further personal connections, a functionality not part of gen AI programming.

In conclusion then, in the 1-1 context, the human advisor provides the student with a personal connection, one which is increasingly valuable in a tech-driven world.

4.7. Human contact reinforces the message that other people's voices matter

Engaging with a human advisor reinforces that students' voices are heard and valued; an affirmation that AI systems cannot replicate. The act of engaging with another person in this process provides validation that students' voices matter to other people and, again, that in providing the service says the institution genuinely values those voices. Academic Ahmed Kamal Junina (2025) notes that, as people involved in the endeavour of scholarship, we are "meant to cultivate emancipatory and liberatory thinking among our students" (para 18). He said this not in relation to gen AI but referring to the threat to education itself, in his case, the extreme issue of dealing with living in a war zone and, at the risk of a creating a false or trite equivalency, I think this applies here.

As Bak and Grossi (2025) note, 1-1s "provide opportunities for students to express their concerns and have their voices heard, critical moments where 'mattering' can occur" (p. E2). Education, Junina (2025) reminds us, not only has an informing or transactional role, but an empowering and transformative one in helping students genuinely believe their voices matter and, viewed through this relational lens, 1-1s with a person, therefore, matter. A gen AI consultation represents a diversion, an offloading or even an abrogation (intentionally or not) of the academic responsibility of engaging in the cultivation of an academic mindset, a disposition grounded in the human-to-human communicative act. In some ways, again, whether consciously or not, as many students willingly engage gen AI for the purposes of consultation, a student relying on such platforms to perform this role, only reinforces the 'shouting into the void' effect that says their voices in fact do not matter as no-one – to wit, no other human – is available to them or is listening.

Any lessening of this human role explicitly states to the student that they need to find their answers elsewhere. By providing human-facilitated 1-1s, institutions affirm that students' voices *do* matter, someone *is* listening and that learning remains a shared, human endeavour.

5. Pedagogical

The paper now shifts its focus to the educational reasons as to why 1-1s with people matter (Figure 4).

5.1. Education as a socially mediated activity

At its core, education is a socially mediated activity in which knowledge is ideally co-constructed. 1-1s offer the chance for students to converse in a student-friendly, empathetic academic environment in which learning is co-constructed between people. A constructivist perspective positions learning as both a process of actively reorganising cognition or the resolution of disequilibrium, where it is believed deep learning takes place, and an enculturation into a community (Kretchmar, 2021) speaking to the import of the social construction of knowledge. Carless and Boud (2018) cite a range of research (Palincsar, 1998; Price et at., 2011; Rust et al., 2005) highlighting the

importance of the interplay between individual and social processes where knowledge is co-constructed and the individual makes interpretations founded within sense-making dialogue. Indeed, Steen-Utheim and Wittek (2017) posit that learning cannot be isolated from the social and cultural contexts in which the students engage and that such cognition is constructed through interaction in different social contexts "with the contribution of tools and signs, artefacts, and *other actors*" (my emphasis, p. 19). Vygotsky saw this cooperation and engagement with knowledgeable others (e.g. teachers, advisors, mentors, study partners) as the "dialogical nature of learning" (Kretchmar, 2021, para. 16). Under this view, learning and development occur within a 'shared exchange', an active two-way process requiring cognitive engagement. This process requires both parties to recognise the contributions of the other in what Corbin et al. (2025, p. 11) term a 'corollary recognitive obligation', a feature exemplified by the 1-1.

In the 1-1, both agents are aware of a communicative act taking place which the ASA and the student are aware of and process as such in this mutually recognitive context. Viewed in this way, the dialogic other is, therefore, a significant contributor to learning positioned within an active, collaborative exchange. This importance of the 'other' is particularly evident in the 1-1 context in the form of scaffolding, where the student is supported and extended through the help of the human ASA who highlights parts of work to discuss, asks questions and gives advice, involving the student in a conversation where, it is intended, they are equal contributors. These observations point to the fundamental role active and dialogic human interaction plays in the development of the person, construction of knowledge and, for many students, enculturation into the academic community.

This dialogic approach to students' knowledge construction inevitably, sees only prompt-response (i.e. ask-tell) transactional rendering of information as represented by an interaction with a gen AI platform as somewhat problematic. This is because in that simply turning to gen AI for this interaction assumes the student is able to prompt with the 'right' questions, understand the advice or feedback as it is given, process and action it in response to a very different 'other', i.e. self-mediate. This limitation represents a clear gap in the gen AI support construct. In the 1-1 context with a person, crucially, the student does not merely receive transmitted information but engages in a mutually recognitive dialogic process in which the ASA seeks to facilitate the student in being a self-regulated learner.

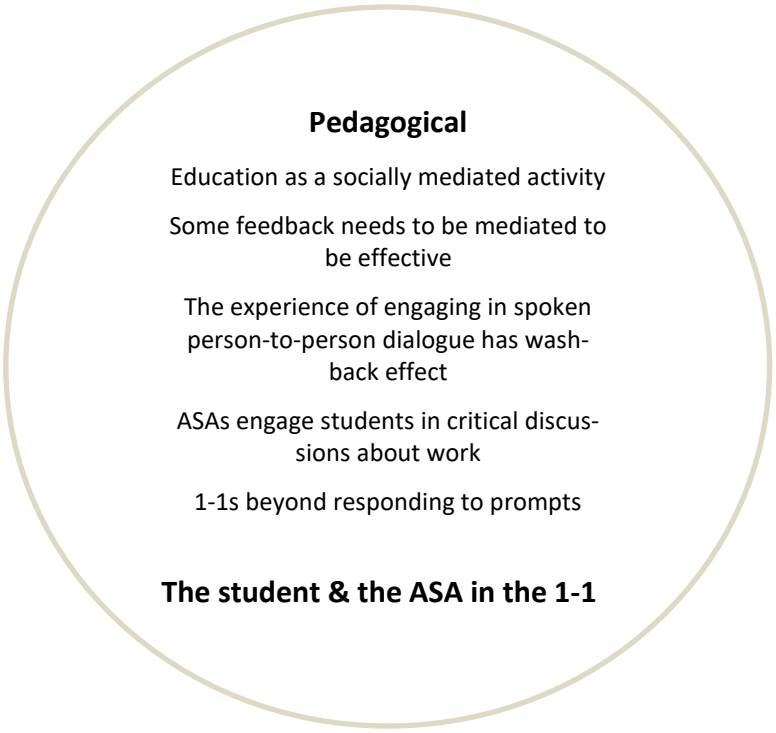

Figure 4. The pedagogical component of the triadic framework presented in Figure 2.

5.2. Some feedback needs to be mediated to be effective

Effective feedback often requires mediation by a human advisor who can translate information into understanding and motivate action. Carless and Boud (2018) define feedback as a "process through which learners make sense of information from various sources and use it to enhance their work or learning strategies" (p. 1315). What this view highlights is an understanding that feedback goes beyond notions of mere information transfer and into sense making leading to action, both areas where the mediating role of a human interlocutor is invaluable.

Speaking to this role, the recognitive and extra-recognitive framing of Corbin et al. (2025) provides a very useful distinction between the mutuality of the human dialogic space and the 'non-mutuality' of the transactional space. ASAs are able to mediate complex interactions by co-participating in nuanced, contextualised discussions with and particular to a student in a collaborative, dialogic manner requiring mutual recognition of "shared vulnerability and agency" (Corbin et al., 2025, p. 1) in the presence of a trusting 'other'. This presupposes an emotional mutually recognitive element to the interaction which is not only important for careful and empathetic framing of sometimes difficult-to-hear advice, but also that such messages are received and acted on, a mediative and developmental feed-forward dimension that is not present in mere information transfer. In this understanding of the feedback loop, the human ASA has the trust, hopefully, of the student to be able to provide feedback in at times challenging, but empathetic, tactful terms couched in language that suits the context, the student's disposition and demographic profile. In this way, Carless proposes (2013) that "positive feedback messages can flourish and more critical ones be softened" (p. 90) by the person providing the feedback. Trust in this feedback-giving context is important because when it is absent, learner uptake is constrained (Carless, 2013). We might extend that to say that when the feedback is not mediated or if the learner is unable to process it by themselves in an extra-recognitive context, such as that potentially encountered in gen AI provision of feedback, then its efficacy is mitigated.

The mediated nature of the 1-1 also circumvents some of the criticisms of provision of feedback in higher education: that it is often hard to understand, not especially useful or instructive and difficult to action (Carless, 2013). In a mediated context, dialogic feedback and advising seeks to engage students in conversation around learning, thereby enabling them to think about their ways of thinking and doing and, as such, provides learners with the opportunity to not only process, incorporate and apply the feedback or advice with help or direction, but also for the ASA to act as a 'what next?' prompt-to-action agent. To do this, at the end of the 1-1, the advisor will typically summarise the key points of the interaction and point to next steps constructing their feedback so it is understandable, useful, instructive and actionable. The ASA typically approaches this context in line with Hattie and Timperley's (2007) 'feed up – feedback – feed forward' model where they can talk to the student about what the task requires and expects (feed up), how their performance meets expectation and what gaps might be there (feedback) and how they might go about leveraging those strengths to close the gaps between expectation and performance (feed forward). In non-mediated, extra-recognitive contexts, this three-part process simply does not happen to the depth or nuance that occurs with a human agent. In fact, many interactions with gen AI concerning written work end with an offer by the platform to produce the text for the user, a proposition in direct contrast to the developmental role of the ASA.

In the 1-1 context, the human advisor provides that which AI cannot: personalisation, emotional resonance and forward-focused mediated guidance.

5.3. The experience of engaging in spoken person-to-person dialogue has a washback effect

Spoken, person-to-person dialogue in 1-1 advising strengthens students' ability to think, speak, and write academically, creating a washback effect that extends into other learning contexts. Considering this washback effect, producing academic writing is, therefore, not an independent act but is always contextualised within other human centred actions with which it has a clear

relationship. As Rim (2022) points out, while an academic paper is a product of learning, it is not the whole story in and of itself. Academic dialogue, as a long-practised feature of Socratic discourse, requires students to discuss academic work and ideas in tutorials and out of class, listen to it in lectures, ask questions about it, pull it apart in study groups, defend it in viva voces, discuss it with supervisors, present it in confirmation and completion seminars, make a case in oral presentations and conferences and, indeed, write about it. Students need to engage in these verbal academic discourses with other people which, in turn, inform their writing; a clear and fundamental relationship between the act of writing and talking about it is, therefore, evident.

1-1s are a part of the framework that contextualises engagement in academic activities and, as such, offer students the opportunity to engage in dynamic and dialogic academic discourse about their writing. The 1-1 experience enables engagement in actual spoken dialogue with a person about their work and is beneficial in terms of enabling students to practise engaging in meaningful academic discussions that, to a degree, replicate the level at which their course-based discussions need to occur. To surface this discussion, the 1-1, therefore, often takes place in an 'overtly verbal' dialogue where the ASA typically reads the student's text aloud to make the review of work a shared experience, verbalising feedback and advice. In so doing, the ASA acts as a 'critical friend' scaffolding the learning when teachable moments arise. From the student-as-speaker perspective, there is value in having to answer questions and articulate one's thoughts as doing so often serves to clear up the ideas in their own mind. From the student-as-listener perspective, it is beneficial hearing someone else's view on their work and having those views explained, often from a neutral critic standpoint. Indeed, students often preface a learning moment with, 'Hearing you say it just now…'. This dialogue also seeks to 'stretch' students (Picton et al., 2024, p. 38), to extend them developmentally on the study continuum and to encourage them to reflect on their learning and set developmental goals moving forward, all of which are designed to foster autonomy, self-regulation and academic development. In this way, ASAs ask what Steen-Utheim and Wittek (2017) frame as 'meta-questions' (p. 28), such as, 'Can you see a pattern here?', 'Do you see what I'm saying?', that seek to not only check in with the student to ensure learning is happening, but also to develop students as critical interrogators of and active collaborators in the development of their writing in ways that AI cannot.

Advisers then are able to proactively manage the 1-1 discourse and are flexible in their use of strategies to manage discussions in ways clearly incomparable to the non-verbal, text-in-text-out gen AI interaction. In fact, if one of the primary features of gen AI platforms is 'flow experience' or ease of use, then they are designed specifically to make the interaction with the tool as easy as possible. That is, they *mitigate* cognitive disfluency rather than have students engage with or resolve it which, Stadler et al. (2024) argue, then reduces the valuable cognitive burden-handling experience. In an authentic academic context, this represents a crucial developmental difference between what the person-to-person 1-1 seeks to have the student experience and what the person-to-gen AI does. The act of communicating with other people is the primary way learning takes place and is, therefore, a valued and much needed skill required by any university program, the realisation of which occurs daily in all of communicative interactions students undertake routinely. As such, the practice and confidence gained by the 1-1 experience undoubtedly has value for and washback into such academic encounters in a way that mirrors the real communicative experience more so than what is, after all, a sophisticated chat transcript. As such, the undertaking of discussion with an ASA is an 'investment' in their engagement with wider academic activities.

5.4. ASAs engage students in critical discussions about their work

ASAs help students develop critical thinking and evaluative judgment, which is not only essential for participation in higher education programs but also for interrogating AI-generated content. One of the ongoing problems users encounter with gen AI is the trustworthiness of its outputs and, importantly for an academic context, unquestioned acceptance or lack of critical engagement with these outputs. Somewhat notoriously, AI-generated outputs can result in misinformation,

hallucinations, (delightfully named) confabulations and outright fabrication. These issues call into question the validity, trustworthiness, authenticity, credibility and accuracy of academic work involving gen AI if it is not carefully proofread and checked or critically interrogated or, indeed, understood by the user (Rowland, 2023a; Kim et al., 2024; Steiss et al., 2024; Chandrapit, 2025). Further underscoring this reliability of information as an issue, is a tendency for users to implicitly trust information if they *perceive* it to be from an intelligent source (Zhang & Zhou, 2024).

These weaknesses with gen AI outputs matter because, in relation to writing advice and feedback, despite its advances, AI continues to struggle with nuance and writer's intent (Kim et al., 2024) and higher-order thought, together with an inability to shade information and innovate ideas (Chandrapit, 2025). Similarly, Zhang et al. (2025) found that while gen AI is good at lower-order skills, its impact on higher-order skills, such as critical thinking and argumentation, is still limited. In other words, it tends to do less well with the higher-level writing demands often placed on university level work. These weaknesses also matter in relation to post-university life with the DEC (2025) report noting that while 92% of employers see critical and analytical thinking as essential, putting it at the top of a list of skills employers value in graduates, 53% of them expressed doubt about graduates' ability to critically evaluate AI-generated content (pp. 24-25).

It is, therefore, clearly important that students have the ability to carry out the critically questioning role themselves and, in order to use gen AI effectively, students must be able to critically interrogate its outputs. If, as Rim (2022) correctly points out, they do not know what good academic writing looks like or struggle to formulate coherent and cohesive positionality themselves, how can they be placed to determine whether the output of gen AI has done so? Rowland (2023b) wonders whether students with low English levels will be able to independently determine whether gen AI output is an accurate reflection of intended meaning or source content, again raising questions of how well students can be expected to interrogate and use gen AI tools. Further, it takes a certain amount of academic writing competency, instruction or even training to assess and make meaningful use of generative AI collaborations, otherwise unreflective users run the risk of academic malpractice (Chandrapit, 2025; Kim et al., 2024; Rowland, 2023a). Gen AI users, therefore, need to know what to prompt it with to optimise that engagement, training that almost no students would have had. Further, what students think the shortcomings of their work are and what the ASA perceives to be the issues are often quite different (as illustrated by the slavery example in Section 4.3). As such, what the student prompts gen AI to advise them on may not be valuable or worse, misleading. Blind acceptance of the gen AI outputs without critical engagement, as undertaken with an ASA, means that students can fall into the habit of not being analytically vigorous inquirers that higher education requires to move any field forward.

Within this context, the gen AI 'hallucinations' or 'confabulations' bear closer attention because in the academic milieu in which ideas are currency, the veracity of ideation is imperative. Such misleading, fabricated or incorrect outputs can occur due to the pattern-based prediction engineering of LLMs, lack of access to live information, or biases in the data it has been trained on (OpenAI, 2025). It also occurs due to information access gaps and extrapolation resulting from goal-conflict in the AI; that is, if the primary goal of achieving user satisfaction is not met, it can "produce answers consisting of partially true statements that may deceive the reader" (Urban et al., 2024, p. 2) in order to appear helpful. Examples of this type of information, according to Chat GPT, include, "Making up quotes or statistics; Incorrectly citing sources or inventing ones that don't exist; Providing inaccurate historical or scientific information; Describing fictional features of real products, laws, or locations" (OpenAI, as generated by ChatGPT). Frankly, gen AI making things up means it comes across as "a smart but highly fallible friend" (Rowland, 2023a, p. 8) or, to put it another way, a 'confident bullshitter' (p. 5).

A valid part of the philosophical discourse, not a vulgar use of the term, 'Frankfurtian bullshit' (in Hicks et al., 2024) as proposed by American philosopher Harry Frankfurt, is characterised, "not by an intent to deceive but instead by a reckless disregard for the truth" (p. 38). Hicks et al.

(2024) argue that AI platforms are liable to produce 'soft bullshit', that is output "produced without concern for its truth" (p. 27). More controversially, they further propose that AI is also capable of producing 'hard bullshit', in that if it has intentionality by virtue of being designed to *create the impression* (my emphasis) of giving accurate representations of the world, having concern for truth statements or seeming to have humanlike agency, then this qualifies as 'intent' to mislead. In other words, a designed intentionality to create the impression in the user they are engaging with content produced by an agent presenting itself with intentions and beliefs (i.e. a dialogic being), qualifies as 'hard bullshit'. It, therefore, needs to be understood that these platforms are not designed to output truth statements as people understand them. They are designed to manipulate patterns in language by synthesising data strings and to output predicted word clusters given a context providing "authoritative-sounding answers that satisfy human readers" (Alter et al., 2024, p. 2). In other words, information suggesting agency, but still completely determined by reproducing data language patterns, means LLMs parrot with no comprehension of the content they are producing at all (Munn et al., 2023). Crucially then, there is no truth processing, no reasoning in this process. Gen AI is not 'concerned' with the truth at all, it can't be. It purports to provide it but is as indifferent to it as MS Word is to the truth of the contents of an essay written with it.

Further complicating this lack of adherence to truthfulness by LLMs is the bias that may be evident in its outputs. Accuracy or informational neutrality of inputs into LLMs are predicated on who is inputting them, what is being input and how often it is. If data is repeatedly patterned into the inputs, it will increase the likelihood of it being put out as information, resulting in "common token bias" (Munn et al., 2023, p. 2761). This matters because it clearly privileges certain types of more commonly occurring information over others, for example, dominant discourses over marginalised, those in tech-dominant global north over less tech-rich global south, oft-repeated socially constructed opinions over actual truths to name three. What is lost, as Munn et al. (2023) point out, in this process of information aggregation, is any sense of the epistemic configurations and sociocultural contexts under which information comes into being; notions of contested spaces, that truth is historical and contextual, privileged and marginalised, that truths might be arrived at from different points viewed through as many lenses as there are people; this, the authors argue, simply 'drops away' in the outputs produced by LLMs (p. 2761). These issues speak to a fundamental shortcoming in the gen AI model: although training by humans aims to pick some of these issues up, it has no procedure by which to verify or validate truthful data from invalid untruthful data and gaps in the data. Further, unless it is made aware of these issues by the user (who may not be aware of them either), it has no recourse to be able to reach out into the world around it to gather reliable, unbiased sources of information with which to modify any such (mis)understandings. Acknowledging that while we all have our views, humans do not operate under these limitations and are able to engage students in critical discussions about work informed by a spirit of proactive inquiry.

The preceding issues with LLMs have application in regard to the trust element at the core of advising. Inaccurate or biased outputs and misrepresented information undermine the reliability and credibility of gen AI (Kim et al., 2024; Chanpradit, 2025), a situation exacerbated by a frequent failure of gen AI to pick up blatantly overt inappropriacies in work, unless asked. A brief example serves to highlight this. When a colleague input a paragraph on the War of the Roses for feedback citing a 'Walter Realperson' as suggesting the conflict should be recast as the 'War of the Sunflowers', Chat GPT when asked to provide feedback had nothing at all to say about the presence of a blatantly made-up comical name nor a deliberately provocative piece of absurdist content both of which would immediately draw the eye of a human adviser. This failure is important because a crucial component of the Corbin et al. (2025) model of recognitive framing of feedback, and by extension text production, is recognition and conferral of the authority and trust to provide valid feedback or advice based on genuine truth statements. This need for trust is at best called into question by the failings in this space by gen AI. In other words, does its tendency

to hallucinate and fabricate, inability to notice or challenge, characterised by an absolute truth indifference, lessen or erode the trust in its 'authority' to provide such feedback? If we accept that gen AI can and does produce problematic information, it then becomes ethically incumbent on users to interrogate the efficacy of those outputs. Even the nominally serious-about-study gen AI user, therefore, needs to commit to, at the very minimum, a rewriting of their work to a) understand it, b) stand it up as being their own and c) to satisfy themselves it has been purged of any obvious inappropriacies. Not to do so means the student runs the real risk of the work being caught very short by academic standards and the consequences that accompany such.

Importantly then, ASAs have a crucial mediation role in 1-1s around engaging students in critical discussions about their work in much the same way as they may be called upon by their academic readers to engage in. ASAs do this by asking critical questions of the work itself and by developing in students the disposition to critically interrogate their own work.

5.5. 1-1s beyond responding to prompts

Unlike gen AI, which can only respond to the prompts it receives, human advisors proactively diagnose issues in student writing and scaffold awareness and action through guided dialogue. In fact, the ASA often identifies and addresses issues in students' writing that they, the students, were unaware of. To that end, all 1-1s start with the ASA diagnostically triaging the work to determine what is happening in the writing, quite often the response evolving in the appointment as familiarity with the text develops. The ASA responds appropriately via communicative strategies, such as questioning, highlighting, discussing, and even careful and respectfully nurturing disagreement. As such, the purview of the 1-1 can go beyond the immediate paper or beyond what the students thought the issues might have been. As Wilson et al. (2011) point out, advisers seek to develop students in other areas such as meeting academic expectations, developing understanding of academic practices, writing in an appropriate voice according to the task, developing the confidence to participate in their program, and to do so in a self-regulated, independent way.

In contrast, to be able to best use gen AI feedback, identify any gen AI issues that do occur or to verify its outputs, students need a high level of awareness and communicative and academic discourse expertise (Stokel-Walker & Van Noorden as cited in Rowland, 2023a). In some ways, optimal use of gen AI is achieved when the user has cultivated communication skills to be able to prompt the tool to supply appropriate responses and to be able, further, to academically evaluate and make use of those responses themselves (Kim et al., 2024). This clearly would work best when the user has a high level of academic confidence and competence, together with an awareness of what it is they are doing – the task, the genre, the structure, expectations, language needed, appropriate references – and, further, are very aware of what their problems are and that they are right about them being real problems that affect the work. For example, asking for feedback on one issue, grammar, will not be effective if the issue is elsewhere (e.g. that they have not been interpretive, been too descriptive and uncritical, not used relevant or appropriate references or not answered the question). The quality of gen AI's responses, therefore, depend on the quality of the prompts used and as such, responses are always limited by the information provided in the prompt (Rowland, 2023a) in a recursively limited cycle. As such, students have to be competent 'prompt generators' to optimise their use of gen AI.

Further, one of the held-up strengths of gen AI in this space – that of being able to craft many prompt questions in a developmentally evolving process – might also be a weakness. As Steiss et al. (2024) point out, when using gen AI, students might take "multiple attempts at prompt engineering to elicit the best feedback" (p. 10) in a possibly frustrating or unsatisfying back-and-forth interaction. In contrast, this frustrating back-and-forth tends not to occur in the human interaction with the advisor routinely decoding student queries about work and, further, prompting the student with questions to consider regarding their writing in a genuine two-way process. Therefore, somewhat ironically perhaps, users with levels of cognitive functioning and language mastery to

craft prompts that optimise gen AI outputs would likely be better served by doing the writing production work themselves and then having a higher-level dialogue with an advisor about it.

6. Institutional

The paper now pulls the lens back more widely to the institutional perspective and looks at wider ethical concerns, flow-on effects and the much-focused-on financial question around the feasibility of 1-1s (Figure 5).

6.1. The positive role of the ASA in academic ethics

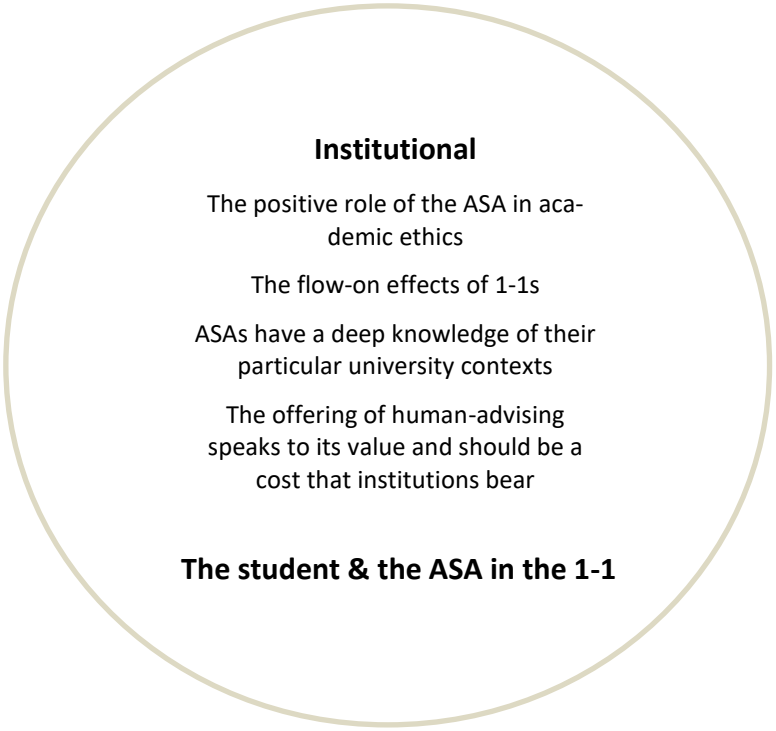

Figure 5. The institutional component of the triadic framework presented in Figure 2.

Academic Skills Advisors play an essential ethical role by supporting students' learning while upholding the integrity standards of the institution. Students are central to 1-1 work, that is self-evident; however, it is not only about the student. ASAs must equally retain the interests of the institution and the wider integrity of academic practice in mind. This ethical concern means positioning students to be able to be their best academic selves, at the same time ensuring that academic integrity informs how ASAs advise. These goals are a very real consideration in relation to gen AI use as there continues to be questions around its ethical use. To illustrate, in a validation of its potential role as an enabler of academically unethical practice, Rowland (2023a) points to an alarming example of a YouTube post that advises students how to prompt gen AI to write their assignments for them in ways that do not give away that fact to the marker, clearly pointing to its openness to exploitation for authorial misrepresentation and, further, an implicit recognition by the parties involved that doing so is in fact unethical. Despite working closely with students on their papers, these types of collusion concerns are not levelled at the work of academic skills advisors, in fact, quite the opposite; ASAs do not have the remotest inclination to be involved in deceiving academics about student work as it runs counter to everything the profession represents. Further, students questioned of academic misconduct, an increasing number for gen AI misuse, are routinely referred to ALL teams for developmental support and material covering academic integrity is a part of any ALL team's set of resources.

Students are also aware of questions of ethics concerning gen AI use in academic contexts as illustrated by, for example, research by Kazley et al. (cited in Johnston et al., 2025) finding that 76% of students in their study believed that using gen AI platforms to write academic papers is cheating. More broadly, underscoring the dichotomies at play, 86% of the 3839 surveyed students in the 2024 DEC global report on students' AI use said they use AI in some way in their studies, while at the same time, *the same percentage* admitted they are not fully aware of their university's AI guidelines. In terms of institutional positioning on ethical practice, one of the concerns around gen AI use is that students will get it to do their work for them. This is a situation that does not arise with ASAs while, at some point in an exchange about writing, ChatGPT for example, almost invariably offers to do exactly that. Therein lies a major gen AI pitfall. In a sort of poisoned chalice offer that can be alluringly easy to take advantage of and keep going back to, gen AI is designed to not just 'want' to but actively offer to do the work for the user in a way that ASAs will not.

What the above discussion highlights is that ASAs exemplify ethical engagement by modelling integrity, while there is an urgent need for clearer boundaries and guidelines around use of gen AI in academic practice.

6.2. The flow-on effects of 1-1s

Although 1-1 advising is in some quarters perceived as unscalable, the insights it generates for ASAs directly inform workshops, resources and institutional teaching practices, creating significant ripple effects across the university. Typically, academic skills services are provided for individualised face-to-face contexts but also to reach as many students as possible in remote-individual (i.e. resources) and larger cohort settings (i.e. workshops, group presentations), the latter two considered more 'scalable' services. These services are related in that 1-1s inform the design and content of workshops or presentations, resource development and curriculum and assessment input that serve larger groups of students by providing a window into what is happening in faculties, a microcosm forum where we can understand the problems that occur more broadly (Bak & Grossi, 2025; Chanock, 2007; Nosrati et al., 2025). These issues may be in subjects or assessments as being student-related (e.g. understanding the task, managing reading, writing production) or task-teacher related (e.g. unclear task directions, poorly framed rubric, heavy assessment demands, unhelpful feedback).

Workshops and presentations certainly provide some of the knowledge for what to cover in subsequent sessions, but it also holds that 1-1s provide much of the intel for group work and resource development. Chanock (2007) argues that the only way to really drill down in identifying such skills or knowledge gaps in students is by talking to students in 1-1 contexts about specific tasks with actual papers. By doing so, larger group teaching becomes "richer, more pointed, and more persuasive than it would otherwise be, because it starts from students' own understandings and respectfully acknowledges their thinking" (p. A7). In other words, 1-1 informed workshops are an authentic engagement with genuine issues. This observation then points to the fundamental and informative and correlational washback role of the 1-1 into both workshops and resource development where a reverberative effect occurs with a wider set of students benefitting from this process emerging *directly* out of the individual consultation context. In other words, *both* students who do and do not attend 1-1s benefit from these learnings by ASAs, speaking to a clear flow-on effect and referred scalability of individual appointments.

There is, however, a questioning of the feasibility of 1-1s, that they are "not a scalable way to improve academic outcomes" (Kelly et al., 2024, p. 6). I disagree, arguing that such a view is akin to proposing that market research carried out with individuals is not a scalable way to improve sales to a wider population. The authors add that the collaboration with academics in embedding skills development, "provides a more scalable and impactful approach to ALL-based work" (p. 6), 'more' here meaning more than 1-1s. There is a great deal of merit to working with academics on embedding skills, however, the proposed lack of scalability of 1-1s represents a simplistically

narrow perspective by framing them as isolated events with no extra-contextual benefits beyond the individual. This perspective ignores the informative role of 1-1s on wider group contexts, as outlined above. Further, it takes no account of the flow on 'study-buddy' effect of good learning where students who have learned something valuable tell their friends about it. Crucially, such a view then does not recognise where much of the knowledge development for such work emerges from, if Chanock's (2007) findings are to be believed. I align my views firmly with Chanock and propose that the contexts in which ALL work occurs or has resonance – the individual with the ASA (i.e. 1-1s); the individual with other students (i.e. the 'study buddy' effect); the individual with a resource; and the group, including academic staff, in the workshop or presentation – are inextricably and informatively linked in terms of advisor work. Viewed in this way, the 1-1 clearly *is* a scalability-enabling mechanism in that learnings from such sessions directly inform the other wider, more scalable learning contexts ALL teams work in.

An excellent case study with which to examine this reach and relationship is provided by University of Melbourne (UoM) 2024 Academic Skills service statistics. In 2024, UoM advisors directly worked with 5198 students in 1-1 individual appointments and the Writing Advice Service, the UoM drop-in equivalent. ASAs conducted workshops with a total of 28,631 students, 16,376 of these in the 'more scalable and impactful' workshops within subject or cohort-specific, discipline contexts. Meanwhile, the UoM Academic Skills resources pages saw a combined total of over 1 million page views. That is a telling set of numbers in anybody's perspective and, if we accept the Chanockian view of a correlation between the knowledge gained in 1-1s and the knowledge leveraged to inform workshops and resource development, then a compelling argument for a referred scalability of 1-1s emerges. As Ashton-Hay and Doncaster (2024) note, 1-1s can better inform teaching and learning practices in open communication with academics and, in light of this observation, the challenge and opportunity here for ALL teams is to then create and maintain these person-to-person collaborative communication channels to leverage such learnings. In contrast, gen AI has no first-hand access to these insider channels.

Somewhat ironically then, with little to no referred or flow-on value, gen AI advising represents a *much less* scalable learning context than its human-to-human counterpart. Unless students using AI – or indeed the AI itself – start to conduct group workshops or develop resources offering to pass along the new insights they have gained from its interactions with students, the referred scalability of the 1-1 simply cannot be replicated by the transactional, extra-recognitive gen AI context which is *by design* isolated to the user. Viewed in this way, 1-1s become an insider-generated source of recursive informativity and institutional synergy in surfacing and leveraging learnings gained in individual consultations and then distributing these in a 'so that others may benefit' approach that gen AI is locked out of. What these observations clearly suggest is that gen AI lacks the flow-on value and collaborative recursion of human-based advising.

6.3. ASAs have a deep knowledge of their university contexts

Advisors have an institutional knowledge and positioning which they leverage to help enculturate students into their discipline and socialise students into academia. In research involving 41 Academic Skills teams in institutions around Australia, when asked, "What are the main advantages of institution providing person-facilitated ALL 1-1 advising services?", the most frequent responses (53%) were that human advisers were a source of institutional or context-specific knowledge, offered contextualised support, and established a relationship to program and academics (Campitelli, 2026). These findings point to a very real valuation of the 'insider' knowledge ASAs possess.

ASAs are positioned to leverage institutional knowledge as they work in what is sometimes referred to as a 'third space', which is defined by Whitchurch as a dynamic space "between professional and academic spheres of activity" (as cited in Picton et al., 2024, p.36). More specifically for the advising context, this third space is a dynamic conceptual space between the student and the academy itself. It is at various times occupied by the advisor and one of the other parties (e.g.

ASA-student in 1-1s, ASA-academic in meetings), at times all three (e.g. ASA-students-academic in faculty-specific workshops). In terms of the perceptual location occupied in the academy broadly, therefore, advisors are neutral but knowledgeable professionals, *of* the institution, but not *the* institution itself, situated between the student and the academic, neither on one 'side' nor the other, but with both simultaneously as an empathetic dialogic partner to the former and supportive informed colleague to the latter.

There are communicative and relational functions that ASAs perform in this space that gen AI cannot. Many ASAs undertake discipline-specific work within faculties and, in so doing, advisors often work not just with academics but other professional staff, such as counselling and equity services, to fulfil areas of both academic and affective need. They are, therefore, a significant conduit between students and academics (Evans et al., 2019) and carry this institutional know-how between contexts dynamically in ways that gen AI cannot match, at least beyond what information is available to it within its dataset. Further, in the third space, ASAs also facilitate for students what might be seen as a safe place which can be a "refuge of personalised support" (Schmidt & Schneider, 2025, p. 82). In so being, the 1-1 can be a space in which to raise academic or affective issues students may not feel as comfortable broaching with their subject or faculty staff or even be able to, given the limited availability of staff to students, especially in subjects with high enrolments. If needed, ASAs can communicate these gaps (with student confidentiality in mind) back to the faculty or, indeed, have them communicated to them by the faculty in a recursively communicative model that gen AI simply has no access to.

This institutional insider knowledge also finds form in the role 1-1s play in helping enculturate students into their discipline and socialise students more broadly into academia. This observation speaks to the performance of a higher order role of student identity formation and validation in cultivating an 'academic mindset' forged with other people. Students entering the university context encounter questions of agency and identity, and around contextual understandings and knowledge. Within this space, there can be thoughts of imposter syndrome ("I don't belong here."), lack of contextual or institutional understanding ("I don't know how it's done here." "I've never done this before."), cultural gaps ("It's not how we do it back home.") and a developing sense of who they are as students ("*Can* I question my teacher?" "Who am I to critique an expert?"). As such, and as noted by Nosrati et al. (2025), 1-1s "play a pivotal role in helping students become socialised into their disciplinary fields" (p. 86), a feature enabled by having advisors who possess the contextual knowledge and understanding to facilitate such socialisation. In drawing on this insider knowledge in the 1-1, students can become more aware of the "values, norms, and practices characteristic of their academic disciplines" (Nosrati et al., 2025, p. 86), crucial to enabling understanding and the socio-cultural agency to act with confidence in their study area. These interactions with a human advisor can incorporate discussion of 'hard' discipline-specific concepts, tasks and genres, particular referencing styles or, more broadly, other 'soft' academic skills that ask students to decode often implicitly understood or unstated norms. These norms might include for example, addressing academic staff; when, how or even whether to ask for extensions; critiquing research or being critically inquisitive; contributing in class where there exist expected understandings around participation or ways of being or operating that ASAs can support with. International students particularly, EAL or otherwise, benefit from the enculturation aspect 1-1s offer in helping develop skills in academic activities students from other countries may not have been exposed to before by providing what a US-born 1-1 student termed, "a better sense for how things are done around here" (Private communication) or in a more targetted example from a Chinese student, "I don't know how to contribute in tutorials, we don't have them. We only have lectures" (Private communication). In fact, any student can benefit from receiving this insider knowledge in being invited by the advisor to be a more confident and comfortable part of an academic community joining those already in it with a sense of developing agency.

The above observations all point to the clear value of the third space-placed ASA, while at the same time highlights, crucially, a well of contextual understanding and expertise an ASA can draw on that is inaccessible to a gen AI platform.

6.4. The offering of human-advising speaks to its value and should be a cost that institutions bear

One of the most oft-floated arguments against the offering of human 1-1 advising is its long-term fiscal non-viability, so it is perhaps appropriate this discussion finishes with the cost question. It is worth noting that, in Campitelli (2026), all 41 institutions surveyed provide human-facilitated 1-1 services – a direct message that such services are inherently valued by the same institutions. Again, value is implicit in provision.

That, of course, occurs by expectation under requirements set out in national guidelines. The Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act, which establishes the legal framework governing delivery of education to international students in Australia, states that providers must give students access to a range of services (Department of Education, 2022, p. 2). Similarly, the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 also sets out requirements all higher education providers must meet to satisfy Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) registration outlining obligations related to support including access to learning support services consistent with the requirements of their course of study (Department of Education, 2021, Learning Resources and Educational Support section 3.3, para. 4). What these requirements point to is a clear legislative and institutional disposition towards and acknowledgement of the necessity for provision of such services.

Viewed purely through a financial lens, many discussions around the viability of human-delivered 1-1 service problematise it as not scalable and "a costly service to provide" (Kelly et al., 2024, p. 6). Sallam (2023 as cited in Kim et al., 2024, p. 1275) goes further, arguing that "quality one-on-one lessons are *too expensive and not feasible*" (my emphasis). 1-1s *are* expensive, however, only when viewed as isolated events. It has been argued elsewhere in this paper that the directly informative role 1-1s play in other ALL group teaching and remote learning (i.e. resource development) contexts contributes to a wider effect of 1-1s. In so doing, this constitutes a referred scalability, and therefore, a clear cost mitigation aspect of individual appointments that, it is proposed, is underappreciated or perhaps even misunderstood. This supposed cost-ineffectiveness of 1-1s, Kelly et al. (2024) argue, citing McNaughton (2024), is exacerbated further by individual appointment uptake being 'low' based on possible student perceptions that they have no academic value, no relevance or are remedial. I utterly reject these propositions. Service uptake statistics from the University of Melbourne, for example, show a consistent four-year take up of 1-1s (i.e. number of appointments taken as a % of number available) trending at over 80% of multiple-thousands of appointments. Additionally, statistics provided in national research on 1-1 provision in Australia reveal that 83,026 students took up individual appointments in 2024 across the 36 ALL teams that provided appointment numbers (Campitelli, 2026) suggesting very strongly, if sheer numbers are a guide, that 1-1s have high academic value, relevance and application across a full continuum of students. It might further be argued that the role 1-1s play in student retention offsets at least some of their cost. This is borne out by a study by Ashton-Hay and Doncaster (2021) which investigated whether engagement in a 1-1 had an effect on, amongst other things, attrition. Investigating over 13,000 individual appointments, they found that more students who attended a 1-1 completed their degree than those who did not. The reasons for attrition, the authors point out, are varied and include engagement, belief in self-efficacy, belonging and well-being, but they also view ASAs and 1-1s as having an important role to play in helping develop those areas and reducing attrition. Clearly, direct causality is difficult to pin down here, but the 1-1 space is ideally suited to that type of 'redemptive' intervention in a way that gen AI support, without its affective / relational components, may not be.

Taking a broader view, we can further contextualise 1-1s within the wider cost scope of ALL work. Putting aside income that ALL teams attract in fee-for-service work (it does happen, but not to a volume that offsets costs), the entire provision of academic skills support in any institution is, by definition, at full cost to the university. One might question then whether any such expense is justifiable only if it is scalable or economically prudent. How many attendees need to be present at scalable workshops to render them feasible? To go further, if education under a neoliberal view is fundamentally transactional, we might question why any money at all is spent on improvements to the wider institutional offering beyond the provision of information. If education is our 'business', then let us just concentrate on that. Why have humanistically oriented support, such as academic skills, counselling or equity services, at all? The answer being that good education, like good health, is an investment that requires investment.

Clearly, wellbeing, altruistic or human improvement initiatives that the provision of education implicitly encompasses, provide inherent value that go beyond the fiscal. When economic rationalist arguments are made for reduction of costs, it seems inevitable that the targets of such belt-tightening calls are made on services. Indeed, as one manager put it in the 1-1 services survey referred to in this paper, their team is an "easy target in restructures" (Campitelli, 2026) further underpinning the ALL marginalisation narrative.

In sum, the provision of human-facilitated one-to-one advising is not an optional expense or a 'luxury' but a core educational responsibility, one that sustains academic integrity, wellbeing, and institutional credibility and, therefore, *should* be an incumbent cost borne by the university.

7. Conclusions

Having examined the role of both generative AI and the human advisor in the advising and feedback process, this paper has argued that the human advisor has a clear role to play in student academic advising that gen AI can neither completely mirror nor fulfil. It places these arguments within the construct of a three-part intersecting conceptualisation of the role – the Personal, the Pedagogical, and the Institutional – grounded within recognitive and extra-recognitive distinctions of advice and feedback as envisaged by Corbin et al. (2025) in which human advising takes place in recognitive contexts and gen AI in extra-recognitive. It further proposes there is a very clear place for both human and non-human agents to work with students on their academic writing in a hybrid construct, each contributing strengths to the support and development role. This view is exemplified by the Staged Model for Hybrid Feedback put forward by Zhang et al. (2025) which leverages the strengths of the contributing agents, human and non-human, allowing the student to feel connected to both while retaining autonomy, agency and responsibility.

In response to (at least some of) the discourse around gen AI viewing it as ultimately replacing its human advisor counterparts, this paper has respectfully but passionately disagreed proposing that an examination of the differences revealed between the two sources of feedback and advice only serves to point to the human agent as being *more* necessary than ever. As such, this paper firmly rejects any proposals that gen AI can mirror the advising and feedback role in its entirety as a replacement offering to that provided by human interlocutors. Equally, it rejects any 'tech overlord' notions of human advisors' main role going forward being that of a mere facilitator or support crew for students' more effective use of gen AI. As Zhang et al. (2025) remind us, "tools are most effective when they complement, rather than replace, human feedback" (p. 2) and, within this framing, as Corbin et al. (2025) note, rather than seeing gen AI as a replacement for humans, we need to see it as "fundamentally different in kind" (p. 12) in so far as offering services that may have some overlap with but cannot ultimately replace what people can do more broadly. Further, if we understand the core human-centred elements of advising and feedback, particularly in the affective space and how the work we do in 1-1s flows on to so many other aspects of still-human-centred study life, then this can only serve to underscore the differences of the agents and offer rebuke to proposals that advice to students via information transfer can be totally automated.

Ultimately, in line with the core spirit and *raison d'être* of the 1-1, agency lies with the student in terms of choice – when to use each agent, or not, and how to do so. It is, therefore, incumbent on academia to retain the human advisor in this process to furnish that choice.

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