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Recognition before correction: Epistemic hospitality in the academic advising contact zone

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This paper argues that academic correction and relational care, typically treated as separate registers within academic language and learning practice, are better understood as a single, fused act within the one-to-one advising encounter. This fusion, this paper proposes, rests on a precondition that has received comparatively little direct attention in existing scholarship: recognition of the student as a specific knower, before any assessment of their claims. Drawing together academic literacies theory, Pratt and Canagarajah's account of the contact zone, Zembylas's affective hospitality, and M. Fricker's account of epistemic injustice, the paper develops the concept of epistemic hospitality, an advising disposition through which recognition is sustained in practice, naming disciplinary norms as situated while engaging a student's existing reasoning as a legitimate resource. The paper concludes with implications for how academic language and learning advisors might frame disciplinary expectations while maintaining recognition of students' own epistemic resources.

Key Words: academic language and learning, academic advising, epistemic hospitality, academic literacies, epistemic injustice, contact zone.

1. Introduction

Academic advisors[1] routinely perform two kinds of work within a single conversation. They tell a student that an argument lacks a clear thesis, that a paragraph needs a topic sentence, or that a claim requires evidence rather than assertion. At the same time, often in the same breath, they attend to how the student is coping, whether they feel overwhelmed, and whether they are willing to keep trying. The literature on academic language and learning has tended to treat these as separate registers of practice, one governed by disciplinary and genre expectations and the other by relational concern (Davis et al., 2025; Wingate, 2026). This paper suggests that treating them separately may obscure something worth naming precisely: correction and care are not sequential acts performed on an already-recognised student, but a single act whose very possibility rests on

[1] The term 'academic advisor' is used throughout in its academic language and learning sense, denoting practitioners who work one-to-one with students on academic writing, reading, and study practices, rather than the course and enrolment advising with which the label is often associated in Australian higher education. Role and team naming varies considerably across the sector, with academic skills advisor, learning advisor, and/or language and communication advisor all in use (Campitelli, 2026).

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an earlier, comparatively underexplored moment, the moment in which a student is first recognised as a specific knower rather than assessed as a general case.

This paper develops the concept of epistemic hospitality to describe what is at stake in that moment. Epistemic hospitality refers to an advising disposition in which a student's existing ways of reasoning and evidencing claims are engaged as legitimate resources, rather than treated as deficits to be corrected, while the disciplinary norm being taught is simultaneously named as situated and particular rather than presented as neutral. The adoption of epistemic hospitality can then be seen as a way to respond to the forms of epistemic injustice M. Fricker (2007) identifies. She distinguishes testimonial injustice, in which prejudice causes a hearer to discount a speaker's credibility, from hermeneutical injustice, in which a gap in shared interpretive resources leaves someone unable to make full sense of their own experience. Both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice presuppose a speaker has already been recognised as a specific knower capable of testifying at all. This paper proposes that such recognition is not guaranteed in the advising encounter, and that its occasional absence brings into view a question that precedes the question of credibility altogether. Recognition, in this sense, comes before correction, and an account of advising practice that begins with how feedback is delivered addresses a question that already presupposes an earlier one has been settled.

Three further literatures inform the concept's development. Writing conventions, as Lea and Street (1998, 2006) established, are bound up with institutional power and identity rather than being transparent technical requirements, a claim recent work continues to affirm empirically, from tacit grading criteria that remain unspoken to students (McGrath & Donaghue, 2025), to the largely oral, interactional processes through which academic writing knowledge is actually built (Gülek, 2025; Kaufhold, 2025) and through which the hidden curriculum of higher education is more broadly transmitted (Whitehead, 2025). The specific encounter in which this transmission occurs has received comparatively less direct theoretical attention within this literature. The concept of the contact zone, coined by Pratt (1991) and developed at length by Canagarajah (2013, 2014, 2025a, 2025b) into an account of how speakers negotiate competing linguistic and epistemic norms in professional and disciplinary settings (Sun & Canagarajah, 2025), offers a vocabulary well suited to that encounter, one that has so far been applied mainly to text and group interaction, with the dyadic, institutionally asymmetric advising relationship remaining a promising but less explored extension. The ethics of hospitality, traced from Derrida (1999) through Ruitenberg's (2011) application to education and Zembylas's (2019) extension into affective hospitality, offers a second vocabulary, one this paper extends from the affective into the epistemic register.

"Advising" is chosen to be the focus of this paper rather than supervision, tutoring, classroom teaching, or writing centre consultation, each of which shares some features with the encounter theorised in this paper, because it combines a specific set of conditions unusually fully. Advising may involve recurring contact with the same student, though this varies by institution and by how services are structured; it is feedback-intensive, structured substantially around responding to a student's own developing work; it is explicitly relational, often extending across an entire course of study; and it is institutionally asymmetric, though epistemically rather than evaluatively, since advisors do not typically grade the work, they discuss it.

Closest to the present argument is Zembylas's (2025) analysis of the entanglement between epistemic violence and affective injustice in higher education, which this paper takes as a starting point while posing a narrower question at the scale of a single advising encounter.

2. Academic literacies: Contribution and open edges

This section examines what the academic literacies tradition has established about writing and power and identifies a promising direction the tradition itself opens up but does not fully pursue. It first revisits the three models Lea and Street's framework distinguishes, tracing how

institutional practice continues to draw on all three unevenly. It then turns to a question the framework's own critical stance invites but leaves comparatively underexplored: not only who within an institution holds authority over academic norms, but which broader tradition of knowledge-making those norms descend from, and where the actual moment of transmission takes place.

2.1. The three models revisited

Lea and Street's (1998, 2006) academic literacies framework remains the field's most widely cited account of how students come to learn the writing conventions of higher education. The framework identifies three overlapping ways institutions have understood the challenge of student writing. The study skills model treats writing as a technical, transferable competence, located in the individual student and developed through instruction in grammar, structure, and mechanics (Lea & Street, 1998). The academic socialisation model represents an advance on this, framing writing as induction into the discourse conventions of a discipline, something a student comes to know through immersion and guidance (Lea, 2004). The academic literacies model represents the most critical of the three, treating writing as a social practice bound up with identity, power, and epistemology, in which what counts as acceptable knowledge-making varies with context (Ivanič, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007).

More than two decades on, the framework continues to shape how academic literacy is taught and researched, including within Australian education, where Davis et al. (2025) describe a shared pedagogy built explicitly around academic literacies principles. Wingate (2026) affirms the framework's continuing centrality to English for academic purposes practice, and Bakogiannis and Papavasiliou (2023), setting out a study of inclusive EAP practice, similarly frame teaching in social rather than purely technical terms. Institutional practice, meanwhile, continues to draw heavily on the more procedural study skills and academic socialisation models alongside this, since these remain easier to timetable, assess, and scale at institutional level. Simón-Grábalos et al. (2025), in a recent systematic review of first-year interventions, find that documented practice remains concentrated around self-regulation and skill-based support, suggesting considerable room for the academic literacies model's insights to be taken up more fully in everyday institutional practice.

2.2. Whose knowledge counts

The academic literacies model's central contribution is its insistence that writing conventions are not neutral. This insistence has tended to locate power at the level of the institution or the discipline, asking who within the university holds authority over what counts as good writing (Lillis & Scott, 2007), leaving a further and generative question available for continued attention: which broader tradition of knowledge-making those institutional norms descend from, and what is treated as universal that might, on closer attention, be better understood as particular. Alejandro (2025) offers a related observation from political anthropology, proposing that academic writing is best understood as a situated social practice, shaped as much by the reflexivity expected of its readers as by any rule internal to the text itself. Work on educational leadership in Nepal makes a parallel observation from outside the Anglophone centre, tracing how a Eurocentric inheritance comes to stand as the default frame for what counts as sound professional practice, and arguing for the standing of indigenous epistemologies alongside it (Dhakal et al., 2024).

This question matters because the norms in question rarely arrive as explicit instruction. Recent work on tacit knowledge in assessment finds that formal grading criteria often rely on conventions not made explicit to students, leaving them to infer what a marker is looking for (McGrath & Donaghue, 2025). Whitehead (2025) documents a comparable pattern under the broader heading of the hidden curriculum in higher education, and Behmanesh et al. (2025), writing from a professional and medical education perspective, find the same pattern recurring well beyond the humanities and social sciences, suggesting this is a general feature of how academic norms are transmitted rather than a matter confined to any one discipline. Chang et al. (2025), examining

assessment of multilingual writers in English-medium instruction institutions, offer a concrete illustration, finding that markers often apply monolingual, native-speaker norms while describing their criteria in general, discipline-neutral terms, a finding that gives this observation about unnamed norms a precise empirical shape.

Where these norms are transmitted becomes a productive further question. A growing body of research on academic discourse socialisation locates this transmission substantially in talk rather than in written feedback or curriculum documents alone. For example, Gülek (2025) traces how oral academic discourse socialisation operates in graduate education, largely through informal interaction. In addition, Kaufhold (2025) finds that academic writing knowledge is built dynamically, in interaction, rather than delivered as a fixed body of rules, and Phyo et al. (2025) show that international doctoral students' socialisation into English academic writing proceeds substantially through spoken exchange with supervisors and peers, a process whose significance is underlined by Vasandani et al.'s (2026) account of the international student life cycle, which identifies strengths and opportunities alongside the transitions students manage.

Taken together, this literature affirms the academic literacies model's founding insight that writing conventions are not neutral, while pointing toward a promising further direction: locating precisely where the work of induction happens. If norms are transmitted substantially through spoken interaction, then the encounter in which that interaction takes place, alongside the text it eventually produces, offers rich ground for its own sustained theoretical attention. It is to that encounter that the paper now turns.

3. From text to encounter: Relocating the contact zone

This section develops the paper's second theoretical resource: Pratt's concept of the contact zone, and its extension by Canagarajah into an account of live linguistic and epistemic negotiation. It first recovers what this concept actually claims, since it is often borrowed without its original texture. It then proposes a promising further application: the one-to-one, institutionally asymmetric encounter between an academic advisor and a student, a genre of interaction that sits naturally alongside the text-based and group settings the literature has developed so far.

3.1. Pratt, Canagarajah, and the grammar of negotiation

Pratt (1991) coined the term 'contact zone' to name social spaces in which cultures meet and negotiate with one another, characteristically under conditions of asymmetrical power, such as colonialism or its long aftermath. Her own primary example, a manuscript written by an Indigenous Andean author attempting to be legible to a Spanish colonial reader, was chosen precisely because it captured negotiation as active and unresolved rather than as a settled outcome. This is a useful qualification to keep in view, since the term has often been borrowed without its original texture. A contact zone, in Pratt's sense, is not simply a meeting point between two settled traditions. It is a site of live, often improvised negotiation, in which parties without a fully shared code, that is, without common linguistic and cultural conventions for making meaning, work, asymmetrically, toward being understood by one another. It also carries a colonial genealogy worth naming directly: Pratt's own examples, and much scholarship following her, treat the contact zone as historically a space in which the party with less power is asked to adapt to the terms of the party with more, even where the encounter is framed as an exchange between equals.

Canagarajah's extension of this concept offers a productive counterpoint to that assimilative default. Across his work on translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013) and contact zone competence specifically (Canagarajah, 2014), he questions the assumption, still common in language and writing pedagogy, that successful communication requires adherence to a single, standardised code, whether Standard English or a fixed academic register. Translingual practice, in his account, treats linguistic and rhetorical resources as a fluid, collaborative repertoire, negotiated between speakers in real time rather than measured against an external standard. The competent communicator, in

this view, achieves not correctness in the abstract but appropriateness to a specific context, an ongoing, situated judgement rather than a rule applied uniformly. Canagarajah's more recent work extends this claim into further domains: his account of transnational and translingual professional communication (Canagarajah, 2025b) traces this negotiation into workplace settings, his analysis of the politics of meaning in translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2025a) proposes that this negotiation is never only linguistic but always also epistemic, and Sun and Canagarajah (2025), analysing engineering research group meetings, demonstrate translingual negotiation occurring empirically, in live, spoken, multi-party interaction, among participants continually adjusting their contributions according to who is present and what is at stake.

3.2. Extending the contact zone to the advising encounter

Read in a technical sense, a contact zone is defined by three conditions: parties who do not fully share the conventions of language and knowledge-making in play, an asymmetry of power between them, and negotiation that is live rather than settled in advance. The advising encounter satisfies each. Student and advisor bring only partly overlapping repertoires of reasoning, evidence and genre; the relation is asymmetrical, since one party holds the authority to name what counts as legitimate academic practice; and the negotiation proceeds utterance by utterance, without a script either party can consult. The concept is applied here as an analytic description of those conditions rather than as a figure of speech.

The expanding body of contact zone scholarship points to a natural next site for its application: the one-to-one, institutionally asymmetric encounter between an academic advisor and a student. Thus, while Sun and Canagarajah (2025) analyse group meetings among peers and colleagues, this setting is distinct from the dyadic encounter this paper is concerned with, in which one party holds the authority to name what counts as legitimate academic practice. Furthermore, Mc Clellan Brooks (2025) moves closer still to the encounter this paper theorises, proposing a multisensorial, embodied account of translingual praxis within writing support. That account centres embodiment and sensory experience rather than the epistemic negotiation at issue here. Nosrati et al. (2025) approach the same encounter from the advisor's side, drawing on practitioners' accounts of how they balance authority with empathy and support, and describing the agentive, critically reflective professional identity this work builds. However, while their study establishes the individual consultation as a site of analysis in its own right, it is nevertheless unidirectional in its analysis, neglecting the perspectives of the student in the encounter. Consequently, this paper builds on that foundation to develop a more specific claim: that within the advising encounter, epistemic negotiation and relational conduct are closely bound rather than separable dimensions of the same event, since both are frequently carried by the same utterance.

Another recent work of relevance to the present work is Duffy and Lin's (2026) argument that what counts as a legitimate intervention in a student's text is itself contested. Analysing Grammarly's adoption in transnational education, they find students and instructors working through which corrections assist a writer and which risk displacing the writer's own voice, a distinction this paper takes up at the level of the spoken utterance.

It is also relevant to note that the advising encounter has several features that mark it as a distinct kind of contact zone, not simply a smaller instance of the classroom or the writing group. It may be longitudinal, where institutional arrangements allow the same two parties to negotiate norms across more than one meeting, though in many Australian settings, consultations are booked as needed and continuity with the same advisor is not assured. The argument developed here does not depend on recurrence. A single consultation contains the fused act in full, and repeated contact, where it occurs, extends rather than creates it. It is institutionally asymmetric, though the asymmetry is epistemic rather than evaluative. What the advisor holds is not power over outcomes but the authority to name what counts as legitimate academic practice, an authority the student has come to draw on precisely because they do not yet hold it themselves. This authority difference is closer to the colonial genealogy of Pratt's term, which concerns whose knowledge counts,

than to the more even footing of a peer research meeting. In addition, the advising encounter routinely moves between registers within a single conversation, from the technical to the relational and back, in a manner a classroom, structured around a fixed block of curriculum time, less readily permits. These features do more than intensify the negotiation Sun and Canagarajah (2025) describe. They give it a distinct character, making the advising encounter a site where epistemic and relational negotiation are not sequential phases of an interaction but co-occurring dimensions of it.

Describing the encounter in the above terms does not reduce either party to a position. Both bring situated knowledge and both exercise agency within the negotiation. The advisor's own disciplinary, linguistic, and biographical formation shapes which norms appear self-evident, and which appear contestable, a point Sinha (2018) makes in observing that hospitality is never offered by a neutral host, and one Nosrati et al. (2025) find advisors themselves articulating as reflective rather than procedural work. Students accept, redirect or decline what is offered, and Jin (2026) argues that resistance carries its own educational significance, which suggests a student's refusal of a norm may be an epistemic claim rather than a gap in understanding. The asymmetry between the parties shapes this negotiation without determining it. What theoretical resources best describe that co-occurrence is the question the paper turns to next.

4. Epistemic hospitality: Recognition as precondition

This section develops the paper's central theoretical resource. It traces the ethics of hospitality from Derrida through Ruitenberg's application to education and Zembylas's extension into affective hospitality, then proposes a further extension into the epistemic register. It closes by bringing this concept into direct relation with M. Fricker's account of epistemic injustice, proposing that recognition, rather than credibility, is the precondition the advising encounter most needs to attend to.

4.1. Derrida, Ruitenberg, and the ethic of hospitality

Ruitenberg (2011) begins from an observation about the ethical frameworks that have historically guided education. The ideal of the autonomous, rational subject positions education as the cultivation of independent judgement. The ideal of the virtuous subject, prominent in character education, positions it as the cultivation of a good disposition. Even the ethic of care developed by Noddings (1984), which shifts attention from the subject to the relation between subject and other, retains the self at the centre of its ethical picture, since Noddings holds that caring must be completed by some response from the one cared for. Ruitenberg proposes that all three frameworks leave room for further development in light of the account of subjectivity developed across recent Continental philosophy, in which the autonomous subject is understood not as an origin of action but as a subject "gathering itself together to answer to the other" (Derrida, cited in Ruitenberg, 2011, p. 30), one that presents itself as identifiable only in response to an other.

Derrida's account of hospitality offers Ruitenberg a productive way forward. Hospitality, in this account, is an unconditional gift given by a host aware of an indebtedness to the guest, one in which the host's welcome responds to a guest's arrival rather than an initiative the host controls (Derrida, 1999). The figure Derrida uses to capture this openness is the empty chair left at the table, a place held open for a guest whose arrival cannot be foreseen or specified in advance: "The other may come, or he may not. I don't want to programme him, but rather to leave a place for him to come if he comes" (Derrida, cited in Ruitenberg, 2011, p. 32). This figure grounds a distinction with direct bearing on the present argument, between hospitality and inclusion. Inclusion, as Graham and Slee (2008) observe, presupposes a whole into which something or someone can be incorporated. Hospitality, Ruitenberg (2011) writes, "does not seek to fit the guest into the space of the host, but accepts that the arrival of the guest may change the space into which he or she is received" (p. 32). This concept of hospitality is the precise sense in which the term is taken

up for the remainder of this paper: not a welcome that absorbs difference into an unchanged host space, but one that holds the host's own position open to revision by what arrives.

Reading academic language and learning practice through Continental philosophy has precedent within the field's own scholarship. McCormack (2014) reads the field through Gadamer, proposing that its work is better understood as an interpretive meeting between advisor and student than as the transmission of technical skill. Chahal et al. (2019) also take up Derrida directly, examining one-to-one appointments and team-teaching in Australian universities to show how the aporia of hospitality, a welcome offered into a space the host continues to own, runs through the everyday organisation of academic support. Their account establishes the institutional reach of the concept. This paper works within this tradition while narrowing the scale, staying with the single utterance exchanged between advisor and student and extending hospitality from the structural and the affective into the epistemic register.

4.2. Zembylas and the turn to affect

Ruitenberg's account of hospitality is structural and ethical, concerned with the position the host occupies. Zembylas (2019) extends the framework into a closely related dimension, proposing that hospitality in education is best theorised alongside affect, the feelings, bodily sensations, and emotional intensities passing between host and guest that shape whether a decentred ethical stance is genuinely lived out. Zembylas terms this approach "affective hospitality" and treats it as continuous with the ethical framework Ruitenberg and Derrida establish rather than as a separate addition to it.

This affective dimension does valuable work that the structural account leaves comparatively open. Sinha (2018), writing on the racialised body of the educator, observes that there is no neutral host, and that who is doing the welcoming shapes what hospitality is possible. R'boul (2026a) extends this line of thought, introducing decolonial epistemic emotions to describe the affective states accompanying a multilingual academic subject's delinking from a single dominant epistemic tradition. Read alongside Zembylas, this work suggests affect is not merely the emotional colouring of an epistemic encounter, but part of how its epistemic stakes are registered and negotiated. Papastephanou (2025) proposes that hospitable exchange between fields can generate exaptive learning, unplanned intellectual growth arising from encounters not designed to produce it, a possibility that may apply equally to encounters between epistemic traditions within a single advising relationship. Hamilton and Bak (2025) give this affective dimension empirical grounding within the field, drawing on interviews with students and practitioners to show how individual consultations help students recognise and work through the emotional dimensions of their learning.

This body of work culminates in Zembylas's (2025) recent conceptual analysis of the entanglement between epistemic violence and affective injustice in higher education, which proposes, at the institutional level, that these two forms of harm are closely bound together rather than separable. This paper takes that entanglement as a starting point and asks a more focused question, posed not at the level of the institution but at the level of a single conversation: what does this entanglement look like in the actual utterances exchanged between an advisor and a student, and what vocabulary, beyond affective hospitality alone, helps describe it precisely?

4.3. Defining epistemic hospitality

Affective hospitality gives a rich account of how a student's difference is felt and lived within an educational encounter (Sinha, 2018; Zembylas, 2019). It offers comparatively less specific guidance for what hospitality requires when the substance of that difference is not only cultural or affective but epistemic, a competing tradition of reasoning, evidence, and argument (Canagarajah, 2025a; Meredith, 2024). This paper proposes "epistemic hospitality" as a term for this further requirement. Epistemic hospitality refers to an advising disposition in which a student's existing ways of reasoning and evidencing claims are engaged as legitimate resources, rather than treated

as deficits to be corrected (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2007), while the disciplinary norm being taught is simultaneously named as situated and particular rather than presented as neutral (Ivanič, 1998; McGrath & Donaghue, 2025). The disposition extends Ruitenberg's (2011) central distinction, in which the guest is not fitted into "the space of the host" (p. 32) but may instead reshape it, from the space of the classroom or curriculum to the space of knowledge-making itself. It is not a technique, and it does not mean withholding disciplinary standards. It means teaching those standards in a way that leaves the student's own resources intact and visible (Canagarajah, 2014), rather than requiring their quiet abandonment. The disposition is proposed as general rather than remedial, since every student arrives with existing ways of reasoning that an unnamed norm may silently displace. The encounters of international and multilingual students make its workings especially legible, which is why they are kept most directly in view here.

The concept of epistemic hospitality sits alongside several related proposals worth situating it against. Meredith (2024) develops a broader account of epistemic justice for universities operating across plural knowledge traditions, offering the institutional scale within which the present, encounter-level argument can be located. R'boul (2026b) proposes "multiepistemicism" as a general framework for epistemic relations in multilingual higher education, operating at the level of institutional and curricular design; epistemic hospitality, by comparison, operates at the finer grain of a single advising conversation, a complementary rather than competing scale of analysis. Hwami and Bedeker (2025) extend epistemic justice specifically toward questions of representation and recognition of the "other" within international higher education. Culturally specific practices of relational and epistemic exchange, such as yarning in Indigenous Australian pedagogy (A. Fricker, 2025), suggest that non-dominant epistemic and relational practices take distinct, situated forms that a general concept like epistemic hospitality should remain attentive to rather than flatten into a single model.

Four neighbouring concepts help mark the term's boundaries. Epistemic humility, the owning of one's own cognitive limitations (Whitcomb et al., 2017), names a stance toward the reach of the host's knowledge, whereas epistemic hospitality names a stance toward the knowledge the guest brings. Asset-based approaches, developed through the funds of knowledge tradition (Moll et al., 1992), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012) share the commitment to treating a learner's existing resources as a foundation, while attending principally to what the curriculum recognises in the student; epistemic hospitality attends additionally to whether the disciplinary norm is named as situated at the moment it is taught. Translingual pedagogy (Canagarajah, 2013; Chang et al., 2025) offers the closest kinship, and the present term may be read as extending its logic from linguistic repertoire to reasoning and evidence. The term is offered as a specification at the scale of a single advising conversation rather than as an alternative to any of these related concepts.

4.4. Recognition and epistemic injustice: Extending Fricker

The definition offered above sits usefully alongside M. Fricker's (2007) account of epistemic injustice, and the relationship between the two is worth making explicit. M. Fricker distinguishes testimonial injustice, in which prejudice causes a hearer to discount a speaker's credibility, from hermeneutical injustice, in which a gap in shared interpretive resources leaves someone unable to make full sense of their own experience. Both offer a productive lens for the advising encounter theorised here, and Ladwal's (2025) reflective account of psychotherapy training offers brief illustrations of each, drawn from a different professional context and used to give the distinction concrete shape rather than as generalisable evidence about advising encounters.

Being addressed by a tutor using another trainee's name, after a year of close contact, points toward something M. Fricker's framework assumes rather than examines directly. Testimonial injustice presupposes that a speaker has already been recognised as a specific individual capable of testifying at all, and where that recognition has not yet occurred, the question of whether a claim is credible cannot yet be posed (see also Merchant, 2020). Ladwal (2025) also describes an

essay that drew on Narayanan's (2015) work on collective melancholia to extend an individually focused developmental theory toward a cultural and intergenerational register. The feedback it received was detailed and closely engaged, and it read that move as evidence of the writer's own adaptation to family and cultural pressures rather than as a theoretical claim to be assessed. This illustrates hermeneutical injustice at small scale: not a withholding of attention, but an available interpretive frame not yet extended to hold what was being offered.

Epistemic hospitality, on the account developed here, therefore begins before any assessment of a student's claims, in the act of recognising who is making them. It functions primarily as an analytical lens, a way of noticing when recognition or interpretation has not yet fully occurred. It becomes normative only secondarily, once such a moment has been noticed, in the sense that noticing invites a considered response. This paper does not propose epistemic hospitality as a means of eliminating such moments altogether, since M. Fricker's (2007) own account suggests they are pervasive features of unequal social worlds rather than occasional lapses. It proposes it as a sustained discipline of attention to their occurrence.

5. Correcting with care: Fusion, not sequence

The three preceding sections have argued, in turn, that academic norms are transmitted substantially through interaction rather than explicit instruction, that the encounter in which this transmission occurs is itself a site of live negotiation, and that a genuinely hospitable response to a student's difference depends on a prior act of recognition rather than beginning with the content of a correction. Taken together, these claims converge on a single proposition, offered here as the paper's central theoretical contribution: that within the advising encounter, epistemic correction and relational conduct are better understood as closely fused than as two acts performed in sequence, since both are frequently carried by the same utterance, and that this fusion is best understood not as a fixed binary but as a spectrum along which any given advising moment can be located.

5.1. The single utterance as a dual act

If academic norms are built dynamically in interaction rather than transmitted as a fixed body of rules, as Kaufhold (2025) demonstrates, then the moment of correction is not a neutral delivery mechanism for content that exists independently of how it is delivered. The delivery is part of the content. Sun and Canagarajah (2025) show something structurally similar in their analysis of translingual negotiation in live disciplinary talk, where speakers continuously recalibrate not only what they say but how they position themselves and their interlocutors as they say it. What their study observes among peers applies with particular force to the advising encounter, where the asymmetry identified earlier in this paper (i.e. one party holding the authority to name what counts as legitimate academic practice) means that a corrective utterance is doing two things at once. It makes a claim about what counts as legitimate knowledge-making, and it positions the student, in that same breath, as either a guest whose own resources are being genuinely engaged or as someone being brought into line with a standard presented as though it had no history and no alternative.

The above view is the sense in which correction and care are proposed here as fused rather than sequential. An advisor does not first deliver the epistemic content of a correction and then, as a separate act, deliver care. The manner of the correction, its framing, its assumptions about what the student already knows and values, its treatment of the student's existing approach as either a resource to build from or a gap to close, is itself where the caring or less caring work is done. On this account, an epistemically neutral version of the utterance, to which warmth might be added afterwards, is difficult to locate.

5.2. Illustrating the fusion

The claim that correction and relational conduct are better understood as closely fused than as two acts performed in sequence can be made concrete through two brief illustrative examples, offered here as heuristic devices rather than as reported data.

Consider first a common piece of advising feedback: a student has written a paragraph that an advisor judges to be too descriptive, and the advisor must communicate that the paragraph needs, in familiar disciplinary shorthand, more critical analysis. One way of delivering this correction tells the student plainly that the paragraph describes rather than analyses, and that they need to argue rather than report. This is, on its surface, a purely technical observation, precisely the kind of feedback the study skills and academic socialisation models would recognise as ordinary instruction (Lea & Street, 1998). But the correction relies on a historically particular standard, an argumentative tradition of critical distance with its own intellectual lineage, presented here as though it were simply what good academic writing is, rather than one tradition among several for establishing the credibility of a claim. Delivered this way, the correction enacts what Ruitenberg (2011) calls inclusion rather than hospitality: the student's existing approach is treated as a gap to be closed, on terms not open to question. A second way of delivering the same underlying observation proceeds differently. The advisor might ask the student what the paragraph is trying to establish, listen to how the student frames their own reasoning, and then name explicitly that the discipline in question expects claims to be foregrounded and evidence marshalled visibly in their support, adding that this is a specific convention rather than a universal marker of good thinking. This is what epistemic hospitality might look like in practice: not a softer tone wrapped around an unchanged technical judgement, but a different technical judgement, one that names the tradition being asked for instead of assuming it.

A second instance shows the same fusion operating in written rather than spoken feedback. The commentary Ladwal (2025) describes, discussed in Section 4.4, was generous and closely engaged, and it also treated an alternative theoretical resource as data about the writer rather than as an argument to be met on its own terms. A hospitable version would engage the link to Narayanan as a defensible theoretical choice, worth assessing for its argumentative strength, before or alongside reading it symptomatically.

5.3. A spectrum, not a binary

The two deliveries illustrated in the first example above are presented, for clarity, as a contrast. Advising practice rarely sorts as neatly as this contrast suggests, and the concept of epistemic hospitality is more useful and more accurate, treated as marking two ends of a continuum rather than a strict either-or. A single advisor, across a single conversation, is likely to move along this continuum more than once: naming a norm explicitly in one moment, presenting it as given in the next, engaging a student's own reasoning warmly while still, in the same exchange, steering it firmly toward a required convention. Rodríguez and Lozada (2026) describe a structurally similar dynamic in their account of engaged reflexivity in decolonising development practice, where practitioners move continuously between upholding existing frameworks and questioning them, rather than settling into one stance or the other. Allen and Girei (2025) observe a comparable pattern in decolonial reflexivity within management education, proposing that reflexive practice is better understood as an ongoing negotiation than a fixed achievement.

Treating the fusion as a continuum rather than a binary has a direct consequence for how epistemic hospitality should be assessed in practice. The relevant question is not whether a given advisor is, in some settled sense, hospitable or assimilative, but where a given utterance, or a given conversation, currently sits along this continuum, and what would move it further toward the hospitable end without requiring the advisor to abandon the disciplinary guidance the student has come for. This framing also helps explain why epistemic hospitality, as developed in this paper, is better understood as a disposition than a technique. A technique implies a fixed procedure, applied the same way regardless of where a conversation currently sits. A disposition, by contrast, can

respond to a conversation's actual position on the continuum, moving it incrementally rather than requiring it to arrive, in a single utterance, at an idealised end point.

6. Toward a reflexive practice of hospitality

The fused act described in the previous section places a demand on the advisor that cannot be met through a fixed script or checklist. This section considers what follows from that demand, situates it within the institutional conditions advisors actually work under, and closes with a small set of questions intended to support reflective practice rather than prescribe technique.

6.1. Disposition, not technique

Ruitenberg (2011) is explicit that hospitality, unlike the ethics of autonomy or virtue it is offered as an alternative to, is not something that can be directly instructed. "Hospitality is not instructed but modelled," she writes, and "the onus is on teachers to offer hospitality, and to show that their interventions are aimed at leaving open a place where the other may arrive" (p. 35). That hospitality is modelled rather than instructed has a direct consequence for how epistemic hospitality should be understood in advising practice. It is not a technique to be deployed at the moment of correction, a phrase to insert or a formula to follow, since a scripted openness would no longer be openness in the sense Derrida (1999) intends: it would programme in advance exactly what hospitality was meant to leave unprogrammed. What can be cultivated instead is a disposition, a standing orientation toward the advising encounter that shapes how correction is delivered without reducing to a repeatable procedure.

This distinction matters for how the field trains and supports its own practitioners. A growing body of work theorises academic hospitality as institutional rather than individual practice: built iteratively through reflexive engagement between colleagues over time rather than achieved through a single intervention (Sutphen et al., 2025), adapting its shape to the conditions of a given encounter rather than applied uniformly (Hogstad, 2025), sustained most readily as one part of a wider institutional orientation alongside compassion and integrity (Anaya et al., 2026), and, on Varpanen's (2025) more foundational reframing, offering a way of rethinking what the educational endeavour itself consists of. In the context of an advising encounter, Bak (2025) shows one form such engagement can take, using meditative self-inquiry to trace how presence develops in individual consultations over time. Read together, this literature suggests academic hospitality is best supported through sustained institutional attention and collegial reflection, of the kind Bell et al. (2025) describe for writing centre practice, rather than through isolated training modules. Epistemic hospitality, understood this way, sits closer to a practical wisdom exercised anew in each encounter than to a competency that operates identically regardless of context.

6.2. Distinguishing hospitality from assimilation

A caring, hospitable orientation of this kind invites an understandable question, namely whether it entails withholding disciplinary standards altogether, leaving students without the guidance they need to succeed on the terms their assessments will actually apply. This is not the paper's claim, and the distinction is worth making precisely. Epistemic hospitality does not mean declining to teach the dominant academic convention, nor does it mean treating every tradition of reasoning as equally appropriate to every assessment context regardless of what that assessment requires. What it changes is not whether the norm is taught but how it is named while being taught. The assimilative end of the spectrum described in the previous section presents the norm as though it had no history, a simple fact about what good thinking looks like. The hospitable end teaches the identical norm while naming it as situated and historically particular, consistent with Canagarajah's (2014) account of competent negotiation in a contact zone as requiring neither rigid adherence to a single standard nor its wholesale replacement, but a considered movement between various options that remains answerable to context. R'boul's (2026a) account of decolonial epistemic emotions is instructive here as well, describing delinking from a dominant epistemic

tradition not as its rejection but as a loosening of its claim to being the only legitimate frame, a loosening that leaves the tradition available for use while no longer treating it as natural or inevitable.

6.3. Working within institutional conditions

None of the foregoing should be read as assuming advisors hold unlimited discretion over how they deliver correction. Advisors work within grading systems, marking rubrics, and institutional policies that frequently specify, in some detail, what a passing or excellent piece of work must demonstrate, and these structures shape what any single advising conversation can accomplish. An advisor exercising considerable epistemic hospitality in conversation still, in most institutional contexts, sends a student back toward an assessment that will be marked against a rubric the advisor did not write and often cannot adjust. This is a genuine condition of the work, not a peripheral detail, and it is worth asking directly what epistemic hospitality can offer within it.

The answer developed in this paper is that epistemic hospitality is most likely to operate at the level of framing rather than at the level of the rubric itself. An advisor cannot always change what a marking criterion requires but is nonetheless able to shape whether that requirement is presented to a student as a neutral fact about good thinking or as a specific, situated expectation of this discipline, this institution, this assessment. Papastephanou (2025) suggests that hospitable exchange between fields can produce exaptive learning, unplanned growth arising from encounters not designed to produce it; something similar may be available to students who encounter institutional norms named honestly as norms, even where those norms themselves remain, for the time being, fixed. Advisors working under these constraints are not positioned to dismantle the rubric in the course of a single consultation but may be well placed to help a student leave that consultation able to see the rubric as one situated account of good academic work rather than the only conceivable one.

6.4. Questions for reflective practice

Consistent with treating epistemic hospitality as a disposition rather than a technique, what follows is offered as a small set of questions for an advisor's own reflection, not as a checklist to complete or a script to follow in a given conversation.

1. What norm am I currently treating as simply given, and could I name it instead as a specific disciplinary or institutional expectation?
2. Have I engaged with how the student is currently reasoning about this task before offering my own account of how it should be approached?
3. Am I treating an unfamiliar approach in the student's work as a resource to build from or as an error to correct?
4. Where in this conversation does the balance between naming a convention and simply applying it currently sit, and is there room to move it toward greater explicitness without leaving the student without the guidance the assessment requires?

These questions are offered as material for an advisor's reflection between encounters rather than as a sequence to work through in a live conversation, which would reintroduce the scripted quality this paper has argued against.

7. Limitations and future directions

This section situates the conceptual argument developed above, considering both its methodological standing and directions along which it invites further development. The argument is conceptual rather than empirical, and this is worth stating directly rather than leaving implicit. No advising conversations have been observed, recorded, or analysed in the preceding sections, and the worked examples offered were explicitly heuristic, intended to illustrate a theoretical distinction rather than to report what advisors typically say. Whether epistemic hospitality, as distinguished

here from its more assimilative counterpart, is reliably observable in real advising talk, and whether students themselves experience the two ends of the spectrum differently, are empirical questions this paper opens rather than answers. Kaufhold's (2025) interactional analysis of how academic writing knowledge is built in talk, and Gülek's (2025) study of oral academic discourse socialisation, both suggest that close analysis of actual advising or supervisory talk is achievable, and could test the distinctions proposed here directly, whether through discourse analysis of recorded sessions or through students' own accounts of encounters they experienced along different points of the spectrum.

A second direction concerns scope. As noted above, international and multilingual students are kept most directly in view because their encounters make the unnamed epistemic tradition particularly visible, not because epistemic hospitality is called for only in their case. The same dynamic plausibly extends further. Gholami and Costantini's (2025) work on migrant identities and community-centred pedagogies for belonging suggests fruitful ground for considering how epistemic hospitality might operate for students navigating migration more broadly, not only international study, and future work might usefully examine whether the same fusion holds, in different form, for first-in-family students or those returning to study after a significant absence.

A third direction concerns the student's own position within the encounter, which this paper has introduced but theorised less fully than the advisor's. A fuller account would examine how students actively receive, redirect or decline the hospitality on offer, and what that agency contributes to the encounter, whether through students' own accounts of advising or through analysis of recorded sessions.

A final direction concerns the affective and institutional costs of the practice this paper proposes. Naming a disciplinary norm explicitly, rather than presenting it as given, may itself generate discomfort, for the student encountering a familiar convention reframed as contingent, and for the advisor stepping outside familiar professional script. Zembylas's (2026) recent work on the moral-political economy of discomfort, asking who is permitted to feel uncomfortable within higher education and under what conditions, offers a valuable lens for future work examining who bears this cost within the advising relationship, and how institutions might better support advisors in carrying it. Kruger and Zembylas (2026) further suggest that decolonial work in education is usefully oriented toward reparative futures rather than diagnostic accounts alone, an orientation this paper's practical questions have aimed toward without yet developing fully.

8. Conclusion: What recognition makes possible

The paper began with an observation available to anyone who has sat across from a student and moved, within a single conversation, from a comment on their thesis statement to a question about how they are managing. It has argued that this movement is not really a movement at all, that the two are fused rather than sequential, and that the fusion itself rests on something prior to either: a moment of recognition in which a student is met as a specific knower before any assessment of their claims begins. Treating academic guidance and relational conduct as separable, the assumption this paper set out to reconsider, is not merely an imprecise description of advising practice. It is a description that can make the work of recognition harder to notice, since a correction delivered warmly can appear, on the surface, indistinguishable from one delivered hospitably, even where the two accomplish different things.

Epistemic hospitality, as developed here through the fusion of Lea and Street's (1998, 2006) account of literacy as power, Canagarajah's (2014) account of the contact zone, Zembylas's (2019) account of affective hospitality extended into its epistemic register, and M. Fricker's (2007) account of epistemic injustice, offers a way of naming that difference precisely. Epistemic hospitality, on this account, is the practical and ethical expression of recognition within the advising encounter: recognition names what must occur first, and epistemic hospitality names the disposition through which it is sustained across a conversation. Naas's (2026) reading of Derrida on

hospitality suggests this philosophical lineage continues to open productive ground for education more broadly, well beyond the advising encounter this paper has taken as its focus. What recognition makes possible, when it is treated as a precondition rather than assumed, is a form of correction that teaches a disciplinary norm honestly, as one tradition among several capable of producing rigorous knowledge, while leaving the student's own resources for reasoning and evidencing claims visibly intact. This is, in the end, a modest proposal for what a single utterance can do differently. Its implications for how the field trains, supports, and reflects on the practice of advising may, this paper suggests, be considerably less modest.

Declarations

Generative AI Use

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