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Strengthening Academic Literacy through Microsoft Word Mentoring: A Writing Skills Development Program for Students under AURA

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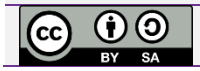
Abstract

The rapid expansion of digital learning requires students to possess not only access to technology but also the ability to use digital tools effectively for academic purposes. However, familiarity with digital devices does not always correspond to competence in preparing, formatting, and editing academic documents. This community service program aimed to strengthen students' basic digital competence and academic literacy through Microsoft Word mentoring under the AURA Program (*Akademi Unggul, Riset, dan Literasi*). The activity employed a participatory and practice-oriented mentoring approach consisting of preparation, introduction and demonstration, guided hands-on practice, formative evaluation, and follow-up orientation toward academic writing. The mentoring focused on basic Microsoft Word functions, including text formatting, paragraph organization, page layout, headings, numbering, and document editing. The results showed that the program provided participants with a more systematic understanding of Microsoft Word as a tool for organizing and producing academic documents rather than merely for typing. Guided practice and immediate feedback also established an initial pathway from basic digital skills toward writing practice, academic writing, and scientific article preparation. The program demonstrates the potential of Microsoft Word mentoring as an accessible foundation for sustainable academic literacy development.

Kata Kunci:
Keterampilan Menulis, Kompetensi Digital, Literasi Akademik, Microsoft Word, Pendampingan.

Abstrak

Perkembangan pembelajaran digital menuntut mahasiswa dan santri tidak hanya memiliki akses terhadap teknologi, tetapi juga mampu memanfaatkan perangkat digital secara efektif untuk kepentingan akademik. Namun, penggunaan perangkat digital sehari-hari tidak selalu diikuti kemampuan dalam menyusun, memformat, dan menyunting dokumen akademik. Program pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan memperkuat kompetensi digital dasar dan literasi akademik peserta melalui pendampingan Microsoft Word dalam Program AURA (*Akademi Unggul, Riset, dan Literasi*). Kegiatan menggunakan pendekatan pendampingan partisipatif dan berbasis praktik yang meliputi tahap persiapan, pengenalan dan demonstrasi, praktik terbimbing, evaluasi formatif, serta orientasi tindak lanjut menuju penulisan akademik. Materi pendampingan mencakup pemformatan teks, pengaturan paragraf, tata letak halaman, heading, penomoran, dan penyuntingan dokumen. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan bahwa peserta memperoleh pemahaman yang lebih sistematis mengenai Microsoft Word sebagai sarana pengorganisasian dan penyusunan dokumen akademik, bukan sekadar alat mengetik. Praktik terbimbing dan umpan balik langsung juga membentuk jalur

	awal dari keterampilan digital dasar menuju praktik menulis, penulisan akademik, dan persiapan artikel ilmiah.
	This is an open access article under the CC–BY-SA license.

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has substantially reshaped the ways students learn, communicate, produce knowledge, and participate in academic environments. Digital competence is no longer limited to the ability to operate technological devices but encompasses the capacity to access, evaluate, manage, create, and communicate information responsibly through digital technologies. The European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens, or DigComp 2.2, conceptualizes digital competence through interconnected dimensions that include information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety, and problem solving (Vuorikari et al., 2022). Similarly, the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report emphasizes that technology can contribute meaningfully to education when it is supported by appropriate access, pedagogical preparation, and relevant competencies rather than being treated merely as a technical instrument (UNESCO, 2023). These perspectives suggest that strengthening students' ability to use basic digital tools productively constitutes an important foundation for their broader academic development.

The importance of digital literacy is particularly evident in higher education, where learning activities increasingly require students to interact with digital information, produce documents, communicate ideas, and complete academic assignments through technology. A systematic review by Gutiérrez-Ángel et al. (2022) demonstrated that digital literacy has become an important component of university education, although students' levels of competence and self-efficacy remain uneven. Research among university students has similarly identified differences between students' familiarity with technology and their ability to employ it meaningfully for academic purposes. Pegalajar Palomino and Rodríguez Torres (2023), for example, found that university students demonstrated strengths in information management but encountered difficulties related to the creation and adaptation of digital content. In the Indonesian context, Pertiwi and Rodliyah (2022) also showed that students recognize the growing importance of digital literacy because learning processes are increasingly integrated with digital technologies.

Digital literacy is also increasingly associated with students' confidence, engagement, and academic performance. Mehrvarz et al. (2021) found that digital competence was related to academic performance through students' engagement in digital informal learning. More recent research has further demonstrated that positive attitudes toward digital technologies and students' digital literacy can support self-efficacy and engagement in technology-enhanced learning environments (Getenet et al., 2024). Yuan et al. (2024) similarly reported a positive relationship between digital literacy and academic self-efficacy, while Zakir et al. (2025), in a study involving Indonesian university students, identified significant relationships among digital literacy, digital competence, self-efficacy, informal digital learning, and academic performance. These findings indicate that technical digital abilities may serve as an entry point for broader academic confidence and independent learning rather than representing isolated technological skills.

One area in which digital competence directly intersects with academic activity is writing. Academic writing is not simply the production of grammatically correct sentences but involves the ability to organize ideas, engage with sources, construct arguments, revise texts, and communicate

knowledge within particular academic contexts. The Academic Literacies model proposed by Lea and Street (2006) provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding writing as a socially situated academic practice rather than merely a set of transferable technical skills. From this perspective, students need to learn not only the conventions of written texts but also how academic knowledge is produced, organized, negotiated, and communicated within institutional environments. Contemporary studies continue to support this broader orientation, showing that academic literacy incorporates cognitive, attitudinal, digital, and writing-related dimensions (Castillo-Martínez et al., 2023).

The relationship between academic writing and digital literacy has become even more significant as writing practices increasingly take place within digital environments. Mammadova (2023) argues that academic writing and information literacy should be approached complementarily because students now compose, revise, locate information, and communicate academic knowledge through interconnected digital environments. Nabhan and Habók (2025) further conceptualize digital literacy in academic writing as a multidimensional competence involving functional digital skills, information seeking, communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, digital culture, and online safety. Their validation of the Digital Literacy Academic Writing Scale among pre-service teachers in Indonesia highlights the extent to which academic writing in contemporary education depends on more than linguistic knowledge alone.

However, familiarity with digital devices does not automatically mean that students possess sufficient skills to use digital tools effectively for academic production. Students may regularly use smartphones, messaging applications, or social media while still experiencing difficulties when required to structure, format, edit, and manage formal academic documents. Research on information literacy similarly indicates that access to information needs to be accompanied by the ability to evaluate sources, compare information, and make informed decisions regarding academic materials (Trixa & Kaspar, 2024). Moreover, Zhou et al. (2025) emphasize that digital literacy encompasses technological practice alongside higher-order thinking, awareness, and responsible engagement, suggesting that isolated technical proficiency alone is insufficient. Therefore, basic technological training should ideally be connected to authentic academic tasks through which learners can recognize the practical relevance of the skills being developed.

Within this context, Microsoft Word represents a practical entry point for strengthening the connection between basic digital competence and academic writing. Although word-processing software is commonly available to students, effective academic use requires more than simply typing text. Students need to become familiar with document organization, paragraph formatting, headings, page layout, editing, revision, and other functions that allow ideas to be transformed into systematically presented written documents. These seemingly technical competencies are relevant because academic writing develops through iterative practices involving drafting, organization, revision, and interaction with texts. Lymer et al. (2024) emphasize that student writing in higher education is better understood as a form of textual practice embedded in academic activities rather than as the production of isolated texts. Consequently, learning to control the technological environment in which academic texts are produced can provide students with a more accessible foundation for developing advanced writing practices.

The need for such foundational support is also visible in research on academic writing in Indonesia. Hasanudin et al. (2023) found that academic writing development requires learning

materials and instructional approaches that correspond to the actual needs of learners and educators. More recently, Subandowo et al. (2025) demonstrated that Indonesian graduate students employ a wide range of strategies across pre-writing, writing, and post-writing stages, including the use of digital tools, source management, consultation, revision, and editing. Their findings reinforce the idea that academic writing is a process composed of interconnected intellectual and technical activities. For novice writers, difficulty in managing technical aspects of document preparation may create additional barriers before they are able to concentrate fully on argument development, evidence, and scholarly communication.

For this reason, academic writing development may benefit from structured mentoring rather than one-time exposure to technological information. Writing support programs provide learners with opportunities to observe procedures, practice specific skills, identify difficulties, receive guidance, and revise their work. Jusslin and Hilli (2024) demonstrated the potential of academic writing workshops to support students' thesis-writing practices through flexible learning spaces. Likewise, Butarbutar (2024) found that scaffolding tools and systematic instructional support can contribute to students' perceptions of improved writing abilities. Such findings suggest that mentoring can function as an intermediary process through which basic technological knowledge is gradually transformed into more independent writing practices.

This practical and developmental perspective provides the foundation for the AURA Program, which stands for Akademi Unggul, Riset, dan Literasi (Academy for Excellence, Research, and Literacy). The program was initiated as an academic forum intended to foster a stronger culture of scholarship, research, and literacy among students. Its inaugural activity was held on December 3, 2025, organized by Media Dakwah Pondok Al-Bashiroh in collaboration with BEM UII Kabinet Garuda. The event featured Dr. Kholili Hasib, M.U.D. as the main speaker, accompanied by Dr. Aziz Akbar, S.H.I., M.E.I. Rather than ending with the initial forum, AURA was subsequently developed as a continuing mentoring initiative intended to translate academic motivation into practical competencies.

As part of this continuation, the program introduced Microsoft Word mentoring facilitated by Ust. Deden Ramadan and Ust. Samsul Huda. The mentoring focused on basic Microsoft Word operation, document formatting, and editing skills. These activities were deliberately positioned at an introductory level because participants were expected to develop technical confidence before progressing toward more complex forms of academic production. The orientation of the program was therefore not limited to teaching software operation. Instead, Microsoft Word was used as a practical bridge through which participants could begin developing habits of document organization, writing, editing, and revision that could later support essay writing, academic assignments, research reports, and journal articles.

Such an approach is consistent with current understandings of academic literacy as a developmental practice. Students do not become academic writers merely by being instructed to produce articles or research papers. They require opportunities to engage gradually with the practices, tools, conventions, and processes involved in academic knowledge production. Contemporary digital academic environments make this gradual development particularly important because writing now requires interaction between conceptual competence and technological competence. Studies of writing development show that the writing process involves numerous decisions and strategies across planning, drafting, revising, and editing (Subandowo et al., 2025),

while studies of digital academic writing emphasize the integration of functional technological skills with critical, informational, and communicative abilities (Nabhan & Habók, 2025).

Despite growing research on digital literacy, academic writing, and technology-enhanced learning, much of the existing literature focuses on university-level digital competence, online learning, advanced writing interventions, or emerging technologies. Comparatively less attention has been directed toward community-oriented mentoring that begins with a familiar and accessible word-processing application and deliberately positions basic document skills as the first stage of a longer academic literacy pathway. This creates a practical space for community service programs that do not immediately demand sophisticated research-writing competencies from participants but instead establish an achievable progression from basic digital operation to document preparation, writing practice, academic writing, and eventually scholarly publication. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that structured training, writing workshops, digital competence development, and academic support can create conditions that encourage greater confidence and participation in academic practices (Getenet et al., 2024; Jusslin & Hilli, 2024; Zakir et al., 2025).

Accordingly, this community service program aimed to strengthen participants' basic digital and writing competencies through Microsoft Word mentoring within the AURA Program. Specifically, the activity sought to introduce fundamental Microsoft Word functions, develop participants' abilities to format and edit documents, and establish these technical competencies as an initial foundation for more productive writing practices. In the longer term, the program is expected to encourage participants to move progressively from basic document processing toward structured academic writing and, ultimately, the preparation of scientific articles for journal publication. By positioning Microsoft Word as a bridge rather than as the final learning objective, the AURA Program seeks to integrate digital skills, writing practice, and academic literacy into a sustainable trajectory of scholarly development.

METHOD

This community service activity employed a participatory and practice-oriented mentoring approach to strengthen participants' basic digital competence and readiness for academic writing through Microsoft Word. The program was implemented as part of AURA, an acronym for Akademi Unggul, Riset, dan Literasi (Academy for Excellence, Research, and Literacy), which was established as a forum for strengthening academic culture, research awareness, and literacy among students and santri.

The mentoring design emphasized active participation, direct demonstration, guided practice, feedback, and gradual independent application. Such an approach is relevant to capacity-building activities because mentoring provides participants with opportunities to interact directly with facilitators, identify practical difficulties, and develop competence through repeated practice. Structured mentoring has also been recognized as an important mechanism for academic and professional development, particularly when learners receive sustained guidance and opportunities for reflection and practical engagement (Mremi et al., 2023; Pratt et al., 2024).

The digital competence orientation of the program was informed by the understanding that digital literacy involves more than the ability to operate a device. Digital competence includes the ability to access, manage, create, and communicate digital content while solving practical problems through technology (Vuorikari et al., 2022). This perspective was particularly relevant to the AURA

Program because Microsoft Word was introduced not merely as word-processing software but as an initial digital tool for organizing and producing academic texts. The importance of connecting technology with meaningful educational activities is also consistent with UNESCO's emphasis that the educational value of technology depends on how effectively it is integrated with learning objectives and user competencies (UNESCO, 2023).

The implementation of the program consisted of five interconnected stages: (1) preparation and identification of learning needs, (2) introduction and demonstration, (3) guided hands-on practice, (4) formative evaluation and feedback, and (5) follow-up orientation toward academic writing.

The first stage involved determining the basic Microsoft Word competencies considered relevant to the participants' writing activities. The facilitators identified several fundamental areas that commonly support document preparation, including text formatting, paragraph organization, page layout, headings, numbering, document consistency, and basic editing.

The materials were deliberately arranged from simple to more structured tasks. This progression was intended to accommodate participants with different levels of previous experience in using Microsoft Word. The program did not assume that familiarity with digital devices automatically represented sufficient academic digital competence. Contemporary digital competence frameworks emphasize that meaningful technology use requires knowledge, practical skills, problem solving, communication, and content creation rather than simple access to technology (Vuorikari et al., 2022).

The facilitators subsequently prepared short demonstrations and practical exercises based on common academic activities. Instead of presenting Microsoft Word features in isolation, the exercises were associated with activities such as preparing assignments, arranging paragraphs, editing documents, and organizing simple academic manuscripts. This approach was intended to help participants understand the direct relationship between technical operations and writing productivity.

The Microsoft Word mentoring activity was conducted as a continuation of the broader AURA Program. The inaugural AURA Forum was held on December 3, 2025, as an initiative organized by Media Dakwah Pondok Al-Bashiroh in collaboration with BEM UII Kabinet Garuda. The initial forum emphasized the importance of scholarship, research, and literacy. The subsequent Microsoft Word mentoring activity translated this broader academic orientation into practical digital and writing competencies.

At the beginning of the mentoring session, participants were introduced to the role of Microsoft Word in academic activities. The facilitators explained that the software could be used not only for typing but also for organizing, formatting, revising, and presenting written ideas systematically. This introductory stage was intended to develop participants' awareness of the relationship between basic digital competence and more advanced academic activities.

The facilitators then demonstrated the selected Microsoft Word features step by step. Direct demonstration was followed by participant replication so that the mentoring process did not remain at the level of verbal explanation. Academic support models involving tutoring and guided learning indicate that structured guidance can facilitate engagement and progressively encourage more independent learning practices (Dumitru et al., 2024).

The main stage of the activity consisted of direct mentoring facilitated by Ust. Deden Ramadan and Ust. Samsul Huda. Participants practiced Microsoft Word functions directly while following instructions and demonstrations provided by the facilitators.

The practical activities covered basic text formatting, font settings, paragraph alignment, line spacing, indentation, page margins, headings, numbering, page organization, and basic document editing. Particular attention was given to consistency in document presentation because participants were expected to recognize that technical organization contributes to the readability and professionalism of written work.

The mentoring process adopted a learning-by-doing orientation. Participants were encouraged to perform each procedure independently after observing the demonstration. Facilitators moved between participants and provided individual assistance when technical difficulties occurred. Rather than immediately correcting every problem for the participants, the facilitators demonstrated the appropriate procedure and encouraged participants to reproduce it independently.

This form of guided assistance corresponds with the broader concept of instructional scaffolding, in which temporary support is provided while learners gradually develop the ability to complete a task independently. Recent work on writing support similarly indicates that scaffolding, demonstration, interaction, proofreading, and feedback can assist novice writers in developing both technical and cognitive aspects of writing (Butarbutar, 2024). Mentoring environments may also contribute to learners' development when support is organized around practical activities rather than limited to one-directional instruction (Mremi et al., 2023; Pratt et al., 2024).

After the participants became familiar with fundamental Microsoft Word operations, the mentoring process explicitly connected technical skills with academic writing practices. Participants were introduced to the idea that document-processing competence represents an initial stage in a broader academic literacy pathway.

The learning trajectory conceptualized in the AURA Program can be summarized as follows:

Basic digital skills → Microsoft Word competence → document organization → writing practice → academic writing → scientific article writing.

This progression was not intended to suggest that mastery of Microsoft Word alone produces competent academic writers. Rather, technical familiarity with word-processing tools was positioned as one enabling condition that may reduce technical barriers when participants later engage with more complex writing activities.

This distinction is important because digital literacy includes not only technical ability but also confidence, problem solving, communication, and meaningful engagement with digital learning activities. Research in higher education has shown meaningful relationships among students' digital literacy, self-efficacy, attitudes toward digital technology, and learning engagement (Getenet et al., 2024). Accordingly, the mentoring program sought to develop basic technical confidence before introducing participants to more demanding academic writing practices.

The evaluation process was formative and practice-based. It focused primarily on participants' ability to apply the Microsoft Word functions introduced during the mentoring session rather than on standardized testing.

Participants' performance was observed during practical activities using several competency indicators: (1) ability to format text appropriately, (2) ability to organize paragraphs, (3) ability to

adjust page settings, (4) ability to use headings and numbering, (5) ability to identify basic formatting inconsistencies, and (6) ability to perform basic document editing.

Formative feedback was provided throughout the mentoring process. When participants experienced difficulties, facilitators identified the problem, demonstrated corrective procedures, and encouraged participants to repeat the task. Formative assessment is particularly appropriate for developmental learning activities because its primary purpose is to improve learning during the process rather than merely to provide a final judgment of achievement (Parmigiani et al., 2024).

The evaluation therefore emphasized observable progress, participant engagement, task completion, and increasing independence. Participants' practical documents served as learning evidence that allowed facilitators to identify areas that had been understood and aspects requiring further assistance.

The activity was evaluated descriptively because the primary objective of the community service program was capacity building rather than hypothesis testing. Observations during mentoring, participant responses, practical task completion, and document outputs were used to describe the implementation and immediate outcomes of the program.

The Microsoft Word mentoring activity was designed as the introductory stage of a longer academic literacy development pathway within the AURA Program. Participants were encouraged to continue using Microsoft Word for routine writing activities after completing the session.

Future mentoring is oriented toward increasingly complex writing competencies, including idea development, paragraph construction, organization of academic papers, identification and use of scholarly sources, citation management, referencing, manuscript editing, scientific article structure, and journal article preparation.

This gradual orientation reflects the principle that academic competence develops through sustained engagement, guidance, practice, and feedback. Structured mentoring and academic support can provide learners with opportunities to progressively move from supported learning toward greater independence (Dumitru et al., 2024; Pratt et al., 2024). Accordingly, Microsoft Word mentoring within the AURA Program was positioned as a bridge between basic digital competence and the longer-term objective of developing productive academic writers.

The activity was implemented as an educational community service and mentoring program with attention to the principles of respect, transparency, voluntary participation, privacy, and responsible reporting. Ethical principles in educational activities require participants to be treated with dignity and to be adequately informed about the purposes for which their participation and learning outputs may be used (British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2024).

For the academic reporting of the program, participant-related information should be presented in a manner that does not unnecessarily reveal personal identities. Evaluation results are therefore most appropriately reported in aggregate or anonymized form. Names and other personally identifiable information should not be included in the dataset or publication unless their inclusion is necessary and explicit permission has been obtained.

Participation in evaluation activities should remain voluntary, and participants should be informed about the purpose of the mentoring program and the potential academic use of non-identifiable information generated during the activity. Participation or non-participation in the evaluation should not affect participants' access to the mentoring program.

Photographs, direct quotations, individual documents, or other materials that could allow a participant to be identified should only be published when appropriate permission has been obtained. These principles are consistent with contemporary educational research ethics, particularly the requirements concerning transparency, informed participation, privacy, confidentiality, minimization of harm, and participants' autonomy (BERA, 2024).

Because the activity focused on basic educational mentoring and did not involve clinical procedures, medical interventions, or experimental manipulation, the ethical emphasis was placed on participant dignity, voluntary involvement, confidentiality, appropriate use of learning outputs, and responsible dissemination. Where the target journal or institution requires formal institutional ethical clearance for community service evaluation data, the authors should comply with the relevant institutional procedure before publication.

RESULT AND CONCLUSION

Results and Discussion

Results

Implementation of the Microsoft Word Mentoring Program

The implementation of the Microsoft Word mentoring represented a practical continuation of the broader AURA Program. While the inaugural AURA Forum introduced participants to the importance of scholarship, research, and literacy, the subsequent mentoring activity translated these broad academic aspirations into concrete and accessible digital practices. The mentoring therefore functioned as a transition from conceptual academic encouragement toward practical capacity building.

The activity focused on fundamental Microsoft Word competencies that are directly relevant to routine academic work. Participants were introduced to basic word-processing functions, including text and font management, paragraph alignment, line spacing, indentation, page margins, headings, numbering, document organization, and basic editing. Rather than presenting these features as isolated software commands, the facilitators related them to the preparation of assignments, reports, essays, and other academic documents.

The implementation produced several immediate program outputs. First, participants were exposed to a more systematic understanding of Microsoft Word beyond its basic typing function. Second, the mentoring created opportunities for participants to practice document formatting directly under facilitator guidance. Third, participants were introduced to editing as an integral component of document preparation rather than as a final cosmetic activity. Fourth, the activity established an explicit connection between basic digital competence and the longer-term goal of academic writing development.

Because the activity was designed as a community service and mentoring program rather than an experimental intervention, no standardized pre-test and post-test dataset was administered. Consequently, the results should not be interpreted as evidence of statistically significant improvement. Instead, the immediate results refer to implementation outcomes, participation in guided practice, exposure to relevant Microsoft Word functions, and the establishment of a developmental pathway toward academic writing.

Development of Basic Document-Processing Competence

An important outcome of the activity was the repositioning of Microsoft Word from a simple typing application to a tool for organizing written communication. Participants were introduced to the idea that a well-structured document requires consistency in typography, spacing, paragraph organization, headings, page layout, and editing.

This distinction is important because basic digital competence involves not only access to software but also the ability to create, transform, organize, and communicate digital content. Recent research on digital competence among university students identifies content creation, digital media use, access to digital information, and communication as interconnected dimensions of contemporary digital competence (Mejías-Acosta et al., 2024).

Within the AURA mentoring context, document-processing competence was therefore treated as a productive digital skill. Participants were not merely expected to know where particular commands were located in Microsoft Word. The learning process emphasized how those commands could be employed to make written documents more organized, readable, and academically appropriate.

Guided Practice and Immediate Feedback

Another observable characteristic of the program was the central role of direct guidance. The mentoring process combined facilitator explanation, demonstration, participant replication, correction, and repeated practice. Ust. Deden Ramadan and Ust. Samsul Huda served not only as presenters but as mentors who assisted participants during the practical process.

This structure distinguished the activity from a conventional seminar. Rather than receiving information passively, participants were expected to perform document-processing tasks directly. Problems encountered during practice could therefore be addressed immediately. This form of interaction is important because academic and writing-related competence develops through cycles of performance, feedback, correction, and renewed practice.

Previous studies have similarly demonstrated the importance of interactive feedback in writing development. Goshu and Gebremariam (2024), for example, found that teacher-student writing conferences can enhance writing development by combining constructive criticism, dialogue, and encouragement. Research on higher education writing also suggests that constructive teacher feedback provides learners with clearer information about weaknesses and possible directions for improvement (Zahari et al., 2025).

Connecting Technical Skills with Academic Writing

The most important conceptual outcome of the AURA mentoring program was the establishment of a pathway between technical digital competence and academic literacy. The program did not position mastery of Microsoft Word as an end in itself. Instead, the activity introduced participants to a gradual developmental trajectory: Basic digital skills → Microsoft Word competence → document organization → editing and revision → writing practice → academic writing → scientific article preparation.

This pathway represents the central contribution of the program. Participants were introduced to the understanding that academic writing requires not only ideas and language ability but also practical control over the digital environment in which contemporary academic texts are produced.

Academic writing itself is recursive. Writers generate ideas, organize information, draft texts, revise arguments, edit language, adjust formatting, and frequently return to earlier stages before producing a final document. Machado and Harris (2026) similarly emphasize that contemporary scholarly writing involves an iterative process supported by various digital technologies and that novice writers require structured support to use such tools effectively.

Emergence of a Follow-up Academic Literacy Pathway

The mentoring activity also generated a clear direction for subsequent AURA activities. Microsoft Word training was conceptualized as the introductory stage of a broader literacy program rather than as an isolated technological workshop.

Future stages can progressively address paragraph development, academic argumentation, literature searching, citation practices, reference management, manuscript structure, research reporting, journal article preparation, and publication literacy. This gradual progression is particularly important because a single workshop is unlikely to produce fully independent academic writers.

Mulyono et al. (2023), in their study of an academic writing workshop for Indonesian vocational education instructors, found that workshop participation could contribute to writing self-efficacy but also emphasized the importance of sustained, personalized, and long-term support rather than relying on one-off interventions.

The immediate outcome of the AURA activity should therefore be understood as the creation of a foundational learning stage upon which increasingly complex academic competencies can subsequently be developed.

Discussion

Microsoft Word as Foundational Digital Competence

The findings of this community service activity reinforce the argument that basic digital skills remain relevant even in an educational environment increasingly dominated by artificial intelligence, cloud applications, and sophisticated research technologies. Digital competence should not be interpreted exclusively through advanced technologies. Competence also involves the meaningful use of basic tools to create, organize, modify, and communicate academic content.

The DigComp 2.2 framework positions digital content creation as one of the central domains of digital competence and emphasizes that individuals should be capable of creating and editing digital content for purposeful activities (Vuorikari et al., 2022). The findings of Mejías-Acosta et al. (2024) similarly identify digital content creation and the ability to use software for learning tasks as significant dimensions of university students' digital competence.

From this perspective, Microsoft Word mentoring may appear technologically simple, but pedagogically it addresses a fundamental component of digital academic practice. The novelty of the AURA Program therefore lies not in introducing a sophisticated technological platform but in recognizing that advanced academic productivity often depends on mastery of seemingly basic technical competencies.

This point is particularly important when discussing digital inequality. Students may have extensive exposure to smartphones, social media, and messaging applications while possessing uneven competence in academic document creation. Daily technology use should therefore not automatically be equated with academic digital literacy. Digital competence involves purposeful production and organization of knowledge, not merely frequency of technology use.

The AURA mentoring activity addresses this distinction by moving participants from technology consumption toward digital content production. Formatting a document, structuring paragraphs, organizing headings, editing text, and producing a readable file constitute elementary forms of academic digital production. These competencies can subsequently support more advanced activities such as citation management, collaborative writing, data presentation, and journal manuscript preparation.

From Technical Literacy to Academic Literacy

The significance of Microsoft Word mentoring becomes clearer when viewed through the Academic Literacies perspective. Lea and Street (2006) argue that academic writing should not be reduced to technical study skills because writing involves participation in particular academic practices, conventions, identities, and forms of knowledge production.

This theoretical position creates an important distinction for interpreting the present activity. Microsoft Word competence alone cannot make participants academically literate. Knowing how to change margins, apply headings, or create numbered lists does not automatically enable a student to construct arguments, evaluate scholarly literature, or participate in academic discourse.

However, technical competence can reduce one layer of difficulty that novice writers encounter. Academic writing already requires substantial cognitive effort related to idea generation, organization, source integration, argumentation, language choice, and revision. When writers simultaneously struggle with document management, formatting, or basic software operation, their cognitive burden may become even greater.

This is why the metaphor of Microsoft Word as a bridge is central to the AURA Program. The bridge does not replace academic literacy. Rather, it creates a practical route toward it.

Mammadova (2023) similarly argues that contemporary academic writing and information literacy increasingly intersect within digital environments. Nabhan and Habók (2025) further demonstrate that digital literacy in academic writing involves functional digital abilities alongside critical thinking, information seeking, communication, collaboration, and digital culture. Thus, basic technical competence should be interpreted as one component within a much broader academic literacy ecosystem.

The AURA Program consequently avoids two problematic extremes. The first is technological reductionism, in which academic literacy is mistakenly equated with software proficiency. The second is academic abstraction, in which students are expected to produce scientific writing without sufficient technical preparation to manage the documents through which that writing is produced.

A more productive approach lies between these extremes. Students can begin with manageable technical competencies and progressively move toward conceptual, rhetorical, and research-oriented writing skills.

Mentoring as Scaffolding for Novice Writers

The guided nature of the activity is another important element of the findings. Beginning writers frequently need more than written instructions. They need opportunities to observe procedures, reproduce them, make mistakes, ask questions, receive correction, and repeat tasks.

This structure reflects the principle of scaffolding. Support is provided when learners cannot yet perform tasks independently and is gradually reduced as competence develops. Butarbutar (2024) emphasizes that scaffolding tools can support writing development by providing learners with structured assistance. Mohale (2025) similarly identifies scaffolded writing support, explicit

feedback, practical exercises, and learner-centered instruction as effective approaches for supporting academic writers.

The AURA mentoring model reflects these principles at a foundational level. A facilitator demonstrates a formatting procedure, the participant reproduces it, a difficulty emerges, guidance is provided, and the participant attempts the process again. Although the task may involve a relatively simple Microsoft Word feature, the learning structure itself establishes habits that are important for later academic writing development.

This is particularly relevant because academic writing is not effectively developed through information transmission alone. Jusslin and Hilli (2024) show that academic writing workshops can function as productive support environments for students engaged in demanding writing tasks. Similarly, Mulyono et al. (2023) found that structured academic writing workshops can contribute to self-efficacy among Indonesian participants, although they also caution that sustained support is necessary for stronger and more durable development.

The implication for AURA is clear. The Microsoft Word session should be maintained as the first layer of scaffolding, followed by progressively more complex mentoring sessions. Participants who become comfortable with basic document preparation can then be introduced to paragraph structure, citation, reference management, source synthesis, scientific argumentation, and journal manuscript organization.

Editing as an Introduction to the Recursive Nature of Writing

One of the most academically important aspects of the program is its attention to editing. Beginners often conceptualize writing as a linear process: text is written once and then considered complete. Academic writing operates differently. Effective writers continually revise, reorganize, delete, expand, clarify, and reformat their texts.

Introducing editing through Microsoft Word can therefore serve as an early introduction to the recursive nature of writing. Even simple activities such as correcting spacing, reorganizing paragraphs, standardizing headings, or modifying page layouts can reinforce the idea that written documents are revisable objects.

Research on academic writing consistently highlights revision and feedback as central to writing development. Zahari et al. (2025) found that constructive teacher feedback contributes to student writing performance by helping learners identify strengths and areas requiring improvement. Goshu and Gebremariam (2024) likewise emphasize the value of interactive feedback and writing conferences for supporting revision.

Research involving digital writing tools points in a similar direction. Mahapatra (2024) found that formative feedback can support academic writing development when learners are trained to use feedback meaningfully, particularly for content, organization, and language improvement. Although Mahapatra's study focused on AI-assisted feedback rather than Microsoft Word, the broader pedagogical principle remains relevant: writing improves when learners are engaged in cycles of production, feedback, reflection, and revision.

The current mentoring activity therefore provides an opportunity to normalize revision from an early stage. When participants later progress toward academic writing, editing should no longer be perceived merely as correcting typographical mistakes but as a fundamental intellectual activity through which arguments and ideas are refined.

Technical Confidence and Writing Apprehension

A deeper interpretation of the findings also requires attention to the affective dimension of academic writing. Novice writers may experience uncertainty not only about what to write but also about how to produce an academically acceptable document.

Nurkamto et al. (2024), in a systematic review of academic writing apprehension, identified unfamiliarity with academic conventions, insufficient writing support, anxiety, and negative beliefs about writing among factors that can contribute to writing apprehension. The review further emphasizes constructive feedback, appropriate support, collaboration, and writing strategies as important responses to these challenges.

This provides an important interpretive lens for the AURA Program. For novice participants, asking them immediately to produce a scientific article may create an excessively large perceived distance between their present abilities and the desired outcome. Beginning instead with a familiar and manageable application such as Microsoft Word allows the developmental pathway to be broken into smaller achievable tasks.

The psychological significance of this progression should not be underestimated. Completing a simple formatting task independently can provide a sense of control over academic technology. Organizing a document successfully may reduce uncertainty about future academic assignments. Gradually, repeated small achievements can contribute to stronger self-efficacy.

Getenet et al. (2024) demonstrated that digital literacy and self-efficacy are related to student engagement in technology-supported learning. Mulyono et al. (2023) also found that writing workshops could contribute to aspects of academic writing self-efficacy among Indonesian participants.

Thus, the potential contribution of Microsoft Word mentoring is not limited to technical competence. It may also create a psychologically accessible entry point into academic writing.

Nevertheless, this interpretation should remain cautious. Because the present community service activity did not administer a validated self-efficacy scale or writing anxiety instrument, changes in confidence cannot be claimed quantitatively. Future AURA evaluations could incorporate brief measures of digital self-efficacy or writing confidence before and after selected training stages.

Why Basic Word-Processing Still Matters in the Age of AI

One of the most important implications of this activity concerns the contemporary tendency to move directly toward sophisticated digital and artificial intelligence tools. The emergence of AI-supported writing systems may create an assumption that basic word-processing competence has become less important. The opposite may be true.

Digital academic writing is becoming increasingly complex. Students now interact with word processors, online databases, citation managers, collaborative platforms, grammar checkers, plagiarism-detection systems, and generative AI. The ability to navigate this ecosystem requires a foundational understanding of how academic texts themselves are structured, modified, stored, and revised.

Machado and Harris (2026) emphasize that contemporary scholarly writers encounter a rapidly expanding range of digital technologies and argue that novice writers require structured support to employ these tools effectively and responsibly.

Starting with Microsoft Word therefore creates an important pedagogical sequence. Participants first learn to control the document themselves. Only afterward should more automated technologies be introduced.

This sequence may also help preserve learner agency. If novice writers move directly to highly automated writing tools before understanding basic writing and editing processes, they may become dependent on technological outputs without being able to critically evaluate them. Mahapatra (2024), while reporting benefits of AI-supported formative feedback, also notes concerns regarding machine dependence and emphasizes the importance of learner preparation and instructor guidance.

The AURA model can consequently be developed according to the principle human competence first, technological augmentation second. Microsoft Word serves as a useful starting environment because participants remain visibly responsible for constructing, editing, organizing, and revising their own documents.

From Microsoft Word to Scientific Article Writing

The long-term aspiration of AURA is to encourage participants to progress toward scientific and journal writing. This objective is realistic only when approached incrementally.

Scientific article writing requires multiple layers of competence: topic identification, research problem formulation, literature searching, source evaluation, citation, synthesis, methodological understanding, data presentation, academic argumentation, revision, adherence to journal guidelines, and publication ethics. No short Microsoft Word workshop can independently develop all these abilities.

However, the current program provides an important prerequisite. Scientific writing must eventually materialize as a structured manuscript. Writers must be able to manage headings, paragraphs, tables, references, page structures, and revision processes. Machado and Harris (2026) emphasize that scholarly writing requires formal structures and repeated engagement with digital technologies throughout the writing process.

The most appropriate development of AURA would therefore involve a sequential mentoring model:

Stage 1: Basic Microsoft Word and document organization
Stage 2: Paragraph and essay writing
Stage 3: Academic reading and source evaluation
Stage 4: Citation and reference management
Stage 5: Academic paper structure
Stage 6: Research-based writing
Stage 7: Scientific article preparation
Stage 8: Journal submission and publication literacy

Such a progression would transform AURA from an event-based literacy forum into a sustainable academic capacity-building ecosystem.

This recommendation is supported by Mulyono et al. (2023), who stress the need for sustainable writing and technological support rather than isolated academic writing workshops. Mohale (2025) similarly reports that practical exercises, scaffolding, explicit feedback, and accessible learning resources are more effective than overloaded or insufficiently interactive academic writing support.

Contribution of the AURA Program

The contribution of this program lies in its developmental framing rather than in technological novelty. Microsoft Word itself is neither new nor technologically innovative. What is important is how the application is positioned pedagogically.

The AURA Program proposes that a familiar digital application can function as an accessible bridge connecting three domains: digital competence, writing practice, and academic literacy.

This perspective differentiates the program from conventional computer training. The objective is not merely to produce participants who can operate Microsoft Word efficiently. The desired trajectory is to develop individuals who can progressively use digital tools to express ideas, organize knowledge, produce academic documents, and ultimately participate in scholarly communication.

This orientation is consistent with contemporary digital competence research emphasizing that digital literacy includes content creation and purposeful use of digital tools rather than simple technological access (Mejías-Acosta et al., 2024; Vuorikari et al., 2022). It also corresponds with the Academic Literacies perspective that writing competence should ultimately be situated within broader practices of academic knowledge production (Lea & Street, 2006).

The community service significance of the program therefore lies in building an accessible entry point into academic culture. For participants who may perceive research and journal publication as distant or highly complex activities, Microsoft Word provides a concrete starting point. A complex objective is transformed into a sequence of achievable competencies.

Limitations and Implications for Future Programs

The findings should be interpreted within several limitations. First, the current activity was an introductory mentoring program and did not employ an experimental or quasi-experimental design. Second, no standardized pre-test and post-test scores were available to quantify changes in Microsoft Word competence. Third, the mentoring focused primarily on basic document processing and therefore cannot be used as evidence of improvement in academic writing ability itself.

These limitations are important because the distinction between technical competence and academic writing competence must be maintained. The present activity provides a foundation for academic writing but does not yet demonstrate that participants can independently construct scholarly arguments, synthesize literature, or prepare publication-ready journal articles.

Future implementations should therefore incorporate more systematic evaluation. A simple Microsoft Word performance rubric could measure competencies before and after mentoring. Participants could also complete short authentic tasks such as formatting an unstructured document, applying headings, reorganizing paragraphs, or editing formatting errors. Longer-term evaluation could examine whether participants subsequently produce assignments, essays, research reports, or journal manuscripts more independently.

Future stages should also collect participants' reflections and feedback. Such qualitative evidence would help determine which aspects of the mentoring are perceived as most useful and which technical barriers remain. Formative evaluation would allow the AURA team to adjust subsequent sessions according to actual participant needs.

Finally, longitudinal follow-up is particularly important. The success of AURA should not ultimately be measured by whether participants can operate Microsoft Word immediately after one mentoring session, but by whether basic digital competence develops into sustained writing activity.

The strongest long-term indicators would include increased frequency of writing, improved document organization, participation in academic writing mentoring, production of scientific manuscripts, and eventually journal submission.

In this sense, the present Microsoft Word mentoring should be regarded not as the completion of the AURA literacy agenda but as its practical beginning.

CONCLUSION

The Microsoft Word mentoring activity implemented through the AURA Program demonstrated the practical value of introducing basic digital competencies as an entry point to broader academic literacy development. The program did not position Microsoft Word merely as a word-processing application, but as a practical bridge connecting digital skills, document organization, writing practice, editing, and readiness for more advanced academic writing activities.

The mentoring process provided participants with opportunities to become more familiar with essential document-processing functions, including text formatting, paragraph organization, page settings, headings, numbering, and basic editing. More importantly, the activity introduced participants to the understanding that these technical skills can support the broader process of producing structured academic documents. The guided and practice-oriented approach also allowed participants to learn through direct demonstration, repeated application, and immediate feedback from the facilitators.

The main contribution of the program lies in its developmental perspective. Rather than expecting novice participants to immediately produce scientific articles, AURA establishes a gradual academic literacy pathway beginning with manageable technical competencies. This pathway moves from basic digital skills to Microsoft Word competence, document organization, writing practice, academic writing, and ultimately scientific article preparation. Such a model provides a more accessible foundation for participants who are still developing confidence and familiarity with academic writing practices.

Nevertheless, the results of this activity should be interpreted within its limitations. The program was introductory in nature and did not employ standardized pre-test and post-test measurements. Therefore, the activity cannot yet provide quantitative evidence of improvement in either Microsoft Word competence or academic writing ability. The findings are primarily limited to descriptive implementation outcomes and the establishment of an initial academic literacy pathway.

Future AURA activities should develop this mentoring into a more systematic and sustainable program. Subsequent stages may include paragraph development, academic reading, source evaluation, citation and reference management, research-based writing, scientific article structure, manuscript editing, and journal submission procedures. Future evaluations should also incorporate competency rubrics, pre- and post-activity assessments, participant reflections, and longer-term follow-up to determine whether the mentoring contributes to sustained writing productivity.

Overall, the AURA Program shows that strengthening academic literacy does not always need to begin with complex research or publication training. It can begin with a familiar and accessible tool such as Microsoft Word, provided that the tool is integrated into a clear developmental framework. In this sense, Microsoft Word functions not as the final objective of the program, but as the first bridge toward greater independence, productivity, and participation in academic and scholarly writing.

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