

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY



PASSwrite TRAINING MANUAL

Western Sydney University | University of Technology, Sydney
Frances Williamson
passwrite@westernsydney.edu.au

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



Acknowledgments

Support for this project has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views in this project do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.



Australian Government



Office for
Learning & Teaching

CONTENTS

The PASSwrite Project	4
Structure of PASSwrite Session	5
The Writing Process	6
Writing in the Disciplines	8
Genres of academic literature	9
Analysing Student Writing	10
Giving and Receiving Feedback	12
Professional conduct and the PASSwrite program	14
Troubleshooting	14
Resources	15

THE PASSwrite PROJECT

PASSwrite is a strategic and sustainable approach to developing student critical thinking and communicative capabilities. In particular, PASSwrite focuses on underprepared and non-traditional students. The project combines the established and effective peer-learning model, Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) with the best practice model of discipline-based academic literacy to create group learning environments. These groups facilitate student engagement in critical reading, writing and dialogue targeted at the concepts, language and conventions of their own academic discipline.



STRUCTURE OF PASSwrite SESSION

Dynamic	Time	Activity/purpose
Stage 1: Introduction/warm-up/reflection		
Individual or pairs	2-5 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either talking or writing, students reflect on their writing e.g. their strengths and challenges, goals, most pressing concerns etc. • In some sessions, this stage may simply be a very brief preview of the week's theme and what will be covered. <p>At this stage, students can submit academic writing for facilitator feedback.</p>
Stage 2: Reading and deconstructing text		
Pairs/threes	20 mins plus 5 mins feedback of key ideas/features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students read a text silently at first and then join with partner to discuss informally. • After 20 minutes, facilitator spends 5 mins seeking whole group feedback to ensure key ideas/features have been identified. • Facilitator to direct purpose of students' reading - either for content or language/structural features (e.g. sentence structure, paragraph structure, use of discipline vocabulary, structure of argument, response to assignment question). This will be determined by week's theme. <p>Facilitator to use silent reading time to write feedback on any students' work submitted in stage 1</p>
Stage 3: Workstations		
Individuals/pairs (think, pair, share)	20 mins for activity; 10 mins for sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students engage in activity with focus on skills or language/literacy building, depending on week and needs of group. • Either divide group in half: one half does one activity and the other does a second, related activity. After 20 mins, they stop and then pair up and spend 10 mins explaining/teaching what they learnt/practiced. Alternatively, whole group does one activity for 25 minutes and then whole group feedback for 5 mins
Stage 4: Writing and co-constructing a text		
Individual or pairs	20 mins	Students write response to text read in stage 2, applying language skills just practiced. Alternate weekly between individual and join construction
Stage 5: Feedback		
Pairs	10 mins	If written individually, students pair up and swap writing, giving verbal feedback based on marking matrix. If written in pairs, swap with another pair and provide feedback as above. Facilitator will need to model this in first week
Stage 6: Wrap and close		
Whole group	2-5 mins	Facilitator to summarise session and preview next

THE WRITING PROCESS

Writing is a dynamic process, involving a number of steps. Although these steps are sequential, they are also fluid, and students are likely to move back and forth between them, particularly as they assess their position in regard to the question/task and their process of information gathering. This process is represented in the diagram below:



Figure 1 – The dynamic process of writing¹

Another way to illustrate the essay writing process is the following linear representation:

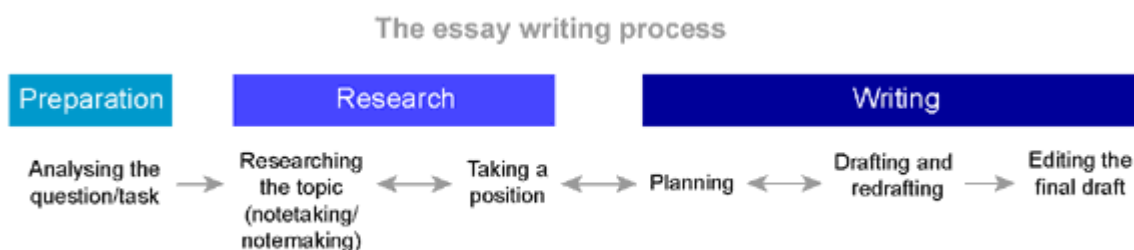


Figure 2 – The essay writing process (linear)²

In addition to focusing on the process of writing, the stages of writing academic texts can also be understood in terms of the levels of learning involved. Each stage is associated with a technique, the functional aspects of writing, as well as understanding, which is a deeper level of learning and involves the nature of knowledge and how it is constructed. This is illustrated in the table below:

1 From University of Wollongong Unilearning - <http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/essay/1b.html>
 2 Ibid.

Academic writing and levels of learning

Stages in writing academic texts	Levels of learning	
	Techniques	Understanding
Selection and evaluation of information sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding information in library and online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making meaning within unfamiliar discourse Understanding which information is relevant
Synthesising the ideas/arguments from other sources with one's own ideas/arguments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referencing: conventions of citation Avoiding plagiarism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowing why, when and whom to reference Understanding referencing as a method of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Providing evidence Acknowledging others' work in the field Giving greater authority to one's own ideas Constructing knowledge
Crafting ones ideas and arguments into a structured, coherent text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structuring Language skills (spelling, grammar, rhetorical strategies, cohesion) Using appropriate terminology/style/conventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in discourse of the discipline Understanding rhetorical processes needed for the construction of knowledge

Table 1 - Academic writing and levels of learning³

After discussion, mark on the preceding diagrams and tables:

- the steps at which many students may experience difficulties
- stages that many students may skip
- stages that many students may not be aware of
- estimated time spent on each broad stage

³ From Wingate, U. (2006). Doing away with 'study skills', Teaching in Higher Education 11(4), 457-469

WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

Based on your reading of the Hyland text and our discussion, complete the table below, noting key differences in writing between at least two disciplines you are familiar with.

Discipline	Typical genres (text types)	Language features	Textual features
Applied linguistics	Essays Linguistic analyses (using variety of frameworks such as SFL, CDA, phonetic/phonemic, corpus linguistics) Experimental reports	Formal language Specialist vocabulary Third person Variety of tenses	Headings Paragraphing Tables and/or figures Extracts from language-in-use Specialised notation (e.g. International Phonetic Alphabet)

GENRES OF ACADEMIC LITERATURE

There are also differences to be found within academic disciplines in terms of genres. The following table summarises the common genres and main features of academic writing.

Functions and structures of genres (text types)				
	Argument essay	Research report, case study	Critical review, annotated bibliography	Reflective journal
Purpose	To persuade a reader that the writer's argument is credible by providing evidence to support the writer's position (thesis)	To explain what was done to solve a problem or to carry out an activity	To summarise and evaluate a single text (critical review) or a group of related texts (annotated bibliography).	To reflect on personal learning experiences
Stages in the text	Introduction (with thesis and preview) Body (systematically presenting arguments and evidence supporting thesis) Conclusion (summary of arguments and restatement of thesis) Reference list	Introduction (background to report; previous studies of the issue) Aims Method (how the activity, project, etc. was carried out) Results (outcomes of activity) Discussion (significance of the activity) Recommendations	Purpose of the text Summary of major themes Critique (evaluation) Bibliographic details	Journal or diary type follows relatively unstructured format; most common is chronological responses to class meetings, tutorials, and/or readings. More formal journals requiring analysis can be organized according to themes and often require comparison of readings and theory with your personal experience.
Audience (reader)	Lecturer/assessment marker	Manager, or provider of funds, lecturer, or assessment marker	Potential reader of the text, lecturer, or assessment marker	Yourself, lecturer, or assessment marker
Language features	Variable, but simple present tense predominates Third person perspective (He, she, it, Brown suggests . . .) Formal language	Simple present tense in Introduction and Discussion Past tense in Method and Results Third person perspective Formal language	Simple present tense Third person perspective (Chapter One introduces . . .) Formal language	Variable, but present tense dominates First person perspective (I am thinking about . . .) Usually less formal language than other genres

Table 2- Functions and structure of genres (text types)

Discuss the genres you have written and those you think students may struggle with.

ANALYSING STUDENT WRITING

Text 1: Informal register

<p>Personal reference</p> <p>Inappropriate reference style</p> <p>Use of abbreviations</p> <p>Use of contracted form</p> <p>Use of empty modifier</p>	<p>In my opinion, adults think differently from children. Lots of theorists agree with me. One of these is Jack Mezirow. He says that adults are more critical than children and adolescents, i.e. they start to question the things they used to believe. Lots of others say that adults think in ways that're different from children. What they seem to be saying is that adults don't just follow a sort of formal logic. What they really do is change up the way they think and behave to different situations. They are flexible.</p>	<p>Use of vague and non-specific terms/use of empty expression</p> <p>Use of empty expression or 'waffle'</p> <p>Use of colloquial expression (phrasal verb)</p>
---	--	--

Text 2: Illogical paragraph structure

<p>Exemplification of first supporting point</p> <p>First supporting point</p> <p>Exemplification of second supporting point</p> <p>Second supporting point</p> <p>Topic sentence</p> <p>Statement of significance</p>	<p>In Australia, it is working culture to go to work at 8 o'clock, take a fifteen minute coffee break at 10 o'clock, a half hour break at midday, take another coffee break about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and then leave the office at five o'clock. This is the average routine that fits the needs of the dominant culture. People believe that when at work, you are working for your employer and that other concerns and activities must wait until after work has finished. However, as Somovar and Porter (1991) state 'Mexicans have a different cultural view about the importance of the family. They hold the family in high esteem, and it is not uncommon for relatives to intrude upon the work scene because they perceive family concerns as more important than business'. Mexican believe that business and work can be done at any time, but family problems come first. This is an example of how business is conducted differently from culture to culture. As people from businesses visit different countries for work, they must be aware of that culture's work ethic and adhere to it whilst on their trip.</p>
--	--

Text 3: Inaccurate grammar and syntax

Verb formation error
 Faulty punctuation
 Verb formation error
 Run-on sentence
 Verb formation error
 Run-on sentence

Word form error
 Run-on sentence

As we know, cross cultural communication can relates to many aspects, such as non-verbal communication, different uses in body languages. Be knowing of these differences is good for human cross-cultural communication, generally speaking, advantages are lots when people knowing the real 'meaning' of other people, these advantages can increase partnerships between friends, increase relationship in engagement etc. Cross cultural communication is the result of differences demonstrations as mentioned above. On the other hand, cross cultural communication may have a chance to cause discrimination in the society, knowing the different uses in different cultures is necessary for people to have an effective communication.

Text 4: Lack of cohesion

No topic sentence to introduce topic of paragraph

No connection between innovation and capital

Unclear relation between international standards and Basel I and II

No explicit link between liquidity requirements and standards

Does not make link between regulators and central bank explicit

Introduces new topics (APRA, ACCC and ASIC) without link to previous sentences

No transition between regulatory bodies and controls

Financial institutions include: depository financial institutions, investment and merchant banks, contractual savings institutions, finance companies and general financiers, and unit trusts (Viney 2010). All financial institutions innovate to an extent. To ensure commercial banks have sufficient capital to meet their obligations, the capital adequacy requirement, an international standard is applied. The Basel I accord was introduced in 1988; the Basel II capital accord was implemented by most countries by 2008. Liquidity requirements are also imposed on financial institutions. All countries have established regulators that set prudential standards for the supervision of their banking sectors. In Australia, the central bank is the Reserve Bank of Australia. Financial institutions are supervised by APRA. The ACCC is responsible for competition and consumer protection and ASIC is responsible for Corporations Law. Some controls placed on Australian banks include: risk management systems certification, audit, disclosure and transparency, and ownership and control regulations (Viney 2010).

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

A key component of PASSwrite sessions is the feedback on students' writing. Giving feedback on a piece of writing can be a source of anxiety for both you as the PASSwrite facilitator and the students themselves.

Remember that most students in the PASSwrite sessions are just starting to develop as academic writers, and therefore a beginning premise for giving feedback should be that less is more. That is, don't feel you need to comment on all areas of a student's work that needs improving - this could be overwhelming. Instead, help the students to prioritise what they need to address.

Guidelines for giving feedback – for facilitator

- Look for three areas to comment on. These should be areas that the writer can reasonably expect to make tangible improvements on. Focus on bigger picture areas such as answering the question, cohesion and coherence, academic conventions, structure etc.
- Always begin by commenting on the positive. This further encourages existing skills and boosts confidence; it also helps ensure any negative comments are contextualised
- When you propose your view, give specific evidence. For example you might say, "I really like the way that you articulate your position in this section, by starting with the claim that... and then following that up with the three sub-arguments of... over the following three paragraphs – all with reference to the literature." OR "I was confused by this paragraph because for me, the topic sentence (point to it) led me to expect the paragraph following would be covering and instead it deals with"
- Avoid giving your own views on 'content' – your role as facilitator is to help the writer develop their capacity to clearly articulate their knowledge and ideas. Keep the focus on what and how the writer's ideas are written to avoid any potential claims of collusion and academic misconduct
- Keep criticism brief – the writer will ask for more detail if they require it

Be sure to refer the students to resources that could be helpful to them. These include online grammar sites, UniStep chapters, your own handouts. Also, direct the students to activities in the session that will be of most benefit for them.

Guidelines for soliciting, giving and receiving feedback – for peers

In addition to the facilitator giving individual feedback, most PASSwrite sessions include opportunities for students to give feedback on each other's writing - this is known as peer-editing. To ensure feedback provided by students is constructive, it is important to establish some ground rules and etiquette for this process. This should be done in the first session. The feedback protocol handout (Appendix 1), provided on Basecamp is a good place to start. Make copies and distribute among your group and then go through the guidelines with the students.

In the early stages of the semester, it is also helpful to provide students with brief marking criteria, directing them on what aspects of their partner's writing to focus on. Sample criteria is available below. Alternatively, you can elicit from the group the aspects of their writing they feel are most instructive to receive focus on. You can use the whiteboard to record these.

Criterion	Description	Comments
Introduction	Background information, thesis statement and preview of stages of essay	
Paragraphing	Clearly identifiable paragraphs, single topic per paragraph, clear and concise topic sentence, sufficient and logical supporting sentences	
Conclusion	Clearly identifiable conclusion which restates thesis and summarises main arguments	
Written expression	Formal, objective, concise language. Clear and logical connections between ideas, sentences and paragraphs	
Spelling, grammar and punctuation	Free from errors	

Table 3 - Sample essay marking guide for peer editing

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND THE PASSwrite PROGRAM

The provision of feedback on individual students' assessable work is a key component of the PASSwrite program. As such, a code of conduct is useful to safeguard the integrity of the program and its student facilitators.

Feedback on attendees' work should:

- Only take place in the PASSwrite session itself
- Focus on identifying of areas to work on rather than editing
- Focus on the structure, language and academic conventions rather than content. Limit feedback on content other than general comments about the clarity of expression or relevance of content to question etc.
- Be limited to assessable work that is yet to be submitted

Collusion:

- Attendees are encouraged to work together, swap ideas and generally help each other prepare for assessments
- Attendees are expected to use their own "voice" when submitting written and/or oral assessments
- Collusion is only an offence if it results in misconduct - e.g. one student plagiarising/ copying verbatim another student's work with or without their consent
- Attendees need to be made aware of the boundaries of collaborative study
- Only provide only hard copies of any sample student assignments used in the sessions

TROUBLESHOOTING

Attendees unwilling to collaborate	
Attendees with significantly different levels of understanding/ability	
Attendees reluctant to comment on other peoples' work	
Time management	
Attendees unwilling to write in session	
Students arrive without having registered (Western Sydney University)	
Attendees expecting/asking for feedback outside session	
Other issues	

Referrals:

Insert information here about relevant support services at your institution, including academic skills/ literacy, counselling etc.

AcPrep

UniStep

HALL

RESOURCES

Include information here on what resources are available for facilitators as well as how and where to locate appropriate readings and model students texts for use in sessions. Below is a list of websites that have excellent resources for English grammar and/or academic literacy. It is simply a starting point. You will no doubt wish to add to it.

Online resources

1. UNE Academic Literacy interactive site
<http://aso-resources.une.edu.au>
2. Activities, information and material on different academic genres
www.sinc.sunysb.edu/Class/sourcebk/genreindframe2.html
3. RMIT's Learning Lab - videos, online tutorials and PDFs to watch and download on everything from academic style to sentence construction
<http://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/writing-skills>
4. Another great RMIT resource for LBOTE students
<http://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/english-language-development>
5. University of Melbourne academic skills pages – comprehensive resource
<http://services.unimelb.edu.au/academicskills>
6. UNSW academic skills resources
www.lc.unsw.edu.au/olib.html
7. Western Sydney University Staff feedback toolkit : information of analysing student writing for academics
www.westernsydney.edu.au/qilt/qilt/assessment/staff_feedback_toolkit
8. Western Sydney University Language and Learning Links – a gateway to all kinds of resources on academic literacy
<http://tdu.westernsydney.edu.au/languagelearning/>
9. Grammar and writing
<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar>
10. More grammar activities
www.ego4u.com
11. UTS library study skills site
www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills
12. Printable grammar exercises on range of areas (please don't use one on nominalisation)
www.grammar-worksheets.com/worksheets/worksheets.php
13. Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL): extensive resources for students and tutors/instructors
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl>
14. Writing in Business and Economics
www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/business-economics/index.xml
15. Monash Language and Learning Online: sample essays from different disciplines, excellent self access resources
www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/index.xml
16. University of Wollongong academic reading and writing interactive site
<http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/main.html>
17. Bristol uni online grammar exercises (recommended by Brooke): don't get too hung up on punctuation please
www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/exercises/grammar/grammar_tutorial/page_41.htm
18. Excellent Prezi from Deakin uni on essay writing (generic)
http://prezi.com/hfeqpcik8k7r/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

Frances Williamson
PASSwrite, Western Sydney University
Locked Bag 1797, Penrith 2751
passwrite@westernsydney.edu.au