

Supporting Student Writing



and Other Modes of Learning and Assessment



A Staff Guide



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and Other Modes of Learning and Assessment

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A Staff Guide.**

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Reflecting the authors' commitment to gender equality, gender specific terms, such as 'he' and 'she' are used intermittently throughout this book.

Foreword: Debbie Holley

Professor of Learning Innovation; Faculty of Health and Social Science;
Bournemouth University

A hotly contested debate in Higher Education remains: where does the responsibility lie for the development of student writing? How clearly these inspirational authors place this responsibility with us – in our classrooms, labs, online spaces, tutorials, one-to-ones, large groups, small groups. Wherever our students are learning, they are writing, be it formatively, creatively, or summatively, often with pain, pressure and little support, but seldom for pleasure. If we are to actively engage our students with their learning, it has to be where they learn, not ‘over there’ to be fixed by a skills team, however dedicated, but within the framework of true emancipatory practice, where their writing frees them to articulate their authentic voice.

Creative pedagogies have a huge part to play in offering a different lens; as does the decolonisation of curricula practices. As educators in positions of power and authority, no matter how ‘nice’ we are, we still grade their work; it is for us to frame their efforts within a wider social justice platform, giving a voice to all of the students in our care, not just the privileged ones. This Guide, with its wonderful fluidity, design and colour offers us the tools and techniques to weave into our practice, whether we are anthropologists, sociologists, business professionals, designers or engineers. Enabling writing across the disciplines, the examples, resources and activities in this Guide lift off the pages to inspire, encourage and embolden us to embed writing as a practice in each and every context.


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This guide in a nutshell

*"‘I have been Foolish and Deluded,’ said he,
‘And I am a Bear of No Brain at All.’
‘You’re the Best Bear in All the World,’ said Christopher
Robin soothingly.
‘Am I?’ said Pooh hopefully."
(A. A Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh)*



This Guide promotes writing-to-learn. Academic writing is a contested area that is tricky to navigate and master especially for newcomers. However, this does not need to be the case. We show that if instructors ‘teach’ writing differently, it can foster students’ learning. Academic writing is a process: we write to become academic. It is an initiation into and participation in wider professional and academic discourses. This Guide is an invitation to move beyond the ‘mechanics’ of writing - to make it meaningful, engaging, interactive and fun. If writing is appreciated as developmental - and appropriately supported - it automatically spurs students on to write their ‘best’.

The Guide has plenty of white space for the reader to take notes. There are also some special blank spaces that are indicated by the following symbol: 

The illustrations are intended to make the content of the Guide engage with the reader in a playful way, using bright block colours and shapes.

Acknowledgments



With thanks to all participants at our Writing Workshop, Learning and Teaching Conference, LondonMet, July 2017, whose contributions and ideas have gone towards producing this resource.

Special acknowledgement goes to Veronica Piras, a Design student at LondonMet, who has worked creatively and joyously to bring a creative flair to the text layout - and whose illustrations have brought the text alive. We would also like to thank Timothy Donovan for his editorial insights on the text.

Further thanks go to the learning development community for the provision of inspiring conversations and new insights. This also applies to our colleagues who have helped us reflect on learning and teaching, and academic writing.

Finally, we would like to thank our families and friends for their understanding of our 'obsession' with writing.





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Foreword: Debbie Holley

This guide in a nutshell

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1. INTRODUCTION



This academic staff Guide includes many activities for students that can help deconstruct writing and other assessment tasks (formal and informal) and develop students' learning. We outline a variety of writing and pre-writing activities, and a range of approaches, strategies and workshops, all of which have been designed to promote students' understanding of 'the point' of writing and assessment. We also outline activities to support writing and to foster writing habits.

We have developed this Guide following and in response to a Writing Workshop that we delivered at a Learning and Teaching Conference, held at our inner-city, UK post-1992 university. The workshop revealed not only that students struggle with writing but also that instructors struggle with 'teaching writing' meaningfully. Thus, in this Guide, we provide ideas about how to 'teach' academic writing. However, whilst that is the subject that many academics worry about the most, all of the activities here will be of use in de-constructing any assessment task that students face.

Academics worry that students 'don't write' or 'can't write' and wrestle with ways to help initiate students into this vital aspect of their various epistemic communities. 'Academic' writing describes something more tremulous than a range of skills to master - and it definitely describes something more positive and complex than written work produced only for assessment. The process of academic writing can free up thinking and ideas - and be an initiation into and participation in wider professional and academic discourses. We write to process and communicate academic ideas, we write to become academic.

This Guide is designed first and foremost to be 'practical' and useful. But in the process, we also consider key issues that surround academic writing in Higher Education.

We offer examples of how discipline staff, in all areas, as well as those engaged in learning or academic development, can support under- and postgraduate students with their writing. We want academic staff to feel enabled to move beyond a concern with the 'mechanics' of writing to address the anxieties and hopes experienced both by student 'newcomers' and prospective postgraduates when embarking on their journey to academic success.

We outline a range of activities that have emerged from recent innovative practice and research - and that can be adapted to the reader's own context. We have a section with suggestions and links for further reading, including web links that lead to (free) online activities that are useful for classroom practice. We explore the role that multimodal assessments, which are as challenging as traditional assessment, could play in extending students' learning. And, we conclude the Guide with a set of sessions that academics could put together that would constitute a creative programme to develop students' writing throughout the curriculum - and their development of self-efficacy throughout their study and into their professional career.

The list of examples and exercises provided in this Guide is not exhaustive or finite. Especially in these uncertain times, new ways of learning and teaching emerge, together with new software and web-based resources that are useful for students and instructors. Please feel free to share your ideas and resources with us via email - or as a *Take5 blogpost*.



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Sandra, Tom and Sandra

2. HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



This Guide focuses on writing for learning - rather than learning to write. The activities that we suggest are all designed to help students deepen their learning through understanding the questions and the assessment challenges set. Outlining the key aspects of an assignment task helps students to understand assessment as learning, rather than focussing on assessment of learning. The activities 'break down' assignment questions and tasks, suggesting steps into writing - academically and for academia. Focusing on the question becomes a way for students to hone their ability to communicate, rather than attempting to find the right answer to please the tutor, or develop their 'literacy skills'. The activities are designed to develop students' interests and foster their strengths - setting them up for successful study.

We provide ideas on how instructors can best support their students, together with concrete examples and activities. The Guide is meant to be 'useful' - interactive and flexible - with (online) resources to explore and use. This means that readers are asked to 'dip' into the Guide where they think it makes sense to them, and their students. Activities can be adapted to suit particular cohorts and contexts. They should be chosen so they 'fit' with learners and their courses. This means that the activities, although fun, are provided for 'serious' learning. The activities are based on our and other people's experiences as well as more general research into learning, teaching, academic writing and study success.



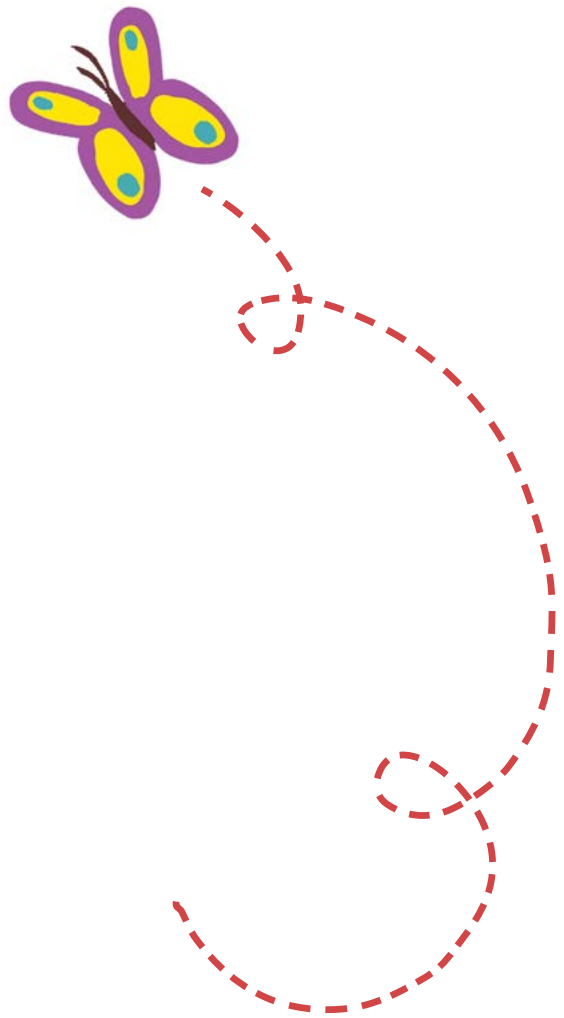
So please do:

- Use this Guide for your teaching - and your students' learning;
- Try the different activities, with your students - and adapt them if needed;
- Have fun - and enjoy the teaching of writing and setting of assignments; and
- Think about writing up your experiences - putting together a case study - and getting published on the topic.

2.1 Overview



The Guide begins with general ideas on how to introduce writing in the classroom (pre-writing activities) and goes on to deal with first, (tentative) writing activities and different means and modes of writing. It also provides ideas on how to ‘talk about’ writing - and what writing activities to avoid (to be set up for success). Next, the Guide talks about writing more generally, across the curriculum, with suggestions on how to ‘combine’ writing with other activities and make it an embodied part of learning. There are activities for students on how to use ‘different’ voices and tips for instructors on how to incorporate writing throughout the academic year. We include background information on why instructors need to engage with academic writing and what we mean by using writing successfully with a variety of learners. Finally, the Guide provides recommendations and further resources for those who want to take writing and assessment in their courses to the next level and those that want to do more background reading and research on the topic.



3. STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT OR DEVELOP STUDENT WRITING



3.1 Introduction

"We fear things because we believe that we will not be able to do them well - we will not cope."

(Burns & Sinfield, 2016, pp. 35-36)

With academic writing, typically the big issue for students is not the spelling, punctuation and grammar that many academics critique, but a fear of failure, of making mistakes and of 'looking like a fool'. There are several ways to tackle this that do not constitute a 'dumbing down' of writing - or learning. Rather our goal is to raise the challenge and the level of difficulty of the tasks that we set students, whilst supporting them in their achievement of those tasks (Angelo, 1993). When we set engaging and difficult challenges that intrigue students and spark their curiosity, performance in assessment is improved (Gossferich, 2016), and thus so are the outcomes of the learning overall.



Given 'student resistance' to writing, we have to convince students that they can surface their thinking through the written word. This is in opposition to the subliminal idea that you can only write what you already know - and that you ought to know the answer to a question the minute you see it. It builds on the idea of 'writing to learn' and that writing is a learning process that helps you 'think through' the ideas that you are encountering in your studies. First and foremost, we want to build students' confidence in the ability to 'say something' rather than to 'find' the answer that the instructor wants. So, this chapter is about introducing students to the notion of playing with ideas and playing with words while surfacing their thinking. It is also about discovering the joy of writing - and highlighting the things to avoid when writing or when embarking on writing tasks. This chapter details short activities to help students understand writing - and all assignment tasks - and set about productive study.

3.2 Activities to help understand the assessment question

The following activities can help students understand assignment tasks and questions. The activities can be undertaken in class with the students - face to face or online - so that they understand the assignment challenge they have been set as they deconstruct the questions and take cognisance of the criteria they must meet. Alternatively, they can be set as homework tasks so students can play with words and writing of their own accord.





3.2.1 *Brainstorming*

A brainstorm is an uncensored 'stream of consciousness' on a topic or on all the words in a Question (Q). At its most basic, it reveals that a Q is something to 'open up' - not to 'narrow down'. This process facilitates the generation and gathering of ideas and thoughts. It can be pen- and-paper-based or online.

How to:

The brainstorming process should reveal to students that a Q does not demand an immediate answer - but should spur thinking.

A good Q is generative:

- Present/display the whole assignment Q for whole group collaboration and discussion.
- As a class, identify the keywords or phrases in the Q - these are the topics that need to be addressed.
- In pairs or in small groups, students brainstorm those keywords - in a free and uncensored way. This demonstrates that you are not looking for a predetermined 'right answer' but are encouraging students to think for themselves.
- Connect keywords/phrases to taught sessions - past and to come.
- Connect to the Learning Outcomes (LO).
- Collect ideas - and discuss with the class.

The resultant big brainstorm-map of keywords/phrases-note should indicate many avenues to follow up with reading and research. The brainstorm can be refined through discussion into an assignment plan, indicating what ideas could be followed up and developed into a series of arguments for an essay, presentation or multimodal artefact.

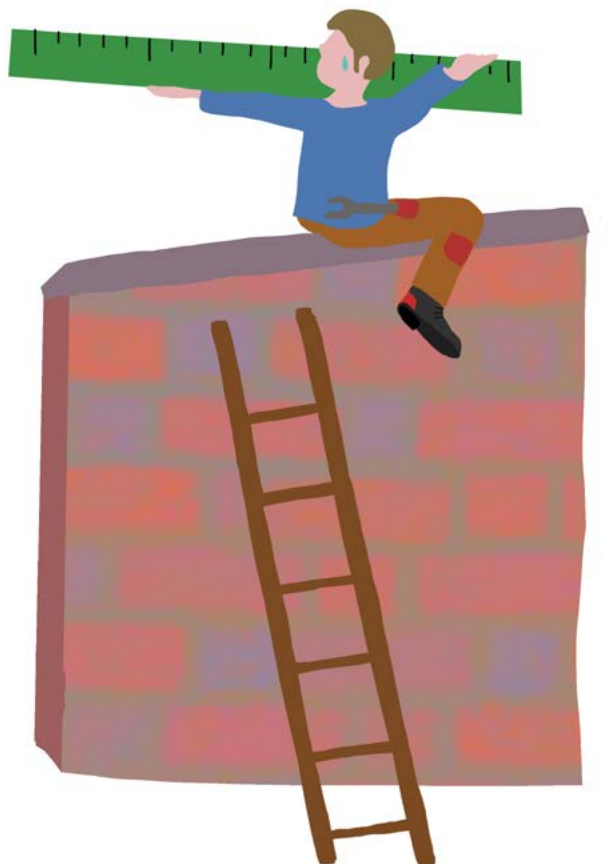
3.2.2 Cluster Wall

Cluster walls involve students posting up their ideas on a Q - on post-its or digitally on smart boards/online platforms. This process helps with identifying themes and topics and with generating ideas for writing and research.



Top tip:

Once finished, do not dismantle the cluster wall; students can add to it over time, perhaps labelling their contributions with their name and date, thus encouraging other students to add to them and develop ideas further.

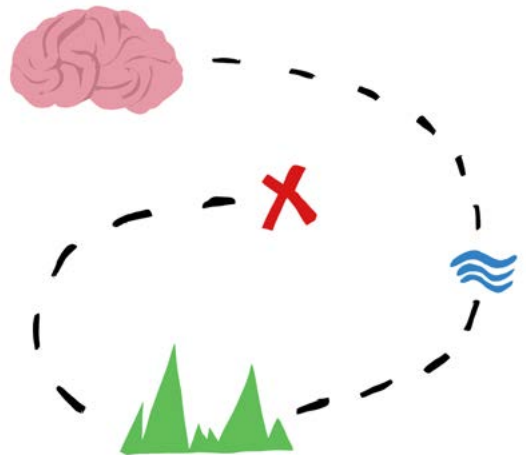


How to:

- Put up the assignment task centrally on a large wall or on a smart board/online platform.
- Ask students to place notes around the Q - with ideas, theories, concepts and relevant literature.
- Check that students are not going off in completely the wrong direction.
- Provide inputs on how to explore the Q further.
- Students may also provide feedback to each other - posing further Q.

3.2.3 Mind-map

Mind-maps are visual techniques for structuring and organising thoughts and ideas - the Swiss Army Knife for the Brain (Rustler, 2012). Typically the key idea of a class essay is placed centrally - as with the 'stream of consciousness' brainstorm - but here new ideas are more deliberately branched off, one word at a time (viz. *How To Mind Map* - Tony Buzan). It is useful to use colour and pictures to bring the mind-map to life and make ideas and arguments visible.

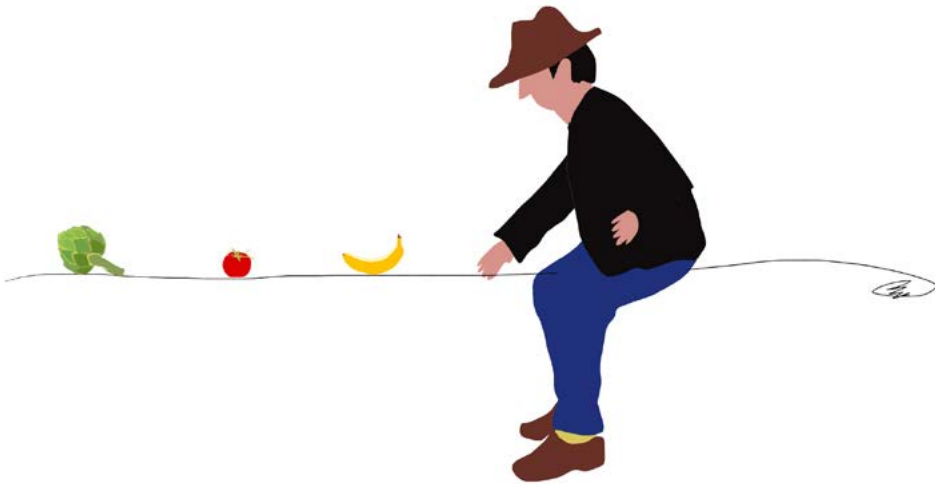


Top tip:

The weekly mind-map:
Each week, rather than you as tutor summarising the contents of a lecture, workshop or seminar, post a student-generated mind-map to the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) as class revision.



3.2.4 Problem solving



In pairs, students identify aspects of the module or course that for them have been the most problematic - or they identify parts of a Q they are unsure about. They then have to find out about that topic and teach the results of their research to their peers via a 30sec or one minute video.



Top tip:

This activity could be used as an alternative assignment mode in itself.

(viz. *Upside Down*

Academy initiatives:

Turning Teacher-Student

Roles Upside Down -

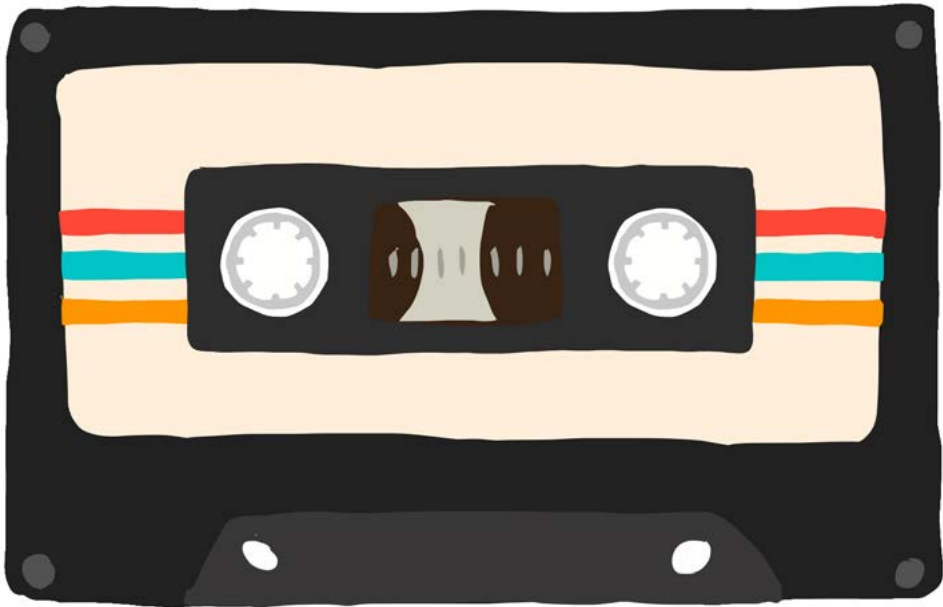
MindShift).

Extension:

Deepen student knowledge further by requiring groups of students to 'teach' elements of the module or course to each other by researching, devising and running an interactive workshop for their peers. This helps them to take ownership of their learning as they develop their analytical and critical thinking and the ability to communicate effectively.

3.2.5 *Record and review*

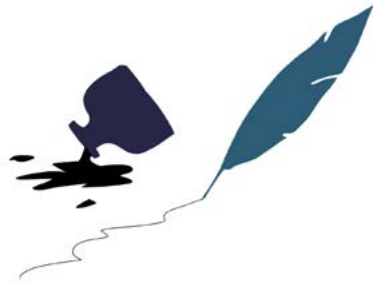
Students debate the assessment task and Q: in pairs, students discuss what they know and don't know. Record the discussion and play it back and discuss ... link to different weeks of the module, different recommended reading, and the LO.





3.3 Writing development (pre-writing activities)

This section outlines activities that introduce students to writing, help them surface their ideas, and get them to tentatively formulate answers to Q set.

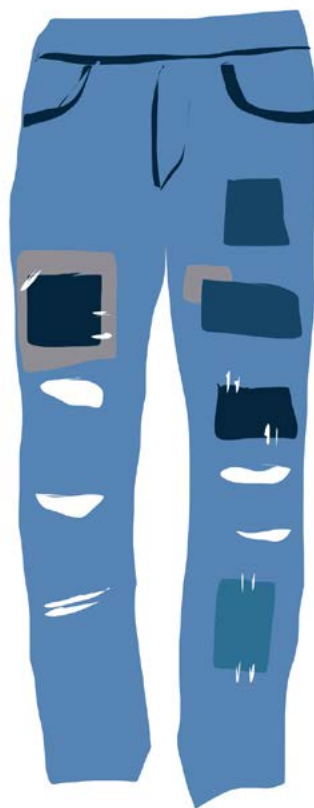


3.3.1 Collage

Collage-making can be a useful first step into academic writing; as a pre-writing activity it takes away the pressure to know the answer and write perfectly formed paragraphs. The production of a collage can reveal that answering a Q means exploring themes and ideas experimentally and playfully. The collage process makes visible how different themes or ideas are connected. It also allows students to see 'the bigger picture', and make connections between the Q, the LO and the themes and topics covered in class.

**Top tip:**

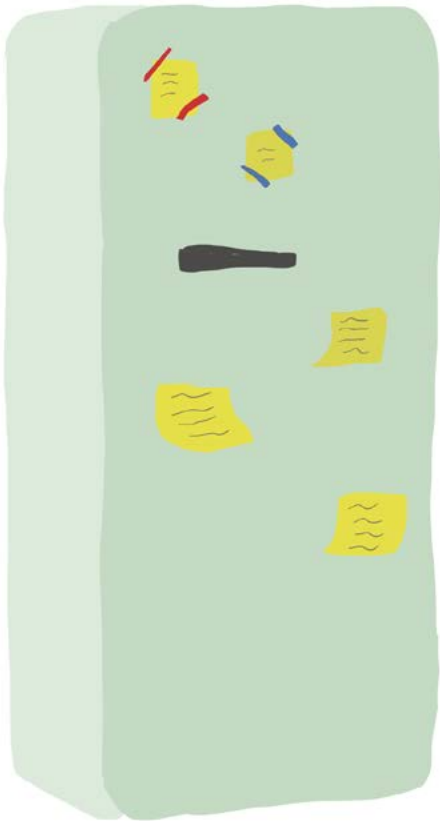
Make time for an activity like this so that students can get lost in the 'flow' of the task. Introduce collage-making early on in a course so that students enjoy and accept them. For example, in week one of our course, we ask students to make a collage of who they are. They then share in pairs and then move around the room sharing. It is a great 'getting to know you' activity as well as a useful thinking tool.

**How to:**

- Bring in magazines, scissors, glue and paper.
- Put up the Q and LO.
- Ask students to reflect on the Q and produce a collage that answers the Q for them - individually, in pairs or small groups.
- Remind students to review the LO, making sure they are also addressed.
- Invite students to share their collage, explaining what it shows and why it answers the Q. Alternatively, one group can show their collage to another – and they can say what they see in the picture - whilst the first group engages in 'active listening'. The first group can then respond and a productive dialogue can ensue.
- Ask students to 'write to' their collage to see what essay ideas emerge.
- Ask students to reflect for themselves on how useful the collage process has been.

3.3.2 *Post-its*

Generally, post-its are a useful (and cheap) study tool that can encourage writing in the most minimalist way possible. Use them in class to encourage students to write down their thoughts, ideas, and arguments (viz. *Advice for Students: 20 Uses for a Post-it Note*).



Top tip:

Play with post-its by setting short and very short writing tasks: the six-, twenty- or forty-word essay. This is a powerful way of drafting and editing in a few words.

3.3.3 Cornell Notes

Further scaffold academic writing by asking students to produce Cornell Notes (viz. *The Learning Toolbox - Cornell Notes*). These notes are very 'active': with a recording stage, a summary stage and finally a 'using' stage. In this way their use can promote understanding, active and deep learning (Biggs, 1999) and develop regular academic writing.



How to:

The note-making paper is divided into three sections:

- One - is for brief notes made in class, which are as concise as possible.
- Two - is where the brief notes are reduced to key words, names, dates, theories and concepts.
- Three - is where the students then write sentences on: How I might use this in my assignment.

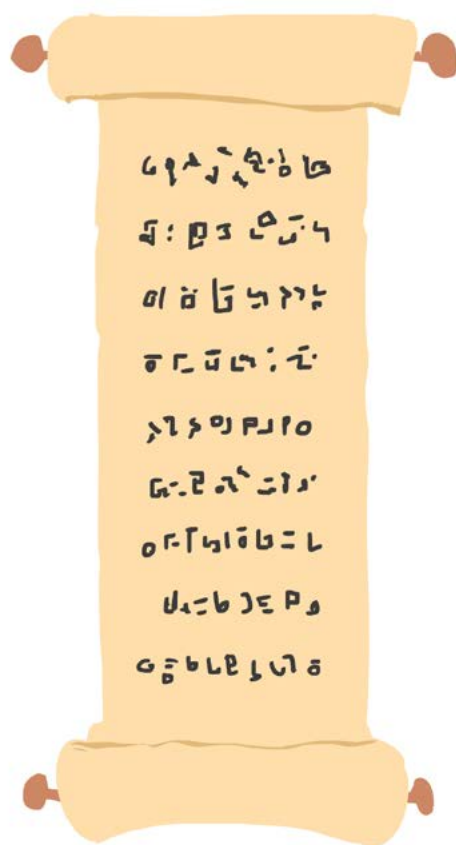
3.3.4 *Reading for writing*

It is not only academic writing that is challenging for students, academic reading is as well. Students often fail to perceive the point of reading, not connecting reading with thinking and writing processes. Typically, students passively read a physical or online text, alone and they encounter problems, alone. A good strategy for breaking down this isolation and for making overt links between reading and writing is to engage in collaborative reading in and out of class. Below we discuss textscrolls and 'drawing to learn' as engaging ways of reading and as a means for fostering 'reading to write'.



3.3.4.1 Textscrolls

A textscroll (Abegglen, Burns, Middlebrook & Sinfield, 2020) can be made by printing off a useful, pithy academic article or chapter on one side of A4 or A3 paper (we like A3 because the larger format appears less threatening and is more accessible). Sellotape the pages side-by-side so that the text becomes one long continuous scroll. Each text selected should have clear relevance to the assignment Q that students are working towards. Roll up each scroll and tie with a ribbon to give the text a flourish.



In class, give one scroll to each student group along with felt tip pens, highlighters and post-its. Each group is tasked with making sense of their scroll: reading the introduction and conclusion, the headers, the author, the date and so forth. Give the students time to overcome their initial reluctance and fear and to get hands-on with their text.

After a while, tell each group they have X amount of time to prepare a short presentation, saying how their text will help with the writing of their essay. At this point, students return to the text with even more purpose and they now experience in an embodied way the point of academic reading.

Alternative:

With an online class, rather than engage in collaborative reading with physical scrolls, you might like to set up Hypothes.is reading groups (*Hypothes.is*). Hypothes.is allows the collaborative reading and annotation of shared texts online. There is a tutorial on the site explaining how to use the application in your teaching.

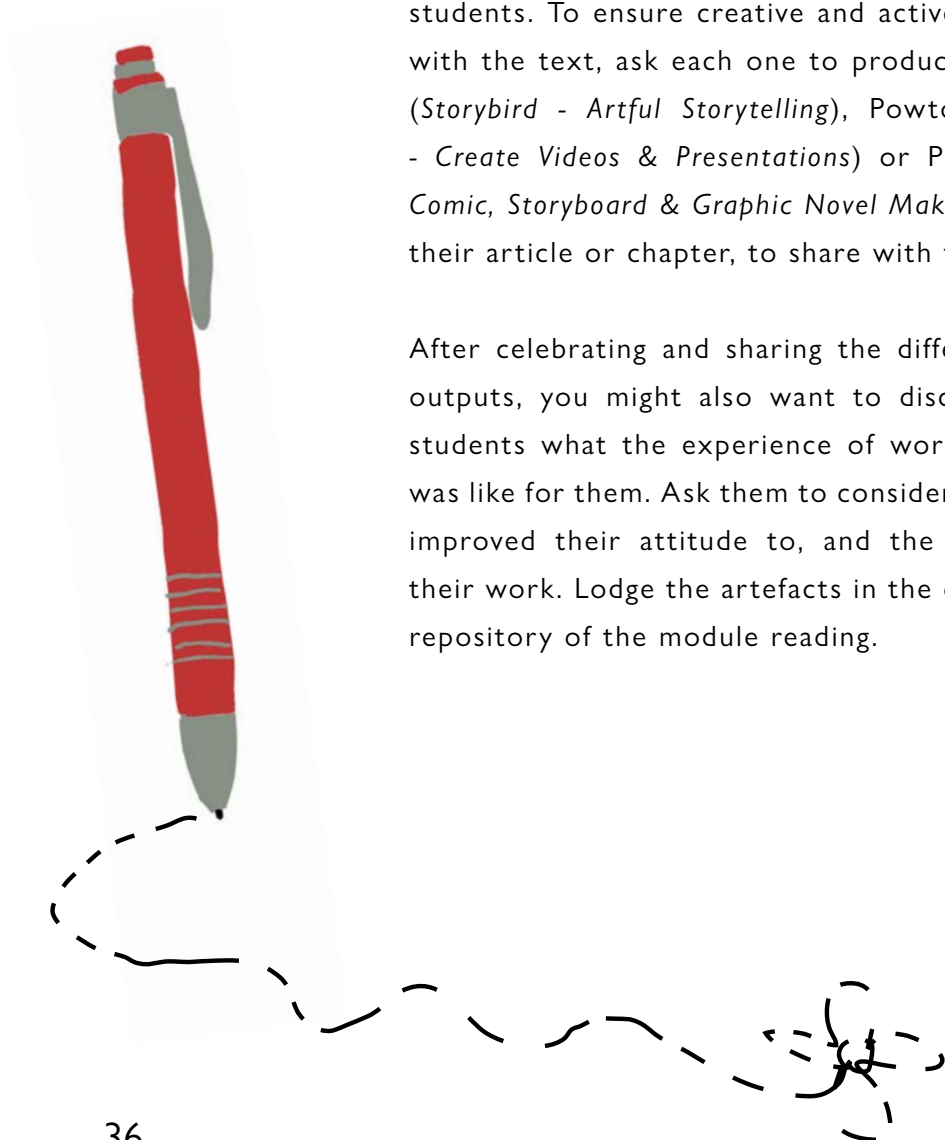


3.3.4.2 *Drawing to learn*

With textscrolls, a student group works collaboratively on a text. Here we suggest that you further emphasise the playful nature of text.

Allocate a key reading to individuals or groups of students. To ensure creative and active engagement with the text, ask each one to produce a Storybird (*Storybird - Artful Storytelling*), Powtoon (*Powtoon - Create Videos & Presentations*) or Pixton (*Pixton: Comic, Storyboard & Graphic Novel Maker*) version of their article or chapter, to share with the class.

After celebrating and sharing the different student outputs, you might also want to discuss with the students what the experience of working together was like for them. Ask them to consider if and how it improved their attitude to, and the outcomes of their work. Lodge the artefacts in the class VLE as a repository of the module reading.



Extension:

Rather than asking students to precis this or compare that in X number of words, ask them to produce a cartoon or animation that explains X to another student or their mum, dad, auntie, or niece. When working on this task, students should privilege visuals rather than words.

Note:

Nick Sousanis produced his PhD thesis as a graphic novel: *Unflattening - Spin, Weave & Cut*. He has also published an article in comic format: *Frames of Thought - Humanities Futures*.



3.3.5 Pre-writing posters

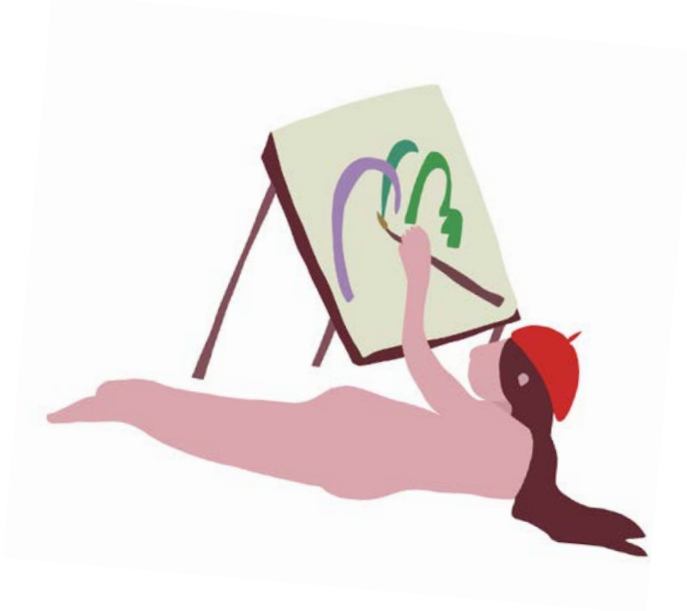
Ask the students to make a poster presentation (as if to the CEO, HoD, Editor or relevant other) on ideas/reading/research findings prior to writing the assignment. The selection and articulation of key ideas helps clarify thinking and reveals the necessity of 'discourse markers': hints and pointers that guide the audience, and that are equally useful in the written text.



Extension:

Rather than poster presentations, ask students to present their ideas as a 3D object, Cabinet of Curiosity, jigsaw puzzle or board game. These forms or genres provide a challenge to the students and their understanding deepens as they wrestle to communicate their ideas. Follow on writing is often improved as a result of the deeper engagement.

3.3.6 Relax and write



It can be really useful to help students relax and de-stress before writing and taking exams. Recommend that students take a walk in the park, meditate, do breathing exercises, declutter the mind and focus their energies. Walking in particular can be powerful, not just to relax and release ideas, but also to develop ideas (viz. *Walking Curriculum –imaginED*).



Top tip:

Start with a guided meditation, for example this one: *Guided Meditation: Centering Yourself*.

3.4 Writing activities and playful writing



The activities presented in this section target writing directly; however, rather than focusing on grammar, referencing or ‘academic integrity’, which are popular with academics but can prevent students’ active engagement with knowledge claims and arguments, these activities are designed to get the students writing and playing with their ideas (Sinfield, Burns & Abegglen, 2019).



3.4.1 *Free write*

Free writing is useful to capture initial ideas and thoughts. Writing freely on a topic can help students surface their ideas and get an idea of where an argument may evolve. Free writing gets students actually writing and if you do this regularly you set up a writing habit. You also set up a 'read - write - read more - write more' ethos - rather than a 'one-draft writing' approach.

Encouraging students to write in this exploratory way can be life changing and many successful students have reported to us that it was the initial free writing activities that we did together that changed forever the way that they thought about and approached writing.



Top tip:

Free write early in the module. Where you do have assignments, undertake a ten minute free write on these in the very first week of the module. Ignore the gasps of horror. Get students to write in a sustained way, seriously considering what they already know about a topic and/or task before your module even starts. Review the writing in a light-hearted way, highlighting the ideas that emerge.

Discuss how this has set them up to make more sense of the module/course as a whole and, moreover, it shows that they have not come in 'empty'.



3.4.2 Slow writing



There is value not only in writing swiftly to surface ideas, but also in writing slowly to spend time with them (DeSalvo, 2014; Berg & Seeber, 2016). As an introduction activity, ask your students to find and sit for an hour with an artwork relevant to their assignment. The art can be in a gallery or a picture brought to class. As they sit with the work they can doodle or sketch - but they cannot answer their phones or surf the net. After the hour they must write no more or no less than 300 words on the artwork as it relates to the assignment. Typically they will have many more than 300 words to write and will have to edit down. This should reveal in an 'embodied' way that taking time to be with their ideas produces more writing than just rushing to words.



Top tip:

Model slow writing -
one step at a time:
Place-Based Poetry,
Modeling One Revision at
a Time.

3.4.3 *Two minutes writing*

Ask students to write more and more often. Include short, timed writing tasks within lectures, seminars and workshops: summarising key arguments, capturing key Q, noting connections with other lectures or modules. Keep the writing time short but make it a regular feature of the teaching.



Top tip:

Remind students to keep a copy of their writing - as a build-up to a larger piece of writing.



3.4.4 Poetry and prose

Explicitly ask students to experiment with alternative forms of writing - providing an angle on an assessment or even an answer to a Q. For example, ask them to write a Haiku, a traditional Japanese poem, in answer to a Q. Haiku poems consist of three lines. The first and last lines of a Haiku have five syllables and the middle line has seven syllables. It is a very disciplined form and the challenge is for students to shape a concise answer in a really tight structure.

Variation:

Story-words: Select keywords related to the subject and ask students to write not an essay but a story. This story can be fictional but it needs to make sense as a whole. The aim is to connect different ideas together, building up a narrative, which can be used to tackle assessments.



3.4.5 *Alternative assignments:* *Genre and re-genre*

Ask students to present their ideas not just in essay format but as video-essays, photo-essays, animations, pictures, poetry, prose... These genres are more engaging for students whilst also requiring many of the skills employed in academic writing: research, structuration and argumentation as well as revision and editing. Here are some examples from our own students: *Finding creativity: DigitalMe Project 2015*.

Altering the genre that we utilise (English, 2011) can prompt discussion on genre conventions, including the genres with which we usually ask students to engage: the essay, the reflective essay, the report, the journal etc. This can 'make strange' that which we academics take for granted and deepen students' understanding of the 'what, why and how' of the heuristic tasks we set. This can be extended to a consideration of assignment criteria and the affordances that different genres offer.

It might also be worth discussing with students which (pre-)writing/scaffolding activities suit certain writing forms. For example, the brainstorm and mind-map may better suit the report whereas the collage may best suit the essay as a discursive instrument.

**Variation:**

Ask students to represent their ideas in a genre other than the one they have already used. For example, ask them to represent their ideas as a TV show/film. This makes the form itself explicit (the sitcom, drama or action movie) and, as the students develop characters and follow plot conventions, they are encouraged to enjoy wrestling with the ideas and revealing what they have learned. This could be a great in-class revision activity.

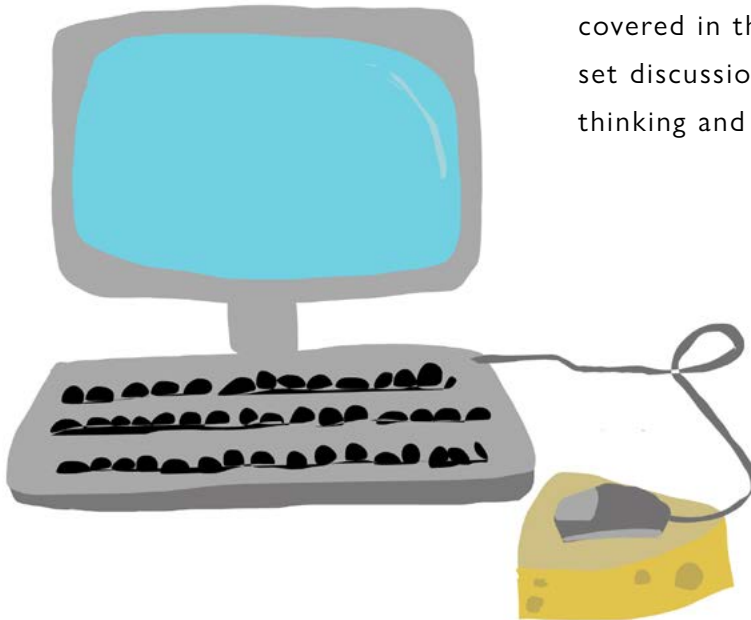
3.5 Online writing

There are benefits in writing online: ease of access, editing, restructuring and shareability. Online writing can take place in various open spaces such as Google Docs (*Google Docs - About*) or you may wish to use the tools in your VLE, for example the wiki tools that allow for collective authoring.



Top tip:

Utilise online Discussion Boards. Select key points that need to be covered in the assignment and set discussion Q to get students thinking and writing.



3.5.1 *The collective answer*

In groups, students produce collective answers to Q very like the ones they will have to tackle in their assignments. Either give out the Q or ask students to generate the sort of Q they would expect to be set in the module. The writing could take the form of a collaborative document produced in the class or outside the class.

Participants of the MOOC Rhizomatic Learning: The Community is the Curriculum (#rhizo14) facilitated by Dave Cormier produced the 'Unreadable Text' (viz. *Writing the Unreadable Untext - University of Glasgow* or *The Unreadable Text - Hybrid Pedagogy*), which could be used and discussed as an example of collaborative online writing.



Variation:

As assignments, students can be asked to set up their own website or write 'instructables' for other students and make them available to their peers as online documents or pdfs. This sort of writing gains a wider audience while encouraging professionalism.

3.5.2 Collaborative online poetry

Rather than writing to answer a Q, ask the class to produce a collective poem on their experience of your module or course in a shared Google doc or wiki. This helps them to experiment with different writing genres and to improve their writing per se. When we have engaged in this form of creative, collective writing we have found that the 'threshold concept' that you need to cross is not the adding of your own lines, but the editing or deleting of the words of others.



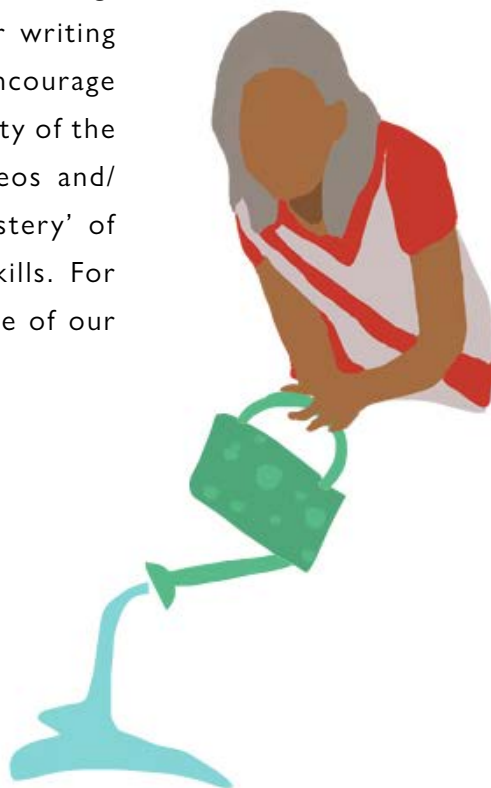
Top Tip:

The Class Artist: Promote active and creative learning by appointing a class artist or an artist in residence. This creates a creative learning mindset and the outputs can be discussed by other students as part of the weekly revision process. For example, Dr Sam Illingworth was a Conference poet in residence: *EGU 18 Artists in Residence*.



3.5.3 Blogging and tweeting

Encourage students to ‘tweet’ about a topic or theme and/or write their own personal blog, focusing on a module or assignment or writing as such (blog to learn). In all of these, encourage students to make use of the multimodality of the medium. They can insert pictures, videos and/or links. All of this helps develop ‘mastery’ of writing while enhancing their digital skills. For an example visit the blog written by one of our undergraduate students: *noblechloe*.



Extension:

Ask students to read and comment on the tweets and blogs of their peers. This develops a sense of audience and writing with a purpose. It also promotes the idea that writing and learning are dialogic (Bakhtin, 2008).

3.5.4 *Software tools and applications*

Utilise all the fun - and free - online software tools and applications that can make writing enjoyable. We like the following, but there are many more (especially now that many universities have moved to online learning and teaching due to the recent pandemic):



Ren'Py: <https://www.renpy.org> - visual novel engine.



Free Write Tool: <http://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/TLTC/freewrite/FWT.html> - simply write.

Written kitten: <http://writtenkitten.net> - get a kitten for every 100 words.

750 words: <http://750words.com> - write regularly and earn points (free trial for 30 days).

WordNet: <http://wordnet.princeton.edu> - large lexical database of English (free but you need to reference the source).

Portent's Content Generator: <https://www.portent.com/tools/title-maker> - create titles or fun assignment questions using keywords.

PowToon - to turn your reflections into animations (quite time consuming): <https://www.powtoon.com/home/> (free if the animation does not exceed a certain length).

FlipGrid - <https://flipgrid.com/> - as with Padlet below - this is an online noticeboard that can be used to collate ideas across a class.

Padlet: <https://padlet.com/> - to collect ideas and opinions.

StoryBird (<https://storybird.com/>), to turn your reflections into an illustrated story book (viz. textbook chapter as a storybird: <https://storybird.com/books/chapter-3-parents-have-a-prior-right-to-choose-the/?token=jxkumdebz3>).

Timeline: http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/timeline_2/ - helps create a graphical representation of related items or ideas.

WordPress – to blog: <https://wordpress.com/> (free but upgrades need to be paid for).

Academic Phrase Bank: <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk> - a resource for academic writers.

3.6 *Discussing writing - reflecting on writing*

Set aside class time for students to talk with each other about their writing (or non-writing) and share their notes and drafts. They could also interview each other to generate ideas and help improve their writing/drafts: Who? What? Where? When? How? And Why? Ask students to compose together, perhaps a sample introduction or a paragraph.

Variation:

Encourage students to role-play the arguments by different theorists or writers. This can help them understand different perspectives while revealing key points to highlight in their work.

Students could also present their writing as a speech and get others to comment on the key arguments presented. This is especially useful for students of Drama or Performing Arts who typically do not expect 'to have to write' when registering for a module or course.



Top tip:

Utilising metaphors can be useful when discussing writing. This can help students articulate their feelings and understand an idea before putting it into sentences or paragraphs and it can spark ideas on how to express their thoughts in written format. You could also ask students to comment on their peers' work, utilising metaphors, for example: 'writing is like cooking' (viz. *Elbow, 1981, 1998*).



3.6.1 Peer review



As well as having relatively informal though actually well-structured discussions centred on writing, it is also useful to have a more formal peer-review session where students bring in assignment drafts for constructive peer review against assessment criteria and LO.

Build in a structured peer review as early as possible in a module in order to normalise the process and encourage students as soon as possible to take control of their learning and writing.



Top tip:

Discuss peer review practice with the students, emphasising the fact it is dialogue and not 'marking'. Peer review is a conversation about the writing in relation to assignment criteria and writing goals, not just saying what is right or wrong in the reviewer's opinion. Put up the assignment task and criteria and insist that students compose feedback in line with the LO. Make sure that all students in a pair or triad have time to give and receive feedback. Take a moment at the end of the session to consider the outcomes of the peer review process.

3.6.2 Scrapbook

Encourage students to keep a scrapbook of ideas that they can go back to if they run out of ideas, but also to make them conscious that it is sometimes important to throw out ideas as a way to clarify and improve the ones you are trying to develop on the way.

Variation:

Ask students to select an item from their scrap pile that captures 'where they are now'. A focused discussion of items can lead to very active reflection (Schön, 1983) on writing - and learning (viz. *The Slow Academic*).



Top tip:

Build in a session where students show their scrapbook on a particular topic or theme to others, for inspiration and a discussion on writing.



3.6.3 Journaling



Encourage your students to keep a journal whilst they study. This can be akin to the sort of diary that people might keep on a vacation or the more writerly type of journal that journalists might keep. The journal is slightly different to the scrapbook or 'blogging to learn' that we also suggest. The idea is to build up and build in a habit of daily writing and reflection (viz. *Five Benefits of Journaling* - Milligram and *Journaling* - Lonerwolf).



Top tip:

Build in regular time each week where students get out their journals and reflect on the module or session. Also make space for journal sharing. And... be available if students want to share their journal entries with you.

3.6.4 *The revision session*

In revision week, ask students to come up with essay or exam Q for your module or course. Collect the student Q and perhaps collate several together so that they look like the sort of Q that might be set for the coursework or exam. Divide the class into two: one group can be tasked with producing mind-maps on the topics, and the other with producing 'perfect' answers to the Q. The mind-maps and perfect answers can then be merged into revision notes.





3.7 Writing activities to avoid

While the aim of this section is to highlight ‘best practice’ strategies, we think that it is still useful to point out what does not work and hence should be avoided. In particular, we ask instructors to avoid the following:

3.7.1 *Do not: Set ‘right answer’ tasks*

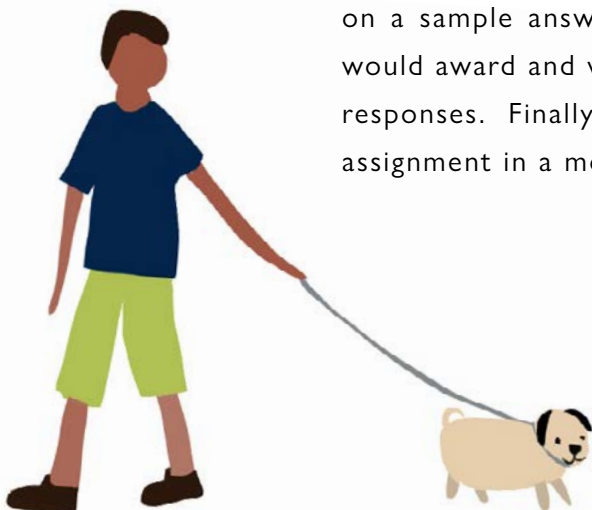
Assignments and Q where there really is only one right answer may be appropriate in some modules and at some stage but they inhibit the exploratory thought that is so necessary at the beginning of a degree programme. If rigidly imposed, students can be so constrained by this sort of assignment that they cease to think for themselves and start to only look for the right answer that the instructor wants (viz. *John Holt: “How Children Fail”*). This is destructive practice, limiting students’ thinking and further increasing the fear of writing.

The setting of targeted writing tasks - for example the six-, twenty- and eighty-word ‘essay’ (viz. 3.3.2 Post-its) - can allow students to play with words, experiment with their thinking and reveal through emergence and creativity just how focussed and targeted academic writing can become. These small and focused writing tasks also show the students - in a ‘practical’ way - the iterative nature of particular forms of writing.

3.7.2 Do not: Give ‘model answers’

Whilst students want model answers and will argue convincingly for them, this activity can backfire. The model answers provided can act as straitjackets on thinking, suggesting that there is only one right answer to a Q when typically there is more than one solution to a problem. Moreover, it is thought by some that they can lead to academic misconduct because students start copying answers. There is no research evidence to say that model answers are well-used by students. Instead, as illustrated earlier, encourage students to develop their writing, writing style and writing confidence (viz. 13th WDHE conference).

However, it can be useful to ask students to give and receive feedback on a sample assignment in relation to the Q set, the assessment criteria and the LO (viz. 3.6.1 Peer review). Once students have compiled (constructive) feedback to give on a sample answer, ask them what grade they would award and why. Then discuss the different responses. Finally, and, hopefully, unpack the assignment in a more generative manner.



3.7.3 *Do not: Ask students to read out their writing in class*

This is, and does feel, scary for many students. There is little evidence to show students benefit from reading out their writing in class. Rather, it can make the student feel open to unnecessary criticism, further fostering his or her fear of writing. There are alternative and more useful ways to discuss writing (viz. 3.6 Discussing writing - reflecting on writing).

However, we have found that once trust has been built up in a class, attitudes to sharing work of any kind can alter radically, which can be beneficial for the whole class. In the classroom that has a positive and encouraging atmosphere, students are often eager to share their work and to engage fully with their peers and the instructor. This shows - again in an embodied way - that learning is social (viz. *Edinyang, 2016*) and that knowledge is socially constructed (Burr, 1995).

3.7.4 Do not: Use plagiarism and plagiarism software to threaten students

While students should not copy ideas and arguments from others without proper acknowledgement of the original source, many students struggle to understand how academic writing 'works' and why it is important to reference sources (the idea of academic honesty and integrity). Thus, it makes little sense to threaten students with academic misconduct and plagiarism penalties before they understand the 'problem' of copying and before they have been initiated into the forms, conventions and practices, that is 'the what, why and how', of successful academic practice.

The more threatened a student feels, the more likely they are to lose confidence and begin to believe that 'copying' is their only route to academic success (or survival).



Rather, build an explicit ‘write to learn’ ethos in your course, and include space to discuss how the ideas and arguments of others can be utilised and referenced. For example, you could encourage students to actively engage with an article or a book and build an argument around that one source with a clear reference to the original piece. You could provide sessions on referencing, but by starting with real work that students have drafted - covering the ‘how’ of referencing as part of developmental, discursive feedback. You could also ask students to review a particular piece of work, as if providing constructive feedback to a peer about the use of quotes.

Once students are comfortable with writing and understand the importance of acknowledging sources, they could try a (free or university-owned) Plagiarism Checker to see where they can improve their work. However, it is important to discuss what these tools can and cannot provide. For example, they can detect duplicate content and quotes that are missing a reference but they cannot tell if references have been made correctly (e.g. if they contain the correct page numbers). When using Plagiarism Checkers, there is also the danger of students focusing on the similarity percentage that is often provided rather than the content and style of their writing.





4. WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM



4.1 *Introduction*

Most of us, when teaching, feel time pressure and ‘content’ pressure: there is too much to cover and so little time. This has been further challenged by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has forced many instructors to move their teaching online. These pressures tend to force out those reflective moments, those hermeneutic spaces (viz. McNamara, 1994) where students can make sense of their learning, and where they can see the connections between different topics and the writing they will have to do for their modules or course. Although it may feel counterintuitive and wasteful in the face of all of this pressure, we urge you to make space and time in your teaching sessions for some of the writing and write-to-learn activities in this chapter. This is a valuable substantial change to the curriculum, and students’ understanding and deep learning will improve in the process. Engagement in these activities will foster mastery of material, encourage real ‘active’ learning, and produce better, ‘owned’ writing that has something to say.

The following sections offer a range of longer and more structured writing activities to use in your teaching sessions as well as writing activities that students can complete in their own time as self-study tasks. There are also models for writing workshops and a suggestion for developing a write-to-learn curriculum for writing across and beyond the academic year.

4.2 A movement-based workshop

Starting a writing session with movement is a great way to unblock or release thoughts; for some, being required to move and make noises is so surprising that they find themselves writing more freely almost by accident. The movement-based activity described (viz. 'How to') launched the Writing Workshop that led to this Guide and everybody who participated fed back that their perceptions had changed. It helped that we really believed in the activity and in our participants.



Adapted from an idea by John Hilsdon, Plymouth University (*Writing - Take5*).



Top Tip:

Do this early in a module or course before students have the time to think this an impossible thing to do.

Variation:

Use in subsequent weeks of the module - varying the subsequent writing time and task. Adapt further by following with a 10-minute free write on the assessment task or Q.

How to:

'Caller' calls out the following instructions:

- All stand in a circle.
- Breathe together: in through nose and out through mouth in time with the leader for about 30 secs.
- Shake arms.
- Shake legs.
- Shake head.
- Relax all muscles and shake whole body.
- All say 'brrrrr' (as if it's cold!) and make the lips vibrate! If they won't, put a finger lightly on each cheek and try again.
- Make the 'brrrrr' go all the way up to the highest note you can produce then all the way down to the lowest note.
- Repeat!
- All 'sing' the sound 'ng' like in the 'dong' of a bell – (leader leads with the note to sing this together).
- Repeat - with different notes - following the leader.
- All say 'blah blah blah' and start to wander around the room in any direction saying this continually – try different notes and changing the 'tune' whilst still saying 'blah blah blah'!
- All sit and close eyes.
- Have one minute of silence with eyes closed.
- Take pen/paper and 'free write' whatever comes to mind for three minutes.

Extension:

Also, use movement throughout the writing process. Make students 'move' and stretch, including when writing online (viz. *Stretch goal added - Tactile Academia*).

4.3 Overcoming writing blocks workshop

Set up a session, circa one-and-a-half hours long, where students actively engage with writing. Ask students to have two sheets of paper in front of them, one for writing and one for writing why they are not writing. Reassure the students that their writing will not be assessed or marked.

To 'seed' students' writing, put up a relevant Q (a real assignment Q works best, as it constructs a much more authentic activity) and ask them to write without stopping for ten minutes on the Q, and to write the reason when they have stopped (for they will) on the second sheet.



After ten minutes structure three reflections:

- What was your reaction to that process?
- Why did you stop writing?
- What can you take from this process into your other academic writing?



The activity can be used as an introduction to writing but also to get students to think about a specific task. It helps students to overcome writing blocks - and shows them that they have something to say (even if it is only the reasons as to why they cannot answer a particular Q).



Top Tip:

Use these additional unblocking/free writing exercises to 'seed' writing:

- Choose a postcard - sight unseen - from a pack - turn over – see picture – write.
- Choose an object from a sack – write.
- Have a piece of paper in front of you – focus on something you can see, hear, feel, smell – write.
- Use this free write tool: *Freewrite*.
- Each student opens the 750-Words app and starts writing: *750 Words*.
- Be inspired by our academic writing pages and resources: *Writing - Study Hub*.
- Find more activities from our Take5 site: *#Take5*.



4.4 Using different writing ‘voices’

Students can gain deep knowledge of a topic when they have to switch genres to communicate (viz. English, 2011). One of the reasons students benefit from experimenting with different voices, styles and genres is that it gives them the possibility to experiment with arguments and content and it helps them find their own voice.

For deep thinking about writing, we ask students to turn a chapter or article into a comic book, or a short play, or a digital animation (viz. Burns, Sinfield & Abegglen, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e).

Also, try to incorporate playful writing and writing activities into your sessions (viz. James & Nerantzi, 2019) as well as creativity per se as a means to understand and communicate (viz. *Creative Academic*).



Top Tip:

Experiment with the different writing strategies suggested here: *Creative Writing Exercises for Beginners*.

4.5 The ‘write to learn’ year

Make your students aware that you are having a ‘write to learn’ focus across your whole module or course and that they will be writing regularly as a way of learning the material, rather than just as a way of being assessed on the material. When we did this at LondonMet, the student evaluations indicated that they had enjoyed the module more, they had understood more, they had been more creative, and they finally understood the point of academic reading (viz. Abegglen, Burns & Sinfield, 2019). The module grades revealed that those who attended the seminars and workshops with embedded writing obtained the best grades they had ever received. Changing attitudes and approaches to writing was a ‘game changer’ for both the students and us.



Top tip:

Build in short writing spaces in every session. For example:

- After reading a short article in class, ask students to write for ten minutes summarising the main arguments.
- Ask students to sum up the main arguments in your lecture or in the seminar itself as text, bullet points or a drawing/sketch.
- Ask students to write a short paragraph that could be used in their final assignment and that uses material from the reading with which they have just engaged.
- If using charts and illustrations show the students the visuals again and ask them to write on your topic, referring to the information in those visuals.
- Ask students to write about a key concept in your subject as if they are explaining it to their nephew or their auntie.
- Explore QMUL thinking-writing site for further tips: *Thinking Writing*.

4.6 *Peer review and/or shut-up and write*

Before a hand-in date for a summative assessment, ask students to bring in draft work for feedback. In the session, divide the room into two; all of the students who have brought in writing congregate in one half of the room while the others must congregate in the other.

With work - Peer Review: Students with work are paired up and have to give thoughtful feedback on each other's work in line with the Q itself, the relevant LO of the module and/or the assignment criteria.

Without work - Shut-up and Write: Students who come in without any work have to sit and start drafting their assignment, there and then, in class. You could ask them to free write their essay or gather their initial thoughts as a collage. They could also produce a brainstorm (3.2.1) or mind-map (3.2.3).



Top tip:

It helps if this session can be double-staffed so that one tutor can keep an eye on the peer reviewers - and the another on the 'shut-up and writers' to make sure that they do get on with the task - and profit from the time and space offered.

4.7 *Putting a small writing programme together*

If you are brave, you might pull together several of our suggested activities to scaffold a specific piece of writing. This format could be built into any module with a written assignment. It would also work well in a Higher Education Orientation module, where academic development is a core focus and/or where one of the outcomes is to raise students' awareness of the forms and processes of academic writing.

For example, you could start discussing assessment (the 'what, why and how' of university assessment practices) as well as the meaning and purpose of assignments and feedback more generally. The aim of this would be to help students better understand and engage with university assessment and hopefully to see how assignments are designed to progress and deepen their learning. This will help them to take control of their writing and writing practices - and their learning per se - and enjoy writing.

This could be followed by actual writing or pre-writing activities. You could also make use of creative and playful writing, different genres and online writing. The activities in the next sections can be undertaken separately, even in different modules, or they can be run together to form a coherent whole in one particular module over the year.



4.7.1 Reflective writing in action

Ask your students to reflect on their first weeks at university, all of the pluses and minuses and all of the contradictory emotions, successes, setbacks, surprises, and then make a collage (viz. 3.3.1 Collage).

Prompts:

- What have been their highs and lows?
- What do they feel about being a student?
- What did they feel when they first arrived?
- How has university been exactly as they expected?
- How has it surprised, unsettled or delighted them?
- What do they think they will have to do to get the most from university overall?



Then they write: to first 'describe' their collage and then to 'analyse' their collage: What is it saying back to them about their first few weeks at uni?

In pairs they review the writing (self- and peer assessment):

- Discuss where it is powerful and effective writing.
- Discuss their two pieces of writing in a comparison: what are the meanings of/in/conveyed by the two pieces? How/where could the 'impact' or 'power' or argumentation be improved?
- Discuss what sort of introduction/conclusion might be written to give it a more impactful shape.
- Discuss whether the two pieces could be combined into one, and how.

Plenary: What have we discovered about (academic) 'writing-as-a-process' over the course of this 'writing-to-learn practice' (formative writing and feedback)?



Top Tip:

As a reflection point, ask students to reflect on that activity. How did it surprise them? How useful was it? And get them to post their reflections on the VLE.

4.7.2 *Artful and slow writing*

Follow up the first writing session with one that makes explicit use of creative and playful practices. We suggest that students find a piece of art or a poem or a song that speaks to them about their subject (for inspiration check this out: *5 Responses to Ticky-tacky Feedback*) and:

- Be with it for one-hour with no distractions. Make notes, doodle or sketch, but no phones, chats or Google.
- Write exactly 300-words on that piece of art, in relation to studying that subject at university.
- Share with a partner or with the class.
- Reflect on the process, the writing and the content.

4.7.3 *Writing workshop*

Following these introductory writing activities, inform the class that you now want them to write a 500-word piece reflecting on their experiences by synthesising the writing that they have already undertaken. Set a time limit for writing the 500-words to be developed from the collage reflection (4.7.1) and the artful and slow writing (4.7.2). Once that time has elapsed, make class time to develop thinking about writing further and develop the writing:

As a class:

- Reflect on the emotional aspect of engaging in those three writing activities.
- Reflect on the barriers to the writing processes as well as the opportunities created.
- What did you do to overcome those barriers?
- What lessons can be learned about writing?
- (Hopefully the class will come up with some responses along the lines of free writing is good, starting writing is essential, or if you cannot think about what to write, prompt yourself with a collage ...)
- Develop tips for the production of successful academic writing.



Optional extra: Individually:

- Review the 500-word piece of reflective writing that you have now undertaken and write or edit it into a more formal piece of writing reflecting on your experiences as a student ('My growth and development as an active learner').
- Reflect on the revision you have done to turn the 500-word piece of writing into a new piece of writing.
- Reflect on how good the new piece of writing is and how it has grown and developed. Think about options to further develop the piece, making use of some of the writing techniques you know or have got to know.
- Try producing something more multimodal (viz. 3.4.5 Genre and re-genre): an animation or a short video, a poster, or a blog.

4.7.4 *Peer review and ‘shut-up and write’ workshop*

Now, ‘tackle’ assignment tasks ‘head on’ (viz. 3.6.1 Peer review and 4.6 Peer review and/or shut-up and write):

Discuss ‘good’ writing/review practice and then split the class:

Peer review group: all those who have already engaged with the assignment set for the module and have produced a first tentative draft in one part of the room to form the peer review group. Require students to get into pairs to peer review their writing/artefact against the assignment criteria.

‘Shut-up and write’ group: All those that have not yet produced very much writing congregate in another part of the room. This latter group must literally now ‘shut-up and write’ for a set period of time. (Refinement: write for twenty minutes - discuss in pairs for ten - write for another twenty...)

At the end of the allotted time have a quick whole class review. Make sure that everybody has benefitted from the session. Refer to resources, including other/further study support sessions for your course/at your institution.



4.7.5 *Multimodal exhibition*

Either create a formal exhibition time and space for the artefacts and pieces of writing produced during the writing programme or develop new artefacts for a meta-reflection on the whole programme - and writing process - to celebrate students' achievements (viz. Abegglen, Burns & Sinfield, 2016a).

How to:

- Students gather artefacts and pieces of writing produced during the writing programme and select the ones they would like to showcase. They need to think about how to present those items and may alter them for the display (or create new ones).
- Students plan the exhibition as a class and think about who they would like to invite and how.
- Students set up the exhibition, showcasing their multimodal artefacts. Invited students and staff members view and comment on them and celebrate.

Extension:

Reflective prompts for further artefacts and pieces of writing: Individually, in pairs or in small groups, reflect on this whole process: what has been the point of the last few weeks? What has been gained, individually and collectively? What can be taken forward to enable successful academic writing and learning?

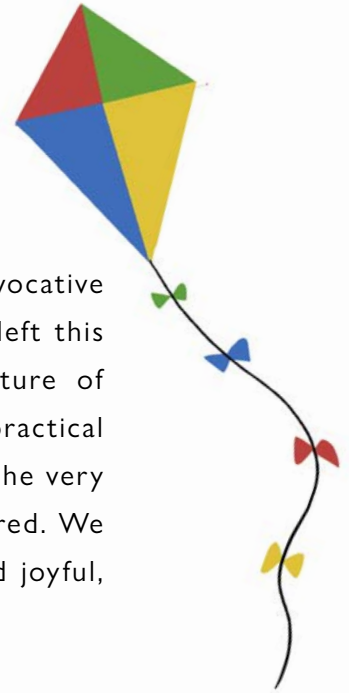




5. WHY DO LECTURERS HAVE TO ENGAGE WITH ACADEMIC WRITING?

5.1 Introduction

What is it that makes academic writing such a provocative and contested issue in Higher Education? We have left this reflection on attitudes towards and upon the nature of academic writing to the end of this Guide for a practical reason. We did not want this to act as a barrier to the very embodied and impactful activities that we have covered. We wanted first to show that writing can be playful and joyful, and that assignment modes can be various.



Indeed, we attempt to show that writing itself is multimodal and can be diverse and that all multimodal practices can have value if they are sufficiently challenging and engaging. Moreover, the ‘threshold concepts’ of academic writing (viz. 5.2), are as applicable to any assessment mode by which we want to prompt (active) student learning as they are to formal academic essays. By writing about writing at the same time as writing on the possibilities of alternative, multimodal genres, we want to demonstrate that academic writing is not the only medium through which we promote engagement; nor is it the only genre or mode by which we can assess students’ learning.

5.1.1 *But writing can feel different*

At the same time attitudes to students and to writing - the often subliminal lenses through which we view both - can have a significant impact on the way we teach writing and support writing development. Here is what academics participating in our Writing Workshop at the LondonMet Learning and Teaching conference had to say about academic writing:



Academic writing can be very daunting for students when they first approach it, partly due to misconceptions about what it actually is, and also because they have little experience of what it entails. Practice with academic writing is therefore a key.



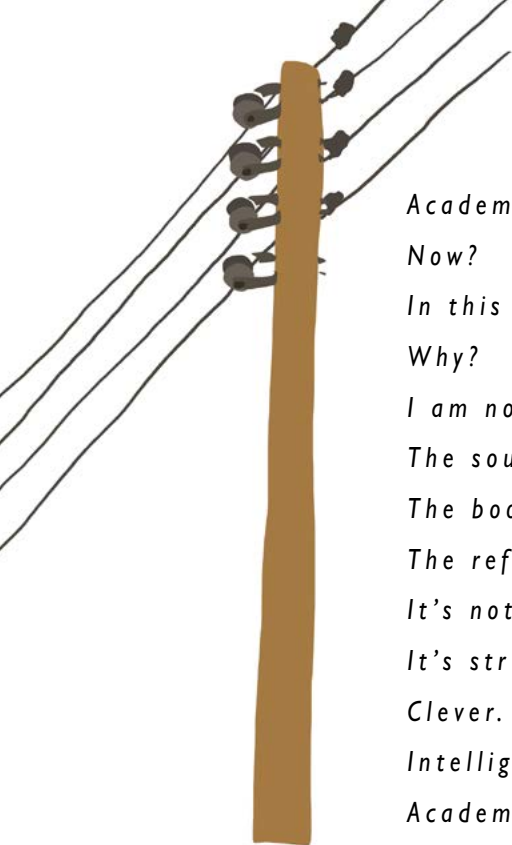
...it is about research - about establishing and discussing debates on a subject of choice. It is about your own voice and personality influencing your style - and your assessment of what needs to be discussed in the subject area. It should include analysis - but also facilitate discovery and give curiosity and inspiration - to find out about something and trying to come to a position. It is answering a question and presenting an argument - it is about discovery of the self in doing so.




The process of academic writing is the ability to express oneself using a range of material, sources and skills ... to support a topic of interest, to voice their opinions, yes, but must be embedded in academic language and knowledge based on research.





Academic writing should be fun, exciting, enjoyable and meaningful. It can be empowering; enhancing skills in the learning environment and in general life. Academic writing can be precise, clear and educational.




Academic writing.
Now?
In this moment?
Why?
I am not ready.
The sources!
The books!
The references!
It's not spontaneous.
It's structured - thought-through.
Clever.
Intelligent.
Academic.

 Students either grasp it immediately or gradually become accustomed to it. The latter is the more common experience for students and the reasons for this vary. Nevertheless the common ones are: getting used to the standard of writing, not having adequate resources, not dealing with the task at hand and lack of self-belief.

 Academic writing can be hard. My experience is that to write well you must be focussed and very clear as to the core of what you want to say. Once you are, you can build your arguments outwards.

 I used to teach academic writing to EAP students in Scotland but it was just translation because they already understood most of the concepts and just required the correct words. Teaching undergrads [in England], I've met with the realisation that many students are incapable of writing arguments or making clear connections between cause and effect and that their writing skill is much worse than that of foreign students.

 Academic writing is, in my opinion, one of the most important skills we develop in our students. It is a skill which they can use in any occupation, sector or country in which they work. This is particularly important in today's context where careers are increasingly boundaryless. That is to say, that students may have diverse career trajectories so whilst I teach them HRM as a subject, they might not work in this field all their working lives.

Grammar.

Structure.

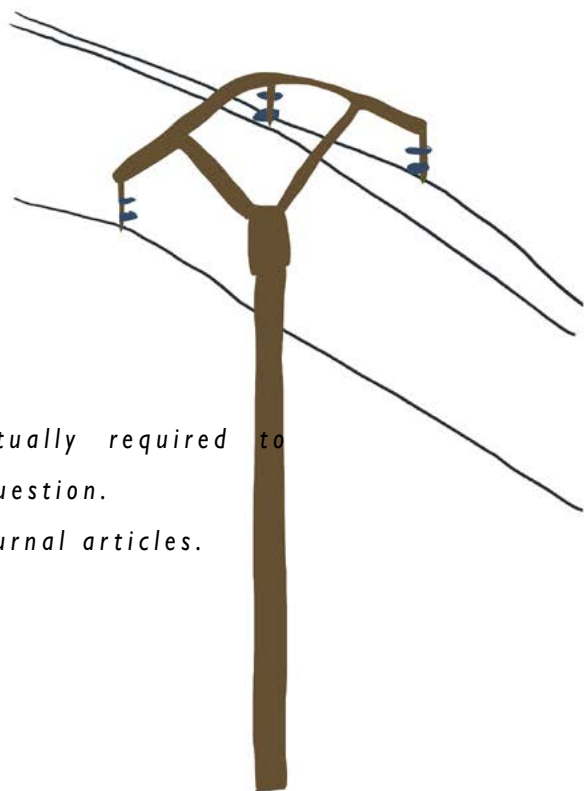
Layout.


What is actually required to answer the question.

Books and journal articles.

The essay.

The end.



 Academic writing is not a given or a natural accomplishment, it probably isn't a talent. It is lodged within a set of social positions that facilitate certain ends that include entry and belonging to a community of practice. It can be taught. It becomes an important relationship to other forms of literacy and lives with graduates long after we've forgotten everything else we have learned. If you want to feel safe when working up a ladder, climb higher than you want to work and then descend two rungs. You'll feel safer. I'm not sure I see it hierarchically, but working at a limit builds strength to work within that limit.



The quotes show that academics themselves view and tackle writing very differently. They use different styles, voices and approaches. They also interpret their students' skills and approaches differently and, thus, they 'teach' it differently. It is something that is 'hard' to do and understand especially when making an initial transition into Higher Education.

This demonstrates that academic writing is closely intertwined with the persona. Writing development is part of learning the subject; it is a part of co-constructing knowledge; it is an essential part of teaching students how to learn as well as what to learn; it is an essential part of classroom practice. If we want to facilitate active and significant learning, we need to build in opportunities for students to learn to write by writing to learn, that is, by engaging in authentic and meaningful writing processes.

The collaborative, discursive and interactive writing activities suggested in this Guide are designed to develop thinking, dialogue and 'real' writing in action. The focus is not on 'right answers' or spelling, punctuation and grammar in the first instance, but rather on foregrounding emergence, development and process. This is writing as learning and for learning and evidence suggests that making space for activities like these demystify academia, build epistemic efficacy and develop real academic writing that is owned by the students (viz. Abegglen, Burns & Sinfield, 2017).

5.2 *The threshold concepts of academic writing*

Many of the instructors' comments (viz. 5.1.1) upon academic writing made in our writing workshop reveal their implicit notions of the threshold concepts of academic writing. There is a focus on joining an academic community and of how slow and emergent, fraught and disempowering that might be. Surprisingly, there is also much consideration of the personal aspects of this writing, and of the joy of discovery. The latter, perhaps not evident to students from their particular disempowered points of view, often need to be teased out. We found that Molinari (2017) helps us focus on the ontological and epistemological functions of writing that speak to all of the aspects of academic writing mentioned spontaneously by our workshop participants. Her argument is that there are 37 possible threshold concepts of academic writing with the key ones being:

- It is a social and rhetorical activity
 - involving knowledge-making;
- It speaks to situations through recognisable forms, representing the world, events, ideas and feelings whilst being open to interpretation;
- It enacts and creates identities and ideologies;
- It is not an end in itself; and
- All writers have more to learn.



This suggests that successful academic writing tasks are the ones that are challenging (Gossferich, 2016), and provoke curiosity and social activity, and/or that reveal and initiate students into the epistemic cultures of their discipline. This challenge and invitation is both apprehended and appreciated by students and, when appropriately supported, it spurs them to engage and be the best they can.

It is important to share with students that all writing is developmental and all of us who write - instructors and students - have more to learn. This acceptance in and of itself might help shift academics' focus away from perceptions of deficit students and more onto what we can do to develop students' writing. It can help students realise that writing is and should be an iterative process; they are not 'failures' because their writing develops (this is seriously counter-intuitive for academics; it is hard for us to see just how wedded students are to the notion that one-draft writing is good writing). One way to do this is to build in regular writing time into our seminars and workshops, so that students experience for themselves that writing is a thinking process:



"I call this process a loop because it takes you on an elliptical orbiting voyage. For the first half, the voyage out, you do pieces of almost-freewriting during which you allow yourself to curve out into space - allow yourself, that is, to ignore or even forget exactly what your topic is. For the second half, the voyage home, you bend your efforts back into the gravitational field of your original topic as you select, organize, and revise parts of what you produced during the voyage out" (Elbow, 1998, p. 60).

5.3 Diversifying writing - and multimodal assessments

Writing is and always has been something with more energy and potential than the formal academic essay. Writing is marking, scratching, tearing and drawing as well as what we would acknowledge to be writing; it is and always has been multimodal:

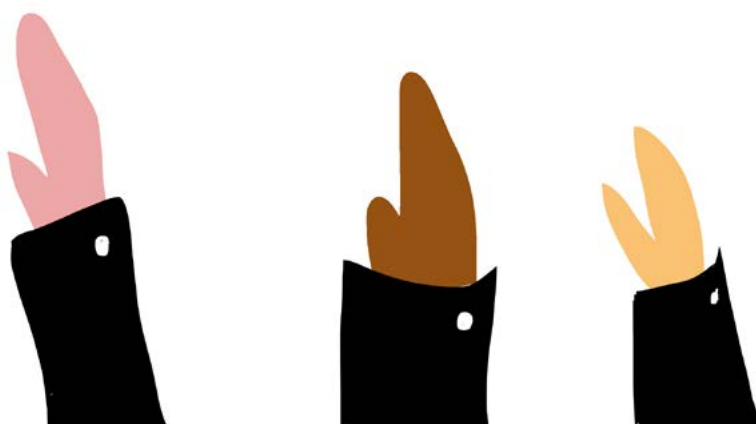
*Etymology of to write: From Middle English writen, from Old English wītan (“to incise, engrave, write, draw, bestow by writing”), from Proto-Germanic *wītanq (“to carve, write”), from Proto-Indo-European *wrey- (“to rip, tear”). Cognate with West Frisian write (“to wear by rubbing, rip, tear”), Dutch wrijven (“to argue, quarrel”), Low German wrieten, rieten (“to tear, split”), Norwegian rita (“to sketch vaguely, carve, write”), Swedish rita (“to draw, design, delineate, model”), Icelandic rita (“to cut, scratch, write”), German ritzen (“to carve, scratch”). See also rit and rat (Write - Wiktionary and cited in Molinari, 2017).*





Molinari (2017), in her exploration of the threshold concepts of academic writing, harnesses the historically multimodal nature of writing to also make useful arguments for developing more multimodal assessments - video essays, blogs, animations and more. Multimodal assessments may never entirely replace the essay, but could occasionally de-centre its dominance (Abegglen, Burns & Sinfield, 2016b). This is not a fad, but a praxis designed to capture the dynamism of academic writing itself. Moreover, arguably more multimodal tasks offer fairer assessment opportunities for all of our students, as they allow different sorts of engagement with a topic or task (viz. *Multimodality and fairness in #acwri - Academic Emergence*).

Multimodal assessments that we have found provocative and productive can be found in *Developing a Digital Student - Take5* - and there are a host of further suggestions here: *Welcome to ds106* and here: *ds106 Assignments*. In one of our modules we have set students the task of being able to choose what to submit for their final coursework (Abegglen, Burns & Sinfield, 2016b) - with great outcomes - and results.



5.4 Allowing and fostering alternative voices - for study success

Whether writing an essay or producing an animation, the student is both curating and communicating; engaged in selecting, revising, shaping and editing information. Ideally this should be in ways that they feel stimulated by. When we have asked students to 'Develop a Digital Me' or to represent their findings from exploring the learning spaces of our university, not as a poster presentation, but as poetry, knitting, an animation, or a video or comic book, rather than being instantly diminished by criticisms of their spelling, punctuation and grammar, they have felt excited and valued. The production of these creative artefacts has generated real pride. The process(es), once mastered, have developed self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982) - leading to confident and articulate students. As one of our first year students said:

"Today was such an amazing day as we all worked together to produce a poster exhibition based on our DigitalMe projects. My poster was created as a collage; I cut out pieces from magazines and newspapers. The words and phrases I used meant a lot to me and took me a few days to put together. While I was putting my poster together I couldn't help but reflect on how it made me feel as an individual, a student, a parent and a person in society. I had doubts about preparing the DigitalMe project but now I had the ability to prepare a poster about it, it was a great feeling. This was the first time any person or institute really cared about who I was and how I felt before starting University" (Week 12 DigitalMe Poster - pinarniyazi).





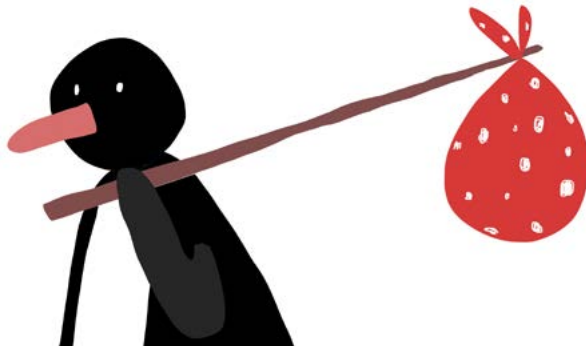
6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this Guide is to help academics discover fresh energy when supporting students with their writing. We wanted to reveal in practical, real and creative ways that writing is a thinking process and that we as instructors also benefit when we create spaces for generative and exploratory writing that enable our students to develop as confident academic writers and confident academics.

Students will flourish if academics set meaningful and valuable writing tasks, as well as other more multimodal forms of assessment. Rather than ‘dumbing down’ we need to ‘scale up’ our challenge levels, whilst ensuring that students are appropriately scaffolded, supported and developed on their route to mastery. We need to harness the fact that students are provoked by their curiosity, by the opportunity to have their say and/or by their perception of the value of the task. They know the difference between being invited into their epistemic community/ies and being asked to ‘regurgitate’ their learning. The onus is on us to set those challenging, provocative tasks.

In this Guide we have drawn on our extensive work with widening-participation students, our work with instructors and our engagement with the literature from the Writing and Learning Development communities, to highlight that writing really is more than a skill or set of skills to master.

We need to move beyond a focus on the mechanics of writing, a preoccupation with spelling, punctuation and grammar (important as these are for final draft writing), to develop a love of writing and to initiate students into their epistemic communities.



We suggest that students need help not just to overcome their fear of writing, but also to positively discover the pleasure of exploratory writing. They need to discover in practice that writing is a learning process that gives them a voice, a voice that places them powerfully within their own learning. They also need to experience for themselves and in embodied ways that formal writing does improve with practise.

We urge you to run writing workshops/weeks/years and set up free-write sessions where students experience writing as thinking/learning as opposed to the alienated (and alienating), judged one-draft writing that they tend to engage in.

We can all encourage students to take ownership of their learning through a variety of active learning modes and diverse writing and meaning-making activities. And we can develop writing in a variety of ways: by scaffolding reading; by encouraging blogging to learn; by setting provocative, open essay questions; and by setting more multimodal tasks, where students seem more naturally to engage in the selection, revision and editing processes that we also want them to engage in with their writing. Writing should not be a trick, something with which we catch students out or judge them as deficient. Academic writing is a process through which to develop and participate.







7. RESOURCES

The following online resources and applications (listed in alphabetical order) proved to be useful in our teaching practice and, in particular, in our academic writing sessions and workshops. They are by no means exhaustive but provide a good overview of the materials and tools currently available for positively supporting students with their writing. As the resources and applications are produced and maintained by third party providers, no responsibility is taken for their content. We therefore recommend you visit and assess the links before sharing them with your students.



#101 Creative Ideas - project to share ideas that foster and promote creativity in Higher Education:

<https://101creativeideas.wordpress.com>



750 Words - write regularly and earn points (free trial for 30 days): <http://750words.com>



Academic Phrasebank - excellent site for linking phrases and for academic writing by the University of Manchester, UK:

<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>



Academic Writing - site with lots of resources for writing and thinking by LDU/Learn Higher CETL and Write Now, UK:

<http://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/TLTC/connorj/WritingGroups/>



Assessment - reflections on assessment by Phil Race:

<https://phil-race.co.uk/assessment/>



Assessment and Generosity - podcast on the topic:
<https://hybridpedagogy.org/assessment/>



Becoming Educational - personal blog discussing all aspects of learning, teaching and assessment:
<https://becomingeducational.wordpress.com/>



Blog-to-learn - blog post on blogging to learn:
<https://becomingeducational.wordpress.com/2015/09/29/becomingeducational-welcome-to-becoming-an-educationalist/>



Collaborative Writing - viz. Writing the unreadable untext, a piece written by participants in the MOOC Rhizomatic Learning: The community is the curriculum (#rhizo14) facilitated by Dave Cormier: <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/107186/1/107186.pdf> or <http://hybridpedagogy.org/writing-the-unreadable-untext/>



Comic Book - viz. Nick Sousanis, who has written a comic dissertation (Unflattening) and also produced a guide for comics as thinking: <http://spinweaveandcut.com/unflattening/> and <http://spinweaveandcut.com/comics-as-thinking-15/>



Cornell Notes - to help organise notes and thoughts:
<http://coe.jmu.edu/learningtoolbox/cornellnotes.html>



Creative Academic - anything to do with creativity, including access to free online magazine exploring the many dimensions of creativity:
<https://www.creativeacademic.uk>



Creative Writing - tips for beginners: <https://study.com/academy/popular/creative-writing-exercises-for-beginners.html>



Dance your PhD - yearly contest asking participants to dance their doctorate: <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2016/10/and-winner-year-s-dance-your-phd-contest> and <http://gonzolabs.org/dance/>



Draw-to-learn - blog post reflecting on the idea of draw to learn: <https://becomingeducational.wordpress.com/2014/12/02/becomingeducational-w9-blog-research-and-draw-to-learn/>



Digital Literacies - ways of fostering students digital skills
<http://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/take5/digital.html>



Failure - see John Holt: <https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/titles/john-holt/how-children-fail/9780201484021/> - and a book review by Kevin C. Costley:
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED495278.pdf>



Feedback - rethinking assessment and giving feedback:
<http://www.nomadwarmachine.co.uk/2017/12/02/ticky-tacky-feedback/>



Free Write Tool - simply write:
<http://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/TLTC/freewrite/FWT.html>



Google Docs - write, edit and collaborate online: <https://www.google.com/docs/about/> - to access and use Google Docs you will need a Google account: <https://www.google.com/gmail/>



Google Jamboard - a simple, free online board that allows writing notes and posting pictures, individually and collectively:
<https://jamboard.google.com>



Hybrid Pedagogy - a community, a conversation, a collaboration, a school, and a journal - discussing critical digital pedagogy:
<https://hybridpedagogy.org>



Inclusivity - a blog post exploring the potential of multimodal assessments: <https://academicemergence.wordpress.com/2016/10/09/multimodality-and-fairness-in-acwri/>



Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education - published by the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education (ALDinHE), and aimed at those interested in all aspects of how learning is facilitated and how it is experienced by students in Higher Education: <https://journal.aldinhe.ac.uk/index.php/jldhe>



Journalling - a blog post exploring the benefits of journalling: <https://blog.milligram.com/benefits-of-journalling/> - and website discussing further benefits of journalling: <https://lonerwolf.com/journalling/>



LTHE Tweetchat - an opportunity to discuss learning and teaching in Higher Education with the wider academic community via tweetchats: <https://twitter.com/lthechat>



Meditation - for writing: https://youtu.be/hL-FiMY_34



Mind-map - how to create mind-maps: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5Y4pIsXTV0>



Multimodality - multimodality and fairness: <https://academicemergence.wordpress.com/2016/10/09/multimodality-and-fairness-in-acwri/> - multimodal assessments : <http://assignments.ds106.us/> - and an example of digital and multimodal storytelling: <http://ds106.us/>



Pixton - making comics: <https://www.pixton.com/>



Plagiarism - preventing plagiarism course:

<http://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/TLTC/learnhigher/Plagiarism/>



Poetry - Sam Illingworth as a Conference poet in residence:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z48CTpjzXYM> and <https://thepoetryofscience.scienceblog.com/author/thepoetryofscience/>



Post-its - twenty uses for a post-it note: <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/advice-for-students-twenty-uses-for-a-post-it-note.html>



Portent's Content Generator - create essay titles using keywords: <https://www.portent.com/tools/title-maker>



Powtoon - creating videos and presentations:

<https://www.powtoon.com/home/>



Reflection - using pictures or objects as aids to reflection by The Slow Academic:

<https://theslowacademic.com/2018/06/06/daily-moments/>



Regenring - a student example of using different genres:

<https://youtu.be/KOW3wq57Q5s>



Ren'Py - using words, images, and sounds to tell interactive stories: <https://www.renpy.org>



Self-efficacy - blog post looking at the role of self-efficacy:

<https://becomingeducational.wordpress.com/2013/10/30/w4-feel-the-fear-education-self-efficacy-and-the-role-of-culture/>



Slow Academic - blog outlining the benefits of slowing down and slowness: <https://theslowacademic.com>



Storybird - visual storytelling: <https://storybird.com/>



Student-Teacher Roles - visit the Upside Down Academy initiatives: <https://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2012/04/03/turning-teacher-student-roles-upside-down/>



Study Hub - writing information and resources by London Metropolitan University (UK):
<http://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/studyhub/writing.html>



Tactile Academia - blog exploring the links between creative and academic practice: <https://tactileacademia.com>



Take5 - staff blog and resources: <https://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/take5/> and <https://lmutake5wordpress.com/>



Ten steps to academic writing - prezi presentation: <http://prezi.com/cbaj9e5kised/copy-of-ten-stages-of-assignment-success/>



Textscrolls - a free resource for teachers, homeschoolers, and education researchers: <http://www.textmapping.org/index.html>



Thinking-writing - QMUL site for further writing tips for academic staff and teachers: <http://www.thinkingwriting.qmul.ac.uk/>



Visual Learning - website supporting the development of visual, spatial and tactile knowledge and skills in any discipline:
<https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/visuallearning/>



Walking Curriculum - link to a book and journal supporting the idea of a walking curriculum: <http://www.educationthatinspires.ca/walking-curriculum-imaginative-ecological-learning-activities/>



WordNet - large lexical database of English (free but you need to reference the source): <http://wordnet.princeton.edu>



Writing Across the Curriculum - tips for academic staff:
<https://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/take5/writing2.html>



Writing Development in Higher Education Conference - 2010:
13th WDHE conference: <http://literacyinthedigitaluniversity.blogspot.com/2010/07/writing-development-in-higher-education.html>



Writing Resources - for academic staff:
<http://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/take5/writing2.html>



Written Kitten - get a kitten for every 100 words:
<http://writtenkitten.net>



Writtenness - on 'writtenness', geopolitics and the academic and other values and assumptions that surround formal academic writing: <https://academicemergence.wordpress.com/2018/05/24/on-writtenness-its-geopolitics-and-other-academic-values-and-assumptions/>

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8.1 Reference link list



Advice for Students: 20 Uses for a Post-it Note: <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/advice-for-students-twenty-uses-for-a-post-it-note.html>



Creative Writing Exercises for Beginners: <https://study.com/academy/popular/creative-writing-exercises-for-beginners.html>



Developing a Digital Student - Take5: <https://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/take5/digital.html>



DigitalMe Project 2015: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOW3wq57Q5s&feature=youtu.be>



ds106 Assignments: <http://assignments.ds106.us>



EGU 18 Artists in Residence:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z48CTpJzXYM>



Five Benefits of Journaling - Milligram: <https://milligram.com/blogs/all/five-benefits-of-journaling-why-take-time-to-write>



Frames of Thought - Humanities Futures:
<https://humanitiesfutures.org/papers/frames-of-thought/>



Freewrite: <https://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/TLTC/freewrite/FWT.html>



Google Docs - About: <https://www.google.com/docs/about/>

-  Guided Meditation: Centering Yourself:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hL-FiMYY_34&feature=youtu.be
-  How To Mind Map - Tony Buzan:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5Y4pIsXTV0>
-  Hypothes.is: <https://web.hypothes.is>
-  John Holt: How Children Fail:
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED495278.pdf>
-  Journalling - Lonerwolf: <https://lonerwolf.com/journaling/>
-  Multimodality and fairness in #acwri - Academic Emergence:
<https://academicemergence.wordpress.com/2016/10/09/multimodality-and-fairness-in-acwri/>
-  noblechloe: <https://noblechloe.wordpress.com>
-  Pixton: Comic, Storyboard & Graphic Novel Maker:
<https://www.pixton.com>
-  Place-Based Poetry, Modeling One Revision at a Time: <https://lead.nwp.org/knowledgebase/place-based-poetry-one-step-at-a-time/>
-  Powtoon - Create Videos & Presentations: <https://www.powtoon.com>
-  Storybird - Artful Storytelling: <https://storybird.com>
-  Stretch goal added - Tactile Academia: https://tactileacademia.com/2020/06/03/stretch-goal-added-integrating-movement-into-online-teaching/amp/?__twitter_impression=true



Take5: <https://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/take5/index.html>



The Learning Toolbox - Cornell Notes:

<http://coe.jmu.edu/learningtoolbox/cornellnotes.html>



The Slow Academic:

<https://theslowacademic.com/2018/06/06/daily-moments/>



The Unreadable Text - Hybrid Pedagogy:

<https://hybridpedagogy.org/writing-the-unreadable-untext/>



Thinking Writing: <http://www.thinkingwriting.qmul.ac.uk>



Turning Teacher-Student Roles Upside Down - MindShift: <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/20467/turning-teacher-student-roles-upside-down>



Unflattening - Spin, Weave & Cut:

<http://spinweaveandcut.com/unflattening/>



Walking Curriculum – imaginED: <http://www.educationthatinspires.ca/walking-curriculum-imaginative-ecological-learning-activities/>



WDHE conference: <http://academic-practice.blogspot.com/2016/05/fw-writing-development-in-higher.html>



Week 12 DigitalMe Poster - pinarniyazi:

<https://pinarniyazi.wordpress.com/2015/05/11/week-12/>



Welcome to ds106: <https://ds106.us>



Write - Wiktionary: <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/write>



Writing - Study Hub: <https://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/studyhub/writing.html>



Creative Academic: <https://www.creativeacademic.uk>



Writing - Take5: <https://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/take5/writing2.html>



Writing the Unreadable Untext — University of Glasgow:

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/107186/1/107186.pdf>



5 Responses to Ticky-tacky feedback:

<http://www.nomadwarmachine.co.uk/2017/12/02/ticky-tacky-feedback/>



750 Words: <https://750words.com>

9. ACADEMIC STAFF VOICES

Jon Tandy

BSc Natural Sciences Course Leader; Senior Lecturer in Physical Chemistry;
School of Human Sciences; London Metropolitan University

This Guide provides an insightful overview of key strategies for writing as a tool for academic learning. This is extremely timely, as students within the natural sciences are increasingly daunted by the concept of academic writing, partly due to preconceptions about how and why scientists write (e.g. ‘chemists don’t write essays...’). Consequently, they are often reluctant to fully engage with writing activities/exercises aimed at deepening their understanding and preparing them for future assessments. This Guide empowers tutors by providing useful and accessible strategies to adopt and mould to fit within their own teaching practice and to support students to develop their confidence and skills within academic writing.

I have personally found the recommended peer-led, problem solving within a workshop context highly effective in teaching and revising key elements of a module. This strategy encourages students to verbalise and write down specific scientific concepts/ideas in a group setting, where they develop concisely written, scientific descriptions/explanations. I have also found the suggested pre-writing posters useful during a tutorial exploring different forms of magnetism. As described in the Guide, the use of creative drawings and text on a single sheet allows students to form a more holistic picture of the topic and clarifies thought whilst enabling articulation of key concepts. Additionally, I have adopted the ‘two minute writing’ and ‘free writing’ techniques in a particular area of physical chemistry to encourage the habit of regularly writing to embed learning and highlight some of the obstacles (conscious and unconscious) to writing long pieces (e.g. a research project report).

The subsequent discussion and reflection (also detailed in this Guide) revealed that several students found these tasks challenging but very rewarding, as they demonstrated how their written ideas developed and changed their perception of the difficulties associated with 'starting to write'.

Finally, I have implemented an 'alternative assignment' recommended in the Guide by providing students with a choice of assessment type: traditional essay versus video essay or digital artefact on an area of chemical kinetics or quantum mechanics (with additional guidance provided). This allowed a more creative and personal approach and encouraged students to take ownership of the assessment, resulting in deeper research into the topic and overall higher engagement with the task.

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Susannah McKee and Marie Stephenson

Senior Lecturers; Extended Degree; School of Social Professions; London Metropolitan University

We love the book, both its content and beautiful design. And we would jointly say that: We've been enthused by the possibilities of working creatively with these strategies together with our first year and foundation year students (Education/Social Sciences). They have inspired us to develop new modules and revisit existing practices. Students have responded to creative challenges, engaged in participatory practices and produced powerful and high-quality outcomes, which have in turn been interesting and inspiring to read. There are a wealth of ideas in this book that we are excited to continue exploring.

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Marie Stephenson <https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/profiles/staff/marie-stephenson/>

Angharad Lewis

Head of Visual Communication; Principal Lecturer; School of Art, Architecture and Design; London Metropolitan University

This feels like a much-needed book. It's been put together in a very user-friendly way, and I can immediately see ways that myself and colleagues can apply the techniques it shares in our practice. I have been lucky enough to benefit from the authors' expertise in the area of supporting students' writing and have had the opportunity to apply some of the techniques in my own teaching. As a lecturer working with students in the field of Visual Communication (BA Graphic Design and BA Illustration & Animation) we often find that writing can be intimidating or evoke the response of 'I can't write'. We often have a number of dyslexic learners on our courses, for whom writing presents a different challenge.

Text mapping has been very effective in helping Visual Communication students digest and respond to longer texts. I have used the technique to support an annual cross-disciplinary book design project with my students and English Literature and Creative Writing students. For my students, the visual and physical way of breaking down a text enlivens their engagement with words. It feels closer to their experience and gives them a feeling of confidence, validating the visual response to a text, and underlining that their approach is not inferior, but rather different and of equal value to the purely textual handling of words.

I also use cluster wall, mind mapping, 2-min writing, Cornell notes and online writing/blogging with Visual Communication students. These are largely used to support reflective practice, providing starting points for the students to reflect, which don't involve sitting and staring at a blank sheet or screen. These techniques are valuable in empowering students to feel confident and embed reflection in their learning.

It helps students to feel comfortable talking about their own work and contextualises their practice in an informed way. If the students feel they can master the appropriate language for their discipline, it helps them be more independent, reflective learners and confident graduates.

What a brilliant book and I'm so proud of our student Veronica, who has done the design. She's done an amazing job with the illustrations!

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Emma Gillaspy

Senior Lecturer in Digital Learning; School of Nursing; Faculty of Health and Care; University of Central Lancashire

Supporting Student Writing is an excellent book. The authors have done a great job of mixing practical ideas for active learning, with gentle challenges to change practice in developing academic writing. It is beautifully illustrated, and the 'toolkit' style structure allows you to dip in to find an activity that suits your needs at that time. Alternatively, you can read the whole thing to integrate writing exercises across your curricula. I particularly value that the authors have given examples of what not to do, suggesting what to try instead that might work better.

This book has stimulated and challenged my thinking around academic writing, encouraging me to come up with other ideas that would work with my students. Overall, it is an honest, practical and thoughtful book that I would recommend as an essential read for anyone looking to develop the writing skills of others.

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Twitter: @egillaspy

This Guide promotes writing-to-learn. Academic writing is a contested area that is tricky to navigate and master especially for newcomers. However, this does not need to be the case. This Guide is an invitation to move beyond the 'mechanics' of writing, to make it meaningful, engaging, interactive and fun. If writing is appreciated as developmental - and appropriately supported - it spurs students to write of their 'best' as they write to learn.

The illustrations, bright block colours, white space and shapes are all designed to make the content of the Guide come alive for the reader in a playful way that is designed to facilitate adaptation for their own practice and contexts.



Creative pedagogies have a huge part to play in offering a different lens; as does the decolonisation of the curricula practices. As educators in positions of power and authority, no matter how 'nice' we are, we still grade their work; it is for us to frame their efforts within a wider social justice platform, giving a voice to all the students in our care, not just the privileged ones.

Debbie Holley, Professor of Learning Innovation, Bournemouth University

This Guide empowers tutors by providing useful and accessible strategies to adopt and mould to fit within their own teaching practice and to support students to develop their confidence and skills within academic writing.

Jon Tandy, BSc Natural Sciences Course Leader, Senior Lecturer in Physical Chemistry, London Metropolitan University

There are a wealth of ideas in this book that we are excited to continue exploring.

Susannah McKee and Marie Stephenson, Senior Lecturers, Extended Degree, London Metropolitan University

Overall, it is an honest, practical and thoughtful book that I would recommend as an essential read for anyone looking to develop the writing skills of others.

Emma Gillaspay, Senior Lecturer in Digital Learning, University of Central Lancashire

