

Writing Requirement in the Four-Year Curriculum

Writing Requirement -- Guidelines for Teachers

Table of Contents

Content	Page
I. Introduction to the Writing Requirement	
	4
Background	4
Designated writing	5
Aims	5
II. Writing	
	6
Pedagogical approaches to writing	6
Writing as a process	6
Writing as a product	11
Motives for writing	12
Writing to learn	12
Writing to think	13
Other motives for writing	14
III. Engaging students in writing various types of texts of substantial length	
	15
Preparing students to write	15
Questioning	15
Free writing	16
Listing	16
Mind mapping	16
Getting students to write	17
Essays	17
Argumentation	17
Critical responses to stimulus questions	18
Chapter summaries	18
Reflective journals	18

Content		Page
	Book reports	19
	Letters to editor	20
	Portfolios	20
	Facilitating students to revise and edit	20
	Revising and editing writing	20
	Engaging students to share their work and to do peer evaluation	21
	Out-of-class peer evaluation	21
IV. Assessment of reading		22
	What to assess	22
	How to assess	23
	Criteria for assessment	24
	Sample assessment descriptors	24
V. Appendices		
	A. Questioning guide	
	A1. Questioning guide – generating “wh” questions	Appendix A1
	A2. Question-asking guide	Appendix A2
	B. Worksheet for free writing	Appendix B
	C. Worksheet for listing	Appendix C
	D. Templates for mind mapping	
	D1: Template A	Appendix D1
	D2: Template B	Appendix D2
	E. Standard structural patterns of essay patterns	
	E1. Standard structural pattern of effective introductions	Appendix E1
	E2. Standard structural pattern of effective conclusions	Appendix E1
	F. Structure of arguments	Appendix F
	G. Template for forming critical responses to stimulus questions	Appendix G
	H. Template for writing chapter summaries	Appendix H

Content		Page
	I. Reflective learning journals	Appendix I
	I1. Suggested guided questions for structured reflective learning journals	Appendix I1
	I2. Template for double-entry reflective learning journals	Appendix I2
	J. Template for composing book reports	Appendix J
	K. Structural framework for composing letters to editor	Appendix K
	L. Portfolio – reflection on a piece of writing	Appendix L
	M. Checklist for revising and editing writing	Appendix M
	N. Templates for peer evaluation	
	N1. Response-centred review sheet	Appendix N1
	N2. Advice-centred review sheet	Appendix N2
	N3. Peer review task sheet – purpose of and approach to writing	Appendix N3
	N4. Peer review task sheet – content and arguments	Appendix N4
	N5. Peer review task sheet – development and organization of ideas	Appendix N5
	N6. Peer review task sheet – stylistic matters	Appendix N6

I. Introduction to the Writing Requirement

Background

In order to pursue its goals of trilingualism and biliteracy, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University is preparing to enhance substantially its language instruction with the new four-year curriculum. As part of this enhancement, with regard to English language writing in particular, the Policy and Implementation Guidelines on the R and W requirements of CAR subjects (June 2010) state that all students are required to complete one subject that includes a requirement for a substantial piece of writing in English within their CAR programmes with a “W” designation.

In order for a CAR subject to be eligible for a “W” designation, it must include an extensive piece of writing of approximately 2,500 words. In order to be eligible for a “W” credit for the subject, students are required to participate in instructional and assessment activities which aim at offering them in-depth training and assistance in their writing process and assisting them to acquire the appropriate writing skills they need for their university studies and future career. The activities are outlined below:

- a short online lecture videos series focusing on writing strategies, provided by ELC; and,
- two one-hour, small-group tutorials designed to provide in-depth feedback on students’ extensive writing. The tutorial groups, to be conducted by ELC staff, will comprise of five students sharing the same CAR subject.

These activities are organized and conducted by ELC staff, in consultation with the instructor of the course. The writing assignment concerned, as well as the performance of the students in the related activities, is graded jointly by the subject instructor and the ELC staff member and counts for a substantial proportion of the final grade for the subject, with the precise weighting determined by the subject instructor. It is recommended, though, that the final writing assignment would contribute to no less than 30% of the subject grade.

The overall objective of CAR subjects is to expand the intellectual capacity of students

beyond their disciplinary domain. This needs to be accomplished in “an academically rigorous manner” challenging students to “analyze a major or local issue from multidisciplinary perspectives, and to tackle the associated problems holistically”. In order to help learners achieve such commendable goals, intellectual, as well as cognitive activities that cultivate literacy, higher order thinking and life-long learning should be formulated and some corresponding instructional guidelines and tools for teachers running CAR subjects with a “W” requirement are to be highlighted in this set of handout in this respect.

Designated writing

The designated writing assignments, which are closely connected with the CAR subject concerned, should include:

- an extensive piece of writing (2,500 words) of any genres
 - o possible genres of designated writing include:
 - critical responses to stimulus questions
 - chapter summaries
 - reflective journals
 - book reports
 - critiques / reviews
 - online posts / blogs
 - letters to editor
 - essays
 - reports
 - portfolios

Aims

This pack

- highlights some information regarding two of the most prevalent approaches to writing in the field, namely, writing as a process versus writing as a product; and motives for writing, that is the perspective of considering writing as a tool to achieve various purposes, so that CAR subject teachers could have a better understanding of

what students are expected to go through when they are asked to fulfill the “W” requirement by composing a piece of extensive writing. In this way, a more effective facilitation can be put in place;

- provides CAR subject teachers with some instructional guidelines and ideas on how to engage students in writing various texts of substantial length, such as chapter summaries, book reports, critical responses to stimulus questions given by subject teacher, reflective journals, and essays, both inside and outside classroom settings;
- offers CAR teachers some writing-related activity sheets / templates that can be adopted to facilitate students’ writing both inside and outside classroom settings;
- lays down the assessment criteria and propose some assessment tasks for CAR subject teachers to assess students’ writing outcomes, as well as their writing competence during their writing process.

II. Writing

Pedagogical approaches to writing

In discussions of developing students’ writing competence in academic settings, a rather controversial issue has been which pedagogical approach should be adopted: writing as a process or writing as a product. In fact, many educationalists do make a sharp and clear distinction between the two approaches as any decisions made may imply completely different teaching and learning frameworks targeting learners’ various learning and developmental needs, and hence, leading to totally different assessment rationales and focuses.

Writing as a process

The construct, writing as a process, is used to describe a perspective about writing in which writing is seen as a complex process of decision-making and activities responding to a particular objective or purpose. Writing, in this respect, is regarded as an expression of the mental process it entails and as a means of communication and interaction, between the writer,

the text and the audience. This perspective also implies understanding writing as a series of drafts and considering the endeavor of writing in its entirety. The process includes several stages, they are, as conceptualized by Learning Media, Ministry of Education (1992)¹, forming intentions, composing and drafting, correcting and publishing, and, outcomes.

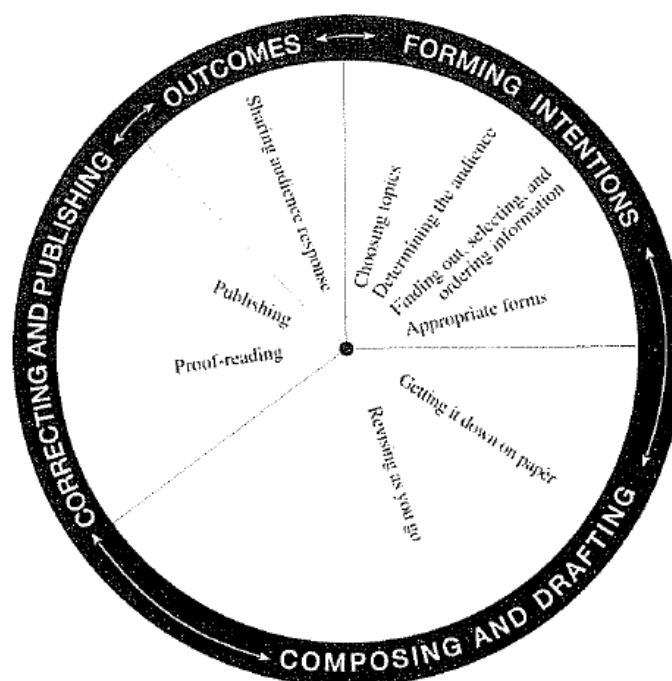


Figure 1: A model of the writing process²

Stage 1 – Forming intentions

At this particular pre-writing stage, writers clarify the purpose and audience for writing, generate relevant ideas, begin to organize them into rough sections and sequences, and, determine the suitable form of their writing so as to achieve the purpose identified. In order to generate plausible and relevant ideas, numerous techniques can be adopted and they are listed as follows:

- Questioning

¹ Learning Media, Ministry of Education. (1992). *Dancing with the pen: the learner as a writer*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media, Ministry of Education.

² Adapted from Learning Media, Ministry of Education. (1992). *Dancing with the pen: the learner as a writer*. Wellington, NZ: Learning Media, Ministry of Education. p.23.

- Asking questions about the topic or subject by using question words such as “what”, “when”, “why”, “where”, “who”, “whom” and “how” is an effective way of getting writers to think about the issue concerned from a range of different angles.

- Free writing
 - Free writing refers to the jotting down of words, phrases, rough sentences or everything that comes to the writers’ mind when they are given a subject to write on. This activity helps writers explore the issue from scratch and the initial ideas noted down will often become clearer at later stages which may probably lead to other impressions and ideas that can enrich the content of one’s writing eventually.

 - Free writing is usually made a timed task for which students are allowed five to ten minutes and during which students are pushed to come up with as many ideas as possible. Though some of the ideas generated may not be of any great significance, it has been generally found that this activity does help writers generate a sizeable amount of innovative ideas for their writing.

- Mind mapping
 - For those who have preferences over visual representations in the realms of communication and learning, mind mapping is a strategy of choice as it allows writers to do their thinking in a visual way with the use of lines, boxes, arrows, circles, bubbles, and so forth to show not only the ideas and details that emerge, but also the relationships they entail on papers. This mental process starts with stating the subject in a few words in the centre of a piece of blank paper with ideas and further details extending outward towards the margins of the paper.

 - Some sample templates of mind maps are depicted below:

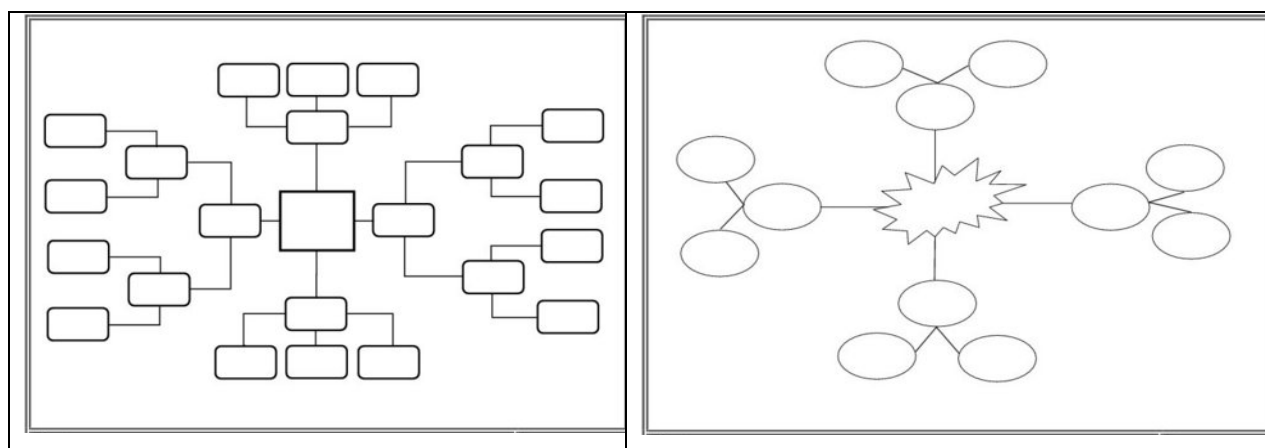


Figure 2: Sample templates of mind maps

- Listing

- Listing is an endeavor to make a list of everything, one after one, about a topic or a subject without trying to sort out major details from minor ones or trying to organize details in any specific orders. This is like brainstorming and writers try to generate as many ideas as possible during the process without evaluating them until later on.

Stage 2 – Composing and drafting

Composing and drafting is the process of translating thoughts, ideas, and intentions into a structured written form. It is a complex process ranging from conducting research, narrowing the topic, developing the thesis statement, arranging supporting ideas in a logical manner, to writing the first draft. The main focus of this stage is on making the intended messages as clear and forcible as possible in writing.

Stage 3 – Correcting and publishing

Correcting and publishing is a stage during which writers ensure whether their intentions are made clear to the intended audience and whether their intentions are in line with the intended purpose or objective before getting their writing published.

Correcting involves two major phases, namely reviewing and proofreading with the former focusing on the messages intended to be conveyed and the latter the surface-level features or

conventions like language form and accuracy. Writers, at this stage, check the organization, coherence and clarity of their communication of their writing to ensure the quality of the “substance” concerned. In the meantime, they double-check their grammar, spelling and punctuation, et cetera, so as to attain mechanical precision in their writing.

Stage 4 – Outcomes

The outcomes of publishing (or sharing) provide writers with opportunities to receive feedback and responses from their readers. It is very likely for a myriad of learning to take place throughout the process of publishing (or sharing) for both the writers and readers. On one hand, writers learn to accept justifiable criticisms, taking them into consideration in their future writing tasks and hence benefit from the responses received. On the other hand, readers learn to think and respond critically to the texts presented to them as they are expected to back their points up with justifications and evidence. After all, with this platform, both parties have a chance to look at an issue from various points of view which is regarded to be of pivotal value.

The proposed model of the writing process is a cyclical process rather than a linear one in which writers may return to any previous stages even after doing some editing and revising as a response to any possible changes of the authentic settings. For instance, if the writer finds that there are not sufficient ideas for his / her writing at the final stage of his / her writing process, he / she may go back to the intentions forming stage for more ideas.

In connection with this approach, writing as a process, improving writing means improving the ways students write. Thus writing assessment should take all the aforementioned stages into consideration. Instead of regarding students’ writing as the final draft and giving them an overall grade on the final written product, teachers consider their work as different drafts at different stages and students’ effort in improving their writing via reviewing and proofreading also constitutes a significant part of the assessment so that the grade they receive can reasonably reflect their progress throughout the entire writing process.

Writing as a product

Conversely, another construct, writing as a product, is employed to refer to a perspective about writing in which writing is considered in terms of the final finished product. Pincas (1982)³, who gives an explicit description of this approach, sees writing as being primarily about linguistic knowledge, with attention focused on the appropriate use of vocabulary, grammatical structures, syntax, cohesive devices, so on and so forth.

In alignment with this perspective, teachers pay tremendous attention and time on the mechanics of form and language usage rather than on the messages communicated in the facet of assessment. It creates an impression, which may be neither comprehensive nor realistic in the field of writing, that it is form and accuracy that matter leaving other aspects of writing which include organization, argumentation, as well as quantity and quality of ideas under-attended and under-valued.

In this sense, improving writing simply means improving primarily the surface-level errors students make concerning the language used regardless of the steps and cognitive effort that are involved in the entire writing process.

It is, however, worth noting that the two models are not incompatible as writing is clearly not a simplistic activity but an intellectually complex one with multiple facets. For instance, while it involves knowledge about language as asserted by the product approach, it also involves skills in using language and other cognitive skills such as selecting ideas, developing thesis, organizing ideas, revising and editing, as put forth by the process approach. pending on the focuses of the courses concerned and the particular needs of students at various stages, to better facilitate students' learning.

³ Pincas, A. (1982). *Teaching English Writing*. London: Macmillan.

Motives for writing

Writing to learn

It is generally believed that students' thought and understanding can grow and clarify through the process of writing. The importance of writing as a way of learning has also been pinpointed in the 1986 report to the UNC Faculty Council⁴ by the Ad Hoc Committee on Writing Across the Curriculum as follows,

“writing is at the heart of the educational process. The complex process of writing compels us to analyze, to organize, and to articulate, to think logically and clearly and to come to a better understanding of our subject through an attempt to explain or present it. Not only does practice in writing improve the precision of our manner of expression, but the process of writing can lead to an increased precision in our ideas and concepts.

... The Committee regards this as an extremely important point: writing in courses in all disciplines has as its primary goal not the improvement of writing per se, but rather the improvement of the learning process.”

Regarding the notion of writing to learn, though there is a general lack of empirical backing in the field, Newell (1984)⁵ did identify three measures of learning, namely, recall, concept application, and reception of passage-specific knowledge for better conceptualization of the construct of learning and further examination of the named notion, writing to learn. Briefly speaking, he discovered that essay writing was more effective in enabling students to produce consistently more abstract sets of associations for key concepts when compared to other types of writing like note taking and responses to short questions.

In spite of the types of learning highlighted by Newell (1984), it is also unanimously agreed that writing does play a cardinal role in facilitating students' learning from helping students examine and evaluate information presented in the texts, connect and integrate what they

⁴ Ad Hoc Committee on Writing Across the Curriculum, UNC. (1986). *1986 report to the UNC Faculty Council*. University of North Carolina.

⁵ Newell, G. (1984). Learning from writing in two content areas: A case study/protocol analysis. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 18, 265–287.

have learnt with the rest of their knowledge, beliefs, experiences, thoughts and feelings, to constructing new knowledge and they are all considered to be of great significant value to students' intellectual development not only in the arena of writing.

To summarise, writing helps promote students' learning, as well as their involvement in the course materials through writing. Writing provides students with a platform to:

- recall what has been learnt and acquired;
- apply the learnt concepts;
- intake course-specific knowledge;
- examine and analyze ideas and information;
- evaluate ideas and information; and,
- connect and integrate what has been learnt with their prior knowledge so as to construct "new" knowledge.

With the course focuses and objectives taken into consideration, CAR teachers could adopt, with modifications if necessary, any of the writing tasks listed in the section to facilitate students' learning throughout the course.

Writing to think

"How do I know what I think until I see what I say?" (E.M. Foster)

In a similar vein, due to the intellectual and cognitive load demanded for accomplishing writing tasks, writing does not merely serve as a tool for improving writing competence, but also a device to sharpen one's thinking and reasoning skills. Thinking, as conceptualized by Griffith (1982)⁶, is a sort of inward activity of mind that enables people to make connections between:

- ideas and experiences;
- new materials and prior knowledge;
- associative and logical thinking; and,
- unconscious, subconscious and conscious levels of understanding.

⁶ Griffith, M. (1982). *Writing to think. National writing project occasional paper no. 4*. Washington: California University.

With the help of writing, students manage to bridge their inner speech with the outer reality together through which a number of thinking processes are made possible or even lively. Besides, writing also allows students to bring vague, disorganized but new perceptions within themselves to a verbal level, which is explicit enough for them to reconsider, further explore, evaluate, modify or extend. Only after going through this ‘essential’ stage of the learning process can they expect clearer patterns to emerge and hence possible permanent grasp of new and unfamiliar knowledge can then be achieved.

Writing to think has been validated by cognitive psychologists and it is clearly stated in the Ad Hoc Committee on Writing Across Curriculum’s 1986 report to the UNC Council that,

“the writing process regularly involves the types of cognition generally labeled ‘thinking’: discrimination, classification, specification, generalization, hypothesis formation and testing. In many cases, writing is not merely an aid to thinking: writing is thinking.”

In view of all these, in order to achieve deeper level learning and thinking, it might be worthwhile for teachers to consider assigning writing tasks to students in their courses.

Other motives for writing

In addition to learning and thinking, writing can also be employed to achieve a plethora of purposes and some of them are listed below:

- writing to report information;
- writing to explain information;
- writing to evaluate information;
- writing to analyze texts;
- writing to persuade others; and;
- writing to inspire others, so on and so forth.

The list above can never be exhaustive as writing has a huge potential in achieving both intra-personal and inter-personal communication, literally, in all circumstances. The kinds of

writing tasks to be adopted in classes are primarily determined by the learning outcomes or goals intended for the courses, as well as the course planning and delivery of individual teachers.

III. Engaging students in writing various types of texts of substantial length

Preparing students to write

Materials / handouts that could be used to help students generate ideas for their writing

a. Questioning (Appendix A)

The simple questioning guide, Appendix A1, helps getting students to think about the issue concerned from a wide range of perspectives by using various “wh” question words to ask a number of open-ended questions.

The strategy of questioning can also be used to support an internal dialogue between the writer and the text. This can keep writers engaged throughout their writing process which is also a meaning-constructing process.

Apart from forming questions, students’ ability to evaluate and improve their questions is considered to be crucial as well in maximizing their potential gain and this ability could be developed with the use of the Question-Asking Guide (Appendix A2) formulated by EDC⁷. This activity involves students in evaluating and rewriting their questions until questions of quality and value are generated. The process itself cultivates a deeper and more reflective thinking habit in students and, undoubtedly, provides students with insights and ideas that will probably fuel their entire writing process.

Teachers may also like to consider employing this Question-Asking Guide to formulate essential questions for students to respond to so as to stimulate their thinking about or draw their attention to some crucial aspects of the topics of assignments.

⁷ Adapted from EDC’s Learning to Learn Network, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, at http://www.polyu.edu.hk/learn-to-learn/teacher/_contents/htm/fs_g1.htm

b. Free writing (Appendix B)

Before getting down to their writing tasks, students may make use of the worksheet for free writing in Appendix B to make free association in relation to the topic concerned within a limited period of time, say, five to ten minutes, without making any judgment or evaluation on the quality of the ideas generated. The ideas obtained could then be further developed and elaborated for their writing assessments.

c. Listing (Appendix C)

It might be of difficulty for students to translate or organize their thoughts into complete sentences or paragraphs when some initial ideas first come to them which does entail certain amount of intellectual load. If it is the case, listing could then be an effective way to facilitate students' process of idea generation as what they need to do is simply to list everything they think is relevant to the topic. They neither need to organize nor order their ideas as these mental processes are not necessary at that particular stage.

d. Mind mapping (Appendix D)

Mind maps serve as diagrammatical representations of one's ideas about a particular concept or topic with the use of lines, boxes, arrows, circles, bubbles, et cetera, during his / her brainstorming process. This technique does not only allow students to generate ideas and details that come to them, but also their possible relationships and connections which are of great significance especially for the organization and development of their writing afterwards.

Getting students to write

Materials / handouts that could be used to help students get down to their actual writing or drafting

a. Essays (Appendix E)

In spite of the fact that the nature and purpose of essay writing do vary in several important aspects across different disciplines in the academic world, academic essays tend to have the same overall structure:

- an introduction;
- a body; and,
- a conclusion.

While the body of an extended academic text can be organized in a number of ways depending on the purpose of the piece of writing, the introductory and concluding sections of essays in general have predictable patterns of organization irrespective of the purpose of the assignment. The essential moves of each are presented in Appendix E1 and E2 respectively to facilitate students' effective writing.

b. Argumentation (Appendix F)

A clear sense of argument is essential to all forms of writing, especially academic writing. While the simplest argument could be formed with a single statement (premise) and another single statement derived from it (conclusion), a more sophisticated and well-informed argument, which is of paramount importance in enhancing the overall effectiveness and persuasiveness of a piece of writing, should also include the following components:

- supporting point and its exemplification;
- counter argument and its exemplification; and,
- refutation of counter argument.

This handout guides students step by step through the formation of an effective and persuasive argument.

c. Critical responses to stimulus questions (Appendix G)

Whether the stimulus questions are generated by teachers or students, the primary aim of the assignment, critical responses to stimulus questions, is to encourage students to ponder an issue from different angles with their critical and analytical mind. It might be of challenge in the very beginning as “thinking critically” might not be a usual practice that students adopt to approach the issues that come to them. This template offers step-by-step guidelines guiding students to form their written responses systematically by taking possible alternatives into consideration before drawing any conclusions.

d. Chapter summaries (Appendix H)

A summarizing task helps foster students’ comprehension of a text, at both literal and reflective levels. At the literal level, students are asked to summarize the key ideas communicated in the text and present them in a coherent and cohesive manner. It is believed that through this process students are able to obtain a basic grasp of the text which is regarded as the initial stage of learning. At the reflective level, students are expected to reflect on what is presented to them through involving in a number of cognitive operations, such as: critical thinking, analyzing, comparing and contrasting, evaluating and synthesizing. Involvement in these mental processes enables students to achieve a deeper level of learning that could not probably be achieved otherwise.

e. Reflective journals (Appendix I)

- Reflective learning journals

Teachers may ask students to keep a reflective journal, with guidelines provided in Appendix I, throughout the course of their study. This will engage students’ in interaction with the course materials and allow unlimited possibilities for learning. For instance, during the process of journal writing they may come up with invaluable thoughts and insights regarding the texts they are reading. They may also have a

chance to connect or integrate what they are studying with the rest of their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Composing reflective journals provides students with a personal and meaningful space to keep a record of their own ideas and thoughts that pop up in interaction. Not only can students reflect on what they have learnt by doing so regularly, but they can also monitor and evaluate their own learning and all these may give rise to a more fruitful learning experience which allows them to grab the complexity of issues and ideas.

- Structured reflective learning journals (Appendix I1)

Specific guiding questions, in connection with the course materials and course objectives, could be adopted to elicit reflective responses from students as sometimes an overly unstructured journal writing task would discourage critical and reflective thinking. Some suggested guiding questions are listed in Appendix I1 and teachers may like to modify them for their own teaching.

- Double-entry reflective learning journals (Appendix I2)

These journals use a two-column format which creates a platform for students to put down their thoughts one by one in correspondence with the information presented in the course materials or texts that they encounter. Students write entries in the left column under the heading “what I read / learnt” to identify, for instance, important terms or questions about a topic or concept, and the entries in the right column provide the analysis of, as well as reflection on the terms or answers to the questions under the heading “what I think about I read /learnt”.

- f. Book reports (Appendix J)

In addition to requiring students to summarize a publication and include their own reflection on it in their book report, teachers may also like to engage students, during their process of reading and writing, in working with several relevant readings to draw commonalities and identify discrepancies out of those readings. The cognitive process embedded well guarantees that students grapple with the complexity of issues and ideas

by consciously applying their critical thinking and analytical skills.

g. Letters to editor (Appendix K)

Letters to editor is a special genre that allows writers to express their opinions or viewpoints on certain issues and problems. In order to make their writing look neat and sound intellectual for purposes of publishing, writers need to pay close attention to both the structure and the quality of their opinions, as well as arguments. This structural framework is formulated to give students some clues on how to organize their letters with necessary, yet persuasive and intelligent content.

h. Portfolio Reflections (Appendix L)

It is evident from an extensive body of research in the field of education that students usually obtain much more than expected out of a course when they are asked to go through all their written pieces and make a portfolio of the best and most interesting ones. Yet, to make the most out of this kind of assignment, on top of the collection of written pieces, students should be encouraged to include a reflective component in which they introduce, explore, and explain the pieces in the portfolio and talk about what they have learnt from these entries. This reflective part provides students with an opportunity to conduct a kind of meta-dialogue that leads to new understanding and insights. A template of such a section is presented in Appendix L for easy reference.

Facilitating students to revise and edit

Materials / handouts that could be used to help students revise and edit their written work

a. Revising and editing writing (Appendix M)

Purpose, audience, content, organization, language, register and conventions are all essential considerations for writers. As students are always overwhelmed with the act of putting down the ideas that come to their mind during the drafting stage, they may not have the capacity to examine the aforementioned items closely and this creates legitimate reasons for writers to rethink and revise their work during the third stage of

the writing process, correcting and publishing. To make the revising and editing process more effective with clear purposes, it is always good to have some guidelines available and the checklist in Appendix M is designed to serve this particular purpose.

Engaging students to share their work and to do peer evaluation

Materials / handouts that could be used to facilitate peer evaluation among students

a. Out-of-class peer evaluation (Appendix N)

Teachers can engage students to form groups with their classmates to perform some peer evaluation tasks outside the classroom regularly. This will provide students with opportunities to share what they have written and what they think about certain materials in a less threatening atmosphere. This practice is highly motivating which promotes an environment of collaborative learning.

In fact, these sharing or evaluation sessions allow students to learn how to give feedback to each other's writing, and at the same time, how to articulate their viewpoints and ideas. Unlike playing the role of teachers, students are most valuable to each other as audience and readers who can respond with their reactions and thoughts about the topic without caring much about the grade.

The content that could be included in students' sharing sessions are sketched as follows:

- initial crude responses (Appendix N1);
- advice on the piece of writing in general (Appendix N2);
- advice on the purpose of and approach to the piece of writing (Appendix N3);
- advice on the content and arguments of the piece of writing (Appendix N4);
- advice on the development and organization of ideas of the piece of writing (Appendix N5); and,
- advice on the stylistic matters of the piece of writing (Appendix N6).

The format of out-of-class sharing or evaluation sessions should be standard so that

students become accustomed to it and gradually become better at expressing themselves.

IV. Assessment of writing

What to assess

When formulating writing assessment tasks, CAR teachers may take the following aspects into account:

- whether students are able to achieve the intended goals of the set assignments by including and selecting relevant content and ideas;
- whether students are able to adopt the text structures and genres that are suitable for attaining the purposes intended for the assessment tasks;
- whether students are able to determine the central claims or purposes of the text;
- whether students are able to form logical and sensible arguments surrounding the thesis identified with a range of viewpoints as supporting details;
- whether students are able to achieve cohesion and coherence, with the help of cohesive devices whenever necessary, in their written responses;
- whether students are able to use appropriate and accurate grammatical structures and precise vocabulary to support sophisticated and effective communication;
- whether students are able to maintain an appropriate register and level of formality in conjunction with the genres of the assignments concerned;
- whether students are able to demonstrate an awareness of audience;
- whether students are able to cite relevant sources, integrate sources into their texts, and acknowledge the sources used in adherence to proper academic conventions; and,
- whether students are able to make improvement in the writing process through revising their drafts in response to both teacher feedback, peer feedback and their own insights.

How to assess

Some suggestions for assessment are listed as follows:

Private writing

- a. Critical responses to stimulus questions (with stimulus questions either from CAR teachers or students themselves)
- b. Chapter summaries
- c. Reflective journal entries
- d. Spontaneous journal entries
- e. Book reports
 - o Descriptive
 - o Evaluative
 - o Reflective
- f. Critiques / Reviews

Public writing

- g. Online posts / Blogs
- h. Letters to editor
- i. Essays
- j. Reports
- k. Writing portfolios

Criteria for assessment

Besides the specific criteria that the CAR subject teachers will have for a particular type of writing that they require students to undertake, writing assessments should be able to assess students' ability in the following areas:

- Content
 - Relevance
 - Comprehensiveness
- Argumentation and organization
 - Argumentation
 - Logical / critical presentation of opinions, analyses
 - Cohesion and coherence
- Language
 - Grammar and accuracy
 - Vocabulary
 - Tone, register and style appropriate for the genre
- Referencing and use of sources
 - Quality
 - Quantity
 - Integration
- Development and editing
 - Students' effort in improving their drafts in response to teacher and peer feedback and comments