

Writing Diagnostic Process

1. Establish the context of the writing for the students:

“Your teacher wants to be able to help guide you to being the very best writer you can possibly be. To do this however, they need to understand what your current strengths are as a writer, as well as what areas you might need further teacher support or practice to improve. This is not a test. This is an opportunity for you to show your teacher who you are as a writer and how they can teach, support and extend you from here.”

2. Establish the process:

- a) Students need to **select a topic** to write about. It should be something they are confident about that allows them to draw from their current background knowledge and experience. Consider options such as:
 - i. Choose something you are most passionate about. Something that you love to talk about with your friends, to read about, to watch, play or do. This can literally be anything. Once you’ve chosen the topic of your writing, you can then focus on writing:
 - what you love about it
 - what you find interesting
 - something you could teach someone about it
 - explain a particular element of it
 - what your favourite or least favourite part of it is
 - why people don’t like it or don’t understand it
 - what a class would look like if it was a subject at school
 - ii. Consider what you want to do after you finish Year 12 and beyond. You might know exactly what job you are working towards, or where you want to be in the world, but you also might be still considering your choices and working out who you are as a person. There is no ‘right’ or expected response for this. During your writing you might consider:
 - what job you would like to work in the future
 - where you would like to work or travel in the world
 - what you will need to do to make this happen
 - what skills you can develop now to help you in your future
 - why you really don’t know what you are going to do & how that makes you feel
 - what you know you definitely do not want to do or be in the future
 - iii. How would people describe you as a person? Reflect on the things that make you you including:
 - how you would describe yourself verses how other people might describe you
 - whether you are the same person in different situations (school versus home versus work/spot/with friends etc)
 - whether you are different than you were a year ago, or five years ago
 - what you think you will be like in the future – as a young adult, or as a middle aged person
 - what you want to achieve in life
 - what do you want your legacy to be
- b) Students are given **10 minutes to write** silently and independently. The idea is that students try and keep writing for *the entire 10 minutes without stopping*. Although they can write on anything, and can write in any text type or style they like, they need to keep in mind their audience:
 - i. “You are writing this to your teacher to show them your writing skills. Keeping this in mind consider:
 - writing fairly formally
 - using a descriptive and varied vocabulary
 - writing in a text type that can show your skills off best.”

- c) Once the 10 minutes are up – students are then given **5 additional minutes** to revise and edit their writing. They should be advised to use a different coloured pen to do the revisions so you can see what they wrote during the drafting time and what they did during the revision time.
- i. 'Editing skills are a really important writing skill to have as a writer, so show your ability to notice changes and fix error as much as you can. You shouldn't write any more to the writing in this time, but you can:
- add descriptive, transition or connective words,
 - change words or phrases with synonyms,
 - reorder sentences or paragraphs,
 - fix punctuation, spelling or expression mistakes.

3. Collect and analyse:

Collect the writing (ensuring student's names and the date are clearly identified) and notify students you will not be returning the writing as it is not being assessed but used to inform your teaching moving forward. Then, use the *Writing Diagnostic Overview* (page 3) to guide you to identify key elements to explore and investigate further. Don't feel like you have to comment on everything – but rather notice the key elements that will have the greatest impact on the writing skills for the student.

- a. Highlight spelling, punctuation and syntax errors in different colours to easily 'see' these areas and be able to compare and consider the specifics of these at the end of reading.
- b. Use the table to review the writing in different lenses. Often, we notice one key thing in our first reading, but then notice something wholly different when looking specifically for other elements in subsequent readings.
- c. Dot point the key things you notice at the end of the writing so you can easily refer back to each piece and start compiling cohort data alongside individual necessities.

After your initial, individual reading, then you can look at the writing collectively.

- a. Use the *Writing Diagnostic Analysis* (page 4) to collate information at a class or cohort-level. Remember we are using this to help inform our teaching foci:
 - what is going to be taught for the whole group, for a small group of students, or for individuals along the way
 - what needs to be explicitly taught, consolidated or automated
 - what will require multiple exposures and opportunities to experiment with under time pressure, or focused learning
- b. Use the final table in the *Writing Diagnostic Analysis* sheet to plan WHERE and WHEN you are going to explicitly teach and explore specific ideas.

4. Track student growth, development and future teaching opportunities

Comparing Term 1 writing with Term 3 or 4 writing can be a fabulous way to celebrate success and growth for student (and the success of the teacher!) Often it is difficult to see growth in a student as the writing tasks shift and everyone improves, but comparing a consistent writing task from one term to the next can be incredibly powerful in seeing true growth in *writing* (rather than *assessment*).

Ideally you will want to complete a writing diagnostic at the start of each term. This assists in a number of different ways:

- a. Identifies teaching points for new units and current teaching.
- b. Highlights student growth – allowing opportunities to celebrate success and development.
- c. Highlights skills requiring further consolidation or automaticity.

Writing Diagnostic Overview

As you are reading the student writing, highlight **spelling**, **punctuation**, and **syntax** errors you notice in 3 different colours so you can 'see' these mechanical errors later. What comments can you make about the following elements (including *errors* made prior to self-editing and *mistakes* that have been corrected during editing)?

Spelling errors	- Homophone misuse - Prefix or suffix confusion - Adding affixes errors - Vowel or vowel cluster confusion - Silent letter omissions or misuse - Inaccurate use of double letter (present or omitting) - Mispronunciation errors - Schwa confusion - Phoneme/grapheme confusion	
Punctuation errors	- Capital letter errors - Apostrophes (contraction, possession, or plural misuse) - End mark errors (errors or overuse) - Comma errors (pause, list or syntactical) - Dialogue or quotation mark errors - Colon or semicolon misuse - Hyphen errors - Brackets errors - Overly simplistic punctuation	
Syntax errors	- Subject verb disagreement - Plural errors - Tense errors - Fragmented sentences - Inaccurate use of determiners - Inaccurate use of prepositions - Misplaced modifiers - Confused or repetitive conjunctions - Inconsistent voice or register - Excessive clauses in a single sentence - Lacking noun and verb phrases	
Vocabulary	- Limited or simplistic (mainly tier 1) - Inaccurate use – out of context - Lacking descriptive or figurative language - Inappropriate to context, audience, purpose - Repetitive - Inaccurate, unclear or repetitive cohesive ties (particularly pronouns)	
Flow and cohesion	- Limited or inaccurate use of cohesive devices - Unnecessarily verbose or repetitive - Limited use of punctuation - Lack of, or inaccurate use of paragraphing - Ideas not connected, sporadic, inconsistent	
Handwriting	- Illegible or very messy - Issues with form, position, size and/or spacing - Inconsistent, or becomes messier throughout (showing fatigue)	
Other	- Exceptionally short: no ideas or slow writing (fluency)? - No evidence of self-editing or revision	

Writing Diagnostic Analysis

1. Classify cohort strengths and areas for improvement

Level	Strengths	Areas of Focus
<i>High</i>		
<i>Medium</i>		
<i>Low</i>		

2. Cohort key areas of focus

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3. Embedding into the curriculum: explicit teaching opportunities

Unit:	Unit: