

write@uni: Preparing for Successful Academic Writing



A learning and teaching guide for staff

This guide has been developed for staff who wish to use the write@uni online resource to facilitate first-year students' transition into university writing. It provides suggestions about how and when write@uni can be used in teaching and learning. It also includes a quick guide to the resource and its table of contents.

About the online resource

The write@uni online resource was developed by Libraries and Learning Services during 2015 and 2016. After consultation with students and staff and a thorough review of the literature, it was built around five major themes:

- Expectations of writing at university (Module 1)
- Writing starts with thinking (Module 2)
- Reading informs writing (Module 3)
- Writing with purpose (Module 4)
- Becoming a proficient writer (Module 5)

These interrelated online modules have not been designed to teach entry-level students how to write at university. Rather, they aim to promote greater awareness of the basic concepts and principles underpinning academic writing at tertiary level. Each module contains interactive elements such as videos, comics, quizzes, reading tasks and self-assessment surveys, especially created to promote student understanding and reflection. Also, the modules include links to websites and resources with additional information and advice.

When to use write@uni

While students can complete each module independently, we recommend that they explore write@uni sequentially, from Module 1 through to Module 5. Results from usability testing indicate that students will benefit from completing Modules 1 and 2 before the academic semester starts, and Modules 3 and 4 before they write their first assignment. Module 5 can be completed either before or after an assignment has been submitted.

How to use write@uni

Write@uni can be used in a variety of ways. Students could either be referred to or required to complete specific modules/sections of the resource:

| Before | During | After |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Doing an assigned course reading• Completing a written assignment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tutorials/lectures• Targeted learning sessions• One-on-one advisory sessions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feedback has been provided on an assignment |

Students may also benefit from analysing and discussing with peers/tutors the writing samples in Module 4.

Below is a summary of suggested activities that students can be asked to complete depending on their specific learning needs. For a detailed overview of the content and features of the resource, please refer to Appendix A.

Table 1. Quick Guide to write@uni

| Students may need to know about... | Suggested Activities |
|---|---|
| The importance of writing | 0.2 Why improve as a writer? |
| Differences between high school and university study | 1.4 Becoming a member of a new culture (lecturer video) 1.6 From high school to uni: what's the difference? (reflective quiz) 1.10 How ready are you? (self-assessment survey) |
| Academia and knowledge creation | 2.3 Thinking at university |
| Assignment questions and university writing | 1.7 Just answer the essay question! (comic) 4.10 Writing is recursive: Further reading section |
| Course reading lists and effective reading | 3.4 Reading for your course (interactive activity) 3.5 Are you a strategic reader? (reflective quiz) 3.7 Reading effectively (lecturer video) |
| University writing assignments | 4.2 Writing at university |
| Argument and critical thinking/reading/writing | 2.5 Believe it or not (reflective quiz) 2.6 What is critical thinking? (lecturer video) 2.9 Beyond the first impression (picture analysis activity) 2.10 When critical thinking is absent (reading activity) |
| | 3.10 Reading with a critical eye (animated video) 4.7 Writing in an academic voice (interactive activity) |
| Academic writing features and language (e.g. use of personal pronouns and passive/active voice) | 4.4 The nature of academic writing (lecturer video) 4.5 Rumour has it... (reflective quiz) 4.6 Writing is a response (interactive activity) 4.11 Oh dear... (comic) |
| Exemplar writing samples from UoA students | 4.7 Writing in an academic voice (interactive activity) 4.8 Examples of student writing (annotated samples) |
| The writing process/journey | 4.10 Writing is recursive (interactive activities) 4.14 Writing is refining (lecturer videos) 5.3 It's all about practice (lecturer videos) |
| Thinking/reading/writing across the disciplines | 2.7 Expectations of you as a critical thinker (lecturer videos) 3.8 Expectations of you as a reader (lecturer videos) 4.12 Expectations of you as a writer (lecturer videos) |

Note: Individual pages of the *write@uni* resource can be embedded into Canvas courses (See Appendix B).

Appendix A: Table of Contents

Home

Introduction

| Name of section | Type of page | Page content |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| 0.1 Introduction page | Introduction video | |
| Meet the characters | Comic characters introduction | |
| 0.2 Why improve as a writer? | Reflective activity | Students learn about the top ten skills and attributes employers look for in new graduates. |
| 0.3 Writing matters | Videos | Alumni, employers and UofA academic staff explain why developing good writing skills is important. |

Module 1: Expectations of writing at university

| Name of section | Type of page | Page content |
|--|------------------------------------|--|
| Module 1: Expectations of writing at university | Landing page | Learning outcome: Understand the differences between school and university regarding academic culture and expectations of writing. |
| 1.1 Who's Rubrick? | Comic | |
| 1.2 Expectations about university | Student interview videos | UofA students talk about their initial expectations about university study. |
| 1.3 From high school to university | Comic | |
| 1.4 Becoming a member of a new culture | Explanatory video | Associate Professor Jason Stephens discusses the university academic culture and values. |
| 1.5 What's for homework? | Comic | |
| 1.6 From high school to uni: what's the difference? | Reflective quiz and student quotes | Students are encouraged to reflect on their assumptions about university study. |
| 1.7 Just answer the essay question! | Comic | |
| 1.8 Finding out what's expected of you | Audio clips | UofA students give tips on how to find out what's expected at university. |
| 1.9 Summary | Video and summary file | Summary Module 1 |
| 1.10 How ready are you? | Self-assessment | Students are invited to identify their strengths and weaknesses and then directed to relevant academic resources and services. |

Module 2: Writing starts with thinking

| Name of section | Type of page | Page content |
|--|-----------------------------|--|
| Module 2: Writing starts with thinking | Landing page | Learning outcome: Know why critical thinking is essential for and expected in writing at university. |
| 2.1 Thinking caps | Comic | |
| 2.2 Learning to think at a higher level | Student interview videos | UofA students talk about thinking at university. |
| 2.3 Thinking at university | Explanatory content | Students are introduced to universities' role in advancing knowledge through research and debate. |
| 2.4 More cyclists, fewer cars | Comic | |
| 2.5 Assessing expert claims | Reflective quiz | Students are encouraged to question commonly-held assumptions. |
| 2.6 What is critical thinking? | Explanatory video | Dr Patrick Girard discusses the definition and importance of critical thinking and argument. |
| 2.7 Expectations of you as a critical thinker | Lecturer videos | Lecturers from across the faculties explain what they expect of students as critical thinkers. |
| 2.8 What gains marks | Explanatory content | Students learn about the skills and behaviours that can help them gain good marks. |
| 2.9 Beyond the first impression | Picture-analysis activity | Students are introduced to important steps in critical thinking: focusing on detail, gaining perspective, and drawing conclusions. |
| 2.10 When critical thinking is absent | Reading activity | Students are invited to discover what can happen when information is taken at face value. |
| 2.11 Developing a critical mind | Student and lecturer videos | UofA students and staff give tips on how to become a better critical thinker. |
| 2.12 Summary | Video and summary file | Summary Module 2 |
| 2.13 How ready are you? | Self-assessment | Students are invited to identify their strengths and weaknesses and then directed to relevant academic resources and services. |

Module 3: Reading informs writing

| Name of section | Type of page | Page content |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Module 3: Reading informs writing | Landing page | Learning outcome: Understand what effective reading involves at university and how it informs the writing process. |
| 3.1 One book, all answers! | Comic | |
| 3.2 Learning to read in different ways | Student interview videos | UofA students talk about their university reading experiences. |
| 3.3 What will you read for? | Explanatory content | Students are introduced to examples of the reading materials and purposes they'll encounter at university. |
| 3.4 Reading for your course | Reading list activity | Students are asked to select what to read from a course reading list. |
| 3.5 Are you a strategic reader? | Reflective quiz | Students are encouraged to reflect on their use of reading strategies. |
| 3.6 But it's ALL important! | Comic | |
| 3.7 Reading effectively | Explanatory video | Associate Professor Maartjée Abbenhuis discusses the importance of reading actively, purposefully and critically. Students are also introduced to genre awareness. |
| 3.8 Expectations of you as a reader | Lecturer videos | Lecturers from across the faculties explain what they expect of students as critical readers. Students also learn about the skills and behaviours that can help them gain good marks. |
| 3.9 Are you a critical reader? | Reading activity | Students are asked to do a close-reading activity of an opinion piece to assess their critical reading skills. |
| 3.10 Reading with a critical eye | Explanatory video | Students are introduced to the importance of reading actively and asking questions before, during and after reading. |
| 3.11 Developing as a reader | Student and lecturer videos | UofA students and staff give tips on how to become a better critical reader |
| 3.12 Summary | Video and summary file | Summary Module 3 |
| 3.13 How ready are you? | Self-assessment | Students are invited to identify their strengths and weaknesses and then directed to relevant academic resources and services. |

Module 4: Writing with purpose

| Name of section | Type of page | Page content |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Module 4: Writing with purpose | Landing page | Learning outcome: Have insight into the nature of academic writing, and what effective writing involves at university level. |
| 4.1 From high school to uni writing | Student interview videos | UofA students talk about their university writing experiences. |
| 4.2 Writing at university | Explanatory content | Students are introduced to common writing assignments at university. |
| 4.3 Writing is everywhere | Comic | |
| 4.4 The nature of academic writing | Explanatory videos | Dr Keith Montgomery discusses the difference between speaking and writing and the features of academic writing. |
| 4.5 Any false assumptions? | Reflective quiz | Students are encouraged to reflect on their assumptions about academic writing. |
| 4.6 Can I use "I"? | Explanatory content | Students are introduced to a number of academic writing style and language features (e.g., active vs. passive, hedging). They can also find these features used in annotated student writing samples . |
| 4.7 Writing in an academic voice | Explanatory content and activity | Students are invited to read through excerpts of either an essay or report to see how other UofA students demonstrate their academic voice. They can find the full annotated version of these and other writing genres on page 4.8. |
| 4.9 I'm so lost! | Comic | |
| 4.10 Writing is a process | Explanatory content | Students learn about the writing process from researching to proofreading (and what questions to consider when preparing for and writing assignments). |
| 4.11 Oh dear... | Comic | |
| 4.12 Expectations of you as a writer | Lecturer videos | Lecturers from across the faculties explain what they expect of students as good writers. Students also learn about the skills and behaviours that can help them gain good marks. |
| 4.13 But I love it! | Comic | |
| 4.14 Revising and editing | Lecturer videos | Lecturers talk about the importance of revising, editing and proofreading. |
| 4.15 Developing as a writer | Student and lecturer videos | UofA students and staff give tips on how to become a better writer. |
| 4.16 Summary | Video and summary file | Summary Module 4 |
| 4.17 How ready are you? | Self-assessment | Students are invited to identify their strengths and weaknesses and then directed to relevant academic resources and services. |

Module 5: Becoming a proficient writer

| Name of section | Type of page | Page content |
|--|---------------------|--|
| Module 5: Becoming a proficient writer | Landing page | Learning outcome: Know how you can develop as a proficient academic writer. |
| 5.1 Putting it all together | Review activity | Recap of complete resource content: thinking, reading and writing are interconnected at university. |
| 5.2 We're done, right? | Comic | |
| 5.3 It's all about practice | Lecturer videos | Professor Gary Barkhuizen talks about his personal writing journey and offers students advice on how to become better writers. |
| 5.4 How do I figure out what I did wrong? | Comic | |
| 5.5 What now? | Development | UofA graduate students talk about their writing skills development. Students also have the possibility to read UofA students' writing stories. |
| 5.6 And we do it all over again | Comic | |

[Feedback](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

[References](#)

Appendix B: write@uni in Canvas

The individual pages of the write@uni resource listed in Table 1 can be embedded into Canvas. They can be found on the Canvas Commons and imported into any Canvas course.

1. Go to the University of Auckland [Canvas Commons](#) and type write@uni.

The screenshot shows the Canvas Commons interface. The search bar contains 'write@uni' and shows 3,848 results. The results are displayed in a grid of 10 cards, each featuring a 'write@uni' logo and a specific resource title and description.

| Title | Author | Date |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| 4.11 Expectations of you as a writer | Jenny Mendieta Aguilar | 23 FEB 2017 |
| 4.10 Oh dear... | Jenny Mendieta Aguilar | 23 FEB 2017 |
| 0.2 Why improve as a writer? | Jenny Mendieta Aguilar | 21 FEB 2017 |
| 2.10 When critical thinking is absent | Olivia Rutti | 22 FEB 2017 |
| 4.5 Rumour has it... | Jenny Mendieta Aguilar | 23 FEB 2017 |
| 2.3 Thinking at university | Olivia Rutti | 22 FEB 2017 |
| 2.9 Beyond the first impression | Olivia Rutti | 22 FEB 2017 |
| 2.6 What is critical thinking? | Olivia Rutti | 22 FEB 2017 |
| 3.10 Reading with a critical eye | Jenny Mendieta Aguilar | 23 FEB 2017 |
| 3.8 Expectations of you as a reader | Jenny Mendieta Aguilar | 23 FEB 2017 |

2. Select the activity or page you would like to import and click on 'import into my course'.

The screenshot displays the Canvas Commons interface. At the top, there is a blue navigation bar with the Canvas Commons logo, search, shared, imported, and updates (0) options, and a user profile icon. A vertical sidebar on the left contains icons for Account, Dashboard, Courses, Calendar, Inbox, Commons, and Help.


The main content area shows a resource titled "2.9 Beyond the first impression" with a "Back" button. The resource summary includes a star rating of 0, a "Leave a review" link, and details: "Grade/Level 12, Undergraduate, Graduate", "Shared with The University of Auckland", and "Type IMS Common Cartridge File (.imscc)". The description reads: "Identify the skills you may need to develop to become a better critical thinker." Below the text are four tags: "critical thinking", "thinking at university", "write@uni", and "writeatuni". An illustration of a laptop with "write @ uni" on the screen is shown.

On the right side, there is an "Import into Canvas" panel. It features a search box for a course, a list of course options with checkboxes (All, write@uni, INFOLIT101, W@S1 test course, Canvas design templates), and a green "Import into course" button. Below this panel is a "Download 3.09 kB" link.

Below the resource description, there is a "Reviews" section with a star rating of 0. A review form is visible, showing the reviewer's name "Jenny Mendieta Aguilar", a "Leave a Rating" prompt with a star icon, a text input field with the placeholder "Leave your review", and a "Submit" button. The character count "1,000 characters remaining" is shown at the bottom of the form.

At the bottom right, there is a metadata section showing "LAST UPDATE: 22/02/17", "SHARED BY: Olivia Rutti", "ACCOUNT: The University of Auckland", and "LICENCE: Copyrighted."

3. Check your course and make sure that you have imported the desired page.



W@S1 > Pages > 2.9 Beyond the first impression

Home | View all pages | Publish | Edit | Settings

Account | Dashboard | Courses | Calendar | Inbox | Commons | Help

Discussions | Quizzes | Assignments | Reading Lists | Outcomes | Chat | People | Piazza | Grades | Announcements | Conferences | Collaborations | Reading Effectively | SCORM | Course Roster | SET Centre | SET Evaluations | Settings


2.9 Beyond the first impression

Think of the last time you admired a piece of art. You may have asked yourself questions such as: "Who made it? How and when was it made? What if I look at it from a different angle? What's the story behind it?"

Follow the four steps below to **see what lies behind another artwork**.

Step 1: First impression

Look at the picture and answer the questions to see what you discover at first sight:



- What is it?
 - A painting
 - A collage
 - An installation
- How old is it?
 - Mid 19th century
 - Early 20th century
 - Contemporary
- Who is portrayed?
 - A postman
 - A business man
 - A policeman

Step 2: Focusing on detail

Step 3: Gaining perspective

Step 4: Drawing conclusions