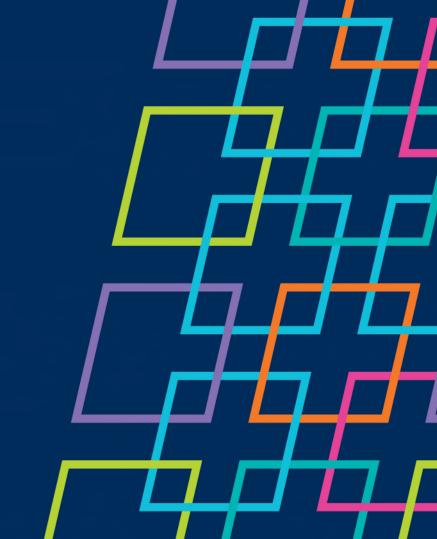# Using student samples in insessional materials design: challenges and tensions

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Our Context

Insessional provision

- Academic Language & Literacy (ALL)
  - Open to all students
  - UG & PG (*50-60 separate provisions*)
  - CEM model (Contextualised, Embedded, Mapped) (Sloan & Porter, 2009)

- Other provision
  - Workshops/tutorials for postgraduate researchers (PhD students)
  - Widening participation
  - Summer short courses

Outline

- Theories underpinning our approach
- What we used to do
- What we're doing now
- Challenges and opportunities

Theories & principles

- Genre Analysis
- Systemic Functional Language
- Language as choice
- Tools not rules

Using student samples

"Exemplars help students to recognise features of quality and understand assessment expectations…**Authentic student samples** are most commonly used as they represent a suitable target level for students" (Smyth & Carless, 2021, p,393).

Working with samples of their own writing is **less intimidating** for students than working with published academic texts and gives students a better understanding of the expected standards (Wingate, 2012 p.32).

Students should be exposed to "**multiple exemplars** so that they can see a continuum of different standards" (Smyth & Carless, 2021, p, 394).

Reviewing the work of peers gives students experience of making judgements about quality and develop their **evaluative judgment** (Sadler 2010).

Previous approach

Stage 1	Initial reflections
Stage 2	Expectations (based on ILOs/Marking Criteria/Tutor feedback)
Stage 3	'Input'
Stage 4	Sample analysis (how the samples meet expectations/conform to the input)
Stage 5	Reflection

1. Reflect

In some of your units, you will need to write an essay.
- What experience do you have of writing essays in your undergraduate study?
- What do you know about how to organise an essay?

2. Expectations

Analyse these samples of tutor feedback. Highlight the references to organisation. What has the student done well in each case? What could they have improved on?

Have you had similar feedback on your essay assignments?

3. Input

A key characteristic of most academic formats is that they have an introduction and conclusion. In the following two sections we will focus on each of these.

4. Sample Analysis

In Appendix 2, there are 2 examples of introductions to the PPPP essay assignment. **Can you identify the features of introduction/conclusion we have been looking at? Which introduction/conclusion do you think is more effective and why?**

5. Reflection

What are your main takeaways from this session?

If you have already started writing your essay, consider how you could improve your essay structure based on this lesson.

Below are the **typical features** of a conclusion. They are listed in the suggested order (from specific to general). Not all features are necessary, and some may not be relevant to the conclusion of your assignment.

A or B	A summary of your main ideas.
B or A	A restatement of the thesis statement (or this can precede the summary of your main ideas).
C	Implications. The 'so what?'. How does your conclusion affect the wider context? What does it mean in the real world?
D	Limitations to your essay (optional). Do you need to explain any limitation or areas your essay did not cover?
E	Recommendations or suggestions for further research (optional)

Analyse the introduction below. Can you identify these features?

- Importance of topic
- Aim
- Thesis statement
- Overview

Is this a successful introduction? Why (not)? If not, how can it be improved?

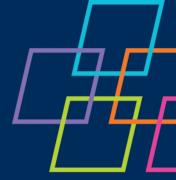Look at the student assignment conclusion below. Identify these components.

- Signposting the conclusion
- Summary of the assignment
- Re-statement of main argument
- Implication(s)

Is it an effective conclusion? Why (not)? If not, how can it be improved?

New approach

Stage 1	Starting point
Stage 2	Initial sample analysis
Stage 3	Input
Stage 4	Extended sample analysis
Stage 5	Application

Students build on their initial understanding with 'check-in' points after each section

Stage 1: Starting point

What's your definition of a 'paragraph'?

What do you think are the characteristics of a well-written paragraph?

Stage 2: Initial sample analysis

Choose two of the samples (1-4) that follow. What conclusions can you draw about what makes an effective paragraph?

Reconsider your initial ideas. Have your ideas about what makes an effective paragraph changed?

Stage 3: Input

Now consider the ideas in the suggestions below on achieving paragraph writing.

Stage 4: Detailed sample analysis

Now based on what we have discussed about **paragraph unity**, **organisation of ideas, coherence** and **cohesion,** analyse the longer samples below.

How effectively has the writer organised their ideas?

Stage 5: Application

How can you apply what we have looked at in relation to your own writing?

- Working alone or with a partner, review some of your own writing focusing on the points we have covered.

- Or work together to revise one of the samples to improve the coherence and cohesion.

Coherence and cohesion

Well-written paragraphs have both **coherence** and **cohesion**. **Coherence** relates to the clarity and connectedness of the writing, and can be perceived through logical connections between ideas within the paragraph itself and to broader ideas within the piece of writing as a whole. It may be achieved through the use of features such as **logical organisation** and **ordering** of ideas, **linking devices or phrases** (sometimes referred to as **signalling**).

Cohesion, and the related concept of **flow**, refers to the smoothness of transitions within the writing and the overall effect on the reader of creating a piece of writing which 'hangs together'. A coherent paragraph may be achieved through the use of **cohesive devices** such as linking phrases, references made using **repetition** of key words or **substitution** through the use of reference pronouns or synonyms. Also, variations in sentence structure and patterns such as **'given to new'** may be useful aids to improving flow of writing and creating a smooth narrative.

'Given to **new**' organisation pattern, e.g.

"Well-written paragraphs have both **coherence** and cohesion. Coherence (*repetition of key word*) **relates to** clarity and connectedness of the writing, and can be perceived through logical connections between ideas within the paragraph itself and to broader ideas within the piece of writing as a whole. A coherent paragraph (avoiding repetition of key noun – changing noun 'coherence' to adj. 'coherent) 'may be
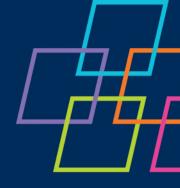
Change in focus

Move away from:

- *What are the features of a 'good' introduction? What does a 'good' introduction look like?*

To

- *How effectively has the writer structured this introduction?*

- *What does this sample tell you about the features of a well-structured introduction?*

Implications for materials writers

Students evaluate the effectiveness of the sample as readers and draw conclusions from this rather than giving them features to look for

= wide range of good quality samples
= more detailed sample analysis when writing materials

Challenges and tensions

- Access to samples
- How many samples can students read in a session?
- Length of samples?
- Focus on content
- What makes a 'good quality' sample? (who decides?)

Opportunities

- Developing our understanding (EAP practitioners) of writing in different disciplines

- Building relationships with departments

- Allowing for differentiation

Thank you!

Any questions?

References

Sadler, D.R. (2010) Beyond feedback: developing student capability in complex appraisal, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 35 (5), pp. 535-550.

Sloan, D. & Porter, E. (2009). The management of English language support in postgraduate business education: the CEM Model (contextualisation, embedding and mapping), *International Journal of Management Education* 7(2), pp. 51-58.

Smyth, P. & Carless, D. (2021). Theorising how teachers manage the use of exemplars: towards mediated learning from exemplars, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 46 (3), pp. 393–406.

Wingate, U. (2012). Using Academic Literacies and genre-based models for academic writing instruction: A 'literacy' journey. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes,* 11(1), pp.26-37.