A school-wide approach to marking writing

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The importance of language

It is through the study of English that individuals learn to analyse, understand, communicate and build relationships with others and with the world around them. The study of English plays a key role in the development of reading and literacy skills which help young people develop the knowledge and skills needed for education, training and the workplace.

- *The Australian Curriculum: English v8.2*
How many forms of writing will your students need?

- Recount
- Narrative
- Information report
- Exposition
- Argument
- Letter of complaint
- Job application (advertisement)
- Evaluation (review)

How many forms of writing are actively taught?
AUTHENTIC TEXTS
AUTHENTIC CONTEXTS

But what does this mean for teaching writing?
Which subjects are best suited to teach these forms of writing?

- Recount
- Narrative
- Information report
- Exposition
- Argument
- Letter of complaint
- Job application (advertisement)
- Evaluation (review)
AUTHENTIC TEXTS
AUTHENTIC CONTEXTS

Every subject needs to teach writing.
What is criterion-referenced assessment?

- Student performance is measured against a fixed set of criteria which are described in advance
  - Criteria descriptors match what students are expected to be able to do at each stage of their education
- The aim is for every student to achieve the top score in every criterion (key difference from norm-referenced assessment)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Text Structure</th>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Persuasive Devices</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Cohesion</th>
<th>Paragraphing</th>
<th>Sentence Structure</th>
<th>Punctuation</th>
<th>Spelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 symbols or drawings</td>
<td>no evidence</td>
<td>insufficient evidence</td>
<td>insufficient evidence</td>
<td>symbols or drawings</td>
<td>symbols or drawings</td>
<td>no correct use of paragraphing</td>
<td>no evidence of correct sentence punctuation</td>
<td>no conventional spelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 limited response</td>
<td>minimal evidence (one component only)</td>
<td>one idea or unrelated ideas</td>
<td>statement of personal opinion or one or two instances (may be same type)</td>
<td>very short script</td>
<td>short script; links are missing or incorrect</td>
<td>ideas are separated into paragraphs</td>
<td>some correct formation of sentences</td>
<td>at least one correct sentence marker (cap or full stop)</td>
<td>limited evidence (≤20 words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 basic awareness that attempts to orient readers</td>
<td>two identifiable components or all components present but weak</td>
<td>one elaborated idea or many related but unelaborated ideas</td>
<td>≥3 instances of devices that support writer’s position (≥2 types)</td>
<td>mostly simple words</td>
<td>some correct links between sentences</td>
<td>all paragraphs are focussed; at least one is logical and contains topic sentence</td>
<td>sentences mostly simple or compound</td>
<td>≥2 sentences correctly punctuated or one correct with one other correct punctuation</td>
<td>correct spelling of simple words and ≥2 common words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 orient reader</td>
<td>contains an intro. body and conclusion</td>
<td>supported with some elaboration</td>
<td>some devices used; effective but not sustained</td>
<td>≥4 precise words or word groups</td>
<td>controlled use of cohesive devices</td>
<td>paragraphing supports argument</td>
<td>most (80%) simple and compound correct; some complex correct</td>
<td>most (80%) sentence punctuation correct (≥5 sentences) and ≥2 other punctuation correct</td>
<td>correct spelling of most simple words and ≥20 common words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 begins to engage and persuade through language choices</td>
<td>all components well developed</td>
<td>elaborated and contribute effectively to writer’s position</td>
<td>sustained and effective use of devices</td>
<td>sustained and consistent use of precise words and word groups</td>
<td>a range of cohesive devices used correctly and deliberately</td>
<td>most simple, compound and complex correct; lacks variety</td>
<td>all sentence correct and mostly correct use of other punctuation</td>
<td>correct spelling of simple words, most common words and ≥2 difficult words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 persuades through deliberate lang. choices and persuasive techniques</td>
<td>selected and crafted to be highly persuasive</td>
<td>fluent and articulate use of precise and effective words and word groups</td>
<td>errors in sophisticated structures; demonstrates variety</td>
<td>accurate use of all applicable punctuation</td>
<td>correct spelling of simple words, most common words and ≥10 difficult words</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 controls writer/reader relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>all sentences correct</td>
<td></td>
<td>correct spelling of all words and ≥15 difficult words</td>
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</table>
# Persuasive Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Arguments</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th>Rhetorical Devices</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Cohesion</th>
<th>Sentence Structure</th>
<th>Syntax</th>
<th>Punctuation</th>
<th>Spelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no introduction is provided</td>
<td>no arguments are provided</td>
<td>no conclusion is provided</td>
<td>writing does not use modal auxiliaries correctly or appropriately</td>
<td>writing uses imprecise or mundane word choices</td>
<td>writing has several errors in pronouns and connectives</td>
<td>most sentences are unsuccessful or only 1 or 2 sentences are indicated</td>
<td>writing has several syntax errors</td>
<td>sentence punctuation is not always evident</td>
<td>some high frequency words with common letter patterns are correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there is a simple introduction (headline/title to be counted)</td>
<td>writing presents a brief argument or uses only a personal appeal</td>
<td>there is a simple conclusion</td>
<td>writing uses modal auxiliaries (e.g. <em>can, might</em>) appropriately and/or uses only one rhetorical device</td>
<td>writing uses appropriate choices to support the argument</td>
<td>almost all pronouns and connectives are correct</td>
<td>most sentences are correctly structured (≥3 attempted)</td>
<td>almost all syntax is correct</td>
<td>sentence punctuation is almost always evident</td>
<td>nearly all words with common letter patterns and high frequency words are correct</td>
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<tr>
<td>there is a statement of claim (may include a preview of arguments)</td>
<td>most arguments presented are developed (elaborated; exemplified) (on topic to score)</td>
<td>the conclusion summarises the arguments presented</td>
<td>writing uses some (≥2) common rhetorical devices</td>
<td>writing uses some effective vocabulary to enhance the argument</td>
<td>all pronouns and connectives are correct</td>
<td>nearly all sentences are correctly structured with some deliberately structured for rhetorical effect</td>
<td>all syntax is correct</td>
<td>all sentence punctuation is evident and most simple punctuation are correct</td>
<td>nearly all less frequently used words and words with less common letter patterns are correct</td>
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<tr>
<td>the introduction is engaging</td>
<td>arguments are objective and coherently justified</td>
<td>the conclusion is effective and persuasive</td>
<td>writing uses some (≥2) sophisticated rhetorical devices</td>
<td>writing uses a range of effective vocabulary to enhance the argument</td>
<td>nearly all sentences are correctly structured with some complex structures for rhetorical effect (≥5 attempted)</td>
<td>all sentence punctuation is evident and most simple and complex punctuation are correct</td>
<td>nearly all words with difficult letter patterns or unusual spelling are correct</td>
<td>nearly all challenging words appropriate to the task are correct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arguments are persuasive and convincing (may include refutation)</td>
<td>writing uses a range of sophisticated rhetorical devices effectively</td>
<td>writing uses effective language across the text and one e.g. of <em>affective lang.</em> for persuasive effect</td>
<td>writing uses a range of sophisticated rhetorical devices effectively</td>
<td>writing uses a range of effective vocabulary to enhance the argument</td>
<td>all sentences are correctly structured with a range of complex sentences for rhetorical effect (≥7 attempted)</td>
<td>all punctuation, including complex punctuation, is correct</td>
<td>nearly all challenging words appropriate to the task are correct</td>
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</table>
The beauty of criterion-referenced assessment of writing

Analysis of performance

- Students are marked according to the standards described
- Each score within a criterion describes a ‘step up’
- Marks are not just numbers: they become meaningful because they can be matched to explicit descriptors
- Criteria can be shared across the whole school: teachers, students and parents
The beauty of criterion-referenced assessment of writing

Creating and using the criteria

- You can describe as many criteria as you like
  - Use the curriculum, teacher expertise, knowledge and understanding of the student body OR (don’t reinvent the wheel) use the NAPLAN or ICAS criteria
- You can use as many or as few criteria as you like
- All subject teachers can use some of the criteria in marking
The beauty of criterion-referenced assessment of writing?

Everyone’s on the same page.
(or thereabouts)
You share the burden and you share the rewards.
The yucky side of criterion-referenced assessment of writing

There’s a lot of upfront work!

- Deciding on and writing up criteria
- Creating a marking manual with annotated texts
- Training ALL teachers plus refresher training
- Having moderation exercises at least once a year (changes in student profile; impact of teaching and learning programs)
Using criterion-referenced assessment of writing across the school means that there are no (or at least fewer) secrets between departments.

It also means the school needs a good data management system.
Workshop task

Look at the two marking schemes for persuasive writing. Consider the subjects + English that would use persuasive writing.

- Which criteria are important? To whom?
- Which criteria would you keep and which discard?
- How much detail do you want?
  - Text Structure vs Intro/Argument/Conclusion
  - Syntax or Agreement/Prepositions/Clause Pattern
Final words about using criterion-referenced assessment of writing across the school

- Everything beautiful comes with hard work.
- Once done, though, it can be used forever (with tweaks and constant practice).
- Students understand that skills are transferable!
- Teachers share the burden and share the rewards:
  - Everyone has to learn how to use the criteria properly and to report using them.
  - Teachers can focus on criteria that are most relevant to their subject.
  - The number of essays could be reduced! 😊
  - Explicit criteria means students know how they can improve.