



## Feedback on Essay Introductions in the Four Broad Disciplines

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In the context of the essay genre as part of the English Writing Requirement, the feedback given on the introduction section holds a very significant place. The Introduction section is a blueprint for the rest of the essay; feedback on this section can set the shape of the final essay. This talk sheds light on the aspects that the feedback on the Introduction section in the essay genre family addresses and how it differs across the four broad disciplines. The data analyzed is a cross-section of my PhD research findings.

PhD in Global Education  
Coventry University

“Towards a theory of effective feedback on disciplinary writing”

# Relevant Research Questions

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- **MRQ: What types of feedback results in change in L2 undergraduate writers' development of discipline-specific essay writing?**
- SRQ1: What linguistic features of essays does the written feedback address? How does this feedback differ across the disciplines?

# Nesi & Gardner 2012

<b>Genres</b>	<b>exposition</b>	<b>discussion</b>	<b>challenge</b>	<b>factorial</b>	<b>consequential</b>	<b>commentary</b>
<b>genre stages</b>	thesis, evidence, restate thesis	issue, alternative arguments, final position	challenge, evidence, thesis	state, contributory factors, summary thesis	state, factors, thesis ensuing summary	text(s) introduction, comments, summary

# Step 1- Determine genre and its social purpose (Context of Culture) MRQ

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01

Analyse Subject  
Leaders' and EWR  
generated  
Assignment  
Guidelines

02

Compare genre  
features with Nesi  
and Gardner's  
genre stages and  
other features

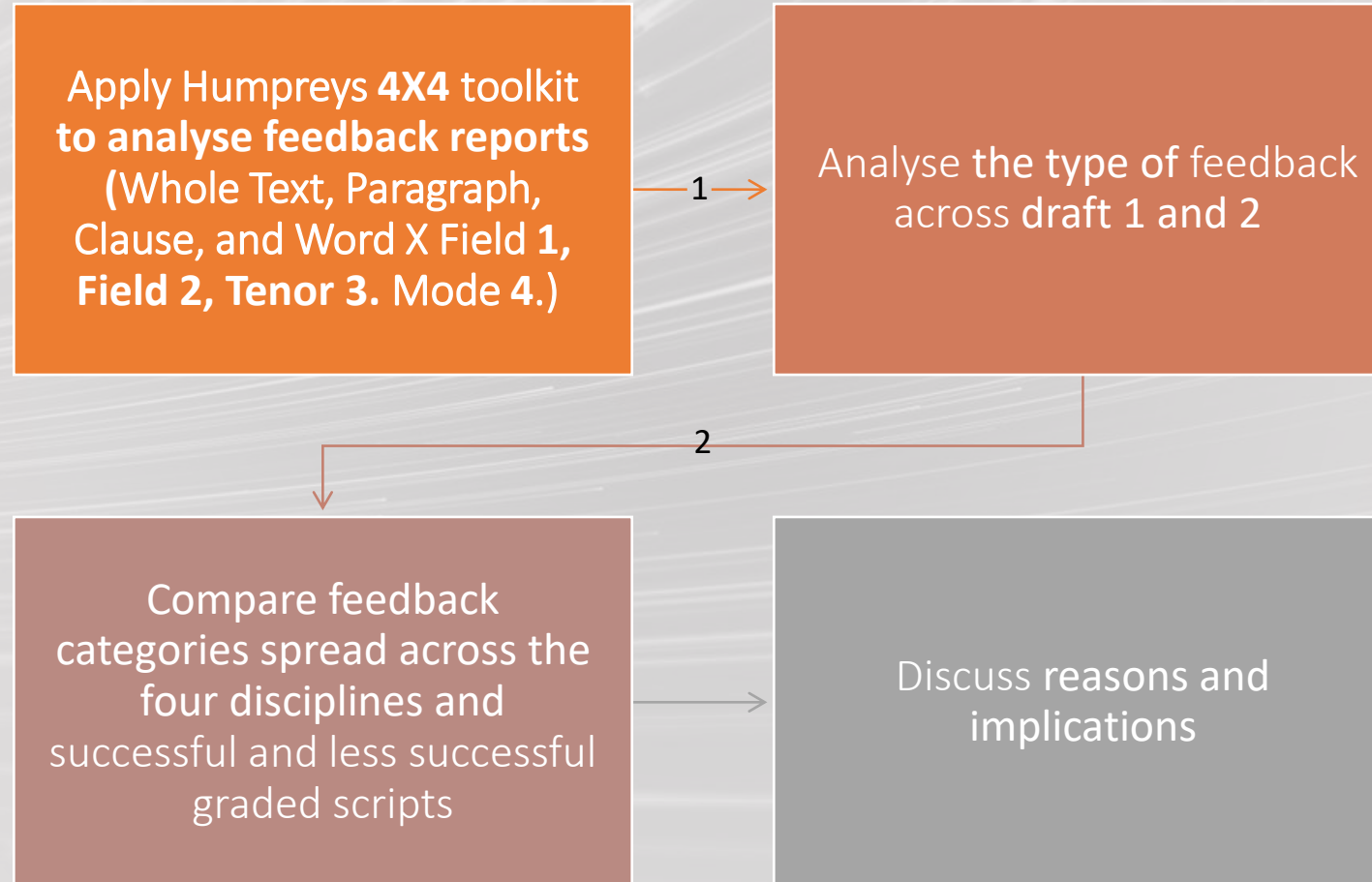
03

Analyse Checklists  
to see if these  
reflected SL's  
genre expectations

04

Map out broad  
structure of  
assignment scripts  
for compliance

# Step 2 Explore feedback for Register (Context of Situation) **SRQ1**



BD	Subject Code	Subject Title	Genre
LS	ABCT1D15	Our Endangered Earth - We invited two language teachers from Sem 2, 2022-23 (same subject, no changes a year later) instead as the language teacher the target semester was unable to participate.	ESSAY
LS	SN2A01	Fundamentals of disaster resilience	ESSAY
SS	APSS1B17-1	Contemporary Chinese Society and Popular Culture	ESSAY
SS	APSS1C35	Growing up in Hong Kong: Reflections on its cultural and moral values	CRITIQUE
PS	BME1D01	Bionic Human and the Future of Being Human	ESSAY
PS	BME1D02	Wearable Healthcare and Fitness Devices for Everyone	CRITIQUE
AH	CBS1A18	Life and Death	ESSAY
AH	CBS1C29	Chinese Art and Design	COMMENTARY

Documents collected  
for analysis

- **Broad disciplines and subjects Semester 2, 2021-22**

# Documents collected for analysis

Document	Draft 1	Draft 2	Final	Total
Assignment guidelines	8			8
Checklists	8 (sometimes different for D1 and D2)			8
Scripts	32	32	7	71
Feedback reports	32	32		64
Student Reflections and feedback reports for mini corpus analysis if needed.	All from the subjects from the chosen semester			for quantitative / corpus analysis
<b>Total documents</b>				<b>151</b>

1:1  
Interviews  
held

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Language Lecturers – 16/16  
(two from each subject)

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Subject Lecturers – 5

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Students – 7



# Humpreys 4X4 Toolkit (2015)

Language to	1-Whole text (Structure & Organisation)	2-Paragraph	3-Sentence (Clause & clause complex)	4-Word and Expression
a- express ideas (field)	Ideas unfold as stages to achieve text purpose (e.g., position statement > arguments > reinforcement)	Ideas from phases according to subject (e.g., Point > Elaboration > Evidence > Link)	expanded noun groups to describe and classify	Technical terms for specific disciplines
a- Expand & connect ideas (field)	Multiple ideas developed and combined logically across text to form an analytical framework	Ideas expanded logically across phases (e.g., Through cause and effect)	Ideas expand and/or project to form well-structured simple and complex sentences	Relating and reporting terms to define, classify, show cause and effect, quote, and report
b-Interact with others (tenor)	Proposition reinforced and justified prosodically to convince audience that a position is valid	Claims supported, justified, reinforced and/or defended	Concessive clauses used to expand and then contract space for alternative voices	Objective evaluative vocabulary (e.g., Significance, relevance) ...
c-Create cohesive texts (mode)	Text organisation made clear through layout, previewing and reviewing of content	Information forms waves from dense 'packed' language to 'concrete' unpacked	Sentence openers focus attention on topic and flow of information...	Abstract nouns used to package and track ideas...

Language to	1-Whole text (Structure & Organisation)	2-Paragraph	3-Sentence (Clause & clause complex)	4-Word and Expression
a- express ideas (field)	Ideas unfold as stages to achieve text purpose (e.g., position statement > arguments > reinforcement	Ideas from phases according to subject (e.g., Point > Elaboration > Evidence > Link)	expanded noun groups to describe and classify	Technical terms for specific disciplines
Files	14	28	0	0
References	17	42	0	0
Codes	Content descriptive vs analytical; Interesting and insightful content; overall organisation and structure	Conclusion - structure and content, Introduction - Background not specific or applicable; clear or vague or missing thesis statement needed; include why the topic was chosen, the significance of the topic; preview content for the reader; Purpose; starting with main argument; structure. Paragraph - relevance of ideas		
b. Expand & connect ideas (field)	Multiple ideas developed and combined logically across text to form an analytical framework	Ideas expanded logically across phases (e.g., Through cause and effect)	Ideas expand and/or project to form well-structured simple and complex sentences	Relating and reporting terms to define, classify, show cause and effect, quote, and report
files	15	9	0	0
References	23	9	0	0
codes	Adding more content points as arguments, suggestions or examples; connecting theory(ies) and experience; Overall essay - Content too general; Presentation of argument - connecting theories and social values; demonstrating knowledge of concepts; Topic - acknowledging effort to research topic; praising original interpretations of artform	Introduction - streamlining content. Body Paragraphs - Paragraph - Developing Better Body Paragraphs; Paragraphs descriptive vs analytical		
c-Interact with others (tenor)	Proposition reinforced and justified prosodically to convince audience that a position is valid	Claims supported, justified, reinforced and/or defended	Concessive clauses used to expand and then contract space for alternative voices	Objective evaluative vocabulary (e.g., Significance, relevance) ...
files	18	17	3	0
References	23	28	4	0
Codes	Missing in-text citations and references; Reference list - Arrange alphabetically not numerically; Format; missing reference;	Acknowledging academic sources to avoid plagiarism; In-text Citation - add missing citation; Integral and Non-Integral citation. Using reliable academic sources; Use more sources; use multiple sources to convince reader; to establish own voice or stance by evaluating or explaining experts views;	Adding transitions, signposting and lead in	
d-Create cohesive texts (mode)	Text organisation made clear through layout, previewing and reviewing of content	Information forms waves from dense 'packed' language to 'concrete' unpacked	Sentence openers focus attention on topic and flow of information...	Abstract nouns used to package and track ideas...
Files	15	33	8	4
References	21	49	11	4
Codes	Coherence - establish main argument for the whole essay. Common Errors - Grammar; Headings - include for better readability; use diverse headings; Use heading instead of essay question. Overall format - double spacing; Overall quality of writing - descriptive rather than analytical; Section Numbering; cohesion - Use logical connectors to connect ideas	In-text Citation - Use surname only; Format; add year of publication; Quotations - Add page number; In-text Citations for images and figures; Paragraph - Structuring body paragraphs - topic sentences, evidence, elaboration and conclusion; Paragraph length; Topic Sentence - Include or improve in body paragraphs	Common errors - Grammar; sentence; Sentence structure; Grammar - Tense advice; Sentence Structure - avoid Topicalisation;	Headings - Language and Format; Spelling; Vocabulary - Choice of words

# Essay Introductions

Analysis of codes  
gleaned from  
feedback reports  
from 8 subjects  
revealed the following  
broad categories of  
feedback given on  
essay introductions :

Thesis statement/question formulation
Objective or purpose
Staging of content
Specificity of background
Structure

# Number of references

Draft 1 and draft 2

of 8 subjects that assign essays or critiques

<b>INTRODUCTION CATEGORIES</b>	<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b>DRAFT 1</b>	<b>DRAFT 2</b>
<b>Thesis statement/question formulation</b>	<b><i>10</i></b>	7	3
<b>Objective or purpose</b>	<b><i>3</i></b>	2	1
<b>Staging of content</b>	<b><i>10</i></b>	8	2
<b>Specificity of background</b>	<b><i>4</i></b>	3	1
<b>Structure</b>	<b><i>10</i></b>	8	2
<b>Total codes</b>	<b><i>37</i></b>	28	9

Feedback on the  
Introduction Section  
**across broad  
disciplines**

- AH discipline subject  
CBS1A18 introduction  
section is expected only in  
the final draft submission

<b>INTRODUCTION CATEGORIES</b>	<b>AH</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>LS</b>	<b>PS</b>
<b>Thesis statement/question formulation</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Objective or purpose</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Staging of content for the</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Specificity of background</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Structure</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>

# Arts and Humanities Discipline

CBS1A18 - Life and Death

## **ESSAY**

A philosophical essay where the teacher did not want students to focus on the introduction in the first two drafts

AH

CBS1C29 - Chinese Art and Design

## **COMMENTARY**

This is an art essay where the introduction is atypical. According to Nesi and Gardner, commentaries are staged based on what the writer has chosen to analyze. These generally include Texts Introduction > comments > summary (rather than discussion and argumentation, this genre includes analysis of texts and artworks (Nesi and Gardner, 2012: 104).

Feedback on  
thesis  
statement on  
two drafts by  
the same  
teacher

### **Draft 1**

**Where is your thesis statement?  
In your introduction, you should  
write a thesis statement that  
provides your main argument  
and the reasons that support  
your main argument.**

### **Draft 2**

**The thesis statement needs to  
be clear and concise,  
highlighting the main points  
that will be discussed in the  
essay.**

**LIFE SCIENCE (ABCT1D15 Our Endangered Earth)**

Feedback on  
thesis  
statement on  
two drafts by  
the same  
teacher

## Draft 1

**Improve thesis statement: Your thesis is a bit vague now. Please do add details and be more specific:**


*"...Therefore, this essay will first outline some of the ideas brought by the writer in the aspect of technological pop culture, then establish the personal views towards the topic and investigate some benefits and drawbacks of the rise of online pop culture."*

"some ideas" -> what ideas exactly?  
what personal views?

## Draft 2

**Your introduction has been improved, but the thesis statement and the overview are still missing. The thesis statement is the most important statement of your essay because it shows the purpose of your writing. In this essay, you chose to discuss the theme "television". Which aspect of television do you want to focus on discussing? You have to state it clearly because this is the purpose of your essay. Based on your writing, your thesis statement can write like this: "This book review aims to discuss the influence of television to the society."**



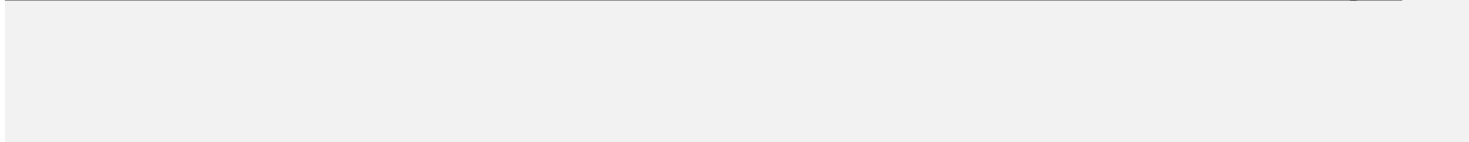


Feedback on  
thesis  
statement

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**And I like the fact that you are trying to answer a question - good! BUT you should not frame it as a question in your Intro. You should write it as a thesis statement. Make a clear statement that you will then try to prove in each of the paragraphs of the essay. This will help shape each paragraph and keep you focused in WHY you are writing. You don't really need the Background and Content. This should all be in one quite short Intro.**

**Arts and Humanities\\CBS1C29 Chinese Art and Design**



## Feedback on the staging of content

### **Draft 1**

**You could split the introduction into two short paragraphs: one about the book and one about your review. At the moment these points seem a little confusing and you go a little off topic. Make sure you give an overview of the book - the authors and purpose etc - and your chosen themes.**

### **Draft 2**

**You have an interesting and concise introduction. You could provide a little more detail though, for example, why did you find the book enjoyable, or which aspects. And in the outline, let the readers know which themes you will focus on.**

**Physical Science - BME1D01 Bionic Human and the Future of Being Human**



## Feedback on the staging of content – D1

**Your thesis statement is not very clear in the introduction. You have chosen the theme "pop culture" to discuss in your essay, but this is a very broad topic. Which aspect of pop culture do you exactly want to focus on? You need to narrow it down. After that, you need to have a thesis statement that clearly, specifically and explicitly states your opinion/comment on this chosen aspect. This is the most important statement of your essay because it shows the purpose of your writing. For example, you can write: "This essay aims to discuss ...".**

- Social Science\\APSS1B17-1 Contemporary Chinese Society and Popular Culture



## Feedback on the staging of content – D1

**Consider rewriting your introduction to include four things: 1) relevant background information such as your understanding of the significance and impact of this book (why this book was written and the impact it made); 2) introduce the key aspects that you have selected; 3) explain why you have chosen to focus on the key aspects and their significance; 4) present the logical connection between the selected themes. You should also use your language skills to connect your ideas. You could try using transitional words or phrases**

**<http://library.bcu.ac.uk/learner/writingguides/1.33.html>. Here is a link to better understand cohesion:**

**<http://home.ku.edu.tr/~doregan/Writing/Cohesion.html> Refer to this site for more help:**

**<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/introductions/>**

Physical Science\\BME1D01 Bionic Human and the Future of Being Human

# Recent Research Activities/Outputs

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Lughmani, S. D., & Chigaeva-Heddad, S. (2024). RESPONDING TO STUDENTS' DISCIPLINARY WRITING IN A UNIVERSITY-WIDE WRITING REQUIREMENT NEGOTIATING AGENCY THROUGH POSITIONING. *Practitioner Agency and Identity in English for Academic Purposes*, 205.

Lughmani, D. (2023). How is AI Changing Writing Pedagogy in Higher Education: English Language Practitioner Perspectives. Presented an invited talk at "Third Professional Development Symposium: The Power of AI in Education" organized by School of General Education and Languages, THEi, Hong Kong (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdPwCqcnUAQ>)

*Also attended the symposium as it is timely and was inspiring even though it was an all-night long event for me now residing in the US.*

Lughmani, D. Jarvis, A. & Wong, S. K. (2023). "Let there be light!: Developing and piloting writing guides for apprentice genres in social work discipline." Paper presented at IWAC2023 on 7 June 2023.

# Thank you! And some final words...

- Any questions or comments?
- This is really a very small part of my PhD work as I wanted to keep it light. Regarding the analytical framework, I am not yet ready to commit to Hyumphrey's 4X4 toolkit for analysis of feedback. The framework has been an insightful learning experience in terms of how EWR feedback addresses the aspects related to development of writing in higher education. My critique of it will highlight the gaps in this framework that may not be revealing for analysis of feedback in the L2 higher education context.
- With AI pulling the carpet underneath our feet, we are trying to ensure that at least some of our students continue to think on their own, develop critical and analytical skills and create new ideas and thus construct new knowledge. To do this, we hope that they continue to engage with recursive writing processes. That is why, feedback on writing continues to be relevant.

# Bibliography

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