

# eSTEEeM Project – Final Report

How students' use of language relates to learning, retention, and performance in assessment on TU100: Implications for learning design, assessment strategy, and tuition practices in the MCT faculty

Nel Boswood, Caroline Coffin, Jim Donohue, Qian Kan, Sarah Mukherjee (FELS participants)  
Val Hancock, Mandy Honeyman, Cheryl McAndrew, Heather Morris, John Woodthorpe  
(MCT participants)

May 2016

Contact: [John.Woodthorpe@open.ac.uk](mailto:John.Woodthorpe@open.ac.uk)

## *Executive Summary*

This project built on previous work between MCT and FELS on language use and student attainment at level 1, including in the production of TU100. It adopted a 'language and learning' perspective which proposes there is a deep relationship between how language is used and how an academic subject is taught and learned. In such a perspective, language is regarded as a complex meaning making system which language users exploit in order to make meanings in context. The approach is a 'functional' rather than 'formal' one, which means that linguistic analysis embraces the meaning or 'content' of the communication. In doing this, the focus is on three dimensions of language use: how language represents the field, how it builds interpersonal relationships, and how it constructs text. Using this model, students' written texts and ALs' TMA feedback were subjected to linguistic analysis at all levels working 'downwards' from the text purpose, text organization, paragraph structuring, sentence and clause relations, to word choice and grammar.

The conceptual frameworks that constitute the field of study are central to this model of language. In MCT, and STEM subjects generally, 'natural' language is by no means the only meaning-making system – computer languages, mathematics, and visual systems are important complementary systems. Nonetheless, 'natural' language performs a central role in orchestrating the other systems and it is this that makes a language and learning approach to attainment and retention on TU100 of potential interest for STEM subjects generally.

The project started by pairing a language specialist with each of the four participating TU100 Associate Lecturers (AL) in order to establish a shared vocabulary and understanding of the issues involved. This initially proved challenging for both parties, but gradually the participants developed new insights into the role of language in assessment and started to make progress through a series of face to face and online workshops and forum discussions. As the project developed, the focus expanded to include more areas of student and AL language use in assessment, including student answers to TMA questions, comments made by ALs on TMAs. The focus on student language use led to the development of Language and Learning checklists to help in marking selected assignment questions.

It was not possible to make any links between student language skills and retention, but the project has produced a considerable body of material on the role of student language skills in assessment, on how ALs can be supported in assessing and developing their students' skills, and in describing the key language challenges facing students. It has also set the scene for further work to develop these points and improve how the University supports ALs and students in building their language skills and awareness.

### *Aims and Scope of the Project*

The main aim of the project was to investigate how students' use of language relates to learning, retention and assessment performance on TU100 My Digital Life. The project investigated the hypotheses that:

1. There is a relationship between language use by students and their performance in assessment in TU100.
2. Performance in TU100 assessment is, in part, dependent on reading and writing and students' use of language is significant for performance in both of these.
3. Understanding how language relates to performance in assessment in TU100 will provide a principled basis for developing the assessment strategy and tuition practices of TU100.
4. Such development will contribute to an improvement in student retention, attainment, and satisfaction.

More specific goals included:

- clarifying and describing the key language challenges experienced by students who score badly on TU100 writing tasks
- improving the learning design, assessment strategy and tuition practices in relation to developing students' language skills on TU100 and more widely in MCT
- engaging ALs in developing materials to support TU100 students in developing their language skills and disseminating these to MCT colleagues

## *Activities*

The project used a 'language as social semiotic', (LASS) perspective developed by Jim Donohue and Caroline Coffin (2014), which sees language as a meaning-making resource which is central to learning and teaching. The adoption of this perspective assumes that students come to level 1 university courses with varying degrees of 'meaning-making resource' appropriate to the context of study and that developing this resource is key to success.

Methodology included:

1. A linguistic analysis of a range of student assignment texts in order to develop:
  - a. descriptions of how language is used by students in their TU100 assignment texts and how it correlates with attainment as reflected in the tutor's grade and feedback.
  - b. a language and learning checklist for evaluating language use in TU100 assignments and more generally in MCT.
2. Collaboration between language specialists and four TU100 associate lecturers in the development of the language and learning (L&L) checklist and disseminating good practice as a result of findings.
3. Text analysis discussions with a selection of students, focusing on their recently written assignments, using the L&L checklist.
4. Investigation of the reading experiences and practices of students through surveys, and tutor report.
5. Review of assignment design and feedback, and, more broadly, TU100 module design, in light of above.

The planned activities of the project were as follows:

1. To analyse student language use in students' module assignments in order to establish descriptors for the features of high and low scoring assignments.
2. To develop language and learning checklists through linguistic analysis of students' work and interviews with students, in order to evaluate and teach language skills.
3. To collaborate with ALs through workshops, meetings and online discussion threads to develop ways of supporting students' language development in TU100.
4. To investigate students' reading experiences and practices, in particular to find out how students use their reading in their writing.
5. To run workshops for project team members to discuss findings and implement change.
6. To deliver conference presentations
7. To contribute to ongoing improvement and evaluation of language and skills development in TU100.

Evidence gathered included the following:

1. A corpus analysis of high scoring and low scoring student assignments produced descriptions to enable the team to distinguish between the language features of

- writing by these two groups and create a generic language and learning checklist for evaluation and teaching purposes. This analysis was carried out using the UAM corpus tool on 101 student scripts (60 high scoring and 41 low scoring).
2. A follow-up linguistic analysis of selected student assignments from the 14J and 15B cohorts by language specialists and ALs was done in order to develop task-specific language and learning checklists for each TMA.
  3. Three ALs provided language journals, contributed extensively to a discussion forum and documented their changing practices in regard to students' language development over the duration of the project. They also shared materials from their dissemination of good practice as a result of the project.
  4. Interviews with seven students, involving a discussion of a written task from one of their recent assignments gave insights into the writing process and what sort of guidance might be useful.
  5. Two surveys of reading experiences and practices of students on TU100 gave details of the way TU100 students use their module reading when constructing their written assignments. A questionnaire was sent to the 14J and 15B cohorts giving a 10% and 14% response rate respectively.
  6. Linguistic analysis was carried out on a corpus of 40 student feedback 'texts' created from PT3e forms and 'skills feedback' (provided at the end of the students' assignment). PT3 feedback and skills feedback were selected from one high and one low scoring student from twenty tutors in the TU100 13B presentation.
  7. Real-time feedback questionnaires completed by students on the 14J and 15B presentations of TU100.

## Findings

1. We were not able to establish a direct causal link between students' language use and retention. However, our main findings from the corpus analysis and detailed linguistic analysis of students' writing show that:

High-scoring assignments in TU100 are likely to be characterised by the following:

- Use of a clear structure ('stages') appropriate for the type of text being written
- Use of more abstract and technical language
- Awareness of audience and purpose more aligned with the assignment task
- Student's 'own words' are similar in style to those of course materials
- Cohesion achieved through use of a range of grammatical linking devices
- Inclusion of complex sentences in which the clauses are linked logically

Low-scoring assignments tend to be characterised by:

- Writing which is unstructured, often without paragraphing or appropriate 'stages'
  - Use of fewer abstract and technical terms
  - Omission of precise definitions or applications
  - Less vocabulary for classifying and categorising
  - Lack of 'long nouns' (nouns combined with describing or specifying words)
  - Fewer clauses showing cause and condition
  - Stronger focus on concrete real world, familiar events rather than abstract theoretical or technical knowledge
  - Personalisation of the content, bringing self into text and interacting with audience as 'you'
  - Less awareness of purpose
2. Interviews with seven students from TU100 revealed that they have a range of attitudes towards language development. Some understand the purpose of this part of the course and are motivated to develop, but this is not the case for all students. Some mentioned the need for clearer guidance on audience, structure, style and rationale for the written tasks. The interviews informed the development of the language and learning checklists for TU100 assignments.
  3. Language and learning checklists specific to each writing task on a TMA can be helpful to inform the marking and feeding back to students on language issues. They can also be used in training sessions with ALs and one-to-one study skills sessions with students.
  4. Collaboration with ALs through three workshops, asynchronous discussion threads, and regular meetings in OU live led to changes in their practice in the teaching of

- language skills. This was documented through 'Language Journals', the discussion threads and dissemination to other TU100 ALs through conference presentations.
5. The main findings from the reading surveys show that:
    - Even high-scoring students find some of the TU100 material difficult to read due to insufficient background knowledge, the complexity of the language or a lack of vocabulary. Over 50% of students surveyed stated that they are challenged by some words or phrases on most pages of the module material when reading.
    - The reading into writing process is mainly characterised by students as a process of notemaking and retrieval.
    - Some students (about 25% of those surveyed) go through a careful recrafting process when using reading material in their written assignments, involving a range of techniques. These practices could be captured and used for teaching study skills.
  6. Linguistic analysis of PT3 feedback showed that lower scoring students receive fewer positive comments on their PT3e forms than higher scoring students and many receive comments that suggest their ALs have a negative perception of their effort in their TMAs. In contrast high scoring students receive overwhelmingly positive comments on their PT3e forms. Tutors' language choices at times intensified either the positivity or negativity of the feedback. Positive feedback for lower scoring students were 'downscaled' by choices such as modification of adjectives 'quite good'. In contrast the higher scoring students' already 'good' feedback was further improved through similar linguistic choices e.g. 'very good'. Tutors delivered feedback as 'Praise sandwiches' at times and these were seen more often in the lower scoring scripts. (see Appendix B for a more detailed report).
  7. Comments from TU100 students in the real time feedback questionnaires placed one third and two thirds of the way through the 14J and 15B presentation showed that most students were still enjoying the module. Those who felt they were struggling were asked to identify their problem areas from a pre-populated list and given a free form text box to provide more detail. Most of the responses identifying difficulties highlighted 'The reading and writing that I need to do' as their main problem. See Appendix D for more details. The numbers of students involved are small (13 out of 29 on 14J and 10 out of 22 on 15B who specified a problem area) and they could be referring to issues other than those related to language. However this response from students sufficiently engaged with the module to respond to a questionnaire embedded within it is an interesting one that resonates with some of the project's other findings.

**Particular successes include:**

1. Development of L&L checklists. See Appendices G, H and I for more detail.
2. Dissemination of good practice around teaching and feeding back on writing by ALs at Regional Staff Development events
3. Improvements to TU100. These mainly centre on the Tutor Marked Assignments where changes have been made to standardise and simplify the language used in the

questions, and to reduce the variety of types of writing expected from students. Taken together, these have produced a more coherent and consistent approach to the assessment of writing through the module.

4. Progress towards a shared understanding of a range of aspects of linguistics as they apply to an MCT module. The MCT participants in the project all had a general interest in the language skills of their students, and how to develop them. However the project continually exposed them to a range of new concepts and terminology that were initially difficult to grasp, but when applied to the module gradually became clearer.

Unexpected outcomes included the impact of the textual analysis of tutor feedback in the PT3, mentioned in point 6.) above and described more fully in Appendix B. This was initially intended as an aside to the project to link into Sarah Mukerjee's PhD research, but developed into a major stream within the project. One reason for that was the timing, coinciding with comments from the TU100 External Examiner and the peer monitors expressing concern about the tone. For example, the External Examiner's report said:

*'I received 6 samples for each TMA, covering the full range of marks. There were examples of excellent practice across all levels. At the same time, although the content of the feedback was broadly similar across tutors, I do think that there are issues of phrasing which could potentially have a significant impact (either negative or positive) on student motivation and self-efficacy. As an example, feedback which states that there is "room for improvement" suggests to the student that they are indeed capable of such improvement, whereas the same feedback content phrased as the student having a "weakness" in a particular area is likely to be received by the student as a negative judgement on their ability. Similarly, sentences starting with "You have failed again to follow my instructions..." are unlikely to engender feelings of determination. Given the fact that:*

1. some OU students may not have had overly positive prior experiences of education,
2. student retention is a significant issue in both introductory courses and those with a computing component (of which TU100 is both), and
3. extensive research suggests that tutor expectations of students are largely self-fulfilling,

*I feel that this issue needs to be looked at in more depth.'*

Those comments provided an opportunity to share the analysis with the External Examiner and with the tutors on the module, and to work with the tutors and with the peer monitors to address the situation. Twelve months later, the External reported that:

*'At the 14B EAB, I had raised an issue in relation to the phrasing of tutor feedback, and on the need to ensure that feedback, even negative, was delivered in a*



*supportive manner. This issue has been addressed comprehensively and systematically, and was discussed at the 14J EAB. At the current EAB meeting (15B), the Chair noted that they have been continuing to work with monitors, who in turn work with tutors, on addressing this issue. The general impression was that there has been an improvement in quality of feedback, and I would agree, based on the samples of work that I examined.'*

There is considerable potential for developing this work further, including working with more ALs, peer monitors and module teams to widen the pool of examples and guidance. This became apparent in providing a summary of the report to the TU100 tutors, where a few misunderstood it as an attempt to ban specific words and phrases and reacted strongly against that.

See Appendix C for more detail of the information given to the tutors in the announcement forum.

## *Impact*

### **Student experience**

The initial focus on the use of language in assignments allowed some immediate improvements to the module in simplifying the language used in TMA questions. Before the project started, question authors gave instructions and explanations in their own words. This resulted in an unintentional mixture of language telling students they 'should', 'must' or 'ought' to do something in answering a question. In addition, the questions were often too detailed and inadvertently difficult to read. The early results of the project highlighted this aspect, resulting in the instructions becoming much simpler and clearer, as well as shorter. Comparing the requests from tutors and students for clarification of the wording of questions suggests their frequency dropped once these changes were made. In particular, the changes made to the style and content of the programming questions increased the proportion of students attempting them as well as their scores. For example, the EMA submission rate increased from 59.1% of initially registered students in 11J to 63.1% in 12J, with their mean scores on the programming questions increasing from 65.0% to 68.9%. Although these changes were made before the project officially started, they arose from discussions within what would become the project team, and laid the foundation for the approach that has continued throughout the remaining presentations of TU100.

The increased emphasis on the quality of tutor comments in the marking of the assignments has already been mentioned here, with the value and effectiveness of that work confirmed by the External Examiner.

Examples of student comments on language aspects of their studies are provided in Appendix D (results of Real Time Student Feedback questionnaires on TU100) and Appendix F (example of responses to PDP question collated by one of the ALs)

### **Teaching**

All team members agreed on the value of the project for opening up rich conversation across the disciplines and sharing of experience. Positive impacts on practice are listed below:

Impact on the practice of a language specialist from Open ELT:

- Better understanding of the language practices valued by MCT colleagues when assessing students' writing. This has developed the capacity of Open ELT to collaborate with colleagues from STEM disciplines on improving students' language.
- Better able to articulate the features of 'emerging' student writing and to identify the type of guidance and teaching needed. This has developed monitoring expertise.

- Better understanding of the reading and writing challenges experienced by 'emerging' level students. This has fed directly into materials writing for the FBL module LB170 (guidance on reading and notemaking, structuring written texts, considering audience and purpose, key grammar points).

### **Impact on the practice of TU100 ALs**

The textual analysis of tutor comments in marked assignments was one of the early outcomes of the project, and most easily communicated to ALs. The findings of that work coincided with, and reinforced, observations made by the TU100 External Examiner and some of the peer monitors. The results and the External Examiner's comments were shared with the TU100 tutors and used to encourage them and the peer monitors to work to improve the language used in assignment comments. This continued over the following four presentations, and its effectiveness has been confirmed by the External Examiner.

The impact on the practice of ALs participating directly in the project is profound with several commenting in their journals, in workshops and in forum discussions that they have thought far more deeply than ever before about the role of language in OU study. This includes the module chair (who is an AL on the module) as well as the four ALs specifically contracted to participate in the project. Extracts from some of their reflections on the experience are included in Appendix E.

### **Outside the OU**

One of the project leaders is now working at Queen Mary University of London and has remained in contact with the project, providing helpful feedback despite ceasing to be formally involved. He presented some of the project at a conference in Aachen in 2015 as follows:

#### **Analysing and sharing with course team and students how language makes meaning in a first year Maths, Computing and Technology course: some issues. A discussion**

Jim Donohue, Queen Mary's University of London

"Challenging Boundaries" - 42nd International Systemic Functional Congress

RWTH Aachen University | July 27-31, 2015

His work at QMUL is continuing aspects of the project and providing potential opportunities for external collaboration, should the necessary funding and staff be available for OU participation.

## **Strategic change and learning design**

Work on this project has contributed to the development and design of the Language and Literacy descriptors now adopted by the Open University across the undergraduate curriculum. The aim of these descriptors is to guide module teams towards embedding language development in new modules.

## *Dissemination*

Little formal dissemination has been possible apart from presentations at eSTeEM conferences in 2014 and 2015, and the Aachen conference mentioned above. However there are multiple opportunities to develop the project further and to disseminate the outcomes.

We recommend the following:

- dissemination via the creation of training materials for ALs, monitors, new module team members,
- development of a 'language development roadshow',
- central resource to house the L&L checklists for use by ALs,
- generic training resource for level 1 students on 'using your reading in your writing'.

## *References*

Coffin, C. and Donohue, J. (2014) *A Language as Social Semiotic-Based Approach to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. Language Learning Monograph Series. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.

### **Analysing and sharing with course team and students how language makes meaning in a first year Maths, Computing and Technology course: some issues. A discussion**

Jim Donohue, Queen Mary's University of London

"Challenging Boundaries" - 42nd International Systemic Functional Congress

RWTH Aachen University | July 27-31, 2015

## *List of Appendices*

*Appendix A - Reading Survey results (Question 8)*

*Appendix B - Associate Lecturer language use in PT3e forms. Report by Sarah Mukherjee*

*Appendix C – Messages to TU100 tutors about the importance of TMA comments*

*Appendix D – Results of Real Time Feedback questionnaires*

*Appendix E – extracts from comments made by ALs working on the project*

*Appendix F – Summary of two tutor groups' responses to language aspects of personal development planning question introduced to TU100.*

*Appendix G - A Language and Learning Checklist to use when marking TU100 14J TMA 03 Question 1a (the summary)*

*Appendix H - An example of the Language and Learning Checklist applied to emerging and established level students*

*Appendix I - A guide for using the Language and Learning Checklist*

## *Appendix A - Reading Survey results (Question 8)*

### **Summary of responses to Question 8 of the TU100 reading surveys Q8: 14J and 15B cohorts**

#### **Aims**

The aim of this question was to find out how TU100 students approach the process of using their module reading in their written assignments. We were particularly interested in finding out what steps the students take in order to transform the information from their reading into a coherent piece of writing.

#### **Question**

Briefly describe how you use the information taken from the module reading and assessment materials (e.g. use of notes or highlighted texts) when you begin to write your TMA.

#### **Method**

Two questionnaires were sent to TU100 students early in the 14J and 15B module presentations. The first questionnaire (14J) obtained 189 responses from a cohort of 1750, representing about 11% of the cohort. In 15B there were 151 responses from a cohort of 1092 students, representing about 13% of the group. Student responses to this question describe how they use the information taken from the module reading materials when they start writing an assignment.

#### **Findings**

The results were broadly similar across the two cohorts and showed that most students are able to articulate the note-making process, but fewer give details of the process of transformation of notes into writing. Very few mention 'thinking' or 'understanding' as part of the process.

The following main categories of response emerge from the data:

1. About two-thirds of students mentioned that they make notes on module materials and use these when writing assignments. A range of techniques are mentioned, including writing by hand, writing with a stylus, typing, creating visual representations using mind-maps, using flashcards, and using highlighting facilities.
2. Nearly 40% of students in each cohort commented on the process of retrieving, selecting and referring to module information or their notes. They describe how they



find information and also how they use their own notes to find information. Most show that they are aware of the importance of using notes that are relevant to the question. Some students stress that they 'refer' to course materials or notes. Others focus on the retrieval method and describe their criteria for selecting material. Some students write the TMA first and then return to the course materials and notes to check information.

3. Just under a third of students in each cohort described the drafting and recrafting process. This goes a step further than categories 1 and 2 in that they document the process of turning reading into writing. Some common themes are evident in the responses. The main ones mentioned by students are:
  - transforming information into own words in order to avoid plagiarising
  - summarising information from notes or module materials in preparation for writing the assignment
  - improving or expanding on existing notes in order to answer an assignment question; converting notes to text that 'makes sense'; drafting and then improving later, e.g. 'scribbling' or 'roughing out' an answer and then writing in more detail
  - highlighting or making notes on relevant points in the module materials, memorising these points, writing the assignment and then checking it against the notes
  - making 'readable' notes at the note making stage
  - making lists
  - thinking things through and developing ideas as part of the recrafting process
  
4. Just under a third of students mentioned the importance of re-reading, reviewing or revising notes / module materials as part of preparing for an assignment. A few of these also mention memorising material in preparation for written assignments.
5. Under a fifth of students mentioned the importance of notes for supporting their own thinking, reflection and understanding of the module materials.

Numbers of students mentioning each theme:

Category/theme	Number of students mentioning this 14J	Number of students mentioning this 15B
1. Note making, including creating highlighting, visual representations of information	132/189 = 70%	100/151 = 66%
2. Retrieving and selecting information from notes or module materials; referring to information while writing, (including researching further if	72/189 = 38%	59/151 = 39%

needed), including referring to tutor's feedback		
3. Revising, reviewing, rereading, memorising	53/189 = 28%	41/151 = 27%
4. Recrafting, drafting, making work coherent ('readable'), summarising, improving or expanding on notes, using own words.	52/189 = 28%	33/151 = 29%
5. Reflecting, thinking, making connections, understanding, checking understanding.	33/189 = 17%	16/151 = 11%

### IMPLICATIONS FOR TU100

The students who responded to the survey show a strong awareness of the purpose of note making and describe a range of techniques and practices used in the reading into writing process. This is encouraging as it implies that students are aware of their own study practices and able to articulate them. The information on the drafting and recrafting process, although only expressed by 28% and 29% of students in each group, is particularly illuminating in that it shows a range of effective practices that could possibly be shared with other students as options. It would be good to record a couple of the students talking through their process so as to give less practised students some ideas.

The fact that under a third of students mention the actual recrafting process indicates that there may be some value in encouraging students to articulate their practices here and to consider options and strategies. It would also be worth highlighting that this is a 'thinking' process as well as one of capturing and retrieving, which seems to be the main focus for students currently.

## *Appendix B - Associate Lecturer language use in PT3e forms. Report by Sarah Mukherjee*

### **1.1 Introduction and aims**

This paper provides the findings and discussion of the Appraisal analysis carried out on Associate Lecturer (AL) feedback. The aims of the analysis were to explore the language used by the ALs in order to investigate the two principle findings of a pilot study:

- Lower scoring students receive fewer positive comments on their PT3e forms than higher scoring students and many receive comments that suggest their ALs have a negative perception of their effort in their TMAs.
- High scoring students receive overwhelmingly positive comments on their PT3e forms.

The study reported here sought to analyse a larger corpus drawing on a corpus of 40 PT3e forms (and the skills feedback) from 20 tutors. From each of the 20 tutors, two scripts were selected: one high scoring and one low scoring.

The research discussed in this paper links to the eSTeEM deliverable 'Reports on tutor practices in relation to language use' (p.5) and was proposed based on initial impressions of the PT3e forms where, students who scored well appeared to receive more positive feedback than their lower scoring peers. The AL language in the PT3e form performs a dual purpose. It not only provides feedback on the particular assignment and 'feedforward' on future work, but in addition provides support to the student in their efforts with the module and builds a relationship. I focus, in this paper, not on the feedback provided in terms of supporting the student in the developing their understanding of the content of the course, but the way in which the language is used from an interpersonal relationship-building perspective, and how this might have an impact on the way in which the student might feel about the feedback.

This is in particular important for the students with lower scoring scripts who appear to be more at risk of not completing the module<sup>1</sup>.

### **1.2 Linguistic Framework**

The overarching methodological framework for the language analysis is that of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). SFL is a theory of language that seeks to understand language use in terms the social and contextual aspects that act as guiding factors for language choice and the construction of meaning. Since Michael Halliday's early work in the 1960s, the theory has continued to be developed and has become more comprehensive in the way in it

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on the finding that in a sample of 21 students of 13B, 5 or 24% of students withdrew from the module early and all were low scoring students.

may be applied with increasing complexity to written and spoken language allowing language to be ‘unpicked’ for its functional purposes in meaning making (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014) The applications of the theory firmly include educational contexts where the role of language in teaching and learning is an ongoing focus of research (Coffin and Donohue, 2014).

Appraisal theory has been developed by linguists working within the SFL tradition (Martin, 2000, Martin and White, 2005), and it is the theory by which speakers and writers convey emotions, judgements and perspectives on the world realised through choices of vocabulary and grammatical structures (Martin, 2000). There are three aspects of Appraisal: Attitude, Graduation (Amplification) and Engagement. Attitude refers to the way a person displays affect, judgement and appreciation about someone or something through their choices of words and grammar, and examples are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Affect, Judgement and Appreciation

<b>Attitude</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Examples from student assignment texts</b>
Affect	conveys emotion about something	<i>‘...this was most disappointing’</i>
Judgement	conveys evaluations of human behaviours	<i>‘your submission was let down by very poor presentation’</i>
Appreciation	conveys the evaluation of aesthetic qualities of objects (primarily the assignment text itself in this research) rather than of behaviours	<i>‘This is another excellent assignment’</i>

The category of judgment is split into subcategories: tenacity, capacity and normality. Tenacity refers to judgements of effort, capacity refers to judgements of capability, and normality to judgements of whether a behaviour is deemed ‘normal’ or ‘unusual’ and some positive and negative examples are provided in Table 2.

Table 2 Tenacity, Capacity and Normality

	<b>Positive:</b>	<b>Negative:</b>
<b>Tenacity:</b>	<i>Paraphrasing can be quite tricky, so this was a good attempt.</i>	<i>I am sure you expected a low mark for this TMA, which was clearly produced in a rush...’</i>
<b>Capacity:</b>	<i>Your grammar, spelling and punctuation are generally good again</i>	<i>Questions 2 and 4 in particular seemed to be let down by some poor presentation</i>
<b>Normality</b>	<i>You have sourced an academic paper</i>	<i>Also you submitted 3 Word documents one for each question - assignments really</i>

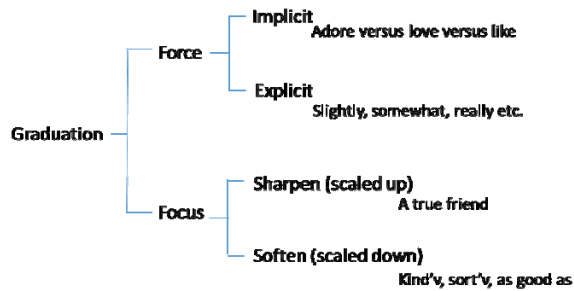
		<i>need to be submitted in one word document</i>
--	--	--

The two other aspects of Attitude: Graduation and Engagement<sup>2</sup> express Attitude in greater subtlety. Graduation is expressed typically by adverbials and adjectives:

the speaker raises or lowers the intensity of a range of semantic categories – thus ‘very’ in ‘a very smart fellow’ acts to heighten the intensity of the JUDGEMENT value (capacity) of ‘smart. and [*sic*] ‘a bit’ in ‘I’m a bit worried’ acts to lower the intensity of the affectual value of ‘worried (White, 2001:25)

Graduation is split into two subcategories: Force and Focus. Force can be described as increasing or decreasing the intensity. Focus in contrast is outlined ‘in terms of the sharpness or softness of the description, for example ‘a true friend’, contrasting with ‘a sort of friend’. The system of Graduation is illustrated in Figure 1 below

Figure 1 Graduation



A comprehensive overview of Appraisal can be found at <http://grammatics.com/appraisal>

### 1.3 The TMAs

TU100 TMAs are made up of a number of questions, sections and parts, and have different aims and objectives in relation to the course content and assessment structure. In order to respond to the module assignment tasks (the parts of the overall TMA) different types of student assignment texts are required. There are tasks that require primarily a written English response, and others that require a response based on the Sense programming language or on mathematics. For the purposes of this work, the focus has been only on those tasks that require a written English response and not on the programming or numerical working tasks. All references to student assignment texts and ALs have been anonymised.

<sup>2</sup> Engagement was analysed as it was perceived that Attitude and Engagement were sufficient to provide an insight into the way in which the ALs’ language conveys either positive or negative stances.

## Methodology

In this section I outline the analytical approach to the research. The texts selected for analysis are comprised of the PT3e feedback forms and the Feedback section on the TMA written by the tutor. I will refer to the texts as either high or low scoring scripts in this document.

The scripts were coded using the software data management system, UAMCT<sup>3</sup>. Each text was coded firstly by TMA number, secondly whether it was a high or low scoring student assignment, finally by instance of Attitude (affect, judgement and appreciation), and Graduation. Each instance was also coded for the target of the Appraisal, as either the student or the assignment; whether the instance of appraisal was explicit or invoked; positive or negative. Certain language was coded also as 'formulaic' for example: 'well done'; 'congratulations'; salutations such as 'best wishes' and emoticons 😊. It is more usual in Appraisal analysis to code single words; however, I have chosen to highlight complete clauses or sentences in order to highlight longer text that may be useful to understand the surrounding contextual language, in particular where the language has been coded as 'invoked', that is where the message less explicit. In the findings section below, I present counts and percentages of instances of Attitude where an instance may be a minor clause (e.g. *Brilliant TMA*); major clause (*and the structure is very good*) or full sentence (e.g. *This is another excellent assignment*).

### 1.2.1 Coding

#### The appraisal target:

Where a tutor is commenting on the student's work, the target of the appraisal is either the student or the assignment. However there is at times some confusion between for example, 'your grammar needs work' where the target might be the grammar, or the student's capacity to use appropriate grammar. At times examples such as these, where deemed appropriate, have been double coded, once as appreciation with the assignment being the target, and once as judgement with the student being the target.

#### Normality:

I have coded for normality where the tutor is commenting on something that is missing from the assignment and would normally be expected (or normal within the context) to be provided, for example references, 'You have not included references' (23-03-L)

#### Tenacity:

Tenacity is a difficult category to code. Tenacity is expressed both directly and indirectly and some of the coding is invoked rather than inscribed. Invoked judgement includes language where there is, in some way, an indirect expression of judgement which can be drawn from the context. For example, 'you did not participate much in the forum discussion' (19-02-L). Students are encouraged as part of one of the TMAs to participate in a

---

<sup>3</sup> The UAM tool is available from <http://www.wagsoft.com/software.html>

forum discussion, stating that a student has not participated much, points to a judgement of tenacity as they are expected to participate.

It is particularly difficult in coding between tenacity and capacity in the context of a student's assignment where there are no explicit references to effort. I have coded language as tenacity where I understood that the tutor expected the student to be able to carry out a certain activity, for example 'You must reference your work correctly.' The tutor expects the student to have been able to reference their work correctly and therefore is passing a judgement of their effort rather than their actual capability. Similarly where the tutor appears to have an expectation that a student has not provided or included something in their assignment, such as 'you must include the word count', I argue indexes again a judgement of effort rather than capacity.

I have coded for tenacity where I understand the tutor's language to either explicitly or implicitly be expressing a judgement of effort in some way. Where the tutor comments on the student not having attempted a section, this has been coded as tenacity, for example 'I can't see where you attempted this' (12-01-L).

Salutations were coded as affect. It was important to code salutations as they did not appear on all the PT3 forms.

In addition, language such as: 'Please try to take care to avoid penalties for overlength answers' [] Based on feedback from ALs on TU100 (workshop Sept 2014), 'please take care...' introduces a judgement of tenacity, albeit more carefully worded.

### 1.3 *Findings Attitude: Affect, Judgement and Appreciation*

#### 1.3.1 Attitude

There are clear differences in the way in which tutors use affect judgement and appreciation across the high and low scoring scripts. Table 3 below shows the number of instances of Appraisal across the three variables of affect, judgement and appreciation and how these are broken down by high and low scoring scripts.

Table 3 Attitude: Affect, Judgement and Appreciation

<b>Attitude</b>	<b>High scoring scripts =386</b>	<b>Low scoring scripts=317</b>
Affect	8% (32)	10% (43)
Judgement	74% (285)	82% (263)
Appreciation	18% (68)	8% (23)

Table 3 shows, for example that there were 317 instances of Attitude in the low scoring scripts of which 82% were coded as some form of judgement. It is interesting to see that between these three aspects of Attitude that in both high and low scoring scripts it is a form of judgement which is predominant and in particular in low scoring scripts. For both the

high and the low scoring scripts it is the area of affect - communicating an emotional stance - that receives the least attention. However in terms of appreciation, there is a difference between the number of instances of appreciation in the higher scoring scripts compared to the lower scoring script. There is more affect and judgement in the lower scoring scripts, but more appreciation in the higher scoring scripts.

Table 4 Positive and negative comments across the high and low scoring scripts

	<b>High scoring =385</b>	<b>Low scoring=315</b>
Positive	92% (353)	36% (130)
Negative	5% (20)	49% (177)
Ambiguous	3% (12)	2% (8)

High scoring scripts receive almost overwhelmingly positive feedback. While lower scoring scripts receive some positive feedback, there is a much more negative feedback. In the discussion below I will attempt to explore the nature of that feedback. In the three sections of affect, appreciation and judgement below, I present the findings of the analysis between the high scoring and low scoring scripts including whether the instance of Attitude is either positive or negative.

### 1.3.2 Affect

Affect is the way in which a speaker or writer expresses positive and negative emotional states, which in this case amounts to an expression of their emotional relationship with the student. Table 5 below shows the instances of affect by positive and negative instances. In both the high scoring and low scoring scripts the target of the affect was mostly the student (91% in the high scoring and 88% in the low scoring).

Table 5 Affect

<b>Affect</b>	<b>High (=32)</b>	<b>Low (=43)</b>
Positive	94% (30)	64% (27)
Negative	6% (2)	36% (15)

It is clear that, while there are positive instances of affect in the lower scoring scripts the higher scoring scripts receive almost overwhelmingly positive language in terms of affect. Within affect, the coding of salutations has an impact on the figures. It was important to code salutations as not all tutors began their feedback with a greeting. Of the low scoring students 23 of the 27 positive instances of affect were salutations (coded also as formulaic).

The examples of positive affect included instances of language such as 'I liked your answer to ....' (30-05-H). However, positive affect reflected mainly instances of language that were formulaic in the tutor scripts, for example salutations. However it is in the negative language where tutors appeared to express personal opinions on the quality of students' assignments.

'I am concerned...' (29-04-L)



It was a pity....' (35-05-L)

This findings suggests that the ALs do not engage with emotional responses to the student work in positive terms yet they are more likely to do in negative terms. Furthermore that the negative language is also directed towards the student rather than the TMA itself.

It is a shame that you didn't manage to answer this question (23-03-L)

### 1.3.3 Judgement

Judgement is the way in which a speaker or writer conveys evaluations about human behaviours. In the context of a PT3e form in TU100 (and other modules), the communication of judgement is important as it reveals to the student the perception that the AL has of either the student's capacity (ability) or tenacity (effort) in that particular assignment. This is relevant in particular in the case of effort, if the AL's perceived judgement of effort is inconsistent with the student's own perception of their effort.

Table 6 below shows that high scoring students received overwhelmingly positive comments in terms of judgement. While lower scoring students, did receive some positive judgements, there were many more negative comments.

Table 6 Positive and negative Judgement

Judgement	High scoring =285	Low scoring=260
Positive	256 (90%)	96 (37%)
Negative	18 (6%)	156 (60%)
Ambiguous	11 (4%)	8 (3%)

When these figures are split into the subsections of normality, capacity, tenacity, the findings show, in Table 7 below that the higher scoring scripts display more instances of capacity than the lower scoring scripts and the lower scoring scripts more instances of tenacity.

Table 7 Subsections of judgement

Judgement	High scoring =285	Low scoring=261
Normality	4% (12)	11% (28)
Capacity	89% (252)	57% (149)
Tenacity	7% (20)	31% (82)
Unclear	0 (0%)	1% (2)

In addition to these figures, the way in which the language is presented as either invoked or inscribed is important. Invoked language being where an attitudinal assessment is explicit, in contrast to one where the assessment is implicit or indirect. In the low scoring scripts, the instances of judgement were more likely to be invoked (66% or 177 instances) rather than inscribed (34% or 89 instances), and in the high scoring scripts the instances of judgement were more likely to be inscribed (69% or 196 instances) rather than invoked

(31% or 89 instances). This finding might suggest that the tutors try to soften the instances of judgement with examples such as:

‘Try to write more clearly’ (12-01-L) a invoked expression of judgement of capacity  
 ‘You must reference your work correctly’ (12-01-L)

Compared with ‘you have written a very good explanation’ (11-01-H) and ‘you have had no difficulties with the calculations’ (18-02-H)

In Table 8 below, the findings show that within the three subsections of judgement found in the data there were greater instances of negative judgement in the low scoring scripts compared with the high scoring scripts.

Table 8 Positive and negative instances of judgement in high and low scoring scripts

	<b>High scoring = 284</b>			<b>Low scoring =260</b>		
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>ambiguous</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>ambiguous</b>
Normality	2% (5)	2% (5)	0.5% (2)	2.5% (7)	11% (28)	0
Tenacity	5% (14)	2% (5)	0.5% (1)	3% (8)	26% (67)	0.5% (1)
Capacity	83% (237)	2% (7)	3% (8)	31% (81)	24% (62)	2% (6)

### **Tenacity**

There were 20 instances of tenacity found in the high scoring scripts of which 14 were positive, 6 negative and 1 ambiguous as seen in Table 8 above. With examples such as:

‘...with strong evidence that much effort was put into the work’ (11-01-H)  
 ‘You also generally participated in a timely and enthusiastic fashion here so well done’ (35-05-H)

The negative comments included two instances (from different tutors) using ‘please take care’ or ‘take care’ which in some way may be seen to soften the negative tenacity. Or as in the case of the example below, there is some reference to previous quality work.

‘I got the feeling that this answer was rushed it did not contain your normal quality of information through it was still appropriate. (22-03-H)

In contrast, in the low scoring scripts there were 73 instances of negative tenacity, and only 8 positive, and 1 coded as ambiguous. The negative comments in the low scoring scripts were not ‘softened’ in the same way as in the positive scripts:

You must reference your work correctly (13-01-L)  
 ‘...it also reflects a lack of attention to detail’ (28-04-L)

'However, you seemed to lose marks due to carelessness or not paying attention to my comments in previous TMAs' (31-04-L)

It appears that there is little acknowledgement by the tutors in the examples below in how difficult some skill are.

'We still seem to have a major problem with written English here (name) in that I am really struggling to understand what you are trying to say. Have you had time to go over the resources available to you at <http://www.open.ac.uk/skillsforstudy/developing-academic-english.php> I do appreciate that you are short of time for study as it is, but if your written English does not improve you will be in danger of failing the course.'

The tutor in this feedback has not acknowledged the possibility that the student may be trying to improve their written English, or the fact that the resources highlighted may not be the most effective approach for that student.

#### 1.3.4 Appreciation

The findings of the ALs use of appreciation is highlighted in Table 9 below. It shows that for the students that score well, the instances of appreciation are overwhelmingly positive. Where there are far fewer instance of appreciation in the lower scoring feedback, where it occurs it is mainly positive.

Table 9 Appreciation: high and low scoring

	<b>High scoring =68</b>	<b>Low scoring=23</b>
Positive	99% (68)	74% (17)
Negative	0% (0)	26% (6)
Ambiguous <sup>4</sup>	1% (1)	0% (0)

For both the high and low scoring students, the target of the appreciation was all coded as the assignment. However with some closer examination of the language choices in negative appreciation in the low scoring texts, the use of 'your' (as in the examples below) suggests a more personal comment and a comment somewhere between the student and the assignment.

Your answer was little [sic] short on detail (10-01-L)

Your notes seem to be excessively wordy (13-01-L)

Mandy on the project team commented that, in her view, it is easier to show appreciation of a higher scoring students work.

---

<sup>4</sup> There were three instances where the language was coded as ambiguous however this was only the case in appreciation.

#### 1.4 Graduation

The sections above presented findings and discussion about the instances of attitude that is the attitudinal meanings that the ALs construe through particular language choices. This section will explore how these meanings are further enhanced through choices that construe greater or lesser degrees of positivity and negativity and the possible impact of these choices for the high and low scoring students. Graduation was coded as *force*, defined as: ‘assessments as to degree of intensity and as to amount’ (Martin and White, 2005:140) and focus. Where an instance of force was identified, it was further categorised as either upscaling or downscaling. The findings for instances of graduation are presented in Table 10 below.

Table 10 Graduation using in high and low scoring scripts

Graduation type	High scoring students = 97	low scoring students = 37
<b>Force</b>	88	33
Upscale	76	13
Downscale	12	20
<b>Focus</b>	9	5

Examples of force for high scoring students included:

You have a really good grasp of what needs to be done (10-01-H)

For the lower scoring students, 28 instances of force were identified, including:

Minor mistakes in the use of English... (12-01-L)

In terms of either the positive or negative impact of the graduation, the high scoring students received far greater number of upscaled graduation (mainly resulting in positive graduation), compared with the low scoring students. The high scoring scripts show a great number of appreciation such as ‘very good’, ‘excellent’, ‘outstanding’. However upscale, as I understand it, does not necessarily result in a positive enhancing of the language. For example, two of the coded upscale graduation include ‘serious issues (31-04-L).

The downscaled instances are more difficult to judge. In my opinion, language choices such as ‘The report shows that you have adequate ability in ...’ suggest a more negative perspective on the ability of the student, albeit more positive than, for example ‘no ability in’ (this does not occur in the data). Equally, ‘minor problems’ – this has been coded as downscale.

The effect of graduation intensifies either the positivity or negativity of the attitude being conveyed. This may seem an obvious point but as a result of the amount of instances of graduation, the high scoring scripts read as much more positive than the lower scoring scripts. This is achieved through the modification of adjectives, i.e. ‘very good’ some

modifiers such as 'clear' that need to be understood in the context of the feedback – that clear academic writing is a sought after skill and therefore a positive comment. Processes are also modified 'you successfully got the sense board up and running'

One effect of the graduation, I suggest, is that it improves the sense of the friendliness of the feedback. While I acknowledge that this is a completely subjective term, and it may even not be an issue for some students in my view the negative graduation enhances the 'unfriendliness' of the PT3 form by making the negative feedback even more negative. There may be students who read PT3 forms quite dispassionately, but I feel that there will be students for whom a low score should be treated quite carefully. While knowing that the lower scoring students are more vulnerable to leave the course early we do not know how TU100 students respond to negative feedback and particularly those who may already be at risk of leaving.

In the section below I discuss how ALs appear to try to soften the harsher criticism that the lower scoring students receive through the pairing of good and bad news.

### 1.5 *The pairing of bad news with good or a 'praise sandwich'*

Some of the negative instances of appraisal are coupled however with positive language. There are 16 instances in the high scoring scripts, and 21 instances in the low scoring scripts of what is often termed a 'praise sandwich'. There are more instances of the coupling of good news and bad in the lower scoring scripts. This could be as part of the ALs wanting to support the students or because there are fewer instances of negative feedback in the higher scoring scripts.

For example

You have a reasonable [*sic*] grasp of what needs to be done and how to do it, but your answer [*sic*] was a little short on detail. (10-01-L)

All your answers are kept below the maximum word limit, but you have not used the word limit effectively...' (11-01-L)

While the pairing of positive and negative feedback has on the surface the effect of softening the negative feedback, in close examination of the negative part of the feedback there are language choices that, in my view, undo the potential of the pairing. There are also again differences in the language choices between the higher scoring and lower scoring students.

For the higher scoring students, the positive section of the feedback is presented with some upscaled force (graduation) and the negative part with downscaled force. This has the effect of underlining the positive message.

You have written a very good explanation of the .... However, the discussion needs a bit more focus on .... (11-01-H)

Two very good examples. Just remember a reference to an online journal .....’ (223-03-H)

These examples stand in contrast to some provided to the lower scoring students, where the positive feedback is at times also downscaled and the negative feedback is more forceful with the modal *need*. Language choices such as these highlight the negative aspect of the pairing.

‘You [*sic*] spelling and grammar seem strong enough, but you need to give references.....’

A good array of points, but you needed to incorporate....’ (12-01-L)

The other point is that 15 out of the 20 instances of good news paired with bad were constructed with *but*. *But*, particularly together with *need*, seems to highlight and heighten the negative part of the feedback. In the high scoring scripts there are only 2 instances out of 16 with *but*.

Another feature of the pairing of positive and negative feedback is that at times, in the lower scoring scripts the two parts of the feedback are not linked.

Generally well presented, but you must give word counts (19-02-L)

You labelled you [*sic*] work but at times you could have used up more words.’ (16-02-L)

Some vagueness of feedback – your answer contains some good points although the structure could be improved. (29-04-L)

## 1.6 **Conclusions**

As already highlighted providing constructive and helpful feedback is not necessarily an easy task. This research sought to investigate the finding from the pilot study that suggested that low scoring students receive more negative feedback than high scoring students, secondly that tutors commented on tenacity in the feedback of lower scoring students.

The findings presented above from a corpus of 40 PT3e forms suggest that TU100 tutors do give more negative feedback to lower scoring students. Additionally, that feedback, in the area of judgment included the tutors’ comments on their perceived judgment of the student’s effort (tenacity). Where tutors appeared to comment on high scoring students’ effort the language choices softened the overall impact. In contrast the lower scoring students received more direct feedback rather than invoked instances of judgment.

It is questionable how far 'effort' can be gauged from reading a student's text. Texts which are the least successful at demonstrating a student's understanding of the module material may have nonetheless entailed great effort by the student.

In terms of judgement, providing feedback on capability has to reflect the mark received. However, more careful and considered choice of language can soften the message. The use of graduation in the student feedback showed some clear differences between the high and low scoring scripts. I suggested that these choices had the effect of making the negative feedback more negative for the lower scoring students, and further enhancing the positive feedback for the higher scoring students. Further investigation in this area would be very interesting.

Another difference in the language choices between the high and low scoring texts was in the pairing of 'good news and bad' or 'praise sandwich'. The analysis showed that there were more 'praise sandwiches' in the lower scoring students feedback than in the higher scoring students' feedback. This suggested initially the tutors attempting to soften their following and more negative feedback. However the language choices in the feedback to the lower scoring students appears to negate the potential effect of the 'praise sandwich'.

Feedback is of huge importance to students and is of particular importance in a distance and e-environment such as the OU where the language of the feedback form is the only communication from the tutor. Without doubt, pointing out where a student can improve is critical to a student's performance in subsequent TMAs, however the way in which this is communicated I believe is of consequence to how the student may feel about the feedback and their motivation levels in their study. This paper has started to reveal some of the insights that the Appraisal analysis could highlight in terms of the way in which language choices construe particular positive and negative attitudes in the feedback to OU TU100 students.

## References

- Coffin, C. & Donohue, J. 2014. *A language as Social Semiotic Approach to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (Language learning monograph)*, London, John Wiley & Sons.
- Halliday, M. A. K. & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. 2014. *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar 4th Edition*, London, Routledge.
- Martin, J. R. 2000. Beyond Exchange: APPRAISAL Systems in English. In: Hunston, S. & Thompson, G. (eds.) *Evaluation in Text. Authorial Stance and the Construction of Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Martin, J. R. & White, P. R. R. 2005. *The Language of Evaluation Appraisal in English*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- White, P. 2001. *An introductory tour through appraisal theory from The Appraisal Website* [Online]. Available: <http://www.grammatics.com/appraisal> [Accessed 8th October 2012].

## *Appendix C – Messages to TU100 tutors about the importance of TMA comments*

### **Dec 2014 Importance of tutor comments - extract from external examiner report**

At the recent EAB for the 14B presentation, our External Examiner made some comments that chimed with several of the monitoring reports. Given the number of similar observations, and her comments are being passed on as an encouragement and reminder of the importance of tutor comments - in content and tone - in supporting students.

Her report includes:

*'I was very pleased to see that checks are carried out at every level for marking of assessed work. Monitoring is extensive and has ensured that marks are consistent across the whole cohort. Tutor guides contribute to this standardisation in providing clear and extensive guidelines for marking.*

*Nonetheless, in the samples that I looked at prior to the EAB, there seemed to be some disparity in terms of tutors' comments on TMAs. I received 6 samples for each TMA, covering the full range of marks. There were examples of excellent practice across all levels. At the same time, although the content of the feedback was broadly similar across tutors, I do think that there are issues of phrasing which could potentially have a significant impact (either negative or positive) on student motivation and self-efficacy. As an example, feedback which states that there is "room for improvement" suggests to the student that they are indeed capable of such improvement, whereas the same feedback content phrased as the student having a "weakness" in a particular area is likely to be received by the student as a negative judgement on their ability. Similarly, sentences starting with "You have failed again to follow my instructions..." are unlikely to engender feelings of determination. Given the fact that:*

- 1. some OU students may not have had overly positive prior experiences of education,*
- 2. student retention is a significant issue in both introductory courses and those with a computing component (of which TU100 is both), and*
- 3. extensive research suggests that tutor expectations of students are largely self-fulfilling,*

*I feel that this issue needs to be looked at in more depth.*

*Having said that, I would also like to note that, as external examiner, the samples I see are in some sense "snapshots in time", and are relatively decontextualized. The samples do not allow me to gauge how a particular tutor is working with a given student over the course of a module (and hence how an pedagogical overall strategy might play out in the feedback given over time). Similarly, I am unable to judge the strength of the relationship between tutor and student: they may have developed a good relationship that allows for more*



*directness in the feedback. Conversely, the tutor may have struggled to engage the student and finds that they must be more direct. However, although the situation may be more nuanced than my perspective allows me to judge, I nonetheless feel that issues of language use can have a profound impact on motivation and learning.*

*I understand from a discussion with the module chair that an investigation into these issues is already underway via a research project entitled [“How students’ use of language relates to learning, retention, and performance in assessment on TU100: Implications for learning design, assessment strategy, and tuition practices in the MCT Faculty”](#). The project includes a textual analysis of tutor feedback, and the module chair has since sent me two reports that provide more detail about the research. The results are fascinating, and should serve as an excellent basis for helping tutors to understand the potential impact of their feedback, and to work on ways of phrasing feedback that is supportive of students.*

*It’s also worth noting that the OU already provides excellent guidance for tutor feedback in the [“Correspondence Tuition” publication by Elizabeth McDonnell and Helen Wood](#). This suggests that the issue can be addressed in part by looking at how to ensure that tutors are aware of relevant materials and are putting them into practice.*

*Finally, I want to stress that a focus on more “student centred” feedback should not require additional work or the provision of more extensive feedback. Instead, it will often be a case of rephrasing existing content. However, a greater awareness of the ways in which feedback statements might be interpreted by students may well have a substantial positive impact (and could itself form the focus of a very worthwhile research project!).’*

The project she refers to is within eSTEEeM and has been mentioned on previous presentations as well as in Part One of the Tutor Guide. We plan to feed some of the results of that project into the TU100 module materials and support, and into its replacement. Please use that material, when it appears, and the [existing OU materials](#) to remind yourself - and any tutors you monitor - of how our comments can be seen by our students.

Please note her comments that she is seeing snapshots and not the complete story. She also refers to 'examples of excellent practice' - as do the peer monitoring reports. However given her perspective as our external examiner, and the fact that some peer monitors have made similar comments, please do take this opportunity to review your feedback. I know from my own tutoring experience that it can be easy to slip into bad habits, or to make comments that are not as supportive as I would like.

As ever, please do discuss this important aspect of our work as tutors in the Tutor Help forum.

TU100 module team

### **Nov 2015 - Marking and monitoring TMAs - importance of tutor comments**

This message is to follow up the information on pages 11 and 12 of Part 1 of the Tutor Guide about the importance of tutor comments. That in turn echoes some of the comments from our External Examiner and from peer monitors posted to the Tutor Announcements forums on the

---

Woodthorpe, J. (2016) *How students’ use of language relates to learning, retention, and performance in assessment on TU100: Implications for learning design, assessment strategy, and tuition practices in the MCT faculty*. eSTEEeM Final Report.

14J and 15B presentations which asked tutors and monitors to focus on the tone of feedback given to students.

This was revisited at last month's EAB for the 15B presentation and our External Examiner has made the following comments in her report on that presentation:

*'At the 14B EAB, I had raised an issue in relation to the phrasing of tutor feedback, and on the need to ensure that feedback, even negative, was delivered in a supportive manner. This issue has been addressed comprehensively and systematically, and was discussed at the 14J EAB. At the current EAB meeting (15B), the Chair noted that they have been continuing to work with monitors, who in turn work with tutors, on addressing this issue. The general impression was that there has been an improvement in quality of feedback, and I would agree, based on the samples of work that I examined.'*

Thanks to those of you who also tutored or monitored on that presentation for playing your part in that improvement. For everyone else, we hope similar comments are justified at the end of this presentation, so please do bear the request on pages 11 and 12 in mind as you mark and/or monitor all your TU100 TMAs.

TU100 module team

## Appendix D – Results of Real Time Feedback questionnaires

14J – 1897 currently registered students (14.0% response rate)

### How are things going?

<b>1</b>		
What do you think of it so far?		
Response	Average	Total
I'm really enjoying the module, and feel like I'm learning a lot	45%	121
It's good, but taking more time than I thought	39%	103
It's quite hard work, and I'm struggling with some of it	11%	29
I've fallen behind, and I'm not sure how to catch up	4%	10
Help - I'm not sure if this is the right module for me	1%	3
Total	100%	266/266

<b>2</b>		
Can you tell us what bits of the module you find hard work?		
Response	Average	Total
The programming	21%	6
The reading and writing that I need to do	45%	13
The calculations I need to do	7%	2
Other Working from electronic books	3%	1

Response	Average	Total
Other the language used, the disjointed website	3%	1
Other maintaining momentum - keeping up with reading with shift work. Some of the work seems completely irrelevant and losing interest in places.	3%	1
Other Programming, Picasa presentations, feedback on other students' work, feedback from other students,	3%	1
Other Studying information which will be useless to me after this module	3%	1
Other Too much information. Much of it very tedious to read and work though	3%	1
Other TMA's	3%	1
Other Knowing what I need to just understand and what I need to memorise. Getting to grips with writing short essay style answers - the practice is good but takes me a long time. Also sometimes find it hard to know what is expected inn TMA questions; sometimes the questions seem really clear other times I don't understand what is required.	3%	1

Response	Average	Total
Total	11%	29/266

It's great you're enjoying studying, and that you're making progress. If possible, it's worth trying to get a little ahead of the study planner in case life gets busy. That will give you a buffer to prevent you from falling behind.

Lots of people find study takes up more time than expected so you aren't alone in that. Please talk to your tutor about time management, and use the fortnightly messages they post to the tutor-group forum to help you focus on the key topics.

Don't worry. Everyone falls behind at some point. It's important to get back on track though, so please talk to your tutor about what you can do to catch up. Also, use the fortnightly messages they post to the tutor-group forum to help you focus on the key topics.

There is still time to make changes if you're having doubts about continuing on the module, so don't worry. Talk to your tutor, and use the information on StudentHome to contact Learner Support. They will do their best to help you think through your options and decide what to do.

It's quite common to struggle with some aspects of the module. Please talk to your tutor about what you can do to help with that. You might also be able to find some guidance in the [Help Centre](#) and use the information on StudentHome to contact Learner Support.

15B – 1193 currently registered students (20.6% response rate)

## How are things going?

### 1

What do you think of it so far?

Response	Average	Total
I'm really enjoying the module, and feel like I'm learning a lot	49%	120
It's good, but taking more time than I thought	39%	97
It's quite hard work, and I'm struggling with some of it	9%	22
I've fallen behind, and I'm not sure how to catch up	3%	7

Response	Average	Total
Total	100%	246/246

## 2

Can you tell us what bits of the module you find hard work?

Response	Average	Total
The programming	5%	1
The reading and writing that I need to do	45%	10
The calculations I need to do	27%	6
Other Hard to do alongside full time work.	5%	1
Other Keeping up with the pace and fitting it in around work	5%	1
Other mainly the maths	5%	1
Other finding time to study and complete activities and anything maths related	5%	1
Other I am finding some of the subject matter quite dry and therefore hard to motivate myself to get through it!	5%	1
Total	9%	22/246

## *Appendix E – extracts from comments made by ALs working on the project*

### **AL1**

#### **1.) The impact of the project on your practice in the areas of teaching and giving feedback on language aspects.**

As a Maths graduate I have little personal experience of graduate level writing. As a consequence I have always found it difficult to feedback on students' writing skills in technology modules. My feedback tended to concentrate on two areas

- Grammar, spelling and punctuation – when to start a new sentence, missing apostrophes, spelling errors and so on
- Structure – as a programmer I am very aware of the structure of programs and recognised that extended pieces of writing needed to have a structure too

As well as feeding back in TMAs on these topics it has been my practice for some years to include day school sessions on

- How to reduce word count without losing content
- Structuring essays and reports so that they have an introduction, one paragraph per topic and a conclusion

I was very conscious though that I could often recognise a poorly written answer but I lacked the skills to identify exactly what was 'poor' about it and I was therefore unable to provide feedback to the student to help them improve their writing style. The TU100 Language project has given me those skills.

The TU100 Language and Learning Checklists are divided into four categories:

- A. Use of source materials: Selecting and representing the relevant information
- B. Structure and development of text: Organising the response in an appropriate way
- C. Writing style: Using language appropriate to task and audience
- D. Grammar, spelling and punctuation

These were further subdivided and examples of student answers to a specific question were provided in each sub-category. In each case there was a student answer from a student with established writing skills and an answer from a student with emerging writing skills. These examples have had a major impact on my ability to recognise weaknesses in

students' writing styles and enabled me to proffer advice on how they can develop their writing skills. They have put the generalist MASUS checklists given in the TU100 Tutor Guide into context. With the examples the MASUS checklist points such as 'Is the introduction appropriate for this kind of text?' have been given meaning. Before I didn't know what was 'appropriate', with the examples I can see what is appropriate and what is not. My feedback on student answers had previously concentrated on categories B and D of the checklist and, to a certain extent, section A. My feedback now also addresses category C. In particular, I advise students to de-personalise their writing and following on from my own experience of benefitting from examples I re-write a small portion of their work in a de-personalised way. For instance:

A student wrote:

Throughout this report I will look at wearable sensors and computers ...

I rewrote this for them as:

This report will look at wearable sensors and computers ...

In addition, my feedback on student answers which exhibit poor structure is more detailed. I show them how they might have identified a structure before starting to write the answer. E.g.

When writing summaries first create a structure for the piece by identifying themes for each paragraph. Then fill in the details, explaining technical terms as they occur. For instance, here the structure might be something like this:

- Introductory paragraph to set the scene at a Warner Bros film premiere
- Paragraph about the passes – passive RFID tags, unique ID, link to Facebook username and password
- Paragraph about the photographers – RFID reader, Wi-Fi camera, Wi-Fi tablet or phone
- Paragraph about what happens when a photograph is taken – how the ID is passed from tag to reader to tablet/phone using Bluetooth, how the ID and photo are uploaded to the server using Wi-Fi, matching the ID with the photo
- Concluding paragraph about the success of the scheme in providing direct advertising for Warner Bros

I have also fine-tuned my own writing style as a result of the project. I have been much more conscious of words with negative connotations, particularly when re-cycling feedback text from previous years. Whereas previously I wrote 'Don't forget to ...' I now write 'Remember to ...' and instead of 'You've got the wrong idea' I write 'You haven't quite got the right idea'. Hopefully students will have more positive and less negative feelings after reading the feedback as a result.

## **2.) How, when and where you have disseminated any of the project to colleagues?**

Dissemination has been less than I would have wished for. I am sure that other tutors whose academic background is in less wordy disciplines like mine could benefit enormously from the 'example' approach to the Language and Learning Checklists. I think this would be particularly helpful when running one-to-one support sessions for students with emerging



writing skills. Comparing the students' answer with one which has been analysed from a student with established skills would help the tutor to help the student. The key here though is that the examples have to be in the correct context so this would only be appropriate for TU100 tutors and doing the analysis is a time-consuming business. I team-teach so I have tried to highlight certain aspects of what I have learnt from the project with my team partner.

## AL2

### 1.) The impact of the project on your practice in the areas of teaching and giving feedback on language aspects.

I think different aspects of the project influenced my practice in different areas, so I am going to break these down a bit.

- a) PT3 analysis: - with the proviso that I would have liked to have seen this analysis include feedback within the submission document and comments on skills because this would have given us a deeper and more accurate picture of tutor's language (because PT3s frequently replicate the tutor guide).
  - i) I became more aware of the way I used language myself, my tone, my approach (sandwiches of positivity), how the language I used might be perceived by students. I am pretty sure that I took greater care as a result.
  - ii) I became very aware of the language and tone used by all the tutors I monitored. I also felt empowered to respond to instances where I thought that their language and/or tone was inappropriate. This resulted in some quite painful exchanges - in particular one long time tutor who really had to change the way she approached feedback. Over the period of the project she made significant changes to her language and tone. In order to decide efficacy of this intervention one would need to look at the results/retention figures for her batches of students (across both B&J presentations) which, of course, is outside my remit. Another, newer, tutor was not as responsive to my feedback and I'm afraid all my attempts at addressing her issues failed - I think this is because she didn't have a background in teaching (industry based experience instead) and therefore was unable to understand any issues around teaching.
- b) In tutorials, both online and f2f, I always focussed one section of the tutorial on language skills; including at least one aspect every time, i.e. proofreading, note taking, structure etc.
- c) In notes I kept on students (on my spreadsheet) I made sure that I was following language skills progress, in particular with L2 students and L1 struggling students. I wanted to try to get them to focus on one language learning opportunity following each TMA and I also wanted to make sure I wasn't being too repetitive (unless it was necessary). I would also set targets, with links to supporting help, for example with use of articles or sentence structure. I recorded the targets in my spreadsheet so that I could praise/encourage the student if they improved or looked like they had

- paid any attention. This sometimes resulted in more developed conversations via notes on submissions from the students, email or 1-2-1 online sessions. (BTW I also kept programming and a very few numeracy notes).
- d) Linked to the last point, in feedback on submissions I would try to concentrate on one thing when language skills were poor (sorry I was never able to absorb Jim's strata for describing language ability) rather than overwhelm the student with criticism of everything that they had done wrong.
    - i) I think that rewriting a small chunk of work for the student is great and can be helpful, but only if accompanied by explanation and sometimes I felt overwhelmed myself by their language issues.
    - ii) I would have liked to have used video clips to support this because it might have been easier to explain my thinking.
  - e) I made a couple of YouTube videos to support these efforts.
    - i) Proofreading
    - ii) Note-taking
  - f) linked to point d)i) I started to seek more support from Student Support to help students. This worked well on TU100 (but failed miserably on TT284 when my request for help with a student was just passed to another tutor no better qualified than myself to help the student). I also used the option to create special support sessions, which I hadn't used before (but more often for helping with programming rather than language).
  - g) Overall, I developed a better understanding of differences between students - particularly through reading their interview transcripts. It became easier to understand other students' needs and work out how better to serve them.

## **2.) How, when and where you have disseminated any of the project to colleagues?**

Again, I am going to break this down a bit.

- a) via monitoring reports and feedback across both presentations to colleagues
- b) to my tutoring "partners" in conversation during prep for day schools/tutorials
- c) officially at the MCT staff development event held in Nottingham on Sat 4th July 2015. My presentation was well received and led to a lively and interesting discussion which took us well beyond my allotted time.

## **AL3**

I have given a talk at a regional staff development day on one of the themes. The tone of language used by ALs to feedback. the possible results of negative feedback on achievement and ways this can be changed.

The reaction to my small presentation from the MCT staff was interesting. Most were shocked at some of the feedback found in the project and some were not. I did not detect that any found it normal but there was some discussion on why it mattered. Some ALs it was clear did not think that their choice of words had any influence and did not see why couching the negative aspects in a positive way would make a difference. There were many

that did see that as a problem and they said they tried to always give the feedback in a positive way. We then digressed into the discussion of correcting mistakes. Some though you need to correct every one and some did not. I also point to the MASUS guide which you are now doing in the Tutor Guide.

I have been asked to do another one later this year on moving to a more positive feedback model even when what you have to say it not always good. I am using some of the data from the study around feedback on language with some ideas from a presentation for languages by Concha Furnborough. Aligning TMA feedback to student's needs and expectations (How well does our feedback work?). I have been given permission to use some parts to make my points on tone and style. Also how much feedback on language should be given and possibly what students are really expecting or needing as opposed to what we think they are needing and wanting. She used the FACT (Feedback Analysis Chart for Tutors) as the analysis tool. Whether feedback focuses on strengths or weaknesses and my focus is on the tone of the tutor within this focus. The differences between perceived strengths and weaknesses in the tone and language of the AL. They used the study to create a scaffold for the depth of feedback. I was asked to create something that could spark a discussion on how individual tutors use language to feedback.

What did come over and what I have taken away is how a small thing from an AL can be a big thing to a student and we do have to watch our language in feedback as it can be devastating for some. The aim must be to show students where they went wrong and how to do better in a non-academic, kind way. Using language they understand and can relate to slowly move then forward.

You have to say they got something wrong  
why it is wrong  
and show them the right way.

*Appendix F – Summary of two tutor groups’ responses to language aspects of personal development planning question introduced to TU100.*

**TU100 14J TMA04 Q1 (d)**

Activity 7 in the *TU100 Guide* asked you to complete a learning outcomes table, and the resources page for the last part of each block has reminded you to update that as you study. You will need some of the entries from that table to help you answer this question and the EMA.

- i. Think back over your experience of studying TU100 so far: think about what has gone well and what has not gone so well. Describe one change you have made, or plan to make, to your approach to studying and how you hope that will make your studying more effective. If you think that no changes are necessary, then explain why.
- ii. Use the learning outcomes tables you have been asked to complete to remind you of your progress over the last few months. Write a few sentences to summarise your key strengths and skills. Include some you would like to develop further as you progress through your studies. Paste into your answer three completed rows of entries from the ‘Practical and professional skills’ section of the learning outcomes tables as supporting evidence.
- iii. Describe two things you will do next to help you with your personal development. You will find it helpful to make a note to yourself of dates when you will achieve these, but you don’t need to include these dates in your answer.

**Extracts from student answers that relate to language**

**AB**

(i)

I also find that if a subject is not of great interest to me then I struggle to take in what I am reading. I have read some tips on how to improve on this and will make sure I apply what I have learnt if this situation arises again.

(ii)

I’ve also managed to improve on my note taking skills. One area I would like to improve on would be reading detailed technical articles and making my own summaries of such articles.

**JH**

(i)

Currently I spend a large portion of my study time reading the materials. I need to ensure that I skim read more often and pull out useful pieces of information opposed to trying to read everything in a high level of detail. This will leave me with more time to focus on activities, where I find I learn best.

(iii)

I am currently setting myself reading time targets, either with course materials or further reading. If I find that I am exceeding these time targets, then either I am spending too much time reading, or the targets are not suited for the material. I am

also putting away materials more often to write up notes. At the moment I get concerned that I am missing details so am focused on copying everything down, where, as I need to focus on what I can recall and understand.

**DB**

(i)

I would say my biggest strengths are in effective note taking, performing calculations and willingness to learn. Something I feel I need to work on is my ability to define and give examples of certain concepts.

(ii)

I would say my biggest strengths are in effective note taking, performing calculations and willingness to learn. Something I feel I need to work on is my ability to define and give examples of certain concepts.

**FG**

(ii)

I have improved in my writing and note taking, my method of studying/learning has improved

Writing a report/essay	Learnt a lot by doing TMA's and activities.	Continue to read tutor notes after TMA. Analyse activities where a report is given. Read report/ summaries of journals(even if I don't understand it completely)	Writing,Academic(professional/formal?) writing, reading and understanding
------------------------	---	--	---

**JO**

(i)

I have enjoyed reading, writing and learning new things and feel that I have achieved new skills in this area. Looking back over my learning outcomes, it is clear that I still need to work on my note taking. Less detail is needed when explaining things as it clutters my notepad and confuses me.

**MB**

(i)

Unfortunately, report and other writing tasks were the least satisfying. I am not the one who is good with words. That is why I should be giving myself even more time when completing those tasks.

**RF**

(ii)

I feel my key strengths and skills are summarising, explaining and interpreting technical information.

**RW**

(i)

I have struggled to keep up with study of each block fully and have been completing the activity's that I am not sure of rather than reading through the whole blocks due to getting behind.

(ii)

I am currently improving my English language skills as these are one of my weakest skills and have been continuing to develop these throughout assignments.

**SR**

(i)

I'm trying to improve my English skills by reading and writing, using special programs and apps for my smartphone, and joining English grammar forums. Trying to be more effective when studying the books and course files, I'm now highlighting important points and adding small notes.

**ZG**

(ii)

Over the last few months I believe that my reading skills have been improved upon, with the amount of reading that I have undertaken so far, my active understanding and information retrieval skills have improved greatly, however my writing skills and explaining skills need to be improved, I have noticed that in the marked assessments the feedback that I have been receiving are pointing towards my communication skills needing to be improved on, I need to understand the scope of the question and answer them effectively.

**PA**

- (i) I have undertaken the TU100 course to personally 'better myself' as opposed to career advancement and have benefited from it greatly, showing vast improvements from TMA01 to TMA03 in things such as language skills where my presentation and sentence construction have had better comments from the tutor as the course has moved on. My understanding of ethical issues is much clearer and I now know how to behave and interact with other people online.

**GB**

- (i) I have chosen to use the online study materials as opposed to the textbooks. This is mostly because I have now been able to insert pictures into my notes as I approach them which helps to better understand the notes taken. I have also made better use of the videos and activities as they appear during reading.
- (ii) I feel I am better with essay style questions than I am with math based questions. My ability to assess my notes in order to better understand the material has also improved. I would definitely like to improve my scientific notation skills as I don't believe they are up to scratch. I would also like to improve my understanding of difficult material by attending more day schools.

**DR**

- (i) A change I feel I must make is to ensure that I do not do too much skim reading as it had caused a few areas of confusion which caused me to go back and re-read sections and had caused me to lose a few marks on my previous TMA(03), skim reading is not a bad thing but I need to do it when appropriate and not because I am in a rush, I will start to reduce the amount of skim reading I do and try to only do so when appropriate.
- (ii) Unrelated
- (iii) There are two skills I would like to develop to improve my learning will be to improve my reading effectiveness, I will do this by ensuring I skim

read less and increase the speed of my intensive reading to ensure I retain more information. ...

TT

- (i) ....My English grammar is not as good as I would like, to the purist, but I was brunged up to appreciate to communicate thoughts and ideas. As long as I can convey understanding I'm happy. It is other people who get upset! However this problem has a millstone around my neck all my adult life and maybe it is time to change, in small steps.
- (ii) I did draft a template of the learning outcome table but I must confess I did not use one and I'm not going to cheat by embellishing one now. (Sorry) Need to discuss impact on EMA.
- (iii)As I sit here in my study I can see on my bookshelf:
  - a. English - A 'Teach Yourself book' .
  - b. Brush up on your grammar - Gullup
  - c. Time Management for Dummies
  - d. Maybe I'll dust them down.

*Appendix G - A Language and Learning Checklist to use when marking TU100 14J TMA 03 Question 1a (the summary)*

**Student Task: Summarise an article**

Suggested use: tutors mark yes or no in response to the questions on the list and then decide if feedback is needed. An adapted checklist could be used by students to self-evaluate.

<b>TMA3Q1a</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Feedback needed?</b>
<b>A: Use of source materials: Selecting and representing the relevant information</b>		
1. Has the relevant information been interpreted correctly and presented?		
2. Has this information been written in the writer's own words (e.g. with paraphrasing or summary) rather than being copied?		
<b>B: Structure and development of text: Organising the response in an appropriate way</b>		
1. Is the text organised in a way best suited to the task?		
2. Are categories or concepts used to organise the text?		
3. Is each section/paragraph clearly about something?		
4. Does the section/paragraph develop the points it is making– with definitions as appropriate?		
5. Are the points linked to provide a logical flow of ideas?		
<b>C: Writing style: Using language appropriate to task and audience</b>		
1. Have the relevant subject-specific words and word-combinations been used, with definitions where helpful?		
2. Is the language appropriately formal and impersonal for the task and audience (i.e., the tutor)?		
3. Have the requirements of the audience been fully imagined		



TMA3Q1a	Yes/No	Feedback needed?
(i.e. does the student understand the extent of technical explanation needed)?		
<b>D: Grammar, spelling and punctuation</b>		
1. Is the sentence structure accurate?		
2. Are the verbs in the correct tense and with the correct endings?		
3. Are noun groups used?		
4. Is the spelling correct?		
5. Is the punctuation appropriate?		

**Appendix H - An example of the Language and Learning Checklist applied to emerging and established level students**

Includes checklist with comments for established and emerging level students (p.1), the task (p.5) and three student texts (p.7)

TMA3Q1a (14J)	Established student (See Illustrative text below)	Emerging student (See two Illustrative texts below)
<b>A: Use of source materials: Selecting and representing the relevant information</b>		
1. Has the relevant information been interpreted correctly and presented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reads source material with good understanding</li> <li>• Identifies and selects key information according to summary purpose (key information should be listed in tutor marking notes)</li> <li>• The underlying purpose of reading this ‘trade’ article is to extract the technical knowledge from the surrounding journalism/promotional messages. So relevant information is technical, focused on both the technology itself, and the user procedures for interfacing with the technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It may not be clear how source material has been read. Relatively limited amounts of information may have been understood. This may reflect failure to notice the thematic structure of the source text, and the nature of the conceptual formations of knowledge which the text is drawing from or reporting.</li> <li>• Identifies and selects one or two elements of the full information expected for the summary purpose; may also include less relevant information</li> <li>• The technical focus may be obscured by promotional or otherwise marginal information (such as an emphasis on the user procedure)</li> <li>• Source material may have been fully understood and relevant points selected, but nevertheless poorly expressed. Poor writing may mask full understanding.</li> </ul>
2. Has this information been written in the writer’s own words (e.g. with paraphrasing or summary) rather than being copied?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rewords information from source text &amp; notes in multiple ways ranging from paraphrasing at a sentence level to extraction of key content from across longer stretches of text – several sentences, paragraph or section; may re-sequence content.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There may be some rewording of information from source text &amp; notes, probably by paraphrasing at a surface and sentence level (this may represent information inaccurately, or slip towards copying phrases, clauses and sentences);</li> <li>• There may be a lot of copying from the source text, with</li> </ul>

TMA3Q1a (14J)	Established student (See Illustrative text below)	Emerging student (See two Illustrative texts below)
		superficial changes to wording and grammar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There may also be a very informal account – ‘own words’ being taken literally to mean the words the student feels comfortable using.</li> </ul>
<b>B: Structure and development of text: Organising the response in an appropriate way</b>		
1. Is the text organised in a way best suited to the task?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text organisation might reflect source material organisation, or might be re-organised/resequenced in accordance with student’s own sense of the most appropriate organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text organisation cyclical and with unclear or repetitive thematic development</li> <li>There may be resequencing of information from different parts of the source text&amp;notes but not really clear how this serves the organisation of the summary text and meaning</li> <li>Overall structure may be difficult to track or technical definitions are not <u>embedded</u> in the user procedure and technical system descriptions but follow after</li> </ul>
2. Are categories or concepts used to organise the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key concepts (as appropriate to the theme of the text] act as organisers of the text structure referred to in B1 above</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some key concepts may occur but do not really organise the text</li> </ul>
3. Is each section/paragraph clearly about something?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some kind of orientation to the upcoming section/paragraph is used in the opening one or two sentences</li> <li>The section/paragraph as a whole has a coherence because it is clearly about something</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is difficult to see what the upcoming section/paragraph is about from the opening sentences</li> <li>The coherence of the section/paragraph is elusive</li> <li>There may be no paragraphing</li> </ul>
4. Does the section/paragraph develop the points it is making– with definitions as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paragraphs develop technical points.</li> <li>Definitions are integrated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of points is obscure.</li> <li>Definitions may be omitted</li> </ul>

TMA3Q1a (14J)	Established student (See Illustrative text below)	Emerging student (See two Illustrative texts below)
5. Are the points linked to provide a logical flow of ideas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coherent line of development through the text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There may be coherence but it may not add up to a line of development through the text;</li> </ul>
<b>C: Writing style: Using language appropriate to task and audience</b>		
1. Have the relevant subject-specific words and word-combinations been used, with definitions where helpful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using technical language from module - both single technical terms and also technical phrases. (often interchanging technical terms that are reasonably synonymous)</li> <li>Compressed sentence structures</li> <li>Definitions included but limited by the word count.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text may be unfocused and wordy rather than concise</li> <li>Limited amounts of technical language used (sometimes inaccurately, often reproducing rather than rewording phrases or sentences around key technical terms from the source material)</li> <li>May include own commonsense technical terms</li> </ul>
2. Is the language appropriately formal and impersonal for the task and audience (i.e., the tutor)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using impersonal and formal language</li> <li>Not colloquial or journalistic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summary may mix somewhat impersonal and formal language style with personal and colloquial style</li> </ul>
3. Have the requirements of the audience been fully imagined (i.e. does the student understand the extent of technical explanation needed)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes appropriate explanations of technical items to demonstrate knowledge of these.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May include own abbreviations and choice of words more appropriate for spoken style</li> <li>The student may fail to include technical explanations because of unclear idea of who the audience is supposed to be.</li> </ul>
<b>D: Grammar, spelling and punctuation</b>		
1. Is the sentence structure accurate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grammar, spelling and punctuation will be accurate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grammar, spelling and punctuation errors may occur; these may</li> </ul>

TMA3Q1a (14J)	Established student (See Illustrative text below)	Emerging student (See two Illustrative texts below)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complex, compound and embedded sentences will be used in order to achieve the compression and technicality of the summary</li> </ul>	accumulate enough to make meaning unclear. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sentences may be simple, or if complex, subordination and coordination are not always managed effectively</li> </ul>
2. Are the verbs in the correct tense and with the correct endings?	Accurate verb tense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systematic errors with tense and verb endings. Use of subject 'they', or 'you', without being clear who is being referred to.</li> </ul>
3. Are noun groups used?	Some 'long nouns'	Few 'long nouns', abbreviations used
4. Is the spelling correct?	Spelling correct	There may be spelling errors and typos
5. Is the punctuation appropriate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sentences beginning with capital letters and ending in full stops.</li> <li>Commas used to separate information within sentences but not between sentences.</li> <li>May include other punctuation marks like colon or semi-colon.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sentences may run into each other without full stops.</li> <li>Commas may be used to separate sentences.</li> <li>Does not include other punctuation marks like colon or semi-colon or if used are used inappropriately.</li> </ul>

## TU100 TMA03 Q1a Task (14J)

- Read the article 'RFID walks the red carpet at The Hobbit's European film premiere' (Swedberg, 2013) in Appendix 1. It describes an RFID system. Use this case study to give a short summary, in your own words, of the Warner Bros. RFID system.
- Include brief explanations of any technical terms and how you understand the system to operate. Base these explanations on material in Block 2 Part 2. A suggested approach is to take notes, summarise the system and then weave in any necessary technical explanations.

### Article: RFID WALKS THE RED CARPET AT THE HOBBIT'S EUROPEAN FILM PREMIERE

*A solution from Dwinq let attendees automatically post pictures taken of them with friends, and with the movie's stars. By Claire Swedberg*  
Dec 23, 2013—When 500 recipients of VIP passes showed up at the European premiere of *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*, their priority was to obtain photographs showing them at the event, in costume and standing next to the movie's stars, and to share the pictures with friends.

To make that possible, Facebook and the film's distributor, Warner Bros., opted for an RFID--based solution from Dwinq. As a result, the attendees' VIP passes came with passive ultrahigh--frequency (UHF) EPC RFID tags, photographers carried RFID readers to interrogate those tags, and Dwinq's Social Media Operating System software linked each picture with that person's ID number, and then posted those pictures, along with *The Hobbit* logo, on his or her Facebook page.

During the single--evening event, the system connected the branded photos to nearly 100,000 individuals, based on an average of 240 friends for each of the 500 participants, with 132 percent sharing. This meant that the pictures not only reached 100 percent of the users' own friends, but also any friends of their friends who may have liked or responded to the pictures.

The event itself, which took place on Monday, Dec. 16, was pandemonium when it came to picture--taking, says Patrick Sweeney, Dwinq's president and CEO. The company has provided the Facebook-- based solution at a variety of events, including the U.S. Olympics and Formula One races, he says, but this event stands out in terms of the high demand for pictures. "We've never had so many photographers for such a small group of people," he states. In fact, five photographers wandered through the premiere event taking pictures.

For the event, 500 people won the VIP passes through Facebook. Upon receiving the pass, each winner could either download a Dwinq app onto a mobile phone and then use it to register the pass or, upon arriving at the premiere, register via laptops located in the "Fan Cave." In either case, the user input the ID number on the VIP pass, and then provided his or her Facebook user name and password, along with permission to link pictures to that Facebook page.

Every guest wore his or her VIP pass on a lanyard around the neck, each consisting of an RFID plastic ID card from Vanguard ID, containing an EPC Gen 2 UHF tag encoded with a unique ID number that was also printed on the pass. Photographers each carried an IDBlue pen-shaped RFID reader, as well as a Wi-Fi-enabled camera with an SD card loaded with Dwinq software, and a tablet or phone that received the tag ID read by IDBlue via Bluetooth technology, and then forwarded that data via a cellular or Wi-Fi connection. Photographers took pictures of the attendees (who were dressed up for the occasion, many in costumes based on characters from *The Hobbit*), either as groups of friends, or together with one or more of the movie's stars.

After a photographer took a picture, the Dwinq software instructed the camera to send that photo to Dwinq's cloud-based server. The photographer then took the IDBlue reader out of his pocket and tapped it near the attendee's VIP pass, after which the reader interrogated the tag, collected its ID number and forwarded that data back to the server as well, via a Bluetooth connection with a tablet device. Dwinq's software on the server then linked the picture with that individual's ID number. It collected the Facebook user name and password linked to the user's RFID number, superimposed the logo from *The Hobbit* over the picture, and posted the image on the individual's Facebook wall.

The picture was subsequently viewed on the "Newsfeed" of each user's Facebook friend. "This was a pretty amazing event," Sweeney says. "We're really thrilled with the results."

Dwinq was not only able to post Facebook pictures, but also collect data for Facebook and Warner Bros. that the companies could use for future advertising. For example, each individual who attended and participated in the Dwinq program could receive future advertising related to other Warner Bros. events. In addition, those who "liked" or responded to the pictures on Facebook could receive advertising. This provides a more direct connection between advertisers and consumers than traditional TV- or magazine-based advertisements, which can be difficult to track and are not personally directed at an individual consumer.

According to Sweeney, the solution requires some sophistication on Dwinq's part to ensure that pictures are sent to the proper Facebook page, and that they are only sent once. For example, he says, it required considerable software engineering to be sure that if a photograph was taken of three people, each with an RFID tag, that photo would only be posted on each individual's wall once, not three times. "That's a real engineering challenge," Sweeney states.

Swedberg, C. (2013) 'RFID Walks the Red Carpet at The Hobbit's European Film Premiere', *RFID Journal*, 23 December 2013 [Online]. Available at <http://www.rfidjournal.com/articles/view?11302> (Accessed 29 June 2014).

---

Woodthorpe, J. (2016) *How students' use of language relates to learning, retention, and performance in assessment on TU100: Implications for learning design, assessment strategy, and tuition practices in the MCT faculty*. eSTeEM Final Report.

## Student texts from 14J

### 1. High Scoring (14/14) Established

Roman numerals = notes from article. Lack of sequence in numbers indicates how far student has resequenced source text information in summary

Highlighted blue words= same or very similar words/phrases/clauses/sentences to source text

Student's Notes	Student's Summary	Comment
<p>v) official treat provider</p> <p>vi) inflatable exhibition centre</p> <p>i) provides visitors with history of chocolate making; interactive tour</p> <p>ii) clever, social-media based image sharing system</p> <p>iii) visitors share experience on Facebook [ultra high frequency tag]</p> <p>iv) developed by Dwinq OF Massachusets</p> <p>xx) Dwinq CEO/president Patrick Sweeney; past experience of RFID tagging</p> <p>viii) RFID tags in visitor ID-badges</p> <p>xiv) Interactive stations</p> <p>xvi)Cameras backed up by software platform</p> <p>ix) Supplied by Vanguard ID Systems, contains passive RDIF tag, unique EPC (electronic product code)</p> <p>xvii) Greater detection range for tags and readers.</p> <p>a) Passive tags use built in circuits to harvest power from the readers</p>	<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <p><b>(a) Summary of the article 'Cadbury Offers RFID-enabled Treat During Summer Olympics' (Claire Swedberg, 2012)</b></p> <p>As part of Cadbury's involvement in <b>the London 2012 Olympics as "Official Treat Provider"</b> they installed an inflatable exhibition centre in Hyde Park called <b>Cadbury House</b>. This provided visitors with a history of Cadbury's chocolate making via an interactive tour, which incorporated a clever, social-media, based image-sharing system that allowed visitors to easily share their experiences on Facebook.</p> <p>The system developed by <b>Dwinq of Massachusetts USA</b>, who's <b>CEO/President Patrick Sweeney</b> has past experience of RFID tagging, consisted of radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags embedded in visitor ID-badges, tag readers, interactive stations and cameras backed-up by a software platform.</p> <p><b>The ID-badge, supplied by Vanguard ID Systems, contains a passive RFID-tag on which a unique electronic product code (EPC) is stored. The tag operates at ultra-high frequency (UHF is 300MHz to 3GHz), this frequency range was chosen as it offered a greater detection range for both the tags and readers.</b></p>	<p>Intro's phenomenon – Cadbury dimension</p> <p>Technical dimension</p> <p>Orientation to technical phenomenon</p> <p>Detailed description of technical system</p>



<p>xii) Readers – supplied by Impinj or ThingMagic</p> <p>vii) Visitor is asked if they want to register xxii) 75% CH visitors use RFID system</p> <p>x) Links Facebook accounts to Dwinq’s software platform</p> <p>xi) Present badge to ‘check in spot’- concealed ThingMagic reader</p> <p>xiii) Visitor goes to photo opportunity areas;</p> <p>xv) Reader detects badge xviii) Software isolates which visitor is in the photograph and automatically posts image and status updates to Facebook account. ixx) Roving photographers with handheld UHF tag scanners, provided by ID Blue, can take pictures sent by WiFi to Dwinq servers, then onto Facebook</p> <p>xxiii) Carter very pleased with popularity</p> <p>And ease of use</p>	<p>Using a passive tag means the ID-badge has no internal battery, but instead uses built-in circuitry to harvest power from the tag readers, the tag readers themselves were supplied by either <b>Impinj or ThingMagic</b>.</p> <p>Visitors entering the exhibition are asked whether they want to register for the system (and about <b>75%</b> of visitors did). Registering means details of a visitor’s Facebook account are taken and linked on Dwinq’s software platform to the EPC of the ID-badge the visitor was given as part of the process.</p> <p>Once registered the visitor has to present their ID-badge to the ‘<b>check-in spot</b>’, a concealed ThingMagic reader, at the entrance so that the system knows they’ve started the tour. A visitor can go to any of the photo opportunity areas within the exhibition and have their photograph taken; the reader in the area will detect their badge and using the proprietary software of the Dwinq platform isolate which visitor it is in the photograph and automatically post the image to their Facebook account. The interactive screens in the exhibit allowed visitors to post status updates in a similar fashion. <b>Roving photographers</b> with <b>handheld UHF</b> tag scanners, provided by <b>ID Blue</b>, can also offer to take pictures that are then sent by <b>Wi-Fi</b> to the Dwinq servers and then onto Facebook.</p> <p>Sonia Carter, head of the UK digital division for Kraft Foods, has been very pleased with the systems popularity and with how easy it has been to use.</p>	<p>Description of user procedure (this procedure structures the text) [blended with technical system description]</p> <p>Description of user procedure continued.</p> <p>Concluding statement (an evaluation of the system)</p>
--	---	---

**General Evaluation:** There is no doubt these are his own words. He appears to be well versed in the discourse and in the content. The notes are heavily manipulated in the service of the summary text. Hardly a note is in the order it was originally in the source text. The text is not derived

from the source text at either a word or phrase level. Blue words are most obviously derived from the source text with little alteration. He hardly uses the course material in any obvious way although appears to understand the concepts presented in the course material.

## 2. Low scoring: Emerging

Roman numerals = notes from article. Lack of sequence in numbers indicates how far summary text has resequenced source text contents

Highlighted blue words in summary = same or very similar words/phrases/clauses/sentences to source text

Student's Notes	Student's Summary	Comment
<p>ii) Dwinq, social media technology company based in Mass created RFID system            i) Cadbury house Hyde Park,            iii) 2012 Olympic and Paralympics</p> <p>v) Visitors given ID badge;            vi) encoded with an ID number</p> <p>iv) Guests who viewed the exhibit like</p>	<p>Name (pseudonym): WA</p> <p>This article was written by RFID Journal, the author was Claire Swedberg and can be found on <a href="http://www.rfidjournal.com/articles/view?9776/">http://www.rfidjournal.com/articles/view?9776/</a> .</p> <p>Dwinq, who are a social media technology company based in Massachusetts, created the RFID system. This system was used at the Cadbury house, which was held at Hype Park during the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.</p> <p>The RFID system allows visitors to share the Cadbury experience, by uploading pictures in different locations throughout the exhibition and also allowing them to check-in to these locations. This is then updated on to Facebook for friends and family to see. When visiting the Cadbury house each visitor is given an ID badge, which comes encoded with an ID number; this allows visitors to easily use the readers throughout their visit.</p> <p>Guests who viewed the exhibit like museum, where they</p>	<p>Has focused on a single theme – RFID uploads to Facebook – and recycles that in various forms. As a result his summary has no real thematic development. The opening sentence miscues Dwinq as the theme of the text.</p> <p>It is likely he has not uncovered the structure of the original source text, and is equally unable to set up a summary text with a thematic pattern.</p> <p>Focuses on a key idea but does not have control over how the whole source text configures the conceptual formation around it</p> <p>However, he has reworded the original in different words in parts</p>

<p>museum, learned about Cadbury's history, sampled the company's confections, and played interactive games, able to share details about the visit with their Face book friends via RFID activation points.</p> <p>vii) place badge next to a check in spot and it updates Facebook page. viii) Can easily use readers ix) Readers throughout CH, such as ThingMagic x) Other fixed readers x1) There is a backdrop, a medal in a stadium or camel in a desert</p>	<p>learned about Cadbury's history, sampled the company's confections and also played interactive games, were able to share details about the visit with their Facebook friends, via RFID activation points.</p> <p>There are also various different readers throughout the Cadbury House such as the Thing Magic reader, where you place your badge next to a check-in spot and it updates your Facebook page. They also have other fixed readers made by Impinj or Thing Magic, where there is a backdrop when the picture is taken and can show you in different locations for example, getting a medal in a stadium or on a camel in a desert.</p> <p><b>Technical Terms</b> <b>Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)</b> is a social media technology, which allows users to share pictures and updates to their Facebook page without having to tap a card against a reader. <b>EPC Gen2 passive UHF RFID tags</b> register Facebook account information and are linked to an ID number that is encoded on to the badge, which allows them to share information on Facebook. They also have a longer read range, then passive (High Frequency) RFID tags. <b>UHF handheld reader</b>, which, is supplied by IDBlue is a portable reader that allows guests to share pictures to Dwinq's social media platform via a Wi-Fi connection.</p>	<p>These technical terms are all recycled from the preceding text and do not do what was expected by the task specification.</p>
--	---	--

### 3. Low scoring: Emerging

Student's Summary (notes not provided)	Comment
<p>When you have sending invention for 500 VIP passes to show the premiere of hobbit . When taking photography with actors the wanted to share on Facebook, warner bros went with RFID-based solutions. All VIP passes have a passive ultrahigh-frequency (UHF) EPC RFID tags. The RFID tags will be tagged were they can view picture which will have an ID number with the hobbit logo. The technology will allow them to share picture with Facebook. All guest have a VIP pass round the neck, it has RFID plastics which has an EPC Gen 2 UHF tags encoded with a unique ID number which is also printed on the pass. All the camera will have ab IGBLue pen-shaped RFID reader and wireless enabled camera which will store all the photo on a SD card. Ones they have taken a photograph the Dwing software camera will send the picture on Dwing's cloud based server. The photography take the IDBlue reader and tap on the VIP Pass which will send information to the Server. The Dwing's server will allow the guest to aloe them to logging in using there Facebook account and the VIP number that will allow them to post picture on their face book. All the picture on taken in face book and warner bros companies has access for further advertising. All the picture on the Dwing serve can be accessed by Facebook and Warner bro for further ref and any guest who attended the premium can access the photo any time for their personal use. The RFID tags worked out very user Fridley and easy for Warner bro to publish there photo on the event.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Blue highlighting shows word for word copying – very little of this.</li> <li>2. Three examples of 'own words' where informal phrasing is used:(Informal phrasing highlighted in yellow) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Went with' = own words for 'opted for'</li> <li>• which has an = 'containing'</li> <li>• 'All the picture on the Dwing serve can be accessed by Facebook and Warner bro for further ref' own words for: 'Dwing was not only able to post Facebook pictures, but also collect data for Facebook and Warner Bros. that the companies could use for future advertising'</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Needs advice on sentence structure, capitalisation, proof-reading, verb endings, paragraphing.</li> <li>4. Use of 'you' as an impersonal subject. Use of 'they/them' without explanation of who this refers to.</li> <li>5. Understood content of summary.</li> </ol>

## *Appendix I - A guide for using the Language and Learning Checklist*

### **Introducing the Language & Learning Checklists**

#### **General**

The reason these are called Language **and** Learning Checklists is that they treat language as central to much of the learning that students do on TU100. They do not treat language as separate to that learning.

In the Language & Learning Checklists There are four general categories to evaluate a student's language and learning development, each with more specific descriptors. Descriptors vary according to the purpose of the TMA question.

Students' language and learning can be rated on the following scale:

<b>Emerging</b>	beginning to read and/or write for this purpose
<b>Consolidating</b>	showing many effective reading and/or writing skills for this purpose
<b>Established</b>	showing a wide range of effective reading and/or writing skills for this purpose

Checklists include descriptors that illustrate what these stages of development might look like for a particular TMA task. There are also texts that exemplify some of the descriptors.

#### **The checklist categories with some explanatory notes**

##### **A: Use of source materials: Selecting and representing the relevant information**

- This is the key academic skill of using reading (or other form of input) as the basis for writing. It refers to what a student knows about the subject matter of an assignment task, how they express this 'in their own words', and how they reference the source materials they are using.
- In a few cases, source materials are not used, so the descriptors are adjusted accordingly

##### **B: Structure and development of text: Organising the response in an appropriate way**

- Text structure and development reflect a writer's thinking, knowledge of the subject, and language experience, as they attempt to fulfil the purposes of a TMA task.
- A TMA task is likely to have one or more overarching purposes (such as definition, explanation, comparison, or argument).
- Achieving this overarching purpose is likely to generate a text that is organised and developed in particular ways. This organisation can be seen in terms of sub-purposes (e.g. an argument assignment may include an argument for and an argument against). These are called **stages**.

High scoring student texts have been used to set the benchmark for what tutors appear to value and expect.

- Text organisation can also be seen in terms of content (e.g., a description text may include 'take notes', 'organise notes', 'store notes'). These are called **phases** of content.
- An important way that texts are organised is by **key concepts**. These will mostly come from the source texts referred to in category A. If a student uses these concepts to organise a clear text, or if they jump backwards and forwards between these concepts and the information in their text is not clearly organised, these are matters for Section B of the Checklist.
- Another way that the logical flow of a text can be organised is with **referring back words** like *which, this*, with **connecting words**, like *and, then*, and by **repetition** of key concept words.

### **C: Writing style: Using language appropriate to task and audience**

- A student's writing style will be a combination of the writing style they start on the course with and a style that develops as they start using the ideas and language of the course.
- Part of writing style is using the **technical**, and '**semi-technical**' language of ICT (a technical term is *data protection regulation*, a semi technical term could be the word *exempted*, for example; this is a term which is less common in many people's everyday speech)
- Writing may be more or less **abstract**. There is a crossover between abstract and technical language. *Disruptive technologies, deterioration of storage media, digital obsolescence, backwards compatibility* are all technical terms. They are also abstract terms. They do not refer to specific, material things. They refer to general or conceptual things.
- Writing style may be more or less **formal**. There is a general sense that conversational writing is not appropriate for TMA assignments. Students will vary in their ability to write formally - and perhaps also in their interest in doing so.

### **D: Grammar, spelling and punctuation**

- Sentences, like whole texts, are structured to make sense to a reader or a writer. Sentence structure is controlled by 'grammar'.
- Sentence structures can be
  - **Simple**: *Digital tape is slow and inconvenient.*

- **Compound:** *Most PCs have sufficient internal space for a second hard disk **or** a cheap external hard disk can be connected to a USB.* (Two simple sentences joined by *and, but, or*)
- **Complex:** ***Once** data is stored in the cloud, you can no longer be sure that it is entirely secure from prying eyes.* (Two simple sentences, where one is less prominent than the other because it begins with a connecting word like *once, whilst, because, if*)
- **Embedded:** *For many years, offsite backup was restricted to organisations **who could afford relatively large monthly fees.*** (One sentence is embedded in to another sentence. In this case it is embedded after the word *organisations.*)
- **Compressed:** ***Not content with preserving all human languages,** the Long Now Foundation is planning on building a central repository for information about every computer file format that has ever been developed.* (This is several simple sentences joined together. The first ‘sentence’ – in bold - has been compressed by leaving out the words *The Long Now Foundation is.*)
- Many ‘grammar problems’ come about because the different parts of a sentence are structured together incorrectly. Such incorrect sentence structures may be more or less problematic; they may reflect misunderstandings of the ideas expressed, or of how particular words work to create structure, or both.
- Verbs are the core of a sentence structure. There are many types of verb (such as i) doing, ii) being or iii) seeing verbs) and they come in various forms (such as, i) Linus Torvalds **sent** the following message. ii) *You **should be** free to redistribute copies to anyone, anywhere.* iii) *Many people **failed to see** the paradigm shift of open source software)*
- One of the most important things that verbs do is indicate the point in time that a sentence refers to. This is achieved by what is known as the tense of the verb. For example, verb tense means you can contrast what is happening now with what happened in the past (I **used to make** notes on paper but now I **use** my laptop)
- Nouns are what sentences are about; they include names like *Firefox, Linux*; key concept words like *ubiquitous computing, intellectual property rights, open source software, the browsing habits of users*, and provide the names of many other i) things, ii) people and iii) concepts (like i) *server, website, mouse*, ii) *list of contributors, webmasters, users*; iii) *public profile, scepticism, today’s perspective*
- Nouns can be long groups of word clustered around a ‘head noun’: *intellectual property **rights**, the browsing **habits** of users, a tabbed **notebook** with a section for each subject.* These are called **long nouns** in the checklists.
- Spelling rules are even more fixed than sentence grammar rules. Incorrect spelling can make writing seem very careless or emerging. This can make spelling seem more important than perhaps it is.

- There are only a few key punctuation features:
  - Sentences begin with capital letters and end in full stops.
  - Commas separate information within sentences but not between sentences.
  - Occasional punctuation marks include colon (:) and semi-colon (;).

## **Using the L&L Checklists**

The checklists and illustrative texts are intended as a point of reference for TMA preparation and feedback. They are intended to support what ALs already do and (hopefully) systematise the approach to TMA evaluation and student support. It is expected that ALs will use them as they deem most suitable in the time available. Sometimes this might involve working through the checklist carefully while reviewing a student's assignment responses. Sometimes it might only involve picking out one or two criteria and feeding back on that. Hopefully deciding whether a student is Emerging, Consolidating, or Established provides a basis for allocating skills marks.