As those of you working with students learning to study in English know, it requires many more skills than those covered by academic English exams. Of course students need to have effective English language skills and learning strategies to enable them to understand and produce academic material. But my time teaching business studies on a university foundation course has taught me that young adults may not have developed academic skills in their own language and often need the time and space to learn these in addition to their English skills.

Part of my role was to set and mark business assignments written by a group of international students. My focus was on the content assessment rather than the language assessment (for a nice change) which was done by a colleague. Students had had a lot of input on how to source appropriate information and include a bibliography but these still proved an issue for some students. Online cheat essays were used as sources and students were surprised that these were not academically acceptable. After all, they'd referenced the site, they said.

Writing is not a standalone skill and in an academic context, often follows listening or reading in English. Another big challenge for my students was thoroughly understanding written material in order to be able to paraphrase it and synthesize it into their own work; a challenging skill even for native speakers.

Despite having been made fully aware of issues of plagiarism and having had practice in researching and synthesizing information in more controlled tasks, not all students seemed readily able to apply these techniques to extended writing in subject topics. In light of this, I believe that adopting a process writing approach to preparing students for writing extended assignments can be very beneficial; specifically, building up from short to longer texts that require researching and writing about other author’s points of view.

There are three key stages to the writing process: Pre-writing, drafting and redrafting, and editing (Hedge, 2005). Advocates say that it encourages learners to engage with the writing process more fully as well as learn to write as they write.

For me the most important advantage of this approach is that it allows students to receive feedback from their tutor and classmates at each stage of their writing rather than only at the end. Feedback has one of the most significant, positive effects on learning (Hattie 2013) and helps students to improve their approach and techniques as they write. In addition, students learn to peer and self-assess which are also key components of learning (Black & Wiliam, 2001) and useful skills for university students.
A process writing approach to an extended piece of writing might involve the following.

1. **Generating ideas**: students share and question each other's ideas in order to generate further ideas and develop higher order thinking skills. Techniques such as 'cubing' can be very useful here i.e. looking at a topic from six different perspectives. You can start with a simple What? Where? Why? When? Who? How?

2. **Research**: students check that each other's sources are academically acceptable to avoid referencing issues from the start. Encouraging students to use a free online citation tool from the beginning (e.g. zotero) means they can bookmark reference material and have it create a bibliography for them at the end. Students no longer have to scrape around in their browser history to find an article they vaguely remember seeing three weeks ago.

3. **Planning**: teacher/students assess plans to pre-empt issues of organisation and synthesis. Teachers may also wish to add their own comments, either to each student's plan or by taking one or two (anonymous) plans and discussing them with the whole class.

4. **Draft 1**: teacher/students offer feedback on content, organisation, synthesis and referencing so far to help move the student forward in their next draft.

5. **Final draft**: students peer assess for accuracy to aid final editing.

If students are paired with the same student throughout this process, they can really support each other and see how each other's work has developed. It will encourage a lot of reflection, both self- and peer, that will help develop metacognition. However, in my experience, for self- and peer assessment to be successful, assessment criteria should be made clear to students so they have something to assess against when giving feedback e.g. Other author's work will be referenced appropriately. Language prompts will also help students provide constructive feedback (e.g. You referenced XXX well. I think you need to reference…next time).

Whether a teacher will be able to spend time offering feedback to all students at all stages depends very much on the number of students and time they have. But by using self- and peer assessment, students can learn from each other, develop metacognition and develop important extended writing skills as they write and not have to wait until their next assignment to put feedback into practice when it may have been forgotten.

**References and Further Reading**
Black P & William D, Inside the Black Box, GL Assessment Ltd, 1990
Hedge T, Writing, OUP, 2005

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