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| **Improving Writing: Aligning Structure with the Assignment Brief** |
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| **Setting:** | Seminar |
| **Preparation duration:** | 15 to 30 minutes |
| **Level:** | Levels 4-6 |
| **Activity duration:** | 30 minutes to 1 hour depending on the text(s) |
| **Additional guidance:** | * Exemplar conclusions and a Paragraph Analysis Matrix are available in‘Improving Writing: Aligning Structure with the Assignment Brief Support Sheet’
* University of Manchester’s *Academic Phrasebank* (<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>)
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| **Outcomes:** * Encourage students to write more concisely and creatively when signposting the structure of their work.
* Gain experience of explaining ideas, outlining a logical sequence and creating flow within an essay.
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| **Pre-task preparation:** * Source a short – but high quality – example of academic writing, written by a published academic, that guides the reader from one point (or paragraph) to the next.
* Select 2 or 3 appropriate paragraphs (from previous student work or journal articles) to adapt this activity to your own discipline (one per 2-3 students).
* Three example conclusions (from Nursing) have been provided in the accompanying ‘Improving Writing: Aligning Structure with the Assignment Brief Support Sheet’.
* You might like to encourage students to bring examples of their own writing to refer to during the session.
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**Steps to implement the activity:** 1. Explain to students the importance of cohesion within academic writing, especially around ‘signposting’; in other words, telling the reader clearly what they have read and what will come next in the essay’s structure.
2. Show the class an example of an effective passage of writing from your discipline which will demonstrate how a writer can both remind the reader what has been said already and what will be said next.
3. Emphasise the importance of connectives in creating flow between sentences and ideas, perhaps using the University of Manchester’s *Academic Phrasebank* (<http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>) to demonstrate some examples of the type of language that could be used.
4. Hand out a range of different sample paragraphs, ideally conclusions (see ‘Improving Writing: Aligning Structure with the Assignment Brief Support Sheet’), to students in groups of 2 to 3.
5. From the ‘Improving Writing: Aligning Structure with the Assignment Brief Support Sheet’), ask students to complete the Paragraph Analysis Matrix.
6. Going through each example paragraph/conclusion (preferably illustrated on a PowerPoint slide), ask groups working on the relevant paragraph to feed back to the class.
7. Collate feedback for each example (on a whiteboard or flipchart paper) and narrate the key observations back to the class.
8. Finally, ask each group to find ways to develop their assigned paragraph by incorporating sequential language within the text or by emphasising the findings.
9. This can then be either reported back to the class or you might suggest students post their work on Moodle for comments from other students or even lecturer feedback.
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