

Academic Reading

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Over the last two decades there has been plenty of attention directed towards helping students with academic writing but much less to do with helping them with academic reading. This checklist seeks to redirect at least some attention back onto reading which remains a key aspect of academic literacy.

Batchelor students

Because most Batchelor students are 'first generation, second chance' students, (John Henry calls the 'pioneer students'), they have missed out on the opportunity to observe and learn efficient and effective academic literacy practices from family, friends or from their schooling. This means they must learn their academic skills and literacies 'on-the-job' as it were, here at Batchelor, so that at the same time as they are mastering the specific content and theories of disciplines, they are also learning how to be students who can read, write, discuss ideas in appropriately academic ways.

So, even though you may not be conscious of it, students are learning two domains of knowledge in your workshop. They are learning the academic/professional content of the workshop that you are concentrating on, but they are also learning the more general skills and literacy at work in academic discourse.

Academic literacy

This checklist is concerned with the latter: with the habits, ideas and approaches to reading, writing, talking, thinking and studying your students are learning from you as a result of attending your workshops. Because, wittingly or unwittingly, consciously or unconsciously, you are not just teaching content, you are also teaching general academic literacy.

Students are picking up from you hints and ideas about how to study, about how to read, about how much to read, about what reading is, about what to write, how to write, and so on and so on. They are even picking up the unconscious cues you give off about your own commitment to what you are teaching and your own emotional evaluation of the worth or meaning of academia as an institution and way of life.

Using the Checklist

This Checklist can be used in two ways:

- as a planning tool for *designing* your workshops
- as a reflective tool for *evaluating* workshops

Don't try to address every question or issue raised in this Checklist. Select one or two questions under each Headings as a guide for your thinking.

Academic Reading Checklist

Selection of texts for reading

Bridging: Do you have some readings that bridge between students' current understandings and the target discourse without simply negating the former?

Learning journeys: Do you have some readings by Indigenous authors that critically reflect on their learning journey towards and into the target discourse?

Colonialism: Do you have some readings by Indigenous authors that reflect critically on the target discourse as a colonial imposition on Indigenous realities?

Indigenous perspective: Do you have some readings that express Indigenous perspectives of (about/ within) the field of the target discourse?

Non-written texts: Are all your Readings in written English? Can you find some non-written texts (films, videos, paintings, stories) to 'read' and 'learn from'? Can you use some non-English texts?

Oral 'reading': In oral cultures, the texts of the culture are stored in people, not books. Information is passed on by entering into a relationship with an authorised person. So, have you organised for Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) speakers for students to listen to, converse with or get to know.

Modelling: Do you have some readings that model the kinds of writing (registers & genres) you want from student?

Sequencing your readings

Sequencing: How have you sequenced the readings for the workshop?

- short to longer
- easy to difficult
- Indigenous to 'mainstream'
- narrative to expository
- earlier (naive) views to newer (truer) views
- concepts/principles to illustrations/examples/facts/cases; or vice versa
- expository to dialogic; or vice versa

Reproduction values

Daily shared reading: Have you scheduled some structured shared reading (say 30–40 mins) for each workshop day?

Decipherable: Have you scanned the readings so that they are easily readable photocopies?

Manageable: Have you laid out the readings so that there is less than 10 words to the line?

Glossary: Have you provided a 'plain English' glossary of unusual or difficult words and phrases?

Font size: Is the font clear enough for your students without being 'childishly' large?

Reading Process

Chunking: Do the readings break up into manageable daily chunks? (Remember students can only cope with 5 chunks of new information at a time)

Dictionaries: Are there dictionaries (both general and discipline-specific) handy?

Preview: Do you give an overview of Readings so students know what to expect and what to look for?

Reading groups: Do you group students for shared reading so that everyone reads and can hear the reading of others?

Re-reading: Do you use a structured reading activity so that students learn to go back over a text and interrogate it for specific things?

Mark-up: Do you teach students how to 'mark up' their academic texts?

Modelling reading: Do you also sit with the students and read during 'shared-reading' in order to model how to read more emphatically and expressively?

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