Post-Entry Language Assessment
Information for Staff

All commencing students are required to complete a Post-Entry Language Assessment (PELA) via its instrument ‘the Writing Task’ either in class or through BlackBoard for online units. The PELA is offered within the first few weeks of each semester on campus and until Week 6 for online submissions to ensure that students receive early feedback on their writing.

The PELA adopted by ECU is a simple written task of approximately 150 words. Students are given 20 minutes in class or 30 minutes online to write on a given topic. The topic needs to be fairly general and allow for some development of ‘argument’. Knowledge of content is NOT assessed. Topics include:

• Are good communication skills necessary for [insert profession]? Give reasons.
• What makes a good [insert profession]? Consider the profession you are currently studying and discuss the personal attributes and skills required to be effective.

A list of approved topics is provided. Any changes to the topic or the writing prompt must be negotiated with the PELA Adviser to ensure consistency across the University. For units with multiple classes, the topic should be changed slightly for each class. This stops students preparing a response prior to completing the task. The key is the writing – not the content.

Assessment is based on the TOEFL Independent Writing Rubric which has been simplified to 3 bands as seen in the attached rubric (referred to as the Feedback Sheet). Each student’s PELA is marked, moderated and returned the week after completion, along with feedback via the rubric. Guides on how to complete the task online in Blackboard and how to access the feedback and rubric are provided in the unit Blackboard site.

Feedback to students

The week after completing the PELA, students will receive their marked paper, their Feedback Sheet/Rubric online (see attached) and a generic letter advising them of support options.

Rationale for the PELA

In 2009, DEEWR’s Good Practice Principles for English Language Competence for International Students in Australian Universities (GPPs) put forward 10 principles for universities to follow. Principles 1, 2 and 7 state:

• Universities are responsible for ensuring that their students are sufficiently competent in the English language to participate effectively in their university studies;
• Resourcing for English language development is adequate to meet students’ needs throughout their studies;
• Students’ English language development needs are diagnosed early in their studies and addressed, with ongoing opportunities for self-assessment.

The GPPs have become a set of Standards for both domestic and international students under TEQSA, suggesting that universities will be required to demonstrate compliance. Implementing a
Post-Entry Language Assessment (PELA) and ensuring there is adequate and effective language and academic skills support for all students addresses these principles.

**Benefits for all**

Students need to take responsibility for their learning and it is important for this to start early in their studies. To assist in this, students will receive relevant and individual feedback on their written communication skills. These skills are crucial for success in their studies and this task is run to assist students with their studies. In addition:

- Feedback identifies areas of strengths and/or areas needing development.
- The feedback to students will encourage students who receive ‘2’ (see Feedback Sheet) to seek help.
- This help is provided by Senior Learning Advisers and Learning Advisers who assist students through embedding academic and language support in targeted units, running workshops and seeing students on an individual basis. Online resources and virtual workshops are also available.
- Students who receive a ‘3’ are required to complete the online Foundation Writing Course (FWC) offered by the Academic Skills Centre. This is offered through ECU's Blackboard.
- The University also benefits through the availability of data on identified common weaknesses in each cohort which can then be addressed within discipline specific tasks.
FEEDBACK SHEET

Student Number: ______________________________

FEEDBACK KEY (with examples only) – Sections where you need help:

Paragraphs and Sentence Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence Completeness (SC) (incomplete, run on)</th>
<th>Sentence Length / Complexity (SL) (simple, rambling, word order)</th>
<th>Phrase/Clause Order (PCO) (order of phrases/ clauses impedes meaning)</th>
<th>Paragraphs (Para) (no paragraphs when needed, too short)</th>
<th>Punctuation (P) (comma, full stop, capitals, semicolons, colons, quotation marks)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Word Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Choice (WC) (inappropriate, does not suit the sentence, missing words)</th>
<th>Word Form (WF) (plural, noun or verb form, -ing form)</th>
<th>Articles (A) (a, an, the)</th>
<th>Tense (T) (walk, walked, have walked, have been walking)</th>
<th>Noun/Verb Agreement (NVA) (he were [was], they is [are])</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spelling (Sp) (incorrect spelling)</td>
<td>Apostrophes (Ap) (missing, incorrect use, it’s/its)</td>
<td>Prepositions (Prep) (in, at, on, by, from)</td>
<td>Informal Language (IL) (idioms, slang, isn’t [is not], &amp; [and], use of first and second person)</td>
<td>Conjunctions (Con) (Misuse or missing - and, but, yet, so, because, although)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

English Language Proficiency Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on the topic</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Development of topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Strong focus on the topic</td>
<td>□ Appropriate and relevant</td>
<td>□ Logical and sustained connections throughout essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Satisfactory focus on the topic</td>
<td>□ Mostly relevant material included</td>
<td>□ Ideas are organised but connections may be missing or incorrectly used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Poor focus on the topic</td>
<td>□ Irrelevant material included</td>
<td>□ Ideas are disorganised and/or weakly connected across paragraphs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the feedback, the following actions are recommended:

1. No English language support required: High Proficiency
   You should monitor your English proficiency and access appropriate resources to refine your skills.

2. May require English language support: Developing/Moderate Proficiency
   You are encouraged to undertake a language support course offered by Learning Advisers. These can be accessed on the Academic Skills Centre site within the “My Communities” tab of your Blackboard homepage.

3. English language support required: Low Proficiency
   You must seek support to improve your language skills. You must complete the Foundation Writing Course offered online. To complete this course, access the Academic Skills Centre site within the “My Communities” tab of your Blackboard homepage.

Unable to mark
- □ Limited sample
- □ Unable to read writing

Comment: