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# *Writing Tasks at School and University*

## Text Type Characterisation Tool (TTCT)

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# General notes

The tool comprises six sets of items. *Function* items are scored on a three-point scale of 0-2 (not present, substantially present, centrally present in the text). The items in the remaining five sections are scored on a two-point scale of 0-1 (present or not present in the text). See next page for further details.

At least one item in the *Functions* section must receive a score other than 0. For other sections, all items can be scored as 'no', if appropriate.

Many items overlap and are likely to co-occur. For example:

- “States a position or a conclusion” often goes together with “Gives reasons why something happens, reasons for doing something, or the effects of something”
- “Makes comparisons between two or more things” often goes together with “Evaluates the goodness or badness of something”
- “Narrates a process or event” often goes with “Shows the reader how to do something or suggests what should happen”

# Scoring

The descriptors for scoring items in each section are:

## Functions

- 0 = not present or does not form a substantial part of the text
- 1 = substantially present. Forms a substantial part of the overall text but is not a primary function of the text as a whole
- 2 = centrally present. One of the main functions of the text (a text can have more than one central function)

## Focus

- 0 = not part of the content or does not form a substantial part of the text
- 1 = substantial part of the content or a central focus of the text

## Sources

- 0 = not present
- 1 = present

## Extra-textual content

- 0 = not present
- 1 = present

## Medium

- 0 = not this medium
- 1 = this medium

## Sources

- 0 = does not show this relationship
- 1 = shows this relationship



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# Sections and items

# Functions

*This text...*



states a position or a  
conclusion

supports a position  
or a conclusion with  
argumentation,  
evidence, or  
examples

evaluates the  
goodness or badness  
of something

evaluates  
the importance,  
significance, or  
relevance of  
something

makes comparisons  
between two or  
more things

gives reasons  
why something  
happens, reasons for  
doing something, or  
the effects of  
something

describes  
the physical  
characteristics of  
something

re-presents or  
summarizes the  
contents of a source

interprets a  
source

narrates a process  
or event

shows the reader  
how to do  
something or  
suggests what  
should happen

# Focus

*This text is about...*



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a written/visual/audio/  
physical artefact (e.g. a  
book, article, song, film,  
photograph, product)

the (imagined) writer

another specific individual  
or individuals  
(not the writer)

a real or imagined business  
or work-related scenario

a real or imagined  
research study

# Sources



*This text includes explicit reference to...*

numerical  
research data

verbal  
research data

external texts

# Extra-textual content

*This text includes...*

quotations

non-verbal  
material



# Medium

*This text is...*

a correspondence  
(e.g. letter, email)

written down  
speech (e.g. for an  
oral presentation)

a series of responses  
to separate questions  
or prompts

# Participants

*The (imagined) writer's relationship with the (imagined) reader is...*

informal

personal

professional

# Participants contd.

*The (imagined) reader is...*

**a specific person**

**the public**

**the (imagined) writer**

**less knowledgeable about  
the topic being discussed  
than the (imagined) writer**





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# Guidance on items

# Functions (scored 0-2)



Functions are communicative actions performed within a text. A text may have several communicative functions.

<b>states a position or a conclusion</b>	The position or conclusion stated can be something the writer takes a stance on, something they determine through an experiment or a chain of proofs, something they infer from evidence, etc. A text can take a position or state a conclusion about more than one thing, and it can be supported with evidence or not. Taking positions does not necessarily require the writer to reach a definitive overall verdict on something.
<b>supports a position or a conclusion with argumentation, evidence, or examples</b>	Examples could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>The results of this experiment show that as the length of a wire increased, the resistance also increased.</i></li><li>• <i>I believe that homework should be banned because children are tired after school and need time to do things they enjoy.</i></li></ul>
<b>evaluates the goodness or badness of something</b>	This can cover a wide range of value judgements, e.g.: aesthetics, ethics, usefulness, effectiveness, limitations, quality, trustworthiness, bias, reliability, validity, ease/difficulty, affect (e.g., excitement, interest, happiness).
<b>evaluates the importance, significance, or relevance of something</b>	This could include things like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>The King James Bible had a strong influence on the development of modern English.</i></li><li>• <i>Motivation is essential to learning a language.</i></li></ul>
<b>makes comparisons between two or more things</b>	The things that can be compared/contrasted are wide-ranging, e.g., people; things; processes; ideas; different points of view in an argument. Simply presenting two or more alternatives without further comment on their similarities/differences is not comparison, e.g. <i>Lemons are yellow. Plums are purple.</i>

# Functions contd. (scored 0-2)



Functions are communicative actions performed within a text. A text may have several communicative functions.

<b>gives reasons why something happens, reasons for doing something, or the effects of something</b>	Reasons why something happens, reasons for doing something, or the effects of something can include: direct cause-effect relationships; less direct influencing factors; motivation or purpose; impact, outcome, or consequence.
<b>describes the physical characteristics of something</b>	A range of types of things might be described, e.g.: an object, an organism (including a person), a place, the physical properties of a material (e.g. temperature, weight, size).
<b>re-presents or summarizes the contents of a source</b>	These may include (but are not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a plot summary of a novel, play, or film</li><li>• a description of a picture</li><li>• an executive summary of a report</li><li>• a summary of a research article</li></ul>
<b>interprets a source</b>	<p>The writer offers an interpretation of what another source means or communicates, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the meaning of a metaphor in a poem</li><li>• the message or themes of a source (e.g. photo, letter, newspaper article, cartoon)</li><li>• a novel considered through a particular lens or framework (e.g. feminist, postcolonial)</li><li>• a contextualised reading of a historical source</li></ul> <p>Interpreting something typically involves taking a position.</p>

# Functions contd. (scored 0-2)



Functions are communicative actions performed within a text. A text may have several communicative functions.

<p><b>narrates a process or event</b></p>	<p>The writer sets out a process or event in a clear sequence. The process or event might be small scale/short-term (e.g. what I did yesterday; an experiment) or something much larger (e.g. evolution, the industrial revolution).</p> <p>The process/event might be real or imaginary/hypothetical, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>We grew microbes in petri dishes. Each dish had three sections: a compost-touch fingerprint, an unwashed fingerprint, and a washed fingerprint...</i></li><li>• <i>I can't wait till the holidays start. I will have a lie-in and meet up with my friends in the park.</i></li></ul>
<p><b>shows the reader how to do something or suggests what should happen</b></p>	<p>Sets out directions for performing a task or solving a problem, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• how to make pasta</li><li>• the rules of chess</li><li>• the procedure for an experiment</li></ul> <p>Gives direct suggestions/advice to the reader, e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• how to learn a language,</li><li>• where to go on holiday</li></ul> <p>Advice might be a 'solution' to a 'problem'.</p> <p>This also includes structured proposals for action, such as might be found in a lesson plan, research proposal, or design specification, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• recommendations based on the findings of a research study</li><li>• a plan for the development of a product</li><li>• personal development plans, or plans for future learning</li></ul>

# Focus (scored 0-1)

Focus items give information regarding specific types of things a text might be about. These are not intended to be an exhaustive list of possible topics. Rather, they capture a small number of distinctive things a text might be about.

<p><b>a written/visual/ audio/ physical artefact</b> (e.g. a book, article, song, film, photograph, product)</p>	<p>Focuses on one specified thing, or a small group of things for their own sake, rather than reviewing an open-ended set for some broader purpose. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a critical appreciation of ‘Dracula’</li> <li>• a critical comparative review of two research studies to evaluate their strengths/weaknesses</li> <li>• an evaluation of a specific car design</li> </ul> <p>The source could be something pre-existing or something the student has created themselves (examples of the latter might include own design or research plan).</p>
<p><b>the (imagined) writer</b></p>	<p>Could include a description of the writer, an autobiography, a description of an actual or hypothetical/future experience (e.g. a professional experience, a personal experience, a learning experience).</p>
<p><b>another specific individual or individuals (not the writer)</b></p>	<p>Could include a description of the individual/s, a biography, description of an individual’s work/ideas, etc. The individual/s may be real or fictional and may be human or animal. But the text must refer to a named individual/individuals (e.g. ‘my pet dogs’, not ‘spaniels’; ‘Plato’, not ‘Greek philosophers’).</p>
<p><b>a real or imagined business or work-related scenario</b></p>	<p>Covers a broad range of business/work-related topics, e.g.: legal advice to a client; reviewing a patient’s medical history; proposing a business plan; proposing a book for publication; evaluating the efficiency of an organisation; reviewing a work experience placement. The writer may assume the role of a professional in the scenario.</p>
<p><b>a real or imagined research study</b></p>	<p>Describes or reviews (part of) an actual or hypothetical/future research study. The study could be conducted by the writer or by someone else.</p>

# Sources (scored 0-1)

Items in this section relate to the sources a text draws on. There are two main types of source: research data and external texts.

<b>numerical research data</b>	<p>Research data is information that has been collected through experimentation or research purposes.</p>
<b>verbal research data</b>	<p>Research data may be large or small in scale. For example, a national census is research data, but so are the results of a single experiment performed by the writer.</p> <p>Individual facts are not research data (e.g. the population of London is 8.5 million; the Berlin Wall was built in 1961).</p>
<b>external texts</b>	<p>The text is supported with explicit reference to other texts (with or without direct quotation).</p> <p>This is distinct from the 'Focus' item "the text is about a written/visual/audio/physical artefact". E.g., an essay about <i>Hamlet</i> would only count as being based on external texts if its discussion was supported by texts other than <i>Hamlet</i> itself.</p>

# Extra-textual content (scored 0-1)

These items indicate the inclusion of content that is either not originally produced by the writer or that is not verbal.

<b>quotations</b>	<p>Includes quotations from texts (e.g. a novel, a textbook, a film, an historical document, a research article) or from primary data (e.g. interviews).</p>
<b>non-verbal material</b>	<p>e.g. images, numeric tables, graphs, calculations/formulae.</p> <p>These may or may not be created by the writer and could form part of the question prompt, or the text itself.</p>

# Medium (scored 0-1)

These items are used when a text is in (or emulates) a medium other than the default of written academic work.

<b>a correspondence</b>	e.g., letter, email
<b>written-down speech</b>	e.g. for an oral presentation
<b>a series of responses to separate questions/prompts</b>	

# Participants (scored 0-1)

These items are intended to capture the status of the (imagined) reader/writer and the nature of the relationship between them. We take writing either for the teacher or for an unspecified audience to be the default option.

*The (imagined) writer's relationship with the (imagined) reader is...*

<b>informal</b>	The text invokes a casual, or relaxed, communicative context. Informal texts usually assume that linguistic/functional expectations associated with professional or academic contexts don't apply.
<b>personal</b>	e.g. family or friend
<b>professional</b>	e.g. writing for an employer or colleague

# Participants contd. (scored 0-1)

These items are intended to capture the status of the (imagined) reader/writer and the nature of the relationship between them. We take writing either for the teacher or for an unspecified audience to be the default option.

*The (imagined) reader is...*

<b>a specific person</b>	A particular reader is identified, e.g. writing an email to a known/named person, as opposed to writing a newspaper article, (which will be read by unknown people).
<b>the public</b>	The general reader is an unknown member of the public, e.g. a newspaper or magazine article, a poster, an advertisement.
<b>the (imagined) writer</b>	e.g., lecture notes; diary entry
<b>less knowledgeable about the topic being discussed than the (imagined) writer</b>	e.g., a doctor/lawyer explaining a case to a patient/client; an engineer explaining their product to a consumer

If you would like to find out more about the project, please contact us at: [WTSUproject@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:WTSUproject@exeter.ac.uk)