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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 “States why something happens, the 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**

**states why something happens, the 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.

<p><b>states a position or a conclusion</b></p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>supports a position or a conclusion with argumentation, evidence, or examples</b></p>	<p>Examples could include:</p> <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>
<p><b>evaluates the goodness or badness of something</b></p>	<p>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).</p>
<p><b>evaluates the importance, significance, or relevance of something</b></p>	<p>This could include things like:</p> <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>
<p><b>makes comparisons between two or more things</b></p>	<p>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></p>

# Functions contd. (scored 0-2)



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

<b>states why something happens, the 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>	The writer offers an interpretation of what another source means or communicates, e.g.: <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> Interpreting something typically involves taking a position.

# Functions contd. (scored 0-2)



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

<b>narrates a process or event</b>	<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>
<b>shows the reader how to do something or suggests what should happen</b>	<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 (e.g. a book, article, song, film, photograph, product)</b></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>For this item to apply, the text must focus centrally on the individual/s. It is not sufficient simply to mention characters or people (e.g. in a play, story, or historical account); rather, the writing should be primarily about the individual themselves- for example, exploring Macbeth’s motivations for murder, rather than discussing the theme of revenge in the play more generally.</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> <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>
<b>verbal research data</b>	<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)