

# Good Practice Guide

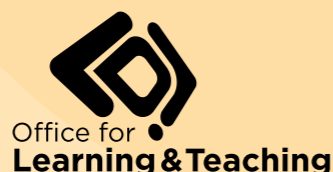


## FIRST YEAR ENGLISH 2015

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# Good Practice Guide

## BACKGROUND



This good practice guide was developed as part of the OLT project “Renewing first year curricula for social sciences and humanities in the context of discipline threshold standards”. The project investigated what we need to do in first year in order to prepare our students to meet the Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs) for the discipline by the time they graduate.

Unlike the other disciplines investigated in the project, English does not yet have a set of nationally agreed and endorsed Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs). The TLOs used for this good practice guide were still in draft form and can be found on the project website at URL: <http://www.firstyearlearningthresholds.edu.au/english/threshold-learning-outcomes/>. They were first drafted at a workshop in Sydney in May 2014 by representatives from eight Australian universities and further refined at the English discipline workshop for this project in June 2014. The peak body for tertiary English, The Australian University Heads of English (AUHE), has fully supported the development of the TLOs to date. Further consultation and dissemination are needed before they can be deemed to be nationally agreed, and endorsed by AUHE.

The intersection of the graduate Threshold Learning Outcomes (TLOs), signature pedagogies and the first-year pedagogy principles involves an approach that is both transitional (including both curricular and co-curricular elements) and discipline specific—and these are intertwined. The approach is based on an expectation that students learn and are able to demonstrate, at a level appropriate to first year, knowledge and understanding of certain disciplinary concepts, methods, terminology etc, and the kinds of skills that enable them to apply or express this knowledge—and these learning outcomes must be assessable.

At the same time, the approach suggests that curriculum and assessment design, and other aspects of pedagogical practice are organised around the challenges of transition to university study, the diversity of students’ backgrounds and prior learning, and the need to scaffold first year students’ learning in order to set them on their way to meeting the TLOs in their final year.

The challenges—or possible barriers to maximising learning—are similarly both transitional and discipline specific, and are experienced very differently by different students.

Our teaching strategies must also, therefore, involve both transitional and “signature” (or disciplinary) pedagogies. We need to design and teach in ways that will engage and motivate student learning. To cater for student diversity, creativity and agency, we need to make the disciplinary discourses accessible, design assessment that is challenging yet achievable, and make our criteria and standards explicit. We must scaffold and support students, at the level of individual assessment items and, more broadly and in the longer term, to help them become efficacious and independent learners. We need to focus our curricula design on student learning rather than discipline content, yet at the same time ensure that, at the end of first year, all students who have met the minimum requirements are—and feel that they are—well-equipped to continue their studies in the discipline and meet the TLOs at the end of their degrees.

This guide was developed to complement the website for the project that contains more detail [www.firstyearlearningthresholds.edu.au](http://www.firstyearlearningthresholds.edu.au). The website and the guide were developed in consultation with the English academics who attended our workshop in June 2014.

### The guide is organised around the TLOs and focuses on:

1. What do first year **students need to know and do** in order to set them on their way to meet the TLOs by the time they graduate?
2. What are the **barriers to students learning**?
3. What **teaching strategies** can we use?

A few specific examples are included in the document but there are more examples available on the website at [www.firstyearlearningthresholds.edu.au](http://www.firstyearlearningthresholds.edu.au).

# Students graduating with a major in English will have knowledge of literary texts from a range of periods and places, and an understanding of the importance of social, cultural, historical and geographical contexts

# TLO 1



## TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

### What students need to know and do

First year students need to be able to demonstrate some understanding of the role that context — different places and historical periods, different audiences — plays in the writing and reading of literature. **They should explore the relationships between the literary text and its context**, which may include the race, class, gender etc. of the writer.

### Student barriers to learning

**Students come to university with different degrees of cultural capital** and many may not have the historical, economic or sociological background to understand literature in its various contexts. Students may find the idea of context difficult and this may need to be unpacked for them. They may also struggle with the complexity or length of some texts from some historical periods.

### Our teaching strategies

Introduce the idea of context explicitly and discuss with students why it might matter. **Provide some information about particular contexts**, but emphasise that nobody 'just knows' about all possible social/historical/geographical contexts — that research, ours included, is usually necessary unless it's a person's particular field. Model this research using critical sources, historical documents or literature databases.

Explore the relationships between the text and its historical, social, political, and economic contexts. **Consider the personal circumstances of a writer and how these factors might influence their writing**, although don't imply that a literary text can be read as a projection of the writer's life in any simple way. Discuss how we might read a given text differently from its first or intended readers.

**Explore texts produced for different audiences.** Examine in class a Shakespeare play, or even just some scenes, and compare with a version for children; this helps students understand the role of intended audience as an element of context.

### Example 1: How different historical contexts affect texts

#### Choose texts that speak to contemporary trends

Capitalising on the present mania for all things Sherlock, ask students to explore the historical context of the original Sherlock Holmes, and how late nineteenth-century English values might be reflected in Conan Doyle's character. Students could then be asked to contrast Conan Doyle's Sherlock with the Sherlock currently portrayed by Benedict Cumberbatch, and consider what the latter might reflect of contemporary values.

### Example 2: How different texts share a common context

#### Choose texts from a period of significant social change

Reading several texts from a single era can assist students to consider what the texts collectively suggest about that era. In a class exercise, ask students to explore poems of Oodgeroo and Judith Wright from the 1970s and identify shared concerns. As a follow-up assessment task, they could then be asked to find texts by another Australian author of the 1970s and relate the concerns the texts evince to either Oodgeroo or Wright, or both.



## GENRES AND FORMS

### What students need to know and do

Students need to demonstrate knowledge of different genres or varieties of literary forms and understand some key features of these forms. This involves **understanding the concept of genre** and how it influences forms of writing and the identification of different genres and their features.

### Student barriers to learning

Students may not be able to understand the idea of genre and how it influences writing. They may have difficulty distinguishing between genres and “themes” and may struggle with the terminology used in literary criticism to discuss genre and the different genres of literature. Students may dislike or be intimidated by some forms/genres, such as poetry, and this can influence their responses in class and in assessments.

### Our teaching strategies

Explicitly introduce students to the concept of **different genres or forms of writing and to the idea of genre as a “contract” between writer and reader**. This should help them to see how texts circulate and are experienced in the world. Show students some exemplary texts in genres and discuss the relationships between form and content. Introduce and clarify the literary terminology associated with the key features.

Help students to develop skills around the idea of genre: select one theme and encourage students to explore how it is played out across different genres; study several texts from one genre; focus on the origin and formation of genre to help students to recognise/categorise texts through the interplay of difference and similarity.

Design assessments and activities that ask students to write *about* different genres and their features, and assessments and activities that involve writing *in* different genres or forms. **Provide a glossary of some basic literary terms** and create some exercises designed to give students practice in identifying and understanding them.

### Example 1: How to identify features of genres.

#### Use group work to identify and contrast key features of different genres

Divide students into groups; give each group an exemplary text from different genres; ask each group to identify the key features of their genre. Groups would then be asked to write about their genre and its features with a summary of the class’s efforts collated to form a class resource or class glossary. In a follow-up exercise students can be asked to explore which genre they enjoy more than others and to deepen this response with more critical thinking by explaining why.

### Example 2: How to show that genres persist while evolving through time

#### Compare examples of a single genre from different historical periods

Ask students to select a theme and explore how it is played out across different genres. As a class exercise, students could compare versions of particular folk tales across a range of periods. Students could then be given an assessment task to compare two versions of a particular tale from different periods. This works well as a confidence-building, early low-stakes assessment.

### Example 3: How to deepen students’ understanding of the creative aspects of genres

#### Give students practice in writing within particular genres

To practise writing in different genres or forms, ask students to write a sonnet or short work of fiction. Students could swap pieces and explain how creatively the piece uses generic conventions. The finished versions could be collated as a class resource.

THEORIES, METHODS AND CONCEPTS

### What students need to know and do

The study of literature has evolved from a focus on rhetoric to include elements from other disciplines, including philosophy, sociology and political theory. This means that students need to be equipped not only with concepts drawn from rhetoric, like metaphor, but also with concepts such as class, gender, race and ethnicity. **These concepts form the building blocks** on which students can develop understanding of the various theoretical approaches that literary scholars have taken over time — and eventually articulate their own approach.

Before we expose students to such concepts, they need to understand two foundational ideas. First, that there is a particular **language for discussing academic literature**: that literary criticism is not simply expressing a like or dislike for a given text, but an academic discipline with its own terminology. Second, that **texts may be read in a range of ways**.

### Student barriers to learning

First year students may find literary language daunting. They may struggle to identify and understand tropes such metaphor or irony. They may also struggle with discipline terminology — with acquiring language for talking and writing about literature.

Students may struggle to understand that texts may be read in a range of ways. They may know there are many approaches to texts and many ways of reading and interpreting, but find it difficult to come to grips with the idea that as readers we create meaning in the very process of reading.

### Our teaching strategies

Focus on the concepts that underpin theories and use textual examples to demonstrate different concepts, showing students how to bring them to literary readings. “Apply” more than one theory/ concept to a single text to show how texts may be read in a range of ways.

Use the idea of **‘reading positions’** to assist students to begin understanding method. Model a method or approach using one, short and simple, text that students then use themselves in relation to another text. Or, “apply” more than one theory/ concept to a single text to show how texts may be read in a range of ways. This also gives students the chance to begin experimenting with the idea that, by using different conceptual approaches, a reader produces what are effectively different texts. In this way students in first year can study the application and implications of at least one theoretical approach in depth.

#### Example 1: How to get students using concepts in literary analysis

##### Model the way concepts inform the reading of a literary text and ask students to try.

Model how a concept, for example *gender*, informs the reading of a specific text. Give students a short reading on the concept of *class*. Ask students to work in groups to relate the concept to children’s texts, as they are not difficult to understand and can be read in tutorial time. This helps students to understand how a literary theory explains something about the ways literature is read and valued.

#### Example 2: How to develop students’ understanding of method

##### Explore texts using reading positions

Model a method or approach using one, short, simple text. Students are asked to use the method or approach for themselves in relation to another text. Students can then experiment with the idea that, by using different conceptual approaches, a reader produces what are effectively different texts. Give examples to illustrate - early critics of *Jane Eyre* read it purely as a triumphant tale of Romantic subjectivity, whereas more recent critics often read it from a post-colonial perspective as an account of the marginalisation of the first Mrs. Rochester, a West Indian Creole woman.



## WAYS OF READING TEXTS

### What students need to know and do

Students need to be able to read and understand texts that vary in complexity and length. Students need to understand how to read for different purposes. This includes **reading to “get the gist of it”** and reading to **undertake a detailed analysis** of a specific text or passage. Students need eventually to be able to approach long and complex texts with confidence and pleasure.

### Student barriers to learning

The quantity of reading may be daunting to first year students, who can also struggle with the challenge of independent reading — especially of complex or demanding texts. Students may feel daunted by their incomprehension of details (e.g. cultural, literary and historical allusions) or difficult language, and may feel that the pressure to read demanding texts (and to “theorise” that reading) reduces the joy of reading.

Many students will lack “reading resilience”: “the capacity to undertake and discuss the complex and demanding work of interpretation required by literary and rhetorical texts ... [and may] struggle to read and comprehend texts that draw on literary language and techniques and unfamiliar subject matter” (Clausson, Chace, Gallop, Scholes, cited in <http://chelt.anu.edu.au/readingresilience>).

Reading may compete with electronic communication and paid employment and can be a time-consuming task difficult to complete in time for tutorials, forum discussions or assessments.

### Our teaching strategies

Provide a rationale for the importance of reading in the discipline so that students can learn to appreciate that reading analytically can enhance and not reduce their pleasure in a text. Emphasise that reading skills have wide applicability across a range of professions, and put in place teaching and learning strategies designed to support students’ reading. Use teaching and learning materials such as examples and templates of reading guides, and assessment models such as a reading task.

**Set shorter texts, both simple and complex, across a range of genres.** Set fewer texts and allow students more time to read, to enhance the pleasure of reading and reduce the feeling of pressure. Discuss texts in class as most students seem to enjoy this.

Support students’ understanding of more complex texts and allow some choice in which texts to read/ engage with. This may help students to take responsibility for their reading, and to build confidence in tackling new and/or difficult texts. (Reading Resilience Project - <http://chelt.anu.edu.au/readingresilience>).

### Example 1: How to help students understand the time they need to read

#### Reading planner

In class, students read on their own for 1 minute. At the end of the minute they mark with an x how far they read in that time. Everyone calculates their reading speed for that text (words per minute) and calculates total time needed to finish book. They get a small card with days/ weeks/hours on it and write on it number of hours (when and how many) they will need to complete reading. Students track their work for the whole subject.

### Example 2: How to develop students’ vocabularies

#### Scaffolding etymologies

Model the skill by first applying it to a difficult word from a selected reading (show on screen, explain possibilities, for example, sub (‘under’) + marine (‘water’) leads to meaning. Ask students to identify a difficult word, access [oed.com](http://www.oed.com) and produce a definition and etymology. Then using a difficult word from that week’s readings, ask the class to write a 250 word description of the etymology of a word (from oed.com) to assist them in grasping its meaning and ask them to submit the task in next tutorial or as a post online.

## UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING TEXTS: CRITICAL READING AND THINKING

### What students need to know and do

Students need to learn some techniques and concepts that will be useful to them in the interpretation and analysis of texts. These could include **narrative voice, style, form and genre**. They need to gain confidence and flexibility in their deployment of these techniques. Students will be able to demonstrate this learning by 'applying' the techniques or concepts they have learnt.

### Student barriers to learning

Students may find it difficult to "read deeply" in order to identify the themes and complex issues explored in a text, especially when this requires reading "against the grain": that is, learning to read the sub-texts and assumptions behind a text, or reading at a less literal and more metaphoric (symbolic/analogical) level.

Students may associate **academic approaches with being very rational** and hence as not allowing them to respond to emotional aspects of texts or according to their own emotions/experiences. Some may also find some issues represented in novels, short stories or poetry personally upsetting or confronting.

### Our teaching strategies

Give students writing exercises that demonstrate concepts like irony, narrative voice, metaphor and other tropes, in different forms and genres. Help students to articulate their responses in writing and orally through tutorial discussion, drawing out student responses and summarising on the white board, asking students to read short passages aloud and respond to what is written.

Explicitly and intentionally design subjects and assessment tasks that help build and scaffold students' critical reading and thinking skills and explain to students what we mean when we use such terms—what we mean when we ask them to read or think critically.

Ask challenging, open-ended questions that require genuine inquiry, analysis, or assessment (Nilson, Linda, "**Unlocking the Mystery of Critical Thinking**" Faculty Focus, accessed December 1st, 2014). Instances of such questions as they may apply to literary texts include: How do you interpret the text and what are your reasons for coming to that interpretation/evaluation? Is another interpretation possible? By what standards and priorities will you judge the quality of different texts/genres?

### Example 1: How to teach students to read, understand and interpret complex literary texts

#### Close reading in class

For each novel, ask students to complete a close reading exercise focusing on the first pages of the book. Students in turn read aloud one sentence and comment in detail on the main points of analysis, e.g. imagery, point of view. This demystifies literary analysis by offering a "way into" complex texts, builds group coherence and enables acquisition of core analytical skills. Following up with questions for reflection, either online, in tutorials or in assessments, will consolidate students' appreciation that reading analytically can enhance and not reduce their pleasure in a text.

### Example 2: How to build students' capacities to approach and reflect about new texts

#### Blogging and show and telling

Encourage students to choose which texts to read/ engage with by requesting them to 'show and tell' a text they are reading to the class to help them take responsibility for their reading, and to build confidence in tackling new and/or difficult texts. Or, ask students to complete a blog or forum post to introduce their response to the text.



# Students graduating with a major in English will be able to locate, assess and use appropriate critical resources

# TLO 5



## FINDING APPROPRIATE RESOURCES

### What students need to know and do

Students need to learn to find and identify appropriate resources, and to use these resources in their work. They should learn to **search a journal database and the university library catalogue effectively.**

### Student barriers to learning

When set an assessment task, some students may research too little, too late, and may overuse the Internet as a source, believing there is a correct or right answer (sometimes on Google or Wikipedia). Many may not have used journal databases before so they do not have the skills to search them and find appropriate resources.

## EVALUATING AND INCORPORATING RESOURCES

### What students need to know and do

Students need to learn to evaluate resources from different sources. They should learn the difference between a **primary and secondary source** and the differences between **academic sources and more popular ones** and understand the implications of these differences. Students need to learn how to cite and reference secondary material, not only to avoid plagiarism, but also to feel empowered by being able to “do research”.

### Student barriers to learning

Students can search the web, but may struggle to select the best sources. They may be inexperienced in engaging with critical material in a given field, and this can make it hard to make sense of what is read. It may be difficult for students to draw upon critical material without being completely driven by it. Students can struggle to use critical material to inform and support their own readings of a text.

Students may conceive of differences in perspectives and standpoints as bias or, at the other extreme, think “it’s all a matter of opinion” and may struggle to find a way of coping with a range of standpoints and positions.

Citing and referencing properly and effectively can seem very challenging to first year students unused to this form of academic literacy. Students may also find it difficult to integrate secondary sources smoothly into their essays.

### Our teaching strategies

We can demonstrate the use of journal databases and ways of searching **at the time when students need the skills for a particular assessment item.** This will help to integrate the development of these skills within the course content so students see their relevance.

Teachers could set small assessment tasks or formative quizzes to assist students to develop their capacities to research online and also to build their information literacy skills.

### Our teaching strategies

Model the use of secondary criticism in our own lectures and tutorials and make it explicit that that is what we are doing — reinforcing the idea that **this is what research is** — we don’t “just know”. Give short (or excerpted) secondary sources of varying quality, and a set of questions that lead students through the process of evaluating them.

Set a short annotated bibliography as an early, low-stakes assessment task that forms a research base for a later task such as an essay. Teach students **the role of referencing** in academia as well as how to reference.

Design a first assessment task without critical sources to encourage students to have confidence in their own “reading” and build on this in a subsequent task with secondary resources so students learn how to “pull both together”.

### Example 1: How to locate quality resources

#### Research and evaluation skills

To prepare for an essay on a literary text, students are given a tutorial conducted by library staff in locating critical material on literary studies in the library, which includes a competitive exercise of locating a number of identified resources (databases, books, articles, etc.)

### Example 2: How to evaluate resources

#### Evaluating secondary sources

As a follow-up step to selecting a secondary source, the resources can then be evaluated in terms of their authority, currency and relevance. For example students could be asked to assess a source’s authority (who wrote it and who checked its validity, were they biased) as well as its currency, accuracy and relevance. Students can also be exposed to secondary sources, complete or excerpted, that offer alternative readings on the same primary text.

### Example 3: How to evaluate resources for relevance

#### Locating relevant evidence

Students are asked to read a short poem. They are then given a “frame” in which to consider the text (e.g. historical period, gender, literary form). Lastly they are asked to analyse 3 secondary sources for relevance— what material is useful for a reading of the poem within the frame. Well-designed secondary sources may seem relevant by topic but will not in fact be useful for an analysis. Other material will not have an obvious topical connection but will be relevant.

## CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT

### What students need to know and do

First year students need to learn both the **mechanical and more creative** aspects of constructing an argument.

They should understand the concept of a **literary argument**, which may differ from other subjects' academic arguments in that there might be more space for its being conceived as a narrative, and as having room for personal reflection.

They should also be able to **demonstrate that they can frame an oral presentation** that is cohesive and logical with evidence that supports the main ideas.

### Student barriers to learning

Students may have difficulty in formulating a thesis that structures their textual analysis or in weaving a thesis throughout a presentation, report or essay. While they might appreciate that a good essay articulates an argument, students may struggle to distinguish between "arguments", "opinions" and "beliefs". Students may also find it difficult to find the **right balance between expressing their own point of view and presenting a well-researched argument.**

### Our teaching strategies

Find ways of breaking down the distinct skills involved in constructing an argument by showing students how to make a plan or outline and revise the plan as they write.

### Teach students to distinguish between academic argument and opinion

but also allow them space for personal reflection and creativity. Be explicit that they may include personal reflection, and tell them whether or not they may write in the first-person.

#### Example 1: How to teach students to construct an argument

##### Structuring an argument

Provide students with several points or pieces of evidence related to an assessment essay task and ask students to sort the material — to draw diagrams or mind maps showing how to connect thesis, main points and evidence. Then ask students to take these and develop them into a persuasive, well-structured written or oral argument.

#### Example 2: How to build students' confidence by constructing oral arguments

##### Debates

Ask students to practise argument orally in tutorials, where this can take the form of a debate. Students could work in groups to find conflicting evidence or construct differing arguments.

## PROVIDING GOOD QUALITY EVIDENCE

### What students need to know and do

Students need to learn what is considered to be **legitimate evidence** in English. They should be able to distinguish good evidence from poor and academic argument from opinion, and must learn to present evidence explicitly (a skill related to some of those listed in TLO5 to do with incorporating secondary resources).

### Student barriers to learning

Students may not understand the kinds of evidence that can be used to support their arguments. They may not know the differences between **primary and secondary sources** or understand the use of primary sources (or texts) in illustrating and supporting the arguments being constructed.

Students may find it difficult to deal with multiple and conflicting pieces of evidence or arguments. They may find it hard to **select and integrate the evidence** they need to support their arguments.

It may be difficult for students to distinguish between their own ideas, opinions and observations and those represented in scholarly sources. Students may struggle to find a balance between two apparently contradictory requirements. On the one hand, they may think that the task of **expressing a viewpoint** merely asks for their initial response to a text. On the other, they may think that their essay should simply be **a collection of re-arranged secondary materials**.

### Our teaching strategies

Be explicit about what we understand and mean by evidence in literature, explaining that evidence includes extracts from the texts that are related to the whole, and historical information such as details about the author's life and circumstances. **Show students how to identify core arguments and evidence in critical sources, and identify when such arguments are based on particular ethical or political positions.**

Ask students to find their own examples of textual evidence that support the argument they are constructing and assess their ability to find and cite comments from critics that reinforce or contest the point they are making in their argument. In lectures and tutorials students can be asked to work through sections of the journal articles to guide their use.

### Example 3: How to assist students to provide good quality evidence

#### Modelling ways to provide evidence

Teachers need to encourage students to trust their own reading of a text and 'find' their own voice as well as draw upon secondary material by first modelling ways to do this. They might show the difference between statements like "I really dislike the bossy character of Jane Eyre" and "the assertive voice of Jane Eyre can be read as a means of feminising the masculine subjectivity which Bronte inherited from the Romantic tradition, as Boumelha argues in her essay on the novel".



## COMMUNICATION

### What students need to know and do

Students need to recognise that scholarly communication in English has two main components. One is the more **general skill of communicating in an academic register** and the other is communicating in the **language particular to the English discipline**.

First year students need to recognise the importance of writing or presenting for different types of audiences across a range of media. Writing remains a crucial form of communication in English, and students should practise writing in a range of genres or forms.

They need also to learn the importance of editing, in other words, of reading their own work for correctness, coherence and clarity.

### Student barriers to learning

Many students who choose to enrol in English subjects enjoy reading and have relatively developed literacy skills, but may have problems adjusting to the more complex and unfamiliar tasks associated with tertiary studies in English.

Students may not have the skills to **look at their own writing through the lens of an audience**. They may find it difficult to organise their ideas and order their material, and to focus their analysis. They may struggle to convert their thoughts (feelings, reactions to a text) into clear written expression and may need help with technical aspects of writing. They may also not expect to have to draft and re-draft written work.

Forms of communication other than writing may also present difficulties for first year students. Some may be very competent in online forms of communication, while others may struggle with both these and oral forms.

### Our teaching strategies

Be explicit about writing practices and invite class discussion about the relationship between writing skills and employability. Show students how to draft and edit their own writing to improve its coherence and clarity, and help them learn to translate “impressions” into written responses. In smaller cohorts, lecturers might work through drafts. In larger groups, create opportunities for students to have their writing read by their peers, which helps students gain a sense of audience for and confidence in their writing.

Describe and discuss essay-writing techniques and explicitly models of good practice to help students understand unfamiliar forms of academic discourse. Then give them practice in analysis and critical writing.

**Give students opportunities to practise online and oral forms of communication.** Encourage all students to speak in tutorials and engage in clear, structured arguments focused on the literary aspects of the text. Engage lecturers and/or students in role-play as panellists being questioned about a text.

### Example 1: How to communicate and engage others

#### Peer reviewing others' Blogs

Ask students to write a 200 word critical or creative BLOG response (mode of writing informal but coherent-rubric provided) to a text (poem) introduced in Week 2. Peer Review two other students in the group (100 words each). Encourage students to read and learn from the work of others in their group by making constructive, analytical comments on the work of their peers. This will assist in creating a community of on-line writers for further in-class engagement and will also scaffold engagement with texts used as the focus for more formal pieces of writing.

### Example 2: How to give students practice in online communication

#### Pecha-Kuchas

Give both Internal and Distance Education students opportunities to present their work in online forms such as web-page/blogs, in an in-house and on-line journal or via short-structured visual-oral formats such as Pecha-Kuchas (<http://www.pechakucha.org/>).

## IMAGINING AND INTERPRETING THE WORLD

### What students need to know and do

This TLO is related to several others (1, 2 and 4 in particular) and draws them together. Students need to be introduced to the idea of **literary texts as social and cultural artefacts that reflect and interpret “social reality”** and at the same time **produce new meanings and new ways of imagining the world that have their own social reality**. Students may be introduced to the idea, especially related to TLO 4, that just as a literary text produces knowledge, their own (and another critic’s) reading of a text is also a form of knowledge production.

### Student barriers to learning

Students may find it difficult to grasp the idea that **texts help create, as well as interpret**, the social world, since this requires them to understand that there isn’t necessarily an “objective reality” and that every text is a reflection of someone’s interpretation of an aspect of the social world.

### Our teaching strategies

Be explicit that when we ask students to recognise and reflect on the significance of literary texts in imagining and interpreting the social world, we are building on skills to do with active and critical reading.

**Set texts or films that challenge students to think differently about social, cultural or political issues.** Texts can be situated in the contexts in which they were produced and students can then compare these with the contexts in which the students themselves are reading, enabling students to see some of the knowledge or assumptions they might bring to the reading of a text.

Have students engage in interactive conversations in lectures, workshops, and online environments, and exchange different points of view. **Ask specific questions:** How does the text you are reading imagine the world? Does it give you another perspective on the world? What assumptions do you bring to your reading of the text?

### Example 1: How to reflect on the significance of literary texts

#### Blogs to next year’s students

Ask students to write a reflective blog or letter to next year’s first year students reflecting on the significance of the literary texts they have read this year in imagining and interpreting the social world. Ask students to explain how these texts have challenged them to think differently about social, cultural or political issues.

### Example 2: How to get students to apply literary knowledge to contemporary contexts

#### Applying literary knowledge

In a class discussion ask students to choose one aspect of their growing literary knowledge and apply it to a local, contemporary or personal issue that concerns them and report back either in class or in a blog.