

AcaWriter Quick Start Guide

Why is it relevant to you?

AcaWriter is a writing analytics program that can provide draft feedback on essays.

How does AcaWriter provide feedback?

In the same way that spell-check and Grammarly will indicate that there may be a spelling or grammatical error in your writing, AcaWriter indicates the presence of certain features of good academic writing. By simply copying and pasting text into the editor box on AcaWriter's landing page and then clicking "Get Feedback & Save", the software processes the text and reports back to the user whether or not certain types of text have been detected. AcaWriter does this with the help of sophisticated natural language processing technology powered by artificial intelligence.

So, what is AcaWriter looking for in your essays?

In short: attitude. In order to detect attitude, AcaWriter is programmed to recognise discourse markers.

What are discourse markers?

Good legal academic writing is an important skill for all lawyers. With the advent of evidence by affidavit, written submissions, email, and e-filing, lawyers write more than ever. Knowing how to write persuasively requires an understanding of the different functions that words perform. In your mid-session essays, you have been asked to take a stance in relation to a proposition. For example, should NSW Courts allow parties to appear and give evidence via video conferencing technology? To answer this question, it is necessary to evaluate the risks and benefits. Only an essay that takes a position and then provides a persuasive argument in support of that position will achieve a High Distinction. In order to persuade, the author should use particular rhetorical devices known as discourse markers. Discourse markers perform the function of speaking to the reader and conveying a position (e.g. *This essay will argue ...; It is interesting to note, ...; Nevertheless, ...; Conversely, ...; However, ...; In spite of these factors, ...*). More examples are provided in the reading material for Week 3 in UTSONline.

Why bother?

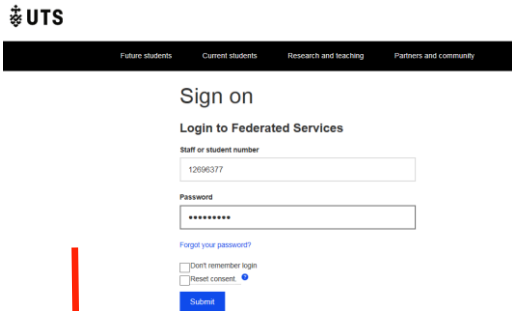
Using AcaWriter gives students an opportunity to receive some pre-submission feedback about their essays. Where there are large tracts of text with no highlighting, students can ask themselves whether there should be (is some analysis, evaluation, original insight needed); or is there too much highlighting (which would suggest a lack of evidence and too much opinion)? Ideally, academics and tutors would give students this feedback, but there simply is not enough time.

Using AcaWriter also gives law students a practice-authentic opportunity to use cutting-edge technology that is used in law firms to analyse risk, sentiment, and relationships. For example, writing analysis enables predictive coding, which assists in the analysis of large data sets. For example, it may be used to determine whether documents or correspondence in the data set are relevant or privileged. It is important for law students to be exposed to technology that assists in document review so that in practice, they are able to appreciate how it works, know its limitations, and defend its use in Court.

A survey monkey form will be sent to you for your feedback on the writing activity and your experience on using the AcaWriter tool. Upon completion of this survey, you will receive a short text from Dr. Philippa Ryan to add to your CV on your contribution to the research on Writing Analytics.

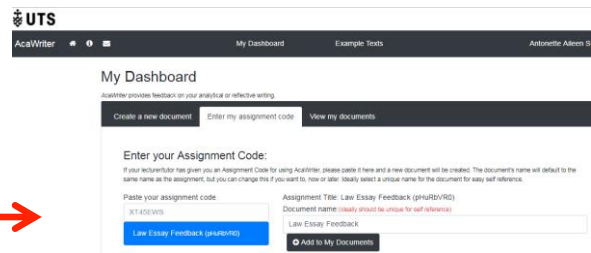
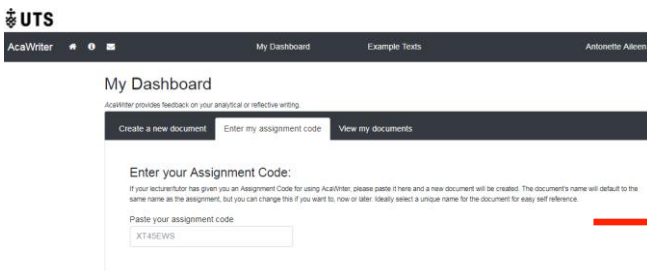
Hear it from Dr. Pip Ryan as she explains it more in her [videos](#).

How to use AcaWriter?



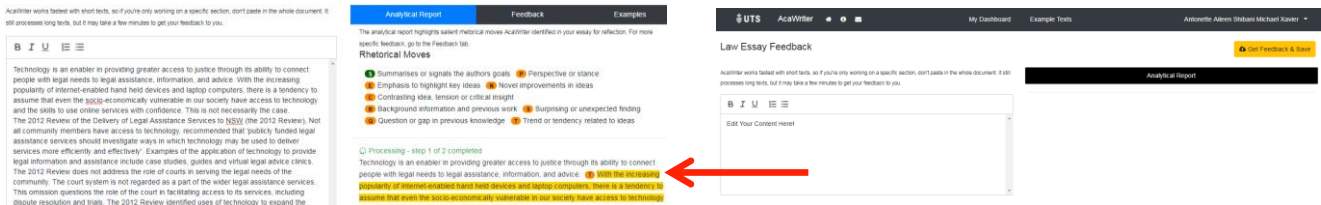
Open the *AcaWriter* website at <https://acawriter.uts.edu.au>. Select UTS Login and enter your UTS Student ID and password. This is the same ID and password that you use to log into UTSONline.

Once you're logged in you'll see the **My Dashboard** homepage. You can Create a new document to experiment, but for **Civil Practice** related feedback, click Enter my assignment code and type: **<assignment code>**. This is matched to your subject (pops up in blue – see below). Click on this, and optionally edit the title of the new document you're creating. Then press Add to my documents.



Click on Go to my document, or press the View my documents button and click on your Document Title. Your document opens, and you can now start using *AcaWriter*.

Paste your draft essay text into the white box and press the Get Feedback & Save button. *AcaWriter* works best with short texts, so paste only a section of text you're working on to get feedback faster. *AcaWriter* will send your text to a server to be analysed and shows you the progress of the analysis. Once the server has completed processing, feedback from *AcaWriter* will appear on the right hand side of your original text.



Feedback from *AcaWriter* consists of three tabs:

1) The first tab displays an 'Analytical Report' highlighting the key rhetorical moves AcaWriter identified in your essay. Reflect on this report to see if you have clearly expressed your attitude in the writing.

Analytical Report	Feedback	Examples
<p>The rhetorical moves highlighted by AcaWriter are used in good academic writing but use them with caution according to the context. Remember, AcaWriter does not really understand your writing, the way people do. You may have written beautifully crafted nonsense - that's for you to decide! Moreover, writing is complex, and AcaWriter will get it wrong sometimes. If you think it got it wrong, that's fine - now you're thinking about more than spelling, grammar, and plagiarism.</p>		
<p>● It looks like you are missing a Background move in your text, which highlights background information and previous literature on the topic. Try including linguistic cues to make this move clearer in your writing. Examples: The past decade has seen ..., Recent studies indicate ..., It is generally accepted that..., the concept has previously been thought to be...</p>		
<p>● If there is a key idea you did like to emphasise in your essay try including linguistic cues to make this move clearer in your writing. Examples: It is important to note that ..., It makes a proper understanding important...</p>		

3) The third tab provides examples of rhetorical moves being used in sentences and are mapped to criteria from your essay assessment rubric. It shows how these moves can help you write better relating to your essay assessment criteria.

Analytical Report	Feedback	Examples
<p>The analytical report highlights salient rhetorical moves AcaWriter identified in your essay for reflection. For more specific feedback, go to the Feedback tab.</p> <p>Rhetorical Moves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Summarises or signals the authors goals ● Perspective or stance ● Emphasis to highlight key ideas ● Novel improvements in ideas ● Contrasting idea, tension or critical insight ● Background information and previous work ● Surprising or unexpected finding ● Question or gap in previous knowledge ● Trend or tendency related to ideas 		
<p>Technology is an enabler in providing greater access to justice through its ability to connect people with legal needs to legal assistance, information, and advice. ● With the increasing popularity of internet-enabled hand held devices and laptop computers, there is a tendency to assume that even the socio-economically vulnerable in our society have access to technology and the skills to use online services with confidence. This is not necessarily the case. ● The 2012 Review of the Delivery of Legal Assistance Services to NSW (the 2012 Review) Not all community members have access to technology, recommended that 'publicly funded legal assistance services should investigate ways in which technology may be used to deliver legal information and assistance include case studies, guides and virtual legal advice clinics. ● The 2012 Review does not address the role of courts in serving the legal needs of the community. The court system is not regarded as a part of the wider legal assistance services. ● This omission questions the role of the court in facilitating access to</p>		

2) The second tab provides more specific feedback on the rhetorical moves you can include in your essay with sample discourse markers. These are not hard and fast rules, but by making the rhetorical moves visible, AcaWriter can help you think more on your writing.

Analytical Report	Feedback	Examples
<p>A list of sample sentences with rhetorical moves, mapped to your essay assessment rubric is provided below:</p>		
Sample Sentence	Essay Assessment Rubric Element	AcaWriter Move
The concept of good faith has previously been thought to be a work in progress in Australia.	Engagement with the law and scholarly literature	Background
This article will trace the origins of good faith and its development in the common law. This essay contains three parts. The first part will talk about the origins of good faith.	Statement of thesis, Essay plan	Summary
However , where the obligations are found in statute and they conflict with contractual obligations, it is important to note that the former must prevail.	Identification of relevant issues, Critical analysis and original insight	Contrast, Emphasis

You can use AcaWriter feedback and edit your text directly on the left, and then request for feedback again. This feature allows you to make changes to see if your AcaWriter feedback changes accordingly. Making these kinds of edits in response to feedback can help you be more thoughtful about your writing. However, don't fall into the trap of changing words just to get more annotations in your text. More annotations are not necessarily better. The true test of quality of your writing is that it meets the requirements of your subject assessment outline.

AcaWriter is a research tool which is constantly getting improved, so hang tight and let us know if something went wrong. Remember AcaWriter is just a tool for reflecting on your drafts. The only text that will be assessed is what you finally submit through UTSonline.

Now go ahead, try AcaWriter and write better!