

## Curriculum review using the LfLFE framework

*A resource page to follow up the LfLFE film*

**Insight.** The LfLFE research found that reading and writing practices on FE courses were often seen by students to be just things that have to be done for assessment, rather than actually being useful for learning, or for life or work. These practices often seemed to be either repeating what the students had already done, or to be unconnected with their experience either on the course or in their life or work. Students could see that the expectations varied greatly across courses, but these were rarely explained, so they were not sure what they were aiming to achieve.

**Priorities.** Across the curriculum, the challenge is to make the reading and writing within courses:

1. more **useful for learning**, and/or more **relevant** to students' intended careers;
2. more **varied**, and/or more **connected** with the students' literacy practices in life and the qualities they value;
3. more **explicit**, so that they (and their lecturers) know what they are aiming to achieve.

**Actions for change.** As shown in the film, each of the 16 FE lecturers in the project was asked to identify a course activity involving reading or writing that wasn't working well, to review it in relation to these three priorities, and to make small changes to improve it.

For example, they thought about the reading and writing students were being asked to do in terms of 'priority 1' above. 'Was it actually useful for learning?' 'If not, what literacy practice did the students need for that learning?'

**Framework.** The team analysed the changes they made, the successes and the problems. From this, they identified nine aspects of a reading or writing practice that the lecturers had either addressed, or realised they needed to address. These have been developed into a framework for others to use.

The nine aspects elaborate the basic questions of **what? why?, who?, and how?** that are needed to understand and describe any use of reading and writing. Overleaf, each aspect is explained in the space around the framework.

**The framework helps us to understand any use of reading or writing and review it or explain it to others.**

## Using the framework

These nine 'aspects of a literacy practice' can be used:

- to analyse the reading and writing within a course activity, or within a course unit, or across on a whole course; and
- to plan small changes in practice to make the reading and writing on a course more useful for learning (priorities 1-3).

### A step-by-step process

- a) Identify an activity (focus on a single activity first) in one of your courses which involves reading and/or writing but which doesn't seem to be working well.
- b) Review the value of this reading or writing practice in relation to the first two priorities. - How useful is it for learning? How relevant is it to students intended careers? Does it contribute to variety on the course or connect with literacy practices in students' lives? (It doesn't need to achieve all of these things, so focus on what seems most important.) Use some or all of the nine aspects in the framework to help you to identify these strengths or problems. (For example, if your students copy from the whiteboard while you write, consider each aspect of this reading and writing practice, perhaps using the sequence – what? – why? – who? and how?)
- c) EITHER - identify ways in which you could modify or vary some of the aspects of this literacy practice to make it more useful for learning.  
OR - use your knowledge of the subject or vocational area to identify a more useful or relevant literacy practice – one that your students need for their studies or their intended careers. Then use the framework to clarify the aspects of that literacy practice, and work out how you can 'fine tune' it to ensure it makes sense and is useful for learning within the course.
- d) Use some of the aspects from the framework to help you to talk about that revised literacy practice explicitly with your students, so that they can understand the value of it and what it involves. (You could discuss *what* they may be aiming to achieve, *why* and *how*, and with what constraints or potential flexibility.)

*Online resources:* a chart is provided to assist with this within 'Activity 3' in the workshop materials on the LfLFE website at [www.lancs.ac.uk/LfLFE](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/LfLFE)

**The framework can also be used to analyse the everyday literacy practices in life and work.**

## Questions we can ask about any use of reading and writing to understand it ourselves and review it or explain it to others

"The kinds of reading and writing that you are engaging in with your students is not somehow an 'add-on' or incidental to your subject area. It's an integral part of your subject, because how people communicate in that subject area is going to be distinctive. As an educator in any subject area you need to 'have a handle on' the dimensions of those literacy practices."

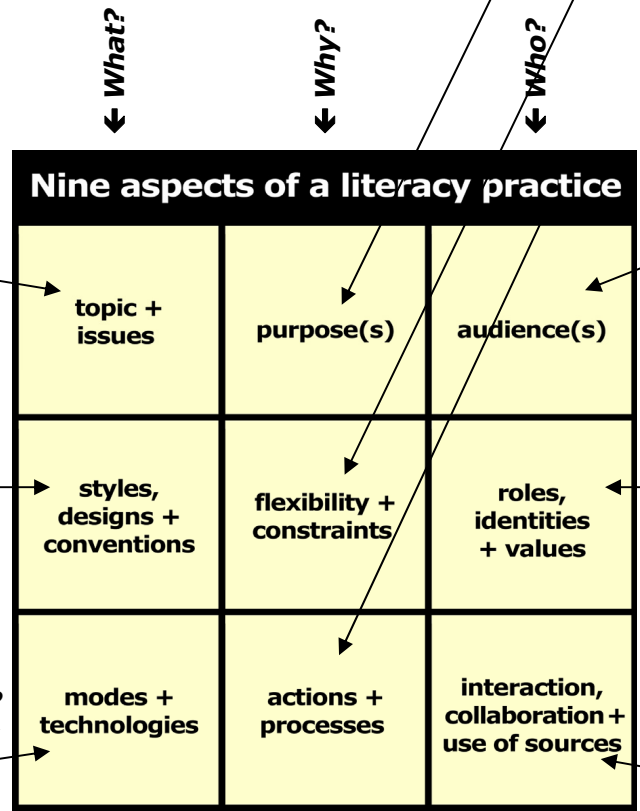
Dr Greg Mannion, LfLFE Project Co-Director,  
University of Stirling

**Topic + issues.** What are the students reading and writing about? What 'issues' are they engaging with?  
(Topics are represented in different ways in different social and professional contexts – ways that may be institutional and/or controversial.)

**Styles, designs + conventions.** What is the design and flow of information? What writing styles are used? What conventions does the reader or writer need to know?  
(Students cannot reinvent social and professional practices – we all need to learn from examples.)

**Modes.** Is the communication multimodal – including images/talk/sound as well as text? Is it to be read in a linear or non-linear way?  
**Technologies.** What technologies are used to achieve this communication? - from pen and paper to digital technologies.

A person's expertise in a particular kind of reading or writing depends on having a sense of these nine aspects. That social or professional practice may be so familiar to them that these aspects are just obvious and not thought about. But when they were learning it, and now if they want to help someone else to learn it, they have to think about these aspects explicitly.



**Purpose.** Why are they reading or writing? What are they aiming to achieve? The purpose may be partly their own, but it may also be institutional – it's what people do. Talking about purpose can be very useful in leading to talking about the other aspects.

**Flexibility and constraints.** Why now? Why here? and Why like this? There are always constraints of time, space and resources, but also areas of flexibility and opportunity. These need to be discussed explicitly so that students can understand the constraints, but also know where they can make choices and decisions.

**Actions (why).** What is the reading or writing part of? Reading and writing in life and work are about getting something done, or achieving something we value or enjoy, like fixing the car or planning a project or reading a novel. What is the wider action in this case?

**Processes (how)** What is the process (or the stages) by which this reading or writing is achieved, perhaps including scanning, noting, drafting and reviewing.

**Audience.** Who is the text being written *for*? or who was it written *for*? A professional note or document may be written for several audiences. (Students may have in mind the lecturer or an outside audience at different moments in their writing, so this needs explicit discussion.)

**Roles, identities+ values.** Who is the text written *by*, and in what role are they writing? What values and priorities do they bring to it? For example, the electrician in the film would be reading and writing in different ways as the installer, project manager or inspector.

**Interaction, collaboration + use of sources.** Who are they reading and writing *with*, and how? For example, are they discussing it as they write? Are they writing parts of it, for someone else to check or finish? How are they using information that others have written?