**Short, In-Class Writing Assignments**

Many students find it difficult to put their thoughts onto paper, and consequently put off starting a piece of writing for far too long. To help encourage them before asking them to complete lengthy writing assignments, such as essays or lab reports, it is a good idea to have them complete short writing assignments in class.

By completing one such writing task at the end of each week, students will begin to gain confidence in the writing process in a low-stakes environment. Each task, which should last for around 10 minutes, could ask students to either:

1. Argue a position and defend it with logical reasoning, **or**
2. Write about a topic recently discussed in class to reinforce content knowledge

Peer review, and improving written work based on feedback from others, goes hand in hand with science writing. To help instil this concept in your students you may wish to ask them to review their peers’ writing from the previous week as a way of kick-starting the current week. This will help review some of the previous week’s content and give them practice in providing useful feedback. If you ask students to provide short written critiques to their peers, it will also give them more writing practice.

*Note: These tasks may also help you to monitor attendance throughout the course of a semester if you collect written answers at the end of class. You may also wish to attach a very small portion of the cumulative assessment for the class to these writing tasks to encourage students to make a real effort in their writing.*

**1) Arguing a Position and Defending it With Logical Reasoning**

**Example Writing Prompts**

*In approximately 200 - 300 words justify, with* ***at least three*** *examples to support you conclusion, whether you would rather be:*

1. A polar bear or a grizzly bear.
2. A top predator or a prey species in a jungle ecosystem.
3. DNA or RNA.
4. A specialist or a generalist.
5. An ionic bond or a covalent bond.

**2) Answering Content-Based Questions to Reinforce Class Topics**

**Example Writing Prompts**

*In approximately 200 - 300 words:*

1. Give **two** examples of scientific breakthroughs that have changed the world, and assess how much of a difference they have made to modern life.
2. Explain the difference between applied and basic research and provide **two** examples (one of each) that show why it is important that both receive funding.
3. Explain how DNA is replicated and provide **two** examples of how it can occasionally go wrong.
4. Give **two** examples of bacteria that have evolved resistance to antibiotics, and explain what we can do to reduce the risk of resistance developing in others.
5. Explain how competition for resources can lead to organisms evolving specialist features, and provide **two** examples that illustrate this.