Post-doctoral WRITING and SPEAKING Self-Assessment (based on form Suzanne Lane adapted for MIT)

Suggested use: on your own, with a writing buddy, group, or Writing Center Consultant to build on your strengths

Adapted by Elizabeth Fox (MIT Writing and Communication Center) for May 24, 2012 talk to Post-doc Association

CURRENT KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT: WRITING FOR DIFFERENT SITUATIONS AND PURPOSES

1. From the following statements, select all that are true for you.

___ I have always enjoyed writing and seek opportunities to write for different purposes.
___ I believe that writing helps me to develop stronger ideas and to explore complex issues in my work.
___ I have sufficient experience and knowledge about writing in my field.
___ I have no strong feelings about writing, neither seeking nor avoiding it.
___ I generally understand the principles for academic writing but want to learn more to publish.
___ I often feel unclear about the principles and purposes for writing in this field.

2. Which kinds of writing are you most comfortable producing? (select as many as you like)

___ Technical writing
___ Longer, synthetic arguments drawing on many sources
___ Blogs
___ Proposals and grants
___ Factual reports
___ Progress reports
___ Lab reports
___ Journal articles
___ Summaries or overviews of a topic (literature reviews, annotated bibliographies, etc.)

3. What, specifically, do you consider strengths in your writing?

   a. ____________________________________________________________

   b. ____________________________________________________________

   c. ____________________________________________________________

Adapted from the Writer’s Personal Profile developed by Tracy Ann Robinson for the Oregon State University Writing Intensive Curriculum Program. For more information about the tool and best practices for using it, please visit http://wac/colostate.edu/atd/assessment/robinson_burton.cfm.
CURRENT KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT: APPROACH TO DRAFTING AND REVISION

4. For each of the following aspects of the academic writing process, mark whether you consider your knowledge and abilities STRONG (S), WEAK (W), or NEUTRAL (N) in that area.

___ Choosing an appropriate and workable topic
___ Locating and evaluating sources
___ Developing a focused, arguable thesis claim
___ Organizing the information and ideas to structure them in a logical sequence
___ Generating the first draft of your paper
___ Writing the abstract, introduction, and/or conclusion
___ Sticking to the topic; identifying and omitting extraneous information
___ Creating smooth, logical transitions between paragraphs and sections
___ Revising your draft for structure and development after peer and/or self review
___ Editing your draft for syntax, clarity, and professional presentation
___ Using an appropriate tone, writing style, and level of complexity for your target audience
___ Establishing a writing schedule that gives you enough time to produce your best paper.

5. In your professional (and other) life, how often do you use informal writing as part of your learning/thinking?

ALWAYS _____ FREQUENTLY _____ OCCASIONALLY _____ NEVER _____

6. What kinds of informal writing have you found helpful for clarifying your thoughts and integrating new information and concepts as you develop your ideas for a draft?

___ Summarizing ideas from readings
___ Writing out your own reflections and responses to readings, presentations, and research
___ Writing critical questions and exploratory answers about material as you read
___ Keeping a general journal for recording thoughts and ideas
___ Free writing on the topic before you begin formal writing
___ Brainstorming notes in an informal outline, mind map, or cluster diagram
___ Writing a formal outline
___ Talking out your questions and ideas with a colleague or friend.
7. Briefly describe your typical approach to writing a first draft (what do you do? How long do you spend on it?)

_____________________________________________________________________________________________

8. Briefly describe your typical approach to revising drafts of your writing.

_____________________________________________________________________________________________

9. What kind(s) of feedback from peers or others do you find most useful?

___ Questions that ask me to clarify what I mean in specific passages

___ Questions that raise issues I hadn’t yet considered or considered fully

___ Positive comments about what’s working well

___ Critiques of what’s not clear, accurate, or well-developed

___ Specific suggestions for further development  ____ Editing marks on my syntax, grammar, and punctuation

10. With which of the following academic speaking forms do you feel most comfortable:

___ Speaking collaboratively in small groups to negotiate ideas and solve problems

___ Debating informally when differences in interpretation exist

___ Debating formally

___ Presenting formally on your research

___ Providing feedback to others on presentations

11. From the following statements, select all that are true for you:

___ I have always enjoyed speaking in public and seek opportunities for public speaking

___ I believe that articulating my ideas helps me to develop stronger ideas and to explore complex issues

___ I have sufficient experience and knowledge about formal speaking in this subject

___ When I speak, I consider my audience and purpose

___ I have no strong feelings about speaking, neither seeking it nor avoiding it.

___ I speak primarily to communicate ideas that I already understand.

___ I mostly avoid public speaking and don’t find it easy.
SETTING PERSONAL WRITING AND SPEAKING GOALS FOR YOUR POST-DOC TRAINING

Think about the kinds of professional writing and speaking you expect to do. Identify any gaps that exist between your current repertoire of writing and speaking skills and those needed in your field. How can you close those gaps? The goals you choose should be specific and realistic (achievable). List your goals:

Writing: 1. ____________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________

Speaking: 1. __________________________________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________________________________