



## Getting it right: further investigations on the impact of an online writing tool used by first year biology students

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**Abstract:** *An online writing tool that incorporates summative assessment was developed in 2007 and trialled in 2008 with first year biology students (Lilje, Breen, Lewis & Yalcin 2008a). The Online Writing Evaluation Tool (ORWET) was evaluated by both the staff, who use a staff version to help them mark student report writing, and the students, who use a student version to help them write a scientific report. Whilst the staff considered their tool to be useful to their marking, and the analysis of marking indicated that there is strong evidence of consistency in marking across a large group of markers (Lilje, Breen, Lewis & Yalcin 2008b), the student story was very different. Even if the students thought the tool was useful to their learning to write a scientific report, they did not like using it (Lilje et al. 2008a). There was an avalanche of comments to open-ended questions asking about the strengths of the tool and how it could be improved.*

*ORWET was originally designed to be used in a second semester course, when it has been suggested students are better acclimatised to being university students. Unfortunately the course was moved to first semester (out of the control of the course developer - OL) without much consideration of the nature of the activities within the course and the readiness of students to be self-reliant and disciplined. Some of the recurring comments of the students were probably to do with their transition from school to university and these are being addressed. Version 2 of ORWET is in use in semester 1 2009. This paper will report on a re-evaluation of the impact of the tool by investigating if using the tool enhances students' understanding of what is required of them, and whether it enhances scientific writing skills.*