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## **SECTION 2 – The Student**

### **1. Student Eligibility**

Tutoring within the Read Write Now! Program is available to any adult who is:

- 18 years old or above
- who has at least basic spoken English
- who has the desire to learn and improve their literacy skills
- is willing to make a commitment to regular attendance, punctuality and to complete set homework

\*Note: priority is given to permanent residents of Australia

### **2. Student Interview and Assessment**

#### ***Initial Student Enquiries***

Most student enquiries come through Central Office. At this stage, as an initial screening tool, a ‘Student Phone Enquiries’ form is completed. If Central Office staff are satisfied that the potential student both meets the criteria for eligibility, and that there is no reason to suspect they would pose any risk to our volunteers, they will be referred to their local Coordinator.

If, during this call, it is felt that there is concern regarding the safety of our volunteers, they will not be referred to their local Coordinator. A decision will be made by the Manager on what actions will next take place. At the time of printing this version of the Coordinator’s Manual, legal advice is being sought on our options if this situation should arise.

If the student’s initial phone enquiry comes directly to the Coordinator without going through Central Office, please complete the *Student Phone Enquiry* form over the phone with them. If the Coordinator has any concerns regarding this student, if they have been referred to *RWN!* Via a correction agency, or if the student volunteers information that they have a criminal record, please contact Central Office. This is part of our Risk Management Strategy for the safety of our Coordinators and tutors.

NB: A copy of the Student Phone Enquiry form is at the end of this section.

#### ***Special Note on Personal Safety***

All Coordinators are asked to consider their personal safety by only interviewing in public places such as local libraries, TAFE or other community locations. We do not

want Coordinators interviewing in private homes. Although there has never been an incident, we want to ensure that our volunteers' personal safety is paramount.

### ***Importance of Student Assessment***

Assessing the student's goals, levels and needs is central to ensuring successful outcomes for the student and tutor. The importance of this role cannot be overstated. Coordinators are encouraged to give this role their utmost attention and to strive towards developing their expertise in this area.

Training, mentoring and refresher courses are readily available from Central Office staff.

### ***The Initial Interview***

The Coordinator will most likely speak to the prospective student on the phone before the interview. Let the student know that they should allow approximately one hour for the interview and assure them there is nothing to be worried about.

When talking to the student on the phone, try to ascertain who they were referred by. If a student has been referred by an employer, a government department such as Centrelink, or even a family member that thinks they need to improve their literacy skills, it may not be something that the student considers a high need in their life. Experience has shown that if the student is not there under their own volition, chances of success in the Program are small. Careful questioning either over the phone or during the interview, followed by a very clear explanation of the requirements and expectations on our students, will hopefully help both parties determine whether this is the right Program for the student. It is much better to make the decision at this stage to not go ahead rather than just 'giving it a go' despite misgivings, and risk having a disheartened tutor who may decide to leave. A good option for these students is to give them time to think about whether they really want to go ahead, and ask them to contact you in a week if they are committed.

Most adult literacy students that you interview will have experienced varying levels of anxiety and humiliation over their difficulties with English or literacy and it is easy to imagine that it will have required a great deal of courage for the person to even seek out our service.

It is reasonable to expect that the person will be anxious about "what's going to happen to them" in their interview with you. They are likely to be nervous and embarrassed. This may manifest as gruffness, shyness or feigned indifference.

The Coordinator needs to be sympathetic to the prospective student's anxiety levels and allow time for general conversation to put the person at ease. Depending on the location, offer them a cup of coffee and have an informal chat.

Tell them what you would like to cover in the interview and ask them if they are comfortable with that. If they are not comfortable with what you want to cover, ask them to tell you where they would like to stop the interview.

This early conversation is itself revealing of how the potential student copes with stress and their likely reaction to a learning environment. Oral language is an important part of literacy so the Coordinator needs to make a mental note of the student's skills in this area as you have the chat and coffee.

***What ideally should be covered in the interview?***

Explain to the student that you would like to find out more about:

- their background;
- the literacy skills they already have;
- the approximate level they are currently at;
- their goals; and
- what *they* would like to achieve from working with a tutor.

Explain to them that you need to have this information so that you can arrive at the best possible match with a tutor and to give the tutor some starting points for planning the first few lessons.

Re-iterate that *they* are not being tested to pass or fail – you are simply finding the best starting point for that individual person to ensure their chances of success. Let them know once again that this is confidential and will only be passed on to their tutor. Also remind them that they can stop the interview at any point.

***How accurate is a student assessment?***

This varies depending on both the experience of the Coordinator and the anxiety for the student. Tutors sometimes find that the new student can do more than the assessment shows. This is often the result of nerves on the student's part or the reluctance to answer a question and risk being wrong – even if they feel that they do know the answer. Some adult students have had a lifetime of experiences that now stop them taking risks in the learning environment. In other cases, the assessments can be extremely accurate and summarise all pertinent information and set the tutor on the right path with the student.

Every Coordinator should see student assessments as one of the most important parts of their job. Getting this right should be the aim of all Coordinators. It will take time to develop the skills in this area, so don't be too hard on yourself!

***Additional note: Confidentiality***

Please note when the time comes after the interview to fill in the Student Index Card that there is provision to stick a red dot on the top right hand corner of the card if confidentiality is a major concern for the student. The red dot will alert you that any attempts to contact the student must be made with full discretion. Also advise Central Office so that the student is not posted the magazine or phoned for surveys.

### **3. Preparing for a student assessment**

When you are preparing to assess a student you will need:

- The Prospective Student Interview and Skills Summary Form
- The Literacy Student Assessment proformas. Levels 1, 2 & 3.
- Write On student magazine.
- A sample of real-life reading material to assess practical skills, such as a street directory, train or bus timetable, road map, electricity, gas or water bill, packet of, say, Panadol (to read dosage, not required for any other purpose!)
- A comfortable place to sit and talk, with a table to write on
- Tea and coffee available, if possible

Suggested procedure to follow:

1. Complete pages 1 & 2 of the Student Interview & Skills Summary Form.
2. Then work through the student assessments.
3. Return to the Student Interview & Skills Summary Form and complete the remaining sections.

#### ***Working through the Literacy Student Assessment Tasks***

(If the student is from a non English speaking background and has limited spoken English please refer to page 6)

There are four parts to the assessment process:

1. Oracy/Speaking
2. Reading
3. Writing
4. Numeracy

#### **1. Speaking**

The spoken part of the interview is a key component of the placement assessment process and a one-to-one conversational interview is the most appropriate means of:

- establishing a working relationship with the new student.
- assessing the current literacy skills of the new student.
- identifying the student's needs, goals and concerns.
- identifying the initial level to begin the student's assessment.

If Coordinators are to achieve their assessment purposes, then it is essential that students are fully informed about the purpose and process of the assessment interview, and are given the opportunity to express their own needs and goals.

## **2. Reading**

### ***When to assess reading***

Coordinators should assess reading after an initial judgement of a student's level of spoken English. The Coordinator can then conduct an assessment of the student's reading ability using the tasks in the *Literacy Student Assessment proformas*.

There are three (3) levels:

- Level 1 – Beginning Level
- Level 2 – Middle Level
- Level 3 – Becoming Independent

## **3. Writing**

### ***When to assess writing***

Coordinators should assess writing after an initial judgement of a student's level of spoken English and reading skills. The Coordinator can then conduct an assessment of the student's writing ability using the tasks in the *Literacy Student Assessment proformas*.

There are three (3) levels:

- Level 1 – Beginning Level
- Level 2 – Middle Level
- Level 3 – Becoming Independent

## **4. Numeracy**

### ***When to assess numeracy***

If a student indicates they would like help with numeracy, Coordinators should assess this after an initial judgement of a student's level of spoken English along with their reading and writing skills. The Coordinator can then conduct an assessment of the student's numeracy skills using the tasks in the *Literacy Student Assessment proformas* (Note: there are no numeracy tasks for Level 3 – Becoming Independent).

There are two (2) levels:

- Level 1 – Beginning Level
- Level 2 – Middle Level

## **4. Assessing a student from a non English speaking background**

### ***Staging the Spoken Interview***

#### ***Exploratory stage***

- greet the student
- introduce yourselves
- re-confirm the purpose and process of the interview
- make general conversation
- make initial judgements (mentally) about the student's level

#### ***Analytical and probing stage***

This stage extends for most of the interview and in this stage, Coordinators need to ask questions that elicit language samples to enable an assessment to be made of the student's proficiency level. For example:

Ask the student what they did yesterday/last weekend and listen to their reply. Was it in the correct tense? (past tense) How did they pronounce their words? Did they use articles such as *a, an, the*? The student may speak quite well, but may be using incorrect grammar.

Discretely extend the student to the point where they can no longer adequately cope with the language level to determine the student's linguistic breaking point. This is done by:

- extending the depth of your questions
- increasing the pace of delivery
- moving from familiar and personal topics to more abstract topics that will require the student to understand and use a greater vocabulary range and language structure

For example, questions about technical topics, but topics still related to the student's own experience/job. Elicit responses that require more complexity or the student's own opinions on a current topic in the news (Note: be aware what country the student originates from, and avoid questions if that country is in conflict.)

#### ***Concluding stage***

In this stage it is very important to return to a comfortable level of interaction with the student before this part of the assessment process concludes, because: it allows the student to feel more comfortable about the interview process, which is very important because the student has to continue doing the assessment tasks for reading, writing and or numeracy and needs to have the confidence to gain further information about their tutoring arrangements.

### *Summary*

Assessing the student's goals, levels and needs is central to ensuring successful outcomes for the student and tutor. *The importance of this role cannot be overstated.* Coordinators are encouraged to give this role their utmost attention and to strive towards developing their expertise in this area.

**If you have any difficulties with assessment, contact a member of the RWN Team at Central Office. They are there to assist you!**

References and Materials:

Christie, J. *English Language & Literacy Placement Assessment*. NSW AMES, Department of Education and Training.

Read-Write-Now! Coordinators Manual (2008)

## **5. Working through the steps of the Prospective Student Interview and Skills Summary Form**

NB: Please refer to the copy of this form at the end of this section. The page numbers listed below refer to the pages within the form.

### **1. Student's background - Pages 1 and 2 of the form**

These pages are to gain general background information on the student and are self-explanatory. Please note that the "summary" section on page 1 will be completed after the interview.

### **2. Student Skills Summary - Page 3 of the form**

This page is filled in by the Coordinator not the student. It is a summary of your observations and assessment of the student throughout the interview. A copy of this will be given to the tutor. Less experienced Coordinators will find it easier to complete this summary after the prospective student has left. More experienced Coordinators will probably fill this in throughout the interview. It is perfectly reasonable to tell the student what you are writing about them and avoid anxiety building up in the student. Remember to always be positive in your remarks.

For example, if a student doesn't know how to find a certain road in the street directory, write something along the lines of: "With some assistance in understanding alphabetical order, Peter will soon be able to use a street directory" as opposed to "Can't use a street directory".

#### **Handwriting**

What style an adult uses, whether cursive or print, is their choice. Our comment should only concern the legibility of their script and the ease with which they write. A comment might be:

*Susan's handwriting is clear and she writes quickly and easily.*

or

*Tom writes slowly but his writing is quite legible and with practice he will be able to write more easily.*

#### **Reading**

Results of the assessment can be recorded and a comment made on the student's interests and goals in reading. For example:

*Sharon would like to recognise labels and signs in the supermarket and with help she will be able to do this before too long.*

or

*Matt is very interested in vehicles and wants to read car magazines and manuals.*

### **Practical Skills**

Some students who do not score well on formal tests can handle real-world tasks, which are more important anyway. Check them on reading a timetable, street directory, recipe or the label on a package. They should be praised for what they **can** do.

### **Written Expression**

The Coordinator can conduct an assessment of the student's writing ability using the tasks in the *Literacy Student Assessment*. Ask the student to fill in name, address, etc. at the appropriate level on the form provided. If they have difficulty with this, be very gentle about asking them to write any more. Again, comments should be phrased in a positive way

### **Spelling**

The important point is whether they can spell the words they need, so no separate test is required. You can assess their spelling by looking at what they write. Again positive, constructive comments will be most useful to tutor and student, eg

*Janet's ideas run ahead of her pen! She wants to learn the words that she needs in writing. She would like to learn some strategies for memorising spelling. A personal word book would be useful.*

### **Speaking and listening**

This comment will be particularly applicable to ESL students, but it is useful to note the strengths in this area of an English speaker. How a person speaks is something that is very personal to them and no correction should be made. It is important to listen carefully however and to become aware of any phrasing or pronunciation that makes understanding difficult, or mispronouncing that will make spelling difficult. Later, when tutor and student know one another well, some work can be done to improve, if this is what the student wants.

### **Numeracy (if required)**

Numeracy can then most usefully be assessed by asking the student questions based on real-life information. Advertisements and weather reports in the newspaper, recipes, leaflets, labels, and street directories can all provide numerical questions, which will be relevant in the life of an adult.

For example, "Do you have any difficulty in handling money? For instance, in shopping, paying bills, or understanding your bank statement?"

### **3. Recommendations - Pages 4 and 5 of the form**

Based on the assessment the Coordinator should recommend strategies that will show the tutor where to begin. This is particularly important for new tutors. On page 5 the Coordinator should give suggestions as to where to start in teaching writing, spelling and numeracy, (if required). **Goals, attitudes and motivation** should be general and long-term, as opposed to the specific goals on page 1.

### **4. Agreed actions following interview**

This section must be completed while the student is present as it is the basis of understanding between student and Coordinator. The Coordinator should read aloud to the student what has been written in this section and encourage discussion. Both must know what will happen next and be satisfied with the arrangements. The Coordinator will probably promise to look for a suitable tutor and to contact the student again by a certain date. The student will understand that they will have responsibilities to their tutor and that they can contact the Coordinator again at any time. The student should be given the pamphlet "Welcome to New Students" with contact phone numbers written on it.

The interview is now formally completed and the student can leave feeling happy and confident that they have done well and that steps are in hand to address their problems.

The Coordinator can then complete the rest of the report and, with the information that has been gathered in mind, can look for a suitable tutor.

It is important that you give the assessment form (the whole form) to the tutor – even the sections that the student hasn't completed – these are as important to the tutor as the completed sections as they give an indication to the tutor which levels the student needs to aim for. Also note on the pages how much help/prompting was needed from you or if they completed the task independently.

## **6. Informing the Tutor about the Student Assessment**

When the Coordinator has completed the Student Assessment, and selected the most appropriate tutor available, the next step is to spend some time with the tutor going through the assessment. The less experienced the tutor is the more support they will need from the Coordinator in the early stages. It is not breaking confidentiality to share this information with the tutor.

### ***Getting the New Tutor Started with a Student***

The time you invest at this point will produce results in retaining a volunteer tutor in the Program. If the tutor is experiencing success with their student, the work becomes personally rewarding and the tutor is more likely to continue their commitment. On the other hand if the tutor feels he/she is ineffective and is letting the student down, they will soon leave. This investment of your time will of course also benefit the student by ensuring they receive the most appropriate lessons.

Whilst going through the Student Assessment with the new tutor it may be prudent to subtly re-iterate that literacy is a relative concept. Literacy means different things to different people. Some people want to read books and write their own stories. Others want to read comics. There is a danger of tutors assuming that their own level of literacy is the necessary level. This will quickly alienate a student.

It may also be prudent to remind the tutor of the importance of negotiating what's to be covered in the lessons. This is because our students are adults and each has their own reasons for seeking assistance. Adults need to be involved in making decisions about their own education and what they want to learn.

The focal point of learning is the relationship between the tutor and the student. It is important that the student's own views, needs, aspirations and abilities should determine the kind of learning support he/she receives. The best tutors are those who see themselves as an equal partner in the learning situation, and identify strengths and sources of satisfaction for a student. An effective Coordinator assesses an appropriate starting level to guide the tutor on where to begin with a new student. The tutor and student then develop a program of learning which the Coordinator monitors and supports.

## **7. How the Coordinator Can Support the Tutor**

There are many ways that a Coordinator can support a tutor. The first way is by making sure the student interview and assessment forms contain as much information as possible concerning the student's abilities, suggestions for activities and possible resources that the tutor could use.

After this, support could happen in the following ways:

- \*Encouraging tutors to ring you both for assistance if they need it, and also to share in the excitement of any successes. Spend time listening, encouraging and giving suggestions as needed.
- \*Letting tutors know that they can also access assistance from Central Office.
- \*Ringling or emailing new tutors regularly to see how the tutoring is going and to see if they need further assistance (at the very least, ring after 6 weeks, if not earlier. After that, if all is well, keep in contact every couple of months – more regularly if they are having difficulty.
- Offering to prepare the first few lessons for them if they feel they need this support.
- If they are feeling especially tentative, you could offer to run a tutoring session for them, or to review their lesson plans for them.
- Some new tutors may like to sit in on another tutor's session. For this, only use tutors that you are very confident with. You will need to have their student's permission for this as well.
- \*Holding 3 monthly Tutor Meetings where tutors have the opportunity to chat with other tutors, talk about concerns, discuss any new resources and to access further training through guest speakers.

Some Coordinators will not have the time to provide all these forms of support. If you can at least do the ones that are marked with a \*, this should alert you to any problems that may be happening, and allow you to either address them, or to pass them on to Central Office.

Tutors are very much like our students – they respond well to encouragement and assurance that you are there to help. Giving regular 'pats on the back' along with advice or suggestions as required will help a tutor to feel both valued and supported.

## 8. Monitoring Student Progress – Hot Pink Forms

When a tutor is matched with a student, and at the beginning of each year, the Coordinator will provide the tutor with 3 copies of the *Hot Pink Form*, along with copies of the *Prospective Student Interview and Skills Summary*, and a copy of the *Student Assessment*. The *Hot Pink Forms* are to be completed at the first tutor/student meeting, which is normally an informal meeting, often held at a coffee shop, helping to make the first introduction more relaxed.

At the meeting, the tutor and student discuss the student's goals, working through the form together. The goals that the **student** chooses are ticked in the left hand column and the information transferred to all 3 forms. One copy is for the tutor to keep, one for the student and one to be sent to the Coordinator as soon as possible after this meeting. Determining these goals will help the tutor to focus the lessons on the student's needs.

In June and November, the Coordinator will remind the tutor to update this form. This is done by the tutor and student again working through the tutor's original form (and the student's if they still have it). This time they place a J (in June) or an N (in November) in the column that shows how the student feels about his/her progress (column titles: about the same, getting a bit better, getting much better, can now do this confidently).

The Coordinator can get the updates for his/her form in the following ways:

- via email – an email version of the *Hot Pink Form* is available for Coordinators to email to their tutors for updates. Contact Central Office for this. OR
- via phone OR
- by sending another hard copy of the *Hot Pink Form* (with the goals marked in) and a stamped addressed envelope for the tutor to return to the Coordinator.

A section is also included for the tutor to notify the Coordinator as the outcome if the student finishes with the Program.

These *Hot Pink Forms* should help the tutor and student fine-tune goals, making it easier for the tutor to choose lesson content. They should also help the tutor and student to see progress made in many areas, thus giving them both a boost and especially increasing the student's self esteem as they see how far they have come.

## **9. Student Access and Equity**

*Read Write Now!* provides adults throughout the community with opportunities to access quality literacy programs in order to increase their skills and fulfil their individual needs and aspirations. The provision of this service involves volunteers across the state who provide individual literacy and/or numeracy tuition, free of charge, to meet the needs of individual clients. The *Read Write Now!* Program can provide the adult learner with a positive, supportive relationship to begin their literacy learning.

Since the volunteer tutors are trained by Government funding under access and equity principles, *Read Write Now!* has an access and service commitment to the community. This means that at all times the Program must be accessible to the community in which it operates and that all people wanting to participate in the Program should have access to an interview and assessment. Ease of access is essential if the Program is to serve the community's needs. *Adult students who are capable of making active progress in literacy will not be excluded on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, or disability.*

### **Criteria for Students**

Students should meet the following criteria in order to be accepted into the Program:

- Be 18 years old or above
- Have at least basic spoken English
- Express a desire to improve literacy skills
- Be able to make continuous progress in literacy and retain what they've learned
- Identify some clear, realistic, achievable goals
- Display self-motivation and join the program of their own volition
- Have appropriate social skills to participate in the Program
- Have effective communication skills
- Make a commitment to regular attendance, punctuality and to complete set homework

### ***What to do if the Read Write Now! Program is not suitable for the student applicant:***

All potential students will be given an initial assessment interview before acceptance into the Program or being referred on to a more appropriate agency.

It may be deemed that *Read Write Now!* is not appropriate *at the time* for some students because of the following reasons:

- they may not meet the Student Criteria as outlined above
- the student's needs are deemed to be incompatible with the learning situation provided by the Program *at the time*
- no suitable tutor is available *at the time*

If this is the case, the student will be notified as soon as possible and the reasons for non-placement will be explained. If at a later time their situation changes, they may reapply to the Program.

In the case of non-placement due to the lack of a suitable tutor, the student may be invited to remain on a waiting list for a specified period of time mutually agreed upon.

Where a student cannot be appropriately placed with the Program at the time of interview, appropriate referral information – including other programs, TAFE and other service providers such as Disability Services, Recreation Network, community options etc – will be provided as an alternative for the student.

Where a student is to be referred elsewhere, information will only be made available to the referral agency with the agreement of the student.

Where an assessor/Coordinator is in doubt as to the suitability of the Program for a particular student – or where there may be some grounds for concern as to the safety of a tutor matched with the student – the assessor should refer the decision back to Central Office.

## **10. What Happens Next?**

### ***How does a student progress through and beyond Read Write Now?***

After 6 weeks of tutoring the Coordinator or team member will contact both the tutor and the student to ascertain whether the partnership is working well. After this 6 weeks it may be decided that

- the tutoring is going well, and both parties are happy. If this is the case, they will continue to work together, with the tutor giving regular phone or email reports (approximately every 6 weeks) to the Coordinator as to how things are going.
- the tutor is not happy with the partnership. After discussion with the coordinator it will be decided to either:
  - continue with the partnership, but with the tutor giving the Coordinator more regular reviews to monitor the situation. If there has been a lack of effort, punctuality or attendance on the part of the student, the Coordinator will speak to the student regarding this and let them know that they will not be able to continue in the Program without improvement in these areas.
  - end the partnership, and either find another tutor for the student, or if it is decided that Read Write Now! is not suitable for the student, to refer (if possible) the student to another program or agency. The Coordinator will notify the student of this.
  - the student is not happy with the partnership. In this case, if the situation cannot be resolved, the Coordinator may decide to appoint a new tutor to work with the student, in which case the Coordinator will notify the tutor of this. Sometimes a partnership will just ‘not work’ – not necessarily because of any inadequacies in the tutoring. If this is the case, the Coordinator will reassure the tutor of this, so as avoid the tutor becoming demoralised. (*See also Grievance Procedures for Students, pg 20 in this section*)

### ***After six months***

The above options are still there, but others should now be considered as well. Of course, all options are available at any time, but many students need at least six months of tuition to make reasonable progress before moving on.

After a period of time with the tutor, the student may want to join a TAFE class. Many students cannot make this step initially because of fear of finding themselves back in a classroom, which they associate with failure. This is where one-to-one tutoring is invaluable. In this relaxed situation the student can build up confidence, achieve some learning goals and plan their future. This could then include enrolling at TAFE in a CGEA course.

### **CGEA**

TAFE has an excellent system of preparatory classes known as the Certificates of General Education for Adults (CGEA). Usually both day and evening classes are available.

The CGEA covers three levels. Certificate 1 is for beginners, Certificate 111, when completed, will give you entry to most TAFE courses, so there is a wide range. A student can enter at the level that is appropriate, i.e. he/she does not have to start at Certificate 1.

TAFE lecturers in the CGEA are very supportive and classes are friendly and geared to the needs of adults.

To gain entry, your student, with your help, can contact Information in the TAFE College he/she wants to attend. CGEA is even available in distance learning.

Passing Certificate 111 allows entry into other TAFE courses, eg Nursing, Childcare, Aged Care, Information Technology, Visual Art and Craft etc.

### ***CSWE and Certificates in ESL***

TAFE's Certificates in Spoken and Written English and Certificates in ESL will all help an ESL student with their reading, writing, speaking and listening. The only requirement is that English is the student's second language. Both of these courses can be done at levels 1, 11, 111 or 1V, depending on the student's ability.

Passing certain of these levels allows entry into some of the other TAFE courses, eg Nursing, Childcare, Aged Care, Information Technology, Visual Art and Craft etc.

## **11. Options for a Student after Tutoring**

During the tutoring sessions, when it is appropriate, the tutor can begin to discuss plans for the future with their student.

### **Academic options**

- Go to preparatory classes at TAFE (CGEA, CSWE, ESL)
- Enrol in external studies
- Join a mainstream class at TAFE, if they have the pre-requisites.

### **Non-academic options**

- Seek or continue employment
- Do an Adult Community Education (ACE) program, available at TAFE
- Join a neighbourhood learning centre, telecentre or other community class
- Take up some form of volunteer work
- Simply take a break for a while.

The options being considered should be discussed by the tutor and Coordinator. There are probably other options that you can think of, and if so please let *Read Write Now!* know.

It is very valuable if the tutor can continue to support the student into the next stage, particularly if this includes further study. One *Read Write Now!* tutor continued to work with her student from literacy studies through to an Associate Diploma in Human Services, on a decreasing basis. Today they still keep in touch, but as friends.

When the time comes, your student can confidently move on to the next phase of lifelong learning because of the good teaching and support you and the tutor have given them.

## **12. Grievance Procedures for Students**

Given that our students have low levels of literacy and are often lacking in confidence, the Grievance Procedures available to tutors and Coordinators are highly unlikely to be appropriate for students. It is important that we develop openings for students to be able to voice any discontent that they may have with the Program.

The most effective way for this to happen would be for the student to give the information verbally. This in turn is dependent upon the student knowing their rights, having the confidence to take some action and knowing who to contact to talk to about a grievance. We also need to overcome the misconception that some students hold that “because the tutor is only a volunteer I shouldn’t complain”. This is an unhealthy attitude and could leave a student feeling there’s no option but to endure an unsatisfactory situation.

The pivotal point in establishing any kind of grievance procedure for students is in the establishment of a relationship with the Coordinator at the initial interview. Establishing an open line of communication between yourself and the student is the best chance we have of implementing a fair and accessible grievance procedure for students. It is essential that at the initial interview the Coordinator lets the student know that sometimes a re-match with a different tutor is necessary simply because people are so different. The student should be told that if the match is not working out for them (after a recommended period of time) that they are welcome to contact you to request a re-match. The tutor also has the right to do this.

Re-assure the student that this is not seen as a criticism of a particular tutor and is within their rights. Also let the student know that you can be contacted should the tutor not keep appointments or if they have any concerns at all about the Program. Remember we have a duty of care to our students and even though we screen our tutors we do have rare incidences of inappropriate behaviour by tutors (which to date have been only in the area of promoting their personal religious beliefs to the student.)

Whilst we don’t want to make a student feel anxious because of a rare situation, we need to make them feel it is perfectly OK to phone the Coordinator with any concerns. Also let the student know that you or your delegate will be contacting them at various times to gain some feedback from them and ensure they are happy with the Program.

The Coordinator should give each student the brochure “Welcome to New Students” and indicate on the back panel where the contact numbers can be found.

### ***Grievance procedure***

If a grievance arises between a student and their tutor, the Coordinator should take steps to resolve it by arranging to meet the student to gain full information. The Coordinator should then meet with the tutor to discuss the grievance and listen to the tutor’s point of view. The Coordinator should then act as a mediator to try to find an agreeable resolution. (You may wish to use team members as a sounding board first.) All of this should be written down.

If the grievance cannot be resolved or if the Coordinator feels that action needs to be taken that he/she is not comfortable with either in relation to the tutor or the student, then staff at Central Office should be asked to assist.

Staff should then follow through using guidelines as outlined in Section 4 of this manual.

Students should be given the choice of having a support person with them during discussions.

## ***APPENDIX I – Student/Tutor Working Agreement***

### ***(Optional)***

Some Coordinators have experienced the situation where they are not completely confident about a student's commitment to learning, yet want to give the student the benefit of the doubt. This tends to happen only with younger students.

The *Student/Tutor Working Agreement* overleaf is designed to help provide assurance that the student is aware of their responsibility to be reliable in their learning commitments. The idea is that the tutor and student read this agreement together and sign it if the student is happy to do so. Each person keeps a copy.

Please be aware that this is only an *option* and should by no means be given to all tutor/student pairs. Use it at your discretion and explain the reason to the tutor.

*Read Write Now!**Student/Tutor Working Agreement*

As a student in the *Read Write Now!* Program, I agree to work with my tutor by ensuring:

- 1. I will practise reading and do any homework in between lessons if asked to.**
- 2. I will phone my tutor, giving plenty of notice, to cancel a meeting if I cannot meet the tutor as arranged or if I need to change the time.**
- 3. I will let the tutor or Coordinator know if I do not want to continue my lessons.**
- 4. I understand that I can phone the Coordinator if I am unhappy with the present arrangement and discuss the problem.**

Student's Name

Student Signature

Date

As a tutor in the *Read Write Now!* program, I agree to do my best to assist my student by:

- 1. Involving the student in what's to be learned.**
- 2. By preparing lessons for my student.**
- 3. By discussing progress with my student.**
- 4. Continuing my training in adult literacy as needed.**
- 5. Notifying the student in advance if I need to rearrange a meeting time.**

Tutor's Name

Tutor's Signature

Date