



ثانوية التكنولوجيا التطبيقية  
Applied Technology High School

# **IELTS**

## **Academic Writing**

### **Overview**

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***\*Note – All materials in this document originate from the IELTS.org website. The information was made freely available to teachers and students.***

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### How is Academic Writing different from General Training Writing?

The table shows that the first tasks in General Training Writing and Academic Writing are different. The differences in these tasks mean that candidates are required to produce different kinds of writing. The second tasks are quite similar in that they are both discursive and candidates may need to present a solution to a problem, present and justify an opinion, or evaluate and challenge ideas, evidence or arguments. However, the topics in General Training Writing are topics of general interest which tend to be more concrete and personal than those in Academic Writing. The topics and instructions in General Training Writing require candidates to provide general factual information and usually do not require the same degree of comparison and contrast of evidence, opinion or implication as Academic Writing does. The second task in Academic Writing also assumes an academic context and should therefore be formal in style.

	General Training Writing tasks	Academic Writing tasks
<b>Task 1</b>	Writing an informal, semi-formal or formal personal letter	Presenting information from a chart, table, graph or diagram in the candidate's own words
<b>Task 2</b>	Writing a discursive piece of writing	Writing a discursive piece of writing that involves consideration of more abstract issues

### Is Academic Writing Task 1 always a bar chart?

No, the information students are given to interpret and describe may be in the form of one or more diagrams, charts, graphs or tables on a related theme.

### Do my students need to write a separate introduction and conclusion for Academic Writing Task 1?

In Task 1 candidates are asked to describe the visual information and are expected to present this information in an organised, coherent way. This necessarily requires an introductory statement, however brief. Similarly, a statement summarising the main trends or features would be an appropriate ending. Speculation about the information or attempt to explain it are not required by the task.

### What genre is Academic Writing Task 2?

Writing Task 2 has no specific genre although it always requires a discursive response and you should advise your students to read each question carefully and respond appropriately to the individual task they are given. For Writing Task 2 students may be asked to: present a solution to a problem; present and justify an opinion; compare and contrast opinions and evidence; evaluate and challenge an idea, argument or opinion. Their answer should always be in the form of a short formal essay for a tutor or examiner.

### Will my students lose marks if they do not write a formal introduction and conclusion for Academic Writing Task 2?

There are no separate marks given for introductions and conclusions. However, one of the assessment criteria for Writing Task 2 is 'Task Response' ([IELTS Handbook available here](#)). If ideas are presented without an appropriate introduction and conclusion they may not be effectively argued or organised and so marks may be lost in this area.

### **Is the marking equally weighted for the two tasks?**

Task 2 carries more marks than Task 1.

### **How is Academic Writing assessed?**

The IELTS writing scripts are assessed by IELTS examiners. All IELTS examiners are fully trained in how to assess IELTS writing and speaking performances. Examiners' training is kept up to date by regular standardisation sessions and by a process called 'certification'. This requires the examiners to demonstrate that throughout their examining they continue to adhere to the required assessment procedures and standards.

### **What criteria are used to assess the answers?**

These are the assessment criteria used:

**Task 1:** Task Achievement; Coherence and Cohesion; Lexical Resource and Grammatical Range and Accuracy

**Task 2:** Task Response; Coherence and Cohesion; Lexical Resource and Grammatical Range and Accuracy

### **When my students do practice tests, how can I give them an IELTS type score?**

You can give your students valuable feedback on their progress by using the Public Band Descriptors.

### **Are marks deducted for untidy handwriting?**

No, marks are not deducted for handwriting specifically but, obviously, an illegible script cannot be marked. However, clear handwriting by candidates allows their message to be more easily understood by the examiner. Clear handwriting also helps students to communicate their ideas more effectively, so you should encourage your students to write as clearly as possible.

If you have any other questions about IELTS Academic Writing, please [contact us](#) and we'll answer the most frequently asked questions here.

## **An Overview of IELTS Academic Writing**

### **Module format**

IELTS Academic Writing lasts a total of 60 minutes. It consists of 2 tasks (Writing Task 1 and Writing Task 2) and candidates must answer BOTH tasks.

### **Answer format**

Candidates write their answers in pen or pencil on Answer Sheets provided.

### **Timing**

Students are advised to spend 20 minutes on Task 1 and 40 minutes on Task 2. They must complete both tasks in one hour.

### **Task 1**

For Writing Task 1 candidates are given some visual information which may be presented in the form of one or more related diagrams, charts, graphs or tables. Candidates are asked to describe the information or data. They must write at least 150 words on this task.

Writing Task 1 assessment is based on the following criteria:

- 1) Task Achievement
- 2) Coherence and Cohesion
- 3) Lexical Resource
- 4) Grammatical Range and Accuracy

### **Task 2**

For Writing Task 2, candidates are presented with an opinion, problem or issue which they must discuss. They may be asked to present the solution to a problem, present and justify an opinion, compare and contrast evidence or opinions, or evaluate and challenge an argument or idea. Candidates must write at least 250 words and are advised to spend 40 minutes on this task.

Writing Task 2 assessment is based on the following criteria:

- 1) Task Response
- 2) Coherence and Cohesion
- 3) Lexical Resource
- 4) Grammatical Range and Accuracy

Each of the tasks is assessed separately by a trained and qualified examiner and given a score. Writing Task 2 is worth more marks than Writing Task 1 so candidates should be sure to leave plenty of time to complete Writing Task 2. Academic Writing band scores are reported in whole bands or half bands.

## **IELTS Academic Writing – Task 1**

### **Task Description**

#### **What are candidates required to do?**

In this part candidates may be asked to describe facts or figures presented in one or more charts, graphs or tables on a related topic; or they may be given a diagram of a machine, a device or a process and asked to explain how it works. Candidates should make sure to include the most important and the most relevant points in the diagram. Some minor points or details may be left out.

#### **How long does it take?**

Candidates should not spend more than 20 minutes on this task.

#### **What skills are being tested?**

Candidates will be assessed on their ability to choose and clearly describe the most important and relevant information on the diagram or chart. They will be assessed on how well they can organise the information as well as the accuracy of their use of language. The register or style of Task 1 is academic, so an academic writing style should be used. Candidates are also asked to write at least 150 words and will be penalised if their answer is too short. However, candidates will not be penalised for writing more than 150 words, but they should remember that a longer Task 1 answer may mean that they have less time to spend on Task 2 and so they may lose marks there. Remember that Task 2 is worth more marks and candidates should make sure that they have left themselves an adequate amount of time.

#### **How is Task 1 assessed?**

Examiners assess the answer according to these criteria:

- Task Achievement (i.e. how effectively the candidate has identified, illustrated and reported the key features of the information in the task)
- Coherence and Cohesion (i.e. how well the information and ideas are organised, and how well the information is linked)
- Lexical Resource (i.e. the range of vocabulary used, how accurately it is used and how appropriate it is for the task)
- Grammatical Range and Accuracy (i.e. the range of structures used, how accurately they are used and how appropriate they are for the task)

#### **Are there any other regulations candidates need to know?**

- Candidates must write their answers on the Answer Sheet provided.
- If they write less than the minimum word limit they will be penalised.
- They will be penalised for irrelevance if the response is off-topic.
- They will be severely penalised if their writing is plagiarised (i.e. copied from another source).
- They will be penalised if their answer is not written as full, connected text (e.g. using bullet points in any part of the response, or note form etc.)

### **Understanding the Task**

For Writing Task 1 it is very important that candidates are able to understand information that is presented in diagram/graph/chart/table form. They must also be able to choose the most significant information to include in their description and be sure to focus on the overall trends

within the data (if data is presented) in order to give an overview of it. They may also need to compare and contrast information.

### **Things to consider**

Now look at these questions about how you approached the task and consider your answers.

### **Identifying rubrics**

- 1) Are the instructions for this task printed in normal type?
- 2) Is there only one instruction here?
- 3) Is the question candidates must answer printed in bold italics?
- 4) Is the information about High School students?
- 5) Should candidates just copy the information on the question paper for their introductory statement?

### **Understanding the data**

- 1) Is the information about one period of time only?
- 2) Does the data in the darker colour refer to full-time students?
- 3) Do the first three pairs of bars and figures refer to men only?
- 4) According to the table, were 200 males in full-time education in Britain between 1990 and 1991?

### **Planning the Answer**

- 1) In this answer, can candidates choose to talk about either males or females?
- 2) Is it best to focus on one specific year in each separate sentence?
- 3) Can candidates write their answer in bullet points or note form?
- 4) Do candidates need to write a separate introduction or conclusion?
- 5) Are spelling and grammar important in Academic Writing Task 1?

## Task 1 - Tips for Teachers

- For Writing Task 1, make sure to teach and train your students how to read and select the most important information from a diagram. You can do this by asking them to discuss the diagrams in pairs or groups and then presenting their ideas orally. Stress that they will need to spend some time in the exam studying the visual information carefully to ensure that they can 1) identify the general trends 2) select the most important information 3) fully understand how the data has been organised.
- Make sure that you spend some time teaching your students how to accurately present numerical information in a written form in English. This area can cause problems as they may not have had to describe numerical information before. Be sure to stress the importance of accurately copying down numerical information from the Question Paper. It is important that their description reflects the data accurately and precisely.
- Make sure that you provide plenty of practice in the language of comparing and contrasting information.
- Don't forget to include describing a diagram or process in your practice for this part. There are suggestions for this in the [Activities List](#).
- Remind your students to write a short introductory and summarising statement for this task. One introductory sentence is enough followed by the relevant description then a brief summary of main trends or features.
- Make sure to give your students practice in how to organise their information. After an oral discussion of the important information, ask students to group together similar or linked information before they begin to write. It is just as important to plan Writing Task 1 as it is to plan Writing Task 2.
- Give your students plenty of timed practice in writing an answer in only 20 minutes. They will need to be disciplined and well organised to achieve this in the time.
- Encourage your students to use their own words to begin the answer to Writing Task 1 instead of simply copying the exact words from the question paper. You can do this by practising synonyms or changing the form of a word (e.g. from a noun to a verb). You can also ask your students to study the question carefully then turn over their Question Paper to write their opening sentence.
- Remind your students that accuracy in spelling and grammar is important for Writing Task 1, so they will need to spend some time at the end checking their work.

### GENERAL

- Make sure your students are familiar with all forms of data and can read bar charts, pie charts etc.
- Make sure you tell your students to leave some time at the end of each task to check their answer for grammar and spelling mistakes.
- Make sure that your students are familiar with the types of question they will face in each Task.
- Try not to focus only on grammar, make sure that you work on developing a clear writing style as well as how to organise, communicate and link their ideas effectively.
- Try to help your students become good independent language learners by developing and following good language learning strategies. Help them think about ways to record and practice new vocabulary. Using new words in their essays will help them to practice and remember them. Also, help them to try to identify their own common mistakes in writing so they can focus on these when they are checking their work.
- Encourage your students to use their own words at all times as any words copied directly from the question paper will not be assessed.



## Task 1 - Tips for Students

- For Writing Task 1, make sure you take the time to read the visual information carefully. It is important to:
  - 1) identify the general trends
  - 2) select the most important information
  - 3) fully understand how the data has been organised.
- You also need to plan how you will organise the information in your answer.
- Make sure that you study and practise how to present numerical information in a written form in English because this area may be new to you. Remember that it is important to copy the factual information you are given accurately and precisely.
- Make sure to study and practise the language of comparing and contrasting information.
- Don't forget to include describing a diagram or process in your practice for this part.
- Remember to write a short introductory and summarising statement. One introductory sentence is enough followed by the relevant description and a brief summary of the main trends or features.
- Make sure that you practise planning, writing and checking your answer in only 20 minutes. You will need to be disciplined and well organised to achieve this in the time.
- Use your own words to begin the answer to Writing Task 1 instead of simply copying the exact words from the Question Paper. You can do this by practising synonyms or changing the form of word (e.g. from a noun to a verb). You can also practise by studying the question carefully then turning over your question paper before you write your opening sentence.
- Accuracy in spelling and grammar are important in all parts of IELTS Academic Writing so make sure you spend some time at the end checking your writing for errors.

## GENERAL

- Make sure you allow yourself time at the end of each task to check your answer for grammar and spelling mistakes.
- Make sure that you are familiar with the types of question in each part of the test.
- Try not to focus only on grammar. Make sure that you work on developing a clear writing style as well as how to organise, communicate and link your ideas effectively.
- Try to become a good independent language learner by developing and following good language learning strategies. Think about ways to record and practice new vocabulary. Using new words in your essays will help you to practice and remember them. Also, try to identify your own common mistakes in writing so you can focus on these when you are checking your work and reduce your errors.
- Use your own words at all times in IELTS Academic Writing, any words copied directly from the question paper will not be assessed.

## **IELTS Academic Writing – Task 2**

### **Task Description**

#### **What are candidates required to do?**

In Writing Task 2 candidates are given a topic to write about. Answers should be a discursive consideration of the relevant issues, as required by the rubric. The writing style should be formal and academic. Candidates should make sure that they read and answer the question fully. If the topic is computers they should make sure they understand exactly what aspect of computers they need to discuss. They should not simply write about computers in general. Candidates should write at least 250 words.

#### **Is Task 2 compulsory?**

Yes, it is. Because Task 2 carries more marks, candidates who fail to attempt to answer this task will greatly reduce their chance of reaching a good band.

#### **How long does it take?**

Candidates are asked to spend no more than 40 minutes on this task.

#### **What style must candidates write in?**

Semi-formal/neutral. Discursive writing is usually written in this style, even when a specific reader is not identified.

#### **What skills are being tested?**

For this task candidates are assessed on their ability to present an argument clearly giving evidence or examples to support their ideas. They are also assessed on how well their ideas are organised and the accuracy of the language they use. They should make sure that each of their ideas is sufficiently developed and that all of their ideas are relevant to the question. Candidates are expected to write at least 250 words. Short answers will be penalised.

Candidates will not be penalised if an answer is longer. However, if they write a very long answer they may not have time for checking and correcting at the end and some ideas may not be directly relevant to the question. They may also produce handwriting which is unclear.

Candidates should try to discipline themselves to plan their ideas, select the most relevant ones and organise these so that they are presented as clearly and as accurately as possible within the time allowed. Finally candidates should make sure that they do not copy directly from the Question Paper because if they do, this will not be assessed. Candidates should use their own words when writing their answer.

#### **How are answers assessed?**

Examiners assess the answers according to these criteria:

1. Task Response (i.e. how fully and appropriately the candidate has answered all parts of the task; the extent to which the candidate's ideas are relevant, developed and supported; the extent to which the candidate's position is clear and effective)
2. Coherence and Cohesion (i.e. how well the information and ideas are organised and presented, including paragraphing; how well the information is linked)
3. Lexical Resource (i.e. the range of vocabulary used, how accurately it is used and how appropriate it is for the task)

4. Grammatical Range and Accuracy (i.e. the range of structures used, how accurately they are used and how appropriate they are for the task)

### **Are there any other regulations the candidate needs to know?**

1. They must write their answers on the Answer Sheet provided.
2. If candidates write less than the minimum word limit, they will be penalised.
3. They will be penalised for irrelevance if the response is off-topic.
4. Any writing which is plagiarised (i.e. copied from another source) will be severely penalised.
5. They will be penalised if their answer is not written as full connected text (e.g. using bullet points in any part of the response, or note form etc).

### **Understanding the Task**

To understand better how candidates need to approach this task, it may help you to do the task yourself and analyse what you had to do to produce a good answer.

### **Things to consider**

Now look at these questions about how you approached the task and consider your answers.

- 1) Is the text in normal print simply advice, or do candidates have to follow it?
- 2) Are there two sentences that give candidates instructions here?
- 3) Is the writing in bold italics the question candidates have to answer?
- 4) Do candidates only have to answer the question 'To what extent do you agree or disagree'?
- 5) Do candidates have to be able to talk about cars in Britain between 1888 and 2000?
- 6) Do candidates have to talk specifically about cars and not trains or buses?
- 7) Is it enough for candidates to just give their own opinion about this topic?
- 8) Do candidates have to pretend to be a specialist when they are writing their answer?
- 9) Do candidates have to write a formal letter to answer this question?
- 10) Do candidates have to talk about problems with cars in the past as well as the future?

## Task 2 - Tips for Teachers

- Remember that Writing Task 2 is worth more marks than Writing Task 1 so students will need to make sure that they leave a full 40 minutes to answer this question to the best of their ability. Timed practice in class is essential for this.
- Discourage your students from translating ideas from their own language. This often causes problems of coherence. To avoid this in class, encourage your students to discuss their ideas orally with a partner first. You can also brainstorm ideas in class or use the question for a class debate before they do the writing task.
- Encourage your students to spend some time reading the question so that they fully understand the ideas and topic they are being asked to discuss. It is also important for them to stop and plan their ideas before they begin to write. For Writing Task 2 it is important that candidates express their ideas in an organised way and that there is a logical progression to their argument through the clear linking of their ideas. This is only possible if they take the time to plan their response.
- Make sure you focus on the relevance of their ideas. You can do this by getting students to swap essays and asking them to highlight all of the relevant ideas in one colour and the non-relevant ideas in a different colour. Using something visual like a colour can help students to see how important a particular problem is for them. Alternatively you could ask them to select relevant ideas from a list.
- Make sure that your students do not attempt to produce rote learned essays on specific topic areas. They should read each individual question carefully and respond to it appropriately. Learned essays will be penalised in the exam. Furthermore learnt essays often address a topic broadly without consideration for the specific area that the question is directing the candidates to. With each new question, discuss all aspects of the topic with your students before they begin the task.
- Accuracy in spelling and grammar are important for Writing Task 2, so train your students to spend some time at the end checking their writing.

## **Task 2 - Tips for Students**

- Remember that Writing Task 2 carries more marks than Writing Task 1 so you will need to make sure that you leave a full 40 minutes to answer this question to the best of your ability. Timed practice is essential for this.
- Before you begin, make sure that you spend some time reading the question so that you fully understand the ideas and topic you are being asked to discuss. It is also important to stop and plan your ideas before you begin to write. For Writing Task 2 it is important that you express your ideas in an organised way and that there is a logical progression to your argument through the clear linking of your ideas. This is only possible if you take the time to plan your response.
- Don't try to translate your ideas from your own language. This often causes problems of coherence. To avoid this, try discussing your ideas in English with someone else first.
- When you are writing, make sure you include only ideas which are relevant to the question. You can do this by swapping your essay with a partner and asking them to highlight all of the relevant ideas in one colour and the non-relevant ideas in a different colour. Using something visual like a colour can help you to see if this is a particular problem for you.
- Don't attempt to produce rote learned essays on specific topic areas. For the exam, you should read each individual question carefully and respond to it appropriately. Learned essays will be penalised in the exam. With each new question, consider all aspects of the topic before you begin the task.
- Accuracy in spelling and grammar are important in IELTS Academic Writing so make sure you spend some time at the end checking your writing for errors.

## Focus on Assessment

### Assessment Criteria

The writing scripts are marked by fully qualified IELTS examiners. The examiners are trained and monitored following a rigorous standardisation process. On the day of your test, the writing scripts are distributed randomly to a group of examiners. Each writing task is assessed individually and assigned a separate mark. The final score is then calculated and a final band score is awarded. Academic Writing band scores are reported in whole bands or half bands.

Task 1 scripts are assessed on the following criteria:

- Task Achievement (i.e. how effectively the candidate has identified, illustrated and reported the key features of the information in the task)
- Coherence and Cohesion (i.e. how well the information and ideas are organised, presented and linked)
- Lexical Resource (i.e. the range of vocabulary used, how accurately it is used and how appropriate it is for the task)
- Grammatical Range and Accuracy (i.e. the range of structures used, how accurately they are used and how appropriate they are for the task)

Task 2 scripts are assessed on performance on the following areas:

- Task Response (i.e. how fully and appropriately the candidate has answered all parts of the task; the extent to which the candidate's ideas are relevant, developed and supported; the extent to which the candidate's position is clear and effective)
- Coherence and Cohesion (i.e. how well the information and ideas are organised, presented and linked)
- Lexical Resource (i.e. the range of vocabulary used, how accurately it is used and how appropriate it is for the task)
- Grammatical Range and Accuracy (i.e. the range of structures used, how accurately they are used and how appropriate they are for the task)

Scripts under the required minimum word limit will be penalised.

The [sample scripts](#) can give you and your students a good idea of the level they need to reach. The examiners comments at the bottom of each page are also helpful in pinpointing areas of concern. You can use these samples to help students develop a more critical eye towards their own work.

## **Developing Academic Writing Skills**

- You can help to improve your students' writing skills by focusing on writing when you are working on other skill areas. For example, when looking at a reading passage, encourage your students to notice how the text or the argument has been organised. You can point out new vocabulary and focus on cohesion or referencing. This will help to make your course a truly integrated one. When you are working on listening and speaking skills, you can draw your students' attention to the difference in style between the spoken and the written form of the language.
- It also helps to vary the focus of your writing lessons. You may want to focus on any of the following areas at different times: fluency in writing; accuracy in writing; using new vocabulary; paragraphing; introductions and conclusions; organising your ideas; planning an essay; using the correct style; checking and correcting your own work.
- Another way to vary the focus of your lessons is to achieve a balance between i) writing at the sentence level, ii) paragraph building and iii) producing whole texts. Train your students to actively participate in their own learning by telling them which areas they will be working on and why. Point out what they can gain from practising a particular activity.

### **What are the main skills these two kinds of writing require?**

#### **General writing skills**

- Matching the piece of writing to its audience and purpose
- Structuring writing
- Coherence and cohesion
- Clarity of expression
- Accuracy of language

#### **Skills specific to Task 1**

- Choosing the most relevant information
- Organising information
- Describing data correctly and clearly
- Writing in the correct style and register

#### **Skills specific to Task 2**

Following discursive writing conventions:

- Appropriate style
- Appropriate order of information

**What do the above terms mean? Try to define them yourself, then read the definitions below.**

#### **Matching the piece of writing to its audience and purpose**

All writing is written for a reason and to a particular audience.

Your reason for writing influences what you write (e.g. an email or a letter or a report): the contents and style.

Your audience also influences the contents of what you write and the style in which you write.

## **Structure of writing**

Different kinds of writing follow different conventions for the order in which they structure information (For example, introduction → body → conclusion in essays).

Structure is also given to a piece of writing through the use of paragraphs, topic sentences and signalling phrases.

We use paragraphs to signal that we, the writer, are moving on to a new point or new type of information. Paragraphs help the reader to understand our message because they show that one point has ended and another is just beginning. It is also much easier to read small chunks of text than long, continuous ones.

Topic sentences contain the theme of the paragraph. They make the theme of the paragraph clear to the reader and so help to give the text coherence. The rest of the paragraph is usually elaboration and/or exemplification of the theme.

Signalling phrases are phrases we include in our writing (and speaking) to signal to the reader what we are going to talk about next e.g. I'd now like to discuss the advantages ...; my second argument against this statement is ...; finally I would like to ... They are used particularly in longer and more formal kinds of writing.

## **Coherence and cohesion**

Coherence involves following expected sequences of discourse e.g. a greeting is usually followed by a greeting in spoken language, or in essay writing the introduction is followed by the body then the conclusion. This linking is achieved through using our shared knowledge of these conventions and our knowledge of the world rather than through explicit language linkers. Relevance and comprehensiveness of ideas are further examples of coherence.

Cohesion involves using language to mark the links in a stretch of text. Examples of cohesive devices are conjunctions, pronouns, lexical sets, articles, possessive adjectives e.g. in the sentences 'The girl left the room. This surprised her friend', 'This' is a pronoun linking back to the whole of the previous sentence, and 'her' is a possessive adjective linking back to 'the girl'.

## **Clarity of expression**

Expressing yourself clearly involves using language accurately and with an appropriate range, writing coherently and cohesively, following the conventions of the particular kind of writing (e.g. a letter or an essay), and writing relevantly and comprehensively.

## **Accuracy of language**

This means using the correct forms of language i.e. language which contains no mistakes of grammar, punctuation, spelling or vocabulary use.

## **Report Writing for IELTS Academic Writing Task 1**

- Comprehension of data – make sure you spend a couple of minutes at the beginning of the text examining the data to make sure you understand it. You cannot describe it if you don't understand what it is trying to convey to you.
- Choosing data – make sure that you have included a summary of the trends that are apparent in the data as well as giving detailed information.
- Organising the report – make sure that you present your report in an organised manner so that the reader can easily follow what you want to say.
- Appropriate style – make sure your style is neutral and unbiased.



## **Discursive writing conventions for IELTS Academic Writing Task 2**

- Appropriate style – in discursive writing this is usually a neutral or slightly formal style of writing.
- Appropriate order of information – essays in English follow the pattern of introduction → body → conclusion. There are also common patterns within the body of the writing. The pattern used depends on the kind of discursive writing (e.g. discussing advantages and disadvantages, evaluating evidence, giving your opinion).

## **Introduction to Teaching Writing Skills**

### **GENERAL**

- Make sure that your students are at the right level before they attempt the Academic Writing Tasks. Lower level students will not be able to complete these writing tasks and you should always make sure that the writing tasks you give are at the right level for your students.
- Make sure that you focus on the writing process as well as on the testing process. You can do this by giving students essays to write in their own time at home as well as timed essays in class under exam conditions. It is important to develop their writing skills as well as to give them exam practice.
- Try to provide a balance of activities so that you do not always focus on grammatical accuracy. While accuracy is important it is equally important to develop planning skills, organisational skills and fluency and coherence in writing. This will also ensure that your lessons are more balanced.
- Encourage students to adopt new language learning strategies. For example, you can encourage them to take an active approach to learning vocabulary by recording new words and ensuring that they attempt to actively use them as often as possible.
- Increase your students' motivation to write by making their writing more important. You can do this by 'publishing' their work around the classroom or in a class journal. You can also vary the reader of their work by swapping essays with a different class or with their classmates or showing them to a different teacher.
- To do well in an exam situation, students need to perform independently of their teacher. If your classes are usually teacher-centred then you may need to train your students by organising more student-centred activities. Make sure that you encourage your students to actively participate in their own learning process.
- Timed writing practice is essential for your students to be able to do their best in the exam. They need to develop a feel for how to plan, write and check their answers within the time allowed. Timed writing practice can be done in class and also for homework so that your students become less dependant on you telling them to stop one task and begin the next.

## **Increasing Motivation**

Clearly, getting your students to write is the best way for them to practice this skill. However, motivation is often a problem as, while some might enjoy the writing process, many find it a laborious task even in their own language. Below are some ways to increase student motivation to do more writing practice.

- Make it clear from the start of your course how many pieces of writing you expect your students to produce. Tell them when they will be due. If you set this into their weekly timetable, they will develop an expectation to be writing at a particular time. You can also get each student to commit to this at the start of the course.
- Explain exactly what will happen to the writing they produce. Will they be given feedback 1 or 2 days later or will this take longer? Will they be expected to re-write their essays? Decide where, when and how you will handle marking, correction and feedback and let your students know what to expect.
- Encourage your students to build up a portfolio of their writing and to look back at their progress from time to time.
- Vary the class organisation. They may write individually, in pairs or as a group. You may choose to produce one whole essay as a class onto an OHT. You could ask them to write ideas onto large sheets of paper, in a poster format, to put around the classroom, or they could write onto OHTs so that they may be discussed as a class. Any means you can use to get your students writing will help.

## Correction and Giving Feedback

- Train your students to use a checklist for content. When checking their answer at the end they should be sure to carefully re-read their answer to check that 1) they have addressed the task fully and no important details are missing 2) that their ideas are well-organised with sufficient supporting evidence and 3) that their writing communicates well.
- Think about where, when and how you will give feedback on accuracy to your students. If you cannot discuss their mistakes individually, you could make written comments and give general feedback to the class. If you have a large class, it may help to adopt a marking scheme, though you will need to make sure you explain this to your students.
- Students often make the same mistakes. One way to deal with this is to highlight the mistakes which are often repeated in a particular colour. Do not correct them. When the essays are handed back, your students should count up how many of these mistakes there are and keep a record, they should aim to reduce this number as much as possible throughout your course. Point out to your students that these mistakes are the careless mistakes that they should be checking for in the last few minutes of the exam.
- When they have completed an essay in class, ask your students to swap with a partner and ask them to check for common mistakes. It is often easier to spot mistakes in someone else's writing.
- Vary the focus of your correction to teach your students that factors other than grammatical accuracy are important. In your feedback, you should make sure to include comments on: the use of arguments, ideas and evidence; planning and organisation; coherence and cohesion; communicative quality; task completion.
- If your class size is very large, it may be helpful to get your students to write on paper which is pre-printed with a feedback section at the end such as the following:

Task Completion	Good use of:	Areas to improve next time:

- Make sure that you focus on the positive aspects of their writing as well as areas that need to be improved.