

A LEVEL
Teacher Guide

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

H470
For first teaching in 2015

Using the Assessment Objectives

Version 1



Using the Assessment Objectives – Information for teachers

This guide has been devised as a series of activities to work through with students so that they have a better understanding of how marks are allocated for each Assessment Activity.

It can either be used as one single complete series of activities to be given to students and kept for future reference or can be seen as support material to be used with students when tackling different separate sections of the course.

Introduction

Assessment Objectives (AOs) are the key skills assessed on each of the different assessments in A Level English Language. This document aims to give you a better understanding of each AO and to offer you some understanding of how examiners apply them.

AO1 – Apply appropriate methods of language analysis, using associated terminology and coherent written expression

- **AO1** tests your ability to **analyse** the linguistic features of texts. It also requires you to demonstrate an understanding of a wide range of **terminology** as well as your ability to **write in a clear and concise style**.
- Your ability in each AO is marked in levels with specific descriptors. The more advanced your skill the higher the level. Here's an example for AO1 on the *Language under the Microscope* assessment:

Level	Analysis	Relevance	Quotation	Terminology	Written Expression
5	Clearly identify patterns	Precise relation in a wide range of examples	Incisively chosen evidence	Appropriate terminology	Secure academic register
4	Singles out and analyses relevant examples	Relevant range of examples	Relevant examples	Appropriate terminology	Coherent written expression
3		Some clear points	Relevant evidence	Terminology is mostly appropriate	Clear but likely not to be economical
2		Attempts to be relevant	Occasional pieces of evidence	Terminology is partially appropriate	Some errors but the meaning is nonetheless apparent
1		Some link	Evidence, if there, is likely to be barely relevant or only loosely defined	Some terms are used	Writing may at times obscure meaning

From the table above you can see that one AO actually assesses many different skills. Let's look at some examples of students' work.

Activity 1: Consider what AO1 level each answer was awarded and justify your response.

Students' answers	Level of AO1 and justification
a) There are lots of instructions in the text.	1.
b) The guide to hair care has a clear pattern of beginning each of the 10 tips with the imperative mood. The guide advises you to 'Find', 'Give', 'Play' and 'Wrap'. It is also worthwhile to note that, of the 10 examples, 9 are monosyllabic (the only exception being the disyllabic 'Apply').	2.
c) The hair care guide features several examples of imperatives. Examples include 'Find' and 'Give' and 'Apply'.	3.
d) The text features the imperative 'Give'.	4.
e) The text features the command 'Give'.	5.

Secure academic register

One element of AO1 that can be often neglected is the importance of writing your responses in a secure academic register.

Consider the following two examples.

Student 1	Student 2
My investigation looks at the language of custody documents. It's my intention to...	This investigation will examine the language of custody documents. The main focus will be...

Activity 2: Write a commentary comparing the two responses and explaining which of the two is written in a secure academic register.

AO2 – Demonstrate critical understanding of concepts and issues relevant to language use

AO2 assesses your knowledge of concepts and issues associated with the English Language.

- **Concepts** are the ideas people have about the way language is used. A good example of a concept is **representation** which is the way in which texts portray gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, gender etc. to an audience.
- **Issues** are the problems associated with the usage of English. A good example of an English issue is the influence technology is having on the English Language.

AO2 in the *Topical Language Issues* question is assessing two qualities. Here are the specific descriptors for the question.

Level	Knowledge and understanding	Engagement
6	Assured	Engage critically
5	Good	Can take a critical angle
4	Essentially sound	Some ability to think and write critically
3	Mostly accurate, although is likely to lack the depth needed to be convincing	Addresses the specified language concept/issue, although not critically
2	Inaccurate or muddled.	Is present in the piece although somewhat indistinct or confused
1	Does not appear to understand	Just barely detectable in the piece

Looking at this table it is clear that to impress the examiner you must have detailed knowledge of the concept or issue you are discussing but also must engage critically with it to reach levels 4-6.

Critical engagement

To engage critically means that you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the concept or issue you are discussing. Let's look at an example for the TLI of technology:

Prescriptionists like John Humphrys may argue that the abbreviations used in text messages are damaging children's literacy but these abbreviations have been part of the English Language for generations. Even Queen Victoria used abbreviations like 'shd' for 'should' in her letters.

This student is not simply saying whether they think technology is a good or bad influence on language but **critically engaging** with the issue. In giving the example of Queen Victoria's language they are also demonstrating **assured knowledge**.

Activity 3: Consider how you could critically engage with the following quote and demonstrate assured knowledge:

- 'Political correctness has gone too far'

AO3 – Analyse and evaluate how contextual factors and language features are associated with the construction of meaning

AO3 requires you to consider factors that affect production and factors that affect reception.

Activity 4: Consider what other factors you can add to the table below.

Production factors	Reception factors
Time of production	Time of consumption
Place of production	Place of consumption
Political bias	Age of consumer

The mark scheme for the Comparing and Contrasting Texts question differentiates the levels of achievement for AO3 like so:

Level	Focus on the contextual factor	Evaluation
5	Precise hold	Perceptive
4	Focus	Convincing
3	Reasonable sense	Some clear conclusions
2	Some sense	Fairly loose conclusions
1	Indistinct	Vague sense

So level 5 requires close focus and **perceptive** interpretation of context. Let's look at two students' responses to a piece of CLA data recorded during a young boy's birthday; one is perceptive the other convincing.

Activity 5: Identify the perceptive comment

Student 1	Student 2
There are several instances of ellipsis within the child's utterances, this could be because the child has yet to develop use of all of the function words as he is only 2 years old.	There are several instances of ellipsis within the child's utterances, this could be because the child has yet to develop use of all of the function words as he is only 2 years old. Alternatively the instances of ellipsis could be due to the boy's excitement at opening a present.

Student 2's response is obviously the more perceptive of the two however it also manages to do something required for the top bands of AO3 suggesting '**alternatives for how context might account for variations in language use**'.

Activity 6: Highlight the suggested alternative in Student 2's response.

AO4 Explore connections across texts, informed by linguistic concepts and methods

AO4 is assessed in the two 36 mark questions; Comparing and Contrasting texts and Language Change. The AO requires you to do two things; **apply knowledge of linguistic concepts to both texts and compare linguistic features in both texts.**

The level descriptors for the Comparing and Contrasting Texts assessment separate AO4 into the two following aspects.

Level	Knowledge of linguistic concepts	Comparison of linguistic features
6	Selective, methodical and confident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compares particular linguistic features Illuminating connections Clearly establishes some of the varied ways that language is used.
5	Methodical and sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compares linguistic features in the two texts Makes helpful connections Shows some of the ways that language varies.
4	Accurate and mostly appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some comparisons Some connections between them Shows ways in which language use varies.
3	Loose grasp, sometimes unconvincing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More general connections Attempt to compare with only partial success.
2	Shallow and likely muddled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some loose connections Simple matching or contrasting of features Very little demonstration of how language varies.
1	Mostly inaccurate and vague	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparison is essentially lost. There may be one or two connections here and there Connections do not help with notions of the varieties of language use.

Applying linguistic concepts

There are many ways to impress an examiner by demonstrating knowledge of concepts.

Activity 7: Identify the linguistic concept in the following student response.

Both texts describe the women using a semantic field of food. This semantic field represents the women stereotypically revealing a common gender bias in the English Language.

Activity 8: Consider what linguistic concepts may be applicable when comparing a politician's language in a spontaneous interview and in a political manifesto.

Comparing linguistic features

To achieve the higher bands of AO4, students will also need to find close connections between the texts.

Activity 9: Rank the following student responses from closest connection to loosest.

Student response	Rank
1. Both of the texts feature colloquial language.	
2. While both texts feature colloquial language, text A's language has a more informal register due to the frequent use of slang.	
3. Both texts are informal.	
4. Both of the texts feature colloquial lexis though text is more informal.	
5. Text A has some informal words while text B includes some similes.	

AO5 – Demonstrate expertise and creativity in the use of English to communicate in different ways

AO5 requires you to demonstrate your creative writing skills and your ability to shape your writing for different audiences and purposes.

For the Writing about Topical Language Issues the descriptors are separated into two aspects testing your ability to construct an appropriate text and your use of appropriate linguistic features.

Level	Construction	Linguistic features
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expertly-constructed Surprising originality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriately chosen linguistic features Shows flair Precisely suits audience
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-constructed Appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriately chosen linguistic features Shows skill Suits audience
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliberately constructed Contains most of the main elements of the form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear use of appropriate linguistic features Modulated to take account of the audience
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to match the task's purpose Recognisable as an example of the form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some appropriate language features Some attempts to take account of the audience
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some sense of the form specified in the task, Leaves out key elements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some attempts to use appropriate language features Probably not suitable for audience.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little sense of the specified task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One or two appropriate language features may be present Audience not understood

Construction

Activity 10: Consider what elements and linguistic features are required in the following task. Note for the TLI question the purpose will always be persuasion.

GAP (Genre, Purpose and Audience)	Elements	Linguistic features
An editorial, persuading students		
A blog, persuading adults		

Flair and originality

Flair and originality are often the hardest elements for students to achieve but don't worry they are achievable. Here are some tips for developing this aspect of your writing:

- **Read more.** Pick up a newspaper and read a few editorials and articles. Take note of the linguistic features they use. The features that stand out to you will be the ones demonstrating flair and originality.
- **Practice.** Very few people are born with an innate ability to write with flair; they developed their skills through practice. Your practices don't even have to be about English issues. Writing anything will help you develop, so setup a blog about your latest sporting triumphs or favourite bands. It may even lead to a successful career.
- **Share your writing.** Everyone needs feedback to improve so post your work online or give to friend and family. Take note of their comments and use them to improve your next piece.

Answers to activities

Activity 1: a) = level 1, b) = level 5, c) = level 4, d) = level 3, e) = level 2

Activity 2: Example Commentary: Student 1 uses the **contraction** 'it's', the **colloquial** 'looks' and the **active voice** in their response. Student 2 avoids contractions, uses the more **formal and precise** term 'examine' and writes in the **passive voice**; this student is writing in a secure academic register.

Activity 3: Evaluate the positive and negative results of political correctness, for example the reduction in offensive terms for minorities versus restrictions in freedom of speech. Assured knowledge could be demonstrated by reference to specific terms of offense that have undergone change as a result of political correctness.

Activity 4:

Other production factors	Other reception factors
Age of producer	Subject knowledge of receiver
Relationship with receiver	Relationship with producer
Genre conventions of text	
Purpose of text	

Activity 5: Student 2's response offers an alternative interpretation.

Activity 6: Suggested alternative = 'Alternatively the instances of ellipsis could be due to the boy's excitement at opening a present.'

Activity 7: The linguistic concepts are representation and gender stereotypes.

Activity 8: Possible concepts could include the instrumental and influential power of politicians.

Activity 9: From closest to loosest connection: 2, 4, 1, 3, 5.

Activity 10:

GAP (Genre, Purpose and Audience)	Elements	Linguistic features
An editorial, persuading students	Headline, stand first	First person, statistics, quotes, direct address, humour, informal register
A blog, persuading adults	Title, masthead, comments section	First person, informal register, emoticons

Table showing which AO for which question

A Level

	Paper 1			Paper 2			Coursework	
	Section A a)	Section B b)	Section C	Section A	Section B	Section C	Task 1 (A)	Task 2 (B)
AO1 Analysis Writing	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
AO2 Concepts Issues			✓	✓	✓		✓	
AO3 Context	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
AO4 Compare						✓		
AO5 Creativity			✓					✓



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