



ISE: Integrated Skills in English

Understanding the rating scale

Writing module

Writing from sources

ISE Digital



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Online edition, March 2025



ISE Digital writing task

Writing from sources

Theoretical background

The task evaluates the ability to write longer, formal texts. It simulates the intertextual writing on more abstract topics often needed for work and academic purposes. This type of writing typically requires writers to engage with multimodal external sources of information. The task reflects this by combining both written and visual sources such as infographics. Real-world assignments often have a word limit, and writers must be concise and effective. The task reflects that by setting a 300-word limit.

Task description

The task is an integrated reading-into-writing task, reflecting real-world writing in the educational and occupational domain. The reading consists of two or three short texts from public, academic or work-related contexts.

The candidate must read the input and write a new text in response to a prompt. They must select and synthesise relevant information from the sources and integrate it with their own ideas and stance on the topic.

The main purpose of writing is not to simply show understanding of the source texts or merely summarise and pass on their information. Instead, the candidate should make accurate but selective, adaptive, and interpretative use of the sources to suit the new audience and purpose set by the task prompt.

The figure below shows how the candidate should create their written response.

Write a formal essay for your course tutor, developing an argument on the following topic:

Working a part-time job while studying has a negative effect on students. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

- ▶ You **must** use ideas from the texts **and** your own ideas.
- ▶ You **must not** copy from the texts.

🕒 You should spend about **35** minutes on this task.

⚠️ You should write about **250 words** (maximum 300 words).

A

B

C

Select relevant information from all texts. Relevant information is information which is useful for answering the prompt.

Ignore irrelevant information which is not useful for answering the prompt.

Adapt the relevant information by paraphrasing, summarising, evaluating, analysing, synthesising.


Integrate own ideas and stance on the topic.

The candidate should spend approximately 35 minutes and write approximately 250 words. There is a maximum entry limit of 300 words, so candidates should aim to address the prompt fully and effectively within the limit.


Task versions

There are two versions: essay and report.

Sample essay prompt

<p>Instructions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First read the task on the right → • Next read texts A, B, and C below ↓ • Then write your essay <p>⌚ You should spend about 35 minutes on this task.</p> <p>⚠ You should write about 250 words (maximum 300 words).</p>	<p>Writing from sources</p> <p>Write a formal essay for your course tutor, developing an argument on the following topic: Governments and companies should not be allowed to collect and analyse 'Big Data'. To what extent do you agree or disagree?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You must use ideas from the texts and your own ideas. ▶ You must not copy from the texts. <p> click here to open the texts</p>
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Sample report prompt

<p>Instructions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First read the task on the right → • Next read texts A and B below ↓ • Then write your report <p>⌚ You should spend about 35 minutes on this task.</p> <p>⚠ You should write about 250 words (maximum 300 words).</p>	<p>Writing from sources</p> <p>Write a formal report for your city council about reducing the impact of traffic in the city. In your report, you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the methods of reducing traffic • make recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You must use ideas from the texts and your own ideas. ▶ You must not copy from the texts. <p> click here to open the texts</p>
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For the full tasks, including the source texts, see [Appendix 3](#).

For sample scored responses, see [Appendix 4](#).

Rating scale

Overview and general principles

Assessment foci

There are seven assessment criteria organised into four categories.

Content and organisation

- ▶ Demonstrates ability to answer the question with relevant supporting detail.
- ▶ Demonstrates ability to organise ideas into a coherent whole.
- ▶ Demonstrates ability to use textual organisation features to support the message.

Use of sources

- ▶ Demonstrates ability to select relevant information from the source texts.
- ▶ Demonstrates ability to repurpose information to serve the new purpose for writing.

Language

- ▶ Demonstrates ability to use a range of grammar and vocabulary effectively.

Style

- ▶ Demonstrates ability to adjust the writing style to the demands of the context, audience and purpose. The style features relevant for this task are:
 - formal register
 - academic tone
 - following conventions of the essay/report genre.

General principles

Analytic scoring

Each response gets four scores, one for each category. The scores are separate and do not affect each other.

Order of descriptors

The order of descriptors in each band shows their importance. Descriptors listed first are more important than those at the bottom.

Best fit

Rating uses the 'best fit' approach. Raters are trained to choose the band that best matches the response overall, considering the importance of each descriptor.

Band 0

Band 0 represents 'no performance,' when the task was not attempted. This includes blank responses, unintelligible strings of characters, responses written in a different language, or responses which are entirely **off-topic**.

A score of 0 in one category automatically results in a score of 0 in all categories.

Content and organisation

The Content and organisation category assesses the following three criteria:

The candidate's ability to answer the question with relevant supporting detail

What is assessed:

- How well the response answers the question posed in the prompt (eg *Modern technology stops us from using our brains and is making us less intelligent. To what extent do you agree or disagree?*).

What is not assessed:

- General task fulfilment, or if the response follows other aspects of the instructions, such as using the sources or writing an essay/report. These aspects are assessed in the [Use of sources](#) and [Style](#) categories.

The candidate's ability to organise ideas into a coherent whole

What is assessed:

- If ideas are organised logically into a coherent text which is easy to follow.

What is not assessed:

- If the structure follows specific genre conventions. This is assessed in [Style](#).

The candidate's ability to use textual organisation features to support the message

What is assessed:

- If the response uses textual organisation devices which help the reader understand and follow the flow of ideas. Examples of textual organisation devices include: separation of text into paragraphs or sections, headings and subheadings, bullet points, topic sentences, and discourse markers.

What is not assessed:

- If the textual organisation features match the genre set by the prompt.

Content and organisation rating scale

- Score**
- ▶ Demonstrates ability to answer the question with relevant supporting detail.
 - ▶ Demonstrates ability to organise ideas into a coherent whole.
 - ▶ Demonstrates ability to use textual organisation features to support the message.

NOTE: Credit is not given for content that is directly copied from the sources, but using information from the sources is not required in this category. Ability to follow genre conventions is not assessed in this category.

- 6**
- The reader is fully informed and satisfied with the comprehensiveness of the response.**
- ▶ All ideas are relevant and very well supported by detail, amounting to a comprehensive, well-rounded response.
 - ▶ The staging of ideas is seamlessly developed into a coherent, smoothly flowing whole.
 - ▶ All textual organisation features are managed naturally to enhance the message.

- 5**
- The reader is well informed and not left with any, or only minor, questions.**
- ▶ Ideas are relevant, and generally well supported by detail. There are small lapses in clarity/relevance, or missed opportunities to reach a fully comprehensive, well-rounded response.
 - ▶ The staging of ideas is logically developed into a coherent whole. The reader can follow the thread without confusion or strain.
 - ▶ Textual organisation features are managed effectively to support the message.

- 4**
- The reader is sufficiently informed, but is left with some questions.**
- ▶ Most ideas are relevant and, overall, sufficiently supported by detail. Some points are not clear, pertinent or question-specific.
 - ▶ The staging of ideas shows an attempt at developing a coherent whole. The reader may need to fill in some gaps but can generally follow the thread.
 - ▶ Textual organisation features are generally helpful, but there may be signs of mechanical, inaccurate, or over/under usage.

- 3**
- The reader is only partially informed and is left with significant questions.**
- ▶ A few relevant ideas are presented. Overall, the supporting detail is limited or not sufficiently clear, pertinent or question-specific.
 - ▶ The sequence of ideas can be followed most of the time, but overall development is lacking.
 - ▶ Textual organisation features are attempted but mechanical, inaccurate, or over/under usage is evident.

- 2**
- The reader is scarcely informed.**
- ▶ Very few relevant ideas are presented. The supporting detail is very basic, or mostly irrelevant.
 - ▶ A simple sequence of ideas can be identified. Parts of the message are incoherent.
 - ▶ Textual organisation features are either basic or used incorrectly, with a poor effect on comprehension.
 - ▶ May have misunderstood parts of the question.

- 1**
- The reader is not informed.**
- ▶ Virtually no relevant ideas are presented. The supporting detail is missing, or irrelevant.
- OR
- ▶ The response is largely incoherent. The reader is mostly confused even after re-reading.
 - ▶ May have misunderstood the question.

- 0**
- The task is not attempted. This includes blank scripts, unintelligible strings of characters, responses written in a different language, or responses which are entirely off-topic.**

Content and organisation: Frequently asked questions

Does band 6 require a 'perfect' response?

No. Band 6 means the reader fully understands the writer's position and finds the response comprehensive and complete, but it doesn't require the reader to be personally convinced or impressed by the ideas.

What is a 'comprehensive, well-rounded' response?

It is a response that fully addresses the question, develops an argument or evaluation using multiple pieces of evidence, considers different viewpoints, analyses their strengths and weaknesses, and reaches a clear, appropriate conclusion based on the evidence.

Are very short responses penalised?

There is no minimum wordcount required and response length is not directly assessed. However, a very short response will probably not inform the reader well. As a result, it might not get a high score.

Is repetition of ideas penalised?

Repetition of ideas reduces the amount of relevant information. This can limit the response's completeness and make it less effective in informing the reader.

What constitutes an 'entirely off-topic' response?

Responses that discuss a completely different topic and show no attempt to address the prompt are considered 'entirely off-topic'. Taking the [example essay prompt](#), a response which does not mention collection of big data in any way would be considered entirely off-topic and awarded band 0 across the scale. For a specific example, see [sample response 4](#).

For ideas to be considered relevant, do they need to come from the source texts?

No. The ideas and details must be relevant to the question, but source use is assessed in the [Use of sources](#) category.

Can a response score well in Content and organisation even if it does not refer to the sources?

Yes. A response can get top marks in Content and organisation if it fully answers the question, even without ideas from the sources. However, it will receive a low score in [Use of sources](#).

Is copying from the sources penalised in Content and organisation?

No. In this category, copied text from the sources is not credited and is ignored by the rater. However, penalties for copying apply in the [Use of Sources](#) category.

Can a response score well in Content and organisation even if it does not follow the expected genre conventions?

Yes. An essay written for a report task (or vice versa) can still score well in Content and organisation if the ideas are organised logically and are easy to follow. Similarly, using report-like features (eg headings, bullet points) in an essay can receive a good score in this category if they help the reader follow the content. However, these features would affect the score in [Style](#).

How important is it for a response to have paragraphs?

Paragraphs help organise the text and improve readability, which affects the score in Content and organisation. A lack of paragraph breaks can reduce the effectiveness of the response, especially if combined with other issues like poor coherence or incorrect use of discourse markers. However, paragraph breaks placed randomly or at the wrong points can also negatively impact readability, which would result in a lower score in Content and organisation.

How important is it for a response to use discourse markers?

Discourse markers show the logical connection between ideas, helping the reader follow the text. They are important for the Content and organisation category, and their absence or incorrect use can reduce the effectiveness of the response. However, overusing or using them unnaturally can be just as distracting.

Use of sources

The Use of sources category assesses the following two criteria:

The candidate's ability to select relevant information from the source texts

What is assessed:

- ▶ Ability to identify and use information and ideas which are relevant to the prompt, ignoring irrelevant content.

The candidate's ability to repurpose information to serve the new purpose for writing

What is assessed:

- ▶ Ability to adapt the information to suit the new purpose of writing. Information can be adapted by paraphrasing, summarising, evaluating, analysing, or synthesising across source texts and/or with the candidate's own ideas.

What is not assessed:

- ▶ Reading comprehension is an important skill but it is not directly evaluated in this task. The candidate's goal is not to demonstrate understanding of the sources but to use their information interpretatively and adaptively to respond to the prompt.

Use of sources rating scale

Score	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Demonstrates ability to select relevant information from the source texts. ▶ Demonstrates ability to repurpose information to serve the new purpose for writing.
5	<p>Effectively selects and repurposes information from <u>all</u> the sources to suit the new purpose for writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Relevant information from <u>all</u> the source texts is selected, synthesised, and used effectively to support the writer's own ideas and opinion. ▶ The writer's own ideas and opinions are clearly distinguishable from the source texts. ▶ There is some evidence of referencing devices (eg citations, reporting verbs, etc).
4	<p>Adequately selects and repurposes information from <u>all</u> the sources to suit the new purpose of writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Relevant information from <u>all</u> the source texts is selected and paraphrased. Synthesis is attempted, but may not be fully successful (eg some ideas seem 'tagged on'). ▶ Distinguishing own ideas and stance from the sources is attempted but may not be fully successful (eg some ideas are appropriated).
3	<p>Attempts to use information from the sources but either under-uses or over-uses them.</p> <p>Under-use of sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Clearly refers to all the source texts, but only briefly, without exploiting any. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Completely ignores one or more of the source texts, but exploits the other(s) well. <p>Over-use of sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Makes substantive, but not selective or adaptive use of the sources. The response is driven by the source texts rather than own purpose. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Attempts to paraphrase but with mixed results. Some attempts are near-copies.
2	<p>Scarcely or inappropriately uses the sources.</p> <p>Scarce use of the sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Completely ignores one or more of the source texts, and clearly but only briefly mentions the other(s). <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is very limited evidence of source use (vaguely implied ideas, or isolated examples of short phrases or lexical items). <p>Inappropriate use of the sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Most paraphrasing attempts are near copies. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Some of the information from the sources is misrepresented.
1	<p>Does not use the sources or uses them highly inappropriately.</p> <p>No use of the sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There is no evidence of source use in the candidate's response. <p>Highly inappropriate use of the sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Copies multiple and/or large chunks of text, with virtually no evidence of paraphrasing. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Information from the sources is frequently or seriously misrepresented.
0	<p>The task is not attempted. This includes blank scripts, unintelligible strings of characters, responses written in a different language, or responses which are entirely off-topic.</p>

Use of sources: Frequently asked questions

Is it necessary to use all the source texts?

Yes. Bands 4 and 5 require the use of all source texts. If a response completely ignores one text, the highest possible score is 3 or lower, depending on how well the other text(s) are used.

Is it necessary for a response to use all the relevant information in each source?

No. Writers may prioritise ideas which are more useful in developing a response, as long as they exploit each text overall.

What happens if a response omits an important point in the source texts?

There are no fixed rules about which points must be included, and it's not necessary to use all relevant information. A response can still get full marks if it meets the criteria. However, leaving out too much relevant information may result in under-use of the sources.

What is paraphrasing and how important is it?

Paraphrasing is essential to avoid plagiarism and is key to successfully writing from sources. Responses which copy directly from the sources will receive a maximum score of 3 or lower, depending on how much copying is present.

What is referencing and how important is it?

Referencing, or acknowledging sources using in-text tools like citations or reporting verbs, helps avoid plagiarism. There is no universal referencing system, and different variations (eg Harvard, APA) are used worldwide. Explicit referencing is an advanced writing skill typically taught in specific contexts, such as universities. The rating scale lists it as a possible feature of top-scoring responses but with lower importance compared to other descriptors.

A response can still score 5 without referencing devices if it meets the other criteria. However, a response using correct referencing may still score low if the sources are overused, underused, copied, or misrepresented.

What does 'misrepresent the sources' mean?

It means distorting or incorrectly presenting information from the sources. Like plagiarism, it is an improper use of the sources and can result in a score of 2 or 1, depending on how often and severely it happens.

What is summarisation and how important is it?

Summarisation means condensing the source texts without adding analysis or evaluation. It is an important part of writing from sources but does not demonstrate critical use. Responses which only summarise the sources, without interpreting them to answer the prompt, will receive a maximum score of 3.

What is synthesis and how important is it?

Synthesis means creating new ideas or arguments by combining and interpreting information from the sources. It involves analysing and unifying different points to form a new perspective. Synthesis requires critical use of sources, and responses must show it to achieve a score of 4 or 5.

Language

The Language category assesses:

The candidate's ability to use a range of grammar and vocabulary effectively

What is assessed:

- ▶ The complexity, expressiveness, precision, and accuracy of language used.

What is not assessed:

- ▶ Whether the language is relevant to the prompt. This is assessed in [Content and organisation](#).
- ▶ Language directly copied from the sources or prompt. Copied language is ignored, and only language that can be credited to the candidate is assessed.
- ▶ Whether the language is appropriately formal or academic. This is assessed in [Style](#).

See [Appendix 1](#) for an explanation and exemplification of key terms in Language.

Language rating scale

Score ▶ Demonstrates ability to use a range of grammar and vocabulary effectively.
NOTE: Credit is not given for language that is directly copied from the sources. Credit is given for language that is not relevant to the task. Style feature such as register and tone are not assessed in this category.

Overall, expresses themselves with flexibility and ease, distinguishing between fine shades of meaning.

- 6** ▶ Uses a broad range of structures flexibly and effortlessly.
 ▶ Lexically rich, with less common lexis and idiomatic expressions used appropriately and naturally.
 ▶ Virtually error free.

Overall, expresses themselves with clarity and precision, with little sign of having to compromise their message.

- 5** ▶ Uses a mixture of simple and complex structures effectively, with only minor signs of rigidity or awkwardness.
 ▶ Uses a mixture of common and less common lexis and idiomatic expressions effectively, with only minor signs of inappropriacy.
 ▶ Makes few errors with only minor impact.

Overall, expresses themselves with sufficient clarity, without much sign of a compromised message. However, may be somewhat lacking in expressiveness or precision.

- 4** ▶ Uses a mixture of simple and some complex structures. The latter are limited and/or are noticeably rigid or awkward, but they are comprehensible.
 ▶ Uses a good range of common lexis, and some less common lexis and idiomatic expressions comprehensibly, despite noticeable signs of inappropriacy.
 ▶ Errors may be noticeable but generally do not impede understanding.

Overall, they communicate intelligibly, despite signs of a compromised message. May require some effort from the reader.

- 3** ▶ Uses simple structures effectively. Complex structures are absent or, if attempted, have a poor effect on comprehension.
 ▶ Uses a sufficient range of common lexis. Less common lexis and idiomatic expressions are absent or, if attempted, have a poor effect on comprehension.
 ▶ Errors are noticeable and, at times, they cause misunderstanding.

Overall, they manage to express a simple message. May require significant effort from the reader.

- 2** OR
 ▶ Uses simple sentences and basic vocabulary fairly effectively.
 ▶ May show flashes of more complex structures or lexis, but with limited comprehensibility.
 ▶ Errors are frequent and cause misunderstanding.
 ▶ The reader is able to extract a simple message.

Overall, they struggle to communicate even a simple message, despite significant effort from the reader.

- 1** OR
 ▶ The response comes in the form of basic words and phrases.
 ▶ May show flashes of more complex structures or lexis, but with virtually no comprehensibility.
 ▶ Errors predominate and cause misunderstanding.
 ▶ The reader struggles to extract even a simple message.

0 The task is not attempted. This includes blank scripts, unintelligible strings of characters, responses written in a different language, or responses which are entirely off-topic.

Language: Frequently asked questions

What happens if the script is very short?

There is no minimum wordcount required and response length is not directly assessed. However, a very short response will probably not show evidence of a broad range of language. As a result, it might not get a high score.

What happens if much of the response is irrelevant?

Unless the response is entirely **off-topic**, the Language score is not affected by the relevance of the response. Relevance is assessed in **Content and organisation**.

Are there certain structures, functions or lexis which must be demonstrated in each task?

No. There are no fixed structures, functions, or lexis that the candidate is expected to use.

Is highly informal or conversational language penalised?

No. Formality and tone are features of style and are assessed separately. A highly informal response may receive top score in Language but low score in **Style**.

Does band 6 require perfect language?

No. Band 6 requires a rich and broad range of language used naturally, flexibly, and appropriately. Responses don't need to be filled with artificially 'impressive' language. Furthermore, the top band is described as virtually error-free, so it allows for minor errors.

What happens if much of the script is copied from the sources?

Raters ignore any language copied directly from the sources or prompt and only assess the remaining language. Copying large sections reduces the evidence of the candidate's ability and may lead to a lower score. However, a response with copied parts may still get a high Language score if enough original language is produced.

What happens if there is repetition of language?

Repetition limits the range of language shown. Responses with a wide variety of vocabulary and grammar will score higher than those which repeatedly use the same words or structures.

Style

The Style category assesses:

The candidate's ability to adjust the writing style to the demands of the context, audience, and purpose

The style features required for this task are:

- ▶ Formal register
- ▶ Academic tone
- ▶ Following the essay/report genre conventions.

See [Appendix 2](#) for an explanation and exemplification of key terms in Style.

Style rating scale

Score	<p>► Demonstrates ability to adjust the writing style to the demands of the context, audience and purpose. The style features relevant for this task are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – formal register – academic tone – following conventions of the essay/report genre. <p>NOTE: Credit is <u>not</u> given for text that is directly copied from the sources.</p>
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Shows very good control over style features.

- 5**
- There is clear evidence of control in all three style features, and this is maintained throughout most of the response.
 - Occasional lapses are minor.

Shows good control over style features.

- 4**
- There is clear evidence of control in all three style features, but this is not maintained throughout the response.
 - Lapses do not cause much distraction from the message.

Shows sufficient control over style features.

- 3**
- OR
- There is clear evidence of control in some features of style, but others lack evidence.
 - There is some, but limited, evidence of control in all three style features.
 - Lapses may at times distract from the message.

Shows little control over style features.

- 2**
- Some attempts at addressing style features can be discerned, but evidence of control is very limited or noticeably inconsistent.
 - Lapses may frequently distract from the message.

Shows no control over style features.

- 1**
- OR
- No evidence of stylistic control can be discerned.
 - All three features of style are applied consistently inappropriately.
 - Response may show serious stylistic transgressions.

- 0**
- The task is not attempted. This includes blank scripts, unintelligible strings of characters, responses written in a different language, or responses which are entirely off-topic.

Style: Frequently asked questions

What happens if the script is very short?

There is no minimum wordcount required and the response length is not directly assessed. However, a very short response will probably not contain much evidence of stylistic control. As a result, it may receive a low score.

What happens if much of the script is copied from the sources?

Raters ignore any text copied directly from the stimuli and only evaluate the remaining text. Copying reduces the evidence of stylistic control and may result in a lower score. However, a response with copied parts can still get a high Style score if enough original text is provided.

What happens if much of the response is irrelevant?

Unless the response is entirely off-topic, the Style score is not affected by the relevance of the response. Relevance is assessed in Content and organisation.

Appendix files

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1. Key terms in Language

This section on key terms in **Language** is the same as in Understanding the Written online communication rating scale.

Precision

Precision is used in the rating scale to mean the writer's ability to formulate exactly what they want to say, pinpointing specific meaning and detail. Compare the degrees of precision between 'cut' vs 'slice', 'I don't like X' vs 'I'm firmly opposed to X', 'He left' vs. 'He stormed out', 'I don't do X' vs. 'I would never do X' etc. Precision depends on the writer's linguistic range, but also their ability to make the correct choice for their intended meaning.

Simple vs complex structures

Grammatical complexity, or sophistication, can appear in many ways: at the sentence level, at the clause level, or at the phrase level.

Sentence types are often a useful indicator of grammatical complexity. Complex or compound-complex sentences (ie sentences which include at least one dependent or subordinate clause) often form intricate structures. The table below shows examples of increasingly intricate grammatical structures.

Sentence type	Definition	Example
Simple sentence	One independent clause	Young people depend on GPS.
Compound sentence	Two or more independent clauses.	Young people depend on GPS, but older people use a map and compass.
Complex sentence	One independent clause + one or more dependent clauses.	Older people who have learned to use a map and compass do not depend on GPS.
Compound-complex sentence	Two or more independent clauses + one or more dependent clauses.	Young people, often referred to as digital natives, depend on GPS, but older people use a map and compass.

However, sentence types are not a universal indicator of grammatical sophistication. Note the three examples below:

1. *Montreal is cold, so underground shopping is popular.*
2. *Underground shopping is popular because Montreal is cold.*

Technically, example 1 is a compound sentence whereas example 2 is a complex sentence. However, there is very little tangible difference between the two. They both rely on two short clauses in the present simple tense joined by a common linker, so neither constitute evidence of grammatical sophistication.

On the other hand, consider the following example:

3. *These types of crime prevention and reduction strategies could have been applied to the 'Avenue of Light'.*

Example 3 is a simple sentence because it consists of a single independent clause. However, there are a number of other sophisticated features, including:

- ▶ Anaphoric referencing ('these' presumably refers back to strategies mentioned previously)
- ▶ Ellipsis ('crime prevention and [crime] reduction')
- ▶ Complex noun phrase ('these types of crime prevention strategies'), including nominalisation ('prevention')
- ▶ Complex verb phrase, including auxiliary ('could'), the perfect tense, and passive voice ('been applied')

So, grammatical complexity can come in a variety of forms. Raters do not use fixed lists of grammar, lexis, or linguistic functions. They are trained to use their knowledge and expertise to determine if a response shows evidence of grammatical complexity.

Common vs less-common lexis and idiomatic expressions

'Common lexis' refers to high-frequency, everyday words. 'Idiomatic expressions' refers to sequences of words that are generally retrieved and used together as a single unit.

In these samples of candidate language, there are several instances of less common lexis and idiomatic expressions being used comprehensibly (despite some errors). Some examples have been highlighted.

- ▶ *Just the **sense of modernity** and of having more space for busunesses and **recreational areas** is no longer seen as **futuristic**.*
- ▶ *We can **verify this fact** if you **compare elder** people and young people.*
- ▶ *On the other hand, the **human brain** is a very **complex organ** which needs to be **developed** and **maintained**.*
- ▶ *Remembering phone numbers and doing simple **mathematic equations** might **act as simple** exercise for our brains, thus helping our brains to **remain healthy**.*

Raters don't use any predetermined word, topic, or frequency lists when assessing lexical range. They are trained to use their professional expertise to determine if a script contains evidence of idiomatic expressions and less common vocabulary.

Errors

Errors can be classified in many ways, according to a variety of factors. These include linguistic category (eg spelling errors, punctuation errors, etc), the cause of the error (slips, typos, false cognates, etc), or the perceived level of the error – easy or beginner level mistakes. The ISE Digital rating scale does not take into consideration any of these factors.

Raters are trained to evaluate only one aspect, the effect on the reader. The effect that errors may have on the reader depends on:

- ▶ their potential to cause misunderstanding and confusion.
- ▶ the frequency of errors, which can accumulate to cause general strain and slow the reading process.

2. Key terms in Style

This section on key terms in **Style** is specific to the Writing from sources task.

Formal register is typically achieved by:

- ▶ Using formal lexis (eg 'provide' instead of 'give')
- ▶ Using formal structures (eg passive voice)
- ▶ Avoiding slang, colloquialisms, fillers, contractions; etc

The **academic tone** is formal, objective, and impersonal, unlike other formal contexts. For example, academic essays are formal but less personal and subjective than letters of complaint. It also differs from less formal tones, like those used in journalism or conversation.

Academic tone is typically achieved by:

- ▶ Avoiding emotional, sensationalistic, or inflammatory language (eg *This is a horrible situation*)
- ▶ Avoiding personal pronouns (*I don't think that money is important*)
- ▶ Avoiding rhetorical questions (*... but is money important?*)
- ▶ Not addressing the reader directly (*Do you think that money is important? If money is important to you, then ...*)
- ▶ Using hedging to soften claims (*It could be argued that money is not as important*)

Genre conventions can differ significantly across communities. Because there is no universal definition of an essay or report, conventions are described here in terms of tendencies.

The main distinction between the essay and the report is the purpose they serve.

In an essay, the writer's main purpose is to argue. In a report, the writer's main purpose is to inform. In addition, several conventions tend to apply.

Essay	Report
<p>The purpose is to argue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Tends to be organised as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – introduction (contextualisation, outline of argumentation to follow, and may also include the writer's stance) – body paragraph(s) – conclusion (summary of main ideas and writer's stance). ▶ Tends to use topic sentences and discourse markers to introduce ideas and signpost the argumentative thread. 	<p>The purpose is to inform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Tends to be more factual, straight to the point, with more concise sentences. ▶ Tends to be organised into sections comprised of paragraphs and/or stand-alone sentences and/or bullet points. ▶ Tends to have an introductory or overview section but this tends to be brief with little or no contextualisation. It may also be a short, straightforward exposition of aims. ▶ May have a conclusive section but this could also be achieved via a recommendation section. ▶ Tends to use headings to signal different sections.

3. Sample tasks

Sample essay task

<p>Instructions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First read the task on the right → • Next read texts A, B, and C below ↓ • Then write your essay <p>⌚ You should spend about 35 minutes on this task.</p> <p>⚠ You should write about 250 words (maximum 300 words).</p>	<p>Writing from sources</p> <p>Write a formal essay for your course tutor, developing an argument on the following topic: Governments and companies should not be allowed to collect and analyse 'Big Data'. To what extent do you agree or disagree?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You must use ideas from the texts and your own ideas. ▶ You must not copy from the texts. <p>click here to open the texts</p>
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Text A

smartfacts.com

The term 'Big Data' refers to the large amounts of personal information collected from smartphones, computers and other digital devices. This data includes search records, shopping history and other information. There is often too much information to be processed by the human brain. However, companies can use special software to analyse this data and find patterns. For example:

- Authorities use GPS and map data to see which roads are too busy.
- Video game designers see the parts of the game where users press 'pause' or 'stop' to see which parts are exciting or not.
- Companies analyse online shopping to help them direct advertisement.

Text B

How has Big Data affected your practice? Interview with Doctor Robert O'Connor

First, I have a lot more information about individual patients. In the old days, doctors had a patient in front of them and had to ask lots of questions to find the problem. Now, I can look at their medical history and I have access to information about where they live and, if they want, I can record and analyse their diet and daily activity levels. This information can help me to identify problems.

Secondly, all doctors have access to lots of anonymised data about how diseases and problems have been treated around the world, and this helps us to see which treatments work best.

Text C

Issue Magazine Our readers respond to Big Data

"If someone wants to know my personal information, they should ask me first. I don't want companies to track what I buy, where I go, and what I search for on the internet. They analyse this data so that they can send adverts to me - but this benefits them, not me.

Recent news stories have shown that many companies and governments don't store this data carefully. One bank had millions of customer profiles stolen. Such personal information should be kept private, and offline," wrote Joshua Buchan.

Sample report task

<p>Instructions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First read the task on the right → • Next read texts A and B below ↓ • Then write your report <p>🕒 You should spend about 35 minutes on this task.</p> <p>⚠️ You should write about 250 words (maximum 300 words).</p>	<p>Writing from sources</p> <p>Write a formal report for your city council about reducing the impact of traffic in the city. In your report, you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluate the methods of reducing traffic • make recommendations <p>▶ You must use ideas from the texts and your own ideas.</p> <p>▶ You must not copy from the texts.</p> <p>📄 click here to open the texts</p>
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Text A

The London News On this day in the past *Marie Mulligan*

Over 15 years ago, in February 2008, the Mayor of London introduced the traffic congestion charge for central London. Today we interview people walking in central London to find out how it changed life for them. Sita Anand told us:

“The new rule meant that everyone driving into central London had to pay £15 per day. My family lived outside the congestion zone, but my grandmother was inside – she worried that no one would visit her again. Of course, we did, but we took the bus instead of driving. We also started using the bus or subway to go shopping or visit friends in the centre. But my father was a professional plumber, so he had to drive in and pay £15 every day. He was extremely angry when the new charge came in. Many others who needed to drive for work felt the same. After the congestion charge, the streets of London had much fewer cars in them. There were still a lot of buses and taxis, so you couldn’t play on the roads, of course. But the air got cleaner, and the roads were a bit quieter. Without so many cars, buses were quicker, and more people started to ride their bikes to work.”

Text B

Encyclopaedia of Urban Development City Planning Terms and Definitions

A **superblock** is:

a very large block of buildings in a city in which streets are pedestrianised and traffic cannot pass through. Often there are roads into the block so that people who live in the superblock can bring their own cars in and out, but non-residents or busses cannot drive through. Instead, all the traffic is re-directed onto the main roads that go around the superblock. This means that the main roads can become busier and must be big enough to hold all the traffic. Inside the superblocks the number of cars is reduced, and the extra space is transformed into green areas used for walking or playing. Superblocks are suitable for new cities, or cities with straight roads, like Barcelona in Spain.

A **street wall** is:

the part of a building closest to the street.

4. Sample scored responses

Sample response 1: Big data essay

The term 'Big Data' means all the personal information that is stored in digital devices, such as computers, smartphones or smartwatches. It includes search history, addresses or even passwords.

In my opinion, the personal informations of any person should not be analysed by anyone on the internet. It should be protected by security softwares. In this way, only authorised people will access the personal information of a particular person. There are many hackers around the world who could use this informations for crimes. For example, they could steal money from a bank account just by knowing the password. Some companies don't store the "Big Data" about their customers carefully. This makes the work of a hacker easier and takes to many losses of money. The personal informations must be kept private, as Joshua Buchan says.

On the other hand, personal informations can be useful in some purposes. For example, doctors can record the analyses of their patients. Plus, they can use 'Big Data' to help them developing cures for different diseases or seeing which medicines work best. Another way in that "Big Data" is useful is making the video games and programmes better and more interesting. The video game designers can see the numbers of players.

In conclude

Content and organisation	4	Uses of sources	4	Language	4	Style	4
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Rationale for scores:

Both sides of the argument are addressed together with supporting details, and basic textual organisation devices are used to help the reader navigate the text (eg *for example, plus, another way*). Overall, the reader is left feeling sufficiently informed of the writer's stance on the topic. However, some of the supporting detail seems to conflate the issue of big data with cybersecurity, leaving the reader with some questions on the logical connection between the two. The unfinished conclusion is a missed opportunity to consolidate the response. The candidate exploits information from all three sources in the response. Lexical borrowing is noticeable at times, but paraphrasing is generally effective, managing to avoid copying. Synthesis is clearly attempted, with key ideas from all sources recombined and used in support of own stance. Uses both simple and complex structures alongside varied lexis to communicate their message, although certain are drawn directly from the source texts so cannot be credited (eg *which [...] works best, personal information, digital devices*). There are noticeable errors and signs of awkwardness in a few places, but these tend not to impact comprehensibility (eg *takes to many losses of money*). Examples of all three features of style are evident within the text, although this is not maintained consistently (eg personal pronouns appear frequently).

Sample response 2: Big data essay

The issue of big data is more and more present nowadays. Companies and the government seem to have taken the liberty of collecting information about us without our consent. I strongly believe that there is information that should be collected and some that shouldn't.

On the one hand, collecting big data can really help people in different lines of work. For example, as stated in Text B, it is definitely easier for doctors to treat their patients if they are one click away from their medical records. What is more, the fact that big data is collected by GPS helps so many drives take the best and the fastest route to work.

On the other hand, these 'state powers' seem to have taken too much liberty. Nowadays, it is enough to say once near your phone or your computer that you are thinking about visiting a certain place or buying a certain object and the next thing you know, your online pages are filled with all these ads. This gives companies too much power over what we as humans invest in. It also has a way of influencing our needs and desires. Another issue of data saving is the fact that thieves can steal precious information with just one click.

To put it in a nutshell, there should be a clear division between what data should be saved and what shouldn't. If any personal information wound up in the wrong hands, millions of lives could be in great danger.

Content and organisation	5	Uses of sources	5	Language	6	Style	4
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Rationale for scores:

Both sides of the argument are explored, although at times there seems to be some confusion between governments and companies. Sequencing is logical and supported by cohesive devices, but the reader is left with some questions (eg How could this situation lead to millions of lives being in great danger?). Content from all sources is judiciously selected and synthesised with own ideas to suit the new writing purpose, with a clear effort made to distinguish voices (eg *as stated in Text B*). The writer exploits a range of structures and lexis to ensure meaning is communicated clearly and precisely throughout (eg *different lines of work, influencing our needs and desires*). Errors are rare and have negligible impact on the reader. Examples of all three features of style are evident within the text, although this is not maintained consistently (eg conversational tone *the next thing you know*, personal pronouns).

Sample response 3: Big data essay

In this digital age, the collection and analysis of vast volumes of data, known as 'big data', have become essential. With this in mind, I partially disagree with the statement below since it offers a narrow perspective on a complex issue.

'Big data' has revolutionised numerous industries, such as healthcare, transportation, and fashion. It collects targeted information, analyses it and finds patterns that shape how we interact online. For instance, in healthcare, analysing patient and medical data can lead to quicker diagnosis and personalised treatments. Similarly, collecting transportation data can help optimise traffic flow and make navigation easier worldwide.

Moreover, prohibiting governments and companies from collecting data is, from my perspective, impractical and may seriously hinder technological advancement. In today's interconnected world, where there is a high dependency on all-tech, vast amounts of data are generated daily which ultimately allow us, the users, to have better experiences and access to technological advancements.

However, while acknowledging the benefits of 'big data', it is crucial to address the associated risks, particularly concerning data privacy and security. There is no secret that these companies are frequently in the centre of various scandals of data breaches and hence why they should be subject to rigorous auditing.

Furthermore, legislation should be comprehensive and up-to-date, reflecting the evolving nature of technology and data privacy concerns. Clear guidelines should be established, and users should always be asked to consent, or not, their data to be collected, and informed on data retention periods.

In conclusion, protecting data privacy and security is crucial, but completely opposing 'big data' collection and analysis is not the solution. Instead, there should be a regulated approach with auditing processes and clear legislation to hold companies accountable and safeguard individuals' privacy rights.

Content and organisation	6	Uses of sources	5	Language	6	Style	5
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Rationale for scores:

All aspects of the question are addressed comprehensively, with a nuanced position being fully supported by rich details. Staging and organisation are managed seamlessly, while the integration of counter-arguments and rebuttals contribute to a very well-rounded response. Key ideas and details from all sources are extracted and synthesised in support of the new writing purpose, with an attempt made to distance the candidate's voice from other voices. A range of complex structures and lexis are employed flexibly to enhance the message, with no sign of needing to compromise. Meaning is communicated clearly and precisely throughout, with any errors difficult to spot. All three features of style are demonstrated consistently throughout the text, with only very minor and occasional lapses (eg some personal pronouns and flashes of a journalistic tone – *There is no secret that*).

Sample response 4: Big data essay

I go the sea and perno food , water , juis , cap and two or one T-sert . I see one crap , five or six car , teen pepols and seven tree . Colect the seasell .

Content and organisation	0	Uses of sources	0	Language	0	Style	0
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Rationale for scores:

There is no connection between the prompt and the content presented. The response is entirely off-topic and there is no evidence the writer has attempted to address the prompt.

Sample response 5: Reducing traffic report

Dear city council,

I am very worried about the traffic that is happening in the city and I personally believe that if try we can find some good methods to reduce it. First of all, I think that is very wrong for someone to pay a specific amount of money to just take his car and drive to his job. And also paying another charge that is not affordable for all the citizens. Although with this charges less and less people were driving in the streets so the environment got cleaner and this big pollution that was happening to it became less. In addition, others transportations were faster and they were doing their job better and many people started to use bicycles for going to their work, which is another benefit to the enviroment. About superbloc, is very difficult to adapt this new building design, because is made for big cities that does not have a problem with traffic and becasue it makes busier the main roads.

My recommendations in order to reduce this problem that is a headache for a lot of people, is to make a programme about how beneficial is to envirnoment and in our daily life, to use bikes or go by foot in our work, if it is near our house, in order both to avoid traffic and reduce it. In addition, I suggest that we could use more transports such us busses, metros and others because they can fit more people and it reduces the amount of cars on the roads. I hope my suggestions have been helpful and can solve this problem that bothers many people in the morning that want to get in their work.

Sincerely,

Adela Valero

Content and organisation	4	Uses of sources	4	Language	4	Style	3
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Rationale for scores:

Both parts of the question are addressed together with supporting details, and textual organisation devices are used to help link ideas sequentially (eg *first of all, in addition*). The reader feels moderately informed, but a few questions remain (eg Why is it very wrong for someone to have to pay to drive to work?). The writer selects and paraphrases content from both sources to support the new writing purpose. Synthesis is partially successful, although the reference to Text B feels somewhat tagged on. There is some attempt to create distance from other voices (eg *they, other people*) but this is not entirely successful. Uses both simple and complex structures alongside a range of lexis to communicate their message. There are signs of awkwardness in places (eg run-on sentences, *big pollution*) but these do not impact comprehensibility. There is clear evidence of control over formal register (eg avoiding contractions) and academic tone (eg softening) across much of the text, but there are also a number of lapses (eg personal pronouns). The intended genre has obviously been misunderstood.

Sample response 6: Reducing traffic report

My city hasn't very good traffics. The police and the government don't do anything so I decided to write this report message. The traffic lights don't light so much as a result to be many tracks and also deaths. Last week out of my house the traffic light didn't light so two cars tracked and the drivers died. But the problem is not only about traffic lights but is about drivers. 87% of the drivers of my town drive dangerously. My opinion is that if drivers drive under 80 km they must pay 100\$. The police must do something. Also there is a big pollution on earth so I say that we must use electric cars or e-scooters or even better bikes. Finally teenagers must not drive too young because a lot of teenagers died because they were driving dangerously and fast. I hope you will think about it and make our town better! Good bye!

Content and organisation	2	Uses of sources	1	Language	3	Style	2
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Rationale for scores:

The writer seems to have partly misunderstood the prompt, focusing largely on dangerous driving instead of reducing traffic. Most of the content is irrelevant, but some minimally relevant recommendations (e-scooters and bikes) are put forward. The sources are not used at all. Common lexis and simple structures are used comprehensibly. Despite frequent errors, the reader rarely struggles to understand (eg *two cars tracked*). In Style, some very limited evidence of formality can be discerned (eg *as a result*).

Sample response 7: Reducing traffic report

This report addresses the issue of traffic congestion. It aims to evaluate two possible solutions, outlining their respective advantages and disadvantages, and make recommendations for local authorities.

Solution 1 – Congestion Charge

In place since 2008, the measure involves charging 15 pounds/day for any car entering central London.

Advantages

According to Marie Mulligan of London News, the charge has resulted in a reduced number of cars circulating in the city centre as people opted for bikes or public transportation for leisure activities. In turn, noise and air pollution has decreased and public transportation has become more efficient due to fewer cars competing for space.

Disadvantages

People travelling to London for work or business are negatively impacted by the daily 15 pound charge. Over 20 working days, this amounts to 300 pounds, a significant reduction in one's monthly income.

Solution 2 – 'Superblocks'

A city planning solution which entails blocking all but residential traffic in a certain area of the city, often called a 'superblock'.

Advantages

The space previously taken up by cars is reclaimed and used for leisure activities for pedestrians.

Disadvantages

It does not reduce or eliminate traffic, it merely diverts it to nearby roads which are likely to become even more congested. Non-residents are unlikely to feel any positive effects, and in fact those living just outside the superblock limits may even feel an increase in traffic in their street.

Recommendations

A mixed approach, tailored to local socio-economic and demographic conditions is recommended. Cities with a regular, grid-like street pattern may find superblocks easy to implement. However, careful research into the effects of diverting traffic around the superblock is essential. In addition, a congestion charge scheme could also be introduced in areas used for leisure. Professionals travelling for work could be deemed exempt.

Content and organisation	6	Uses of sources	5	Language	6	Style	5
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Rationale for scores:

All aspects of the question are addressed comprehensively, with relevant ideas being supported by plentiful details. Staging and organisation are managed skilfully, while the integration of counter-arguments and rebuttals contribute to a very well-rounded responses. Key ideas and details from both sources are extracted and synthesised in support of the new writing purpose, while citations and reporting verbs are employed to clearly distinguish voices. The candidate exploits a range of complex structures and vocabulary, including some highly sophisticated lexical chunks (eg *tailored to local socio-economic and demographic conditions*). Meaning is communicated clearly and precisely throughout, with any lapses/errors difficult to spot. All three features of style are applied consistently throughout the text.

Sample response 8: Reducing traffic report

The impact of traffic in the city

INTRODUCTION

Pollution is one of the biggest problems in nowadays society and one of the main constituents is, of course, traffic. In this report you shall receive a few ideas that might help in the process of reducing the impact of the traffic.

ADDING CHARGES FOR PERSONAL CARS

For each of us is easier to drive to work, to school, to concerts. Therefore adding fees and charges, will make a considerable percent of the population to switch to public transport or to bikes.

CREATING SUPERBLOCKS

Indeed, having micro neighbourhoods where there are no cars is essential for a balanced healthier life. Developing green spaces and parks, promoting walks and spending time outdoors would improve everyday life considerably.

Moreover, combining superblocs with the fees mentioned above would have a double effect.

FREE ALTERNATIVES TO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Another idea would be to adopt healthier free alternatives for citizens who want to use the public transportation. For example 1 bus ticked could equalate 3 squads.

CONCLUSION

Taking into consideration all the ideas mentioned before, I reckon that the city council might implement the measure brought to attention.

Content and organisation	4	Uses of sources	3	Language	5	Style	4
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Rationale for scores:

Both parts of the question are addressed with brief supporting details, and the report is clearly organised into linear sections. All ideas are relevant, and the reader feels adequately informed although is left with some questions regarding the potential drawbacks/downsides of each method. The candidate extracts and paraphrases content from both sources, but this is very brief and not developed. The response is largely error-free, and includes a range of complex structures and less common lexis. Meaning is communicated clearly and precisely throughout, with only very minor lapses (eg *1 bus ticked could equalate 3 squads*). Examples of all three features of style are clearly evident throughout the text. Lapses do occur (eg *I reckon*, personal pronouns) but these don't cause much distraction for the reader.