

English Language and English for Academic Purposes Unit Standards Supporting Document – Draft for consultation – August 2025

Section Four – Definitions

4.1. English Language unit standards definitions for specific skills at each level

Selected terms, and their respective definitions, related to unit standards at each level

4.2. English for Academic Purposes unit Standards definitions for specific skills at each level

All definitions related to EAP unit standards Level 3 and 4 are included. Some definitions are common across both levels.

Section 4: Definitions

4.1. English Language unit standards definitions for specific skills at each level

Selected terms, and their respective definitions related to unit standards at each level.

Some definitions are common across multiple levels, and these are presented first at the top of each skill. There is some variation in wording and in the examples provided which are appropriate for the skills assessed at each level.

Read all the definitions in the Guidance Information specific to each unit standard.

Speaking

Definitions applicable to all Foundation Level 1- 3 speaking unit standards:

Errors refer to the systematic use of incorrect language features.

Inconsistencies refer to variable control in language features, where the learner can self-correct, if necessary.

Transactions refer to asking for and responding to requests and/or enquiries for assistance or services, such as making an appointment (request), asking for travel information (enquiry).

LEVEL 1 (Foundation)

Basic everyday spoken interactions refer to simple spoken discourse with familiar people on familiar and personal topics on areas of most immediate need, including transactions, conversations, interviews; conversations include asking and responding to simple questions on familiar and personal topics.

Learnt language patterns refer to learnt words and phrases relating to everyday topics.

LEVEL 1

Everyday familiar topics refer to topics that are well-known and relevant to the daily life of the learner, such as school, work, interests, shopping.

Simple everyday spoken interactions refer to short spoken discourse such as conversations and transactions of personal relevance.

LEVEL 2

Connected discourse refers to the use of conjunctions and pronoun reference to link ideas.

Familiar topic refers to a topic that is well-known and relevant to the learner.

Spontaneity refers to responses that are natural and unrehearsed. It may include the learner adjusting learnt language patterns to suit the questions.

Straightforward spoken interaction refers to a transaction or conversation requiring a simple and direct exchange in a familiar situation.

LEVEL 3

Developed refers to information and ideas which are expanded on or clarified by adding detail with explanations, examples and/or evidence.

Fluency refers to a smooth flow of language with few natural pauses.

Moderately complex refers to a level of discourse beyond basic conversation, involving varied vocabulary.

Negotiation may include interaction that involves reaching an agreement e.g. consulting with co-workers, employers, education providers.

LEVEL 4

Inconsistencies refer to variable control in language features, where the learner can self-correct, if necessary.

Sustained discussions refer to discussions that are maintained for an extended time using turn-taking strategies.

Sustained spoken interactions, refer to transactions and conversations maintained for an extended time with appropriate turn-taking strategies.

Writing

Definitions applicable to all Foundation Level 1 – Level 3 writing unit standards

Errors refer to the systematic use of incorrect language features.

Inaccuracies refer to lapses in control of text structure, language features, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.

Definitions applicable to all Level 1 - Level 3 writing unit standards

Description refers to a description of place, person, or thing. It begins with a general statement of the topic, followed by detail.

Recount refers to the retelling of past events. It contains an orientation, order of events, and re-orientation.

Definitions applicable to all Level 1 - Level 4 writing unit standards

Formal letter refers to letters written in formal language and a format for a transactional purpose. Examples of formal letters are letters of complaint, applications, letters to the editor.

Information text refers to writing that classifies or defines the topic and contains relevant and supporting detail, in a logical order that is stated in the third person, without personal opinion or comment.

Persuasive text refers to the use of words to convince the reader of a view regarding an issue. It contains a statement of viewpoint, supporting evidence, and restatement of viewpoint.

LEVEL 1 (Foundation)

Basic text refers to writing that includes a number of single ideas expressed in words, phrases and/or short, simple sentences.

Personal need refers to immediate needs relevant to self and family, including, but not limited to, food, home, friendship, schooling, health.

Personal topics refer to topics which are very well-known and of high relevance and importance to the learner, such as home, family, hobbies.

Phrases refer to word phrases and number phrases, such as dates.

LEVEL 1

Everyday topics refer to topics which are well-known and relevant to the learner.

Simple cohesive devices refer to conjunctions (such as 'and', 'but', 'because') and pronoun reference.

Simple form refers to an easy-to-understand written text that is not complicated with spaces in which answers to questions can be written, that may include simple and compound sentences, single words and phrases.

Simple sentences refer to sentences that contain a subject and a verb, which may also have an object and modifiers, and which contain only one independent clause.

Simple text refers to a written text that includes a number of ideas presented in simple and compound sentences and may include single words and phrases.

Simple verb forms refer to the use of present and past simple verbs as appropriate to the text type.

LEVEL 2

Familiar topic refers to a topic that is well-known and relevant to the learner.

Response for a specific purpose involves expressing a viewpoint on a written or visual text, an experience, a process, an event, or new information.

Simple connected text explicitly links facts and/or ideas using cohesive devices, such as conjunctions, connectives, and pronoun reference.

LEVEL 3

Applied context refers to an employment context or an academic context.

Coherent refers to the presentation of ideas in a comprehensible manner and logical order.

Cohesive refers to how ideas are linked between and within paragraphs using cohesive devices. These include conjunctions, connectives, and pronoun reference.

Connected text refers to the use of conjunctions and other connectors to explicitly link facts and ideas.

Discussion refers to a piece of writing that attempts to give two or more sides of a topic or issue. It contains an explanation of purpose, arguments for and against the topic, and a conclusion.

Explanation refers to statements of how or why the feature or process of a phenomenon changes. It contains a general statement, which describes the phenomenon, an explanation of change, and a conclusion.

Procedural text refers to a text which gives instructions using imperatives, a description of a process, or recommendations. Examples of procedural texts are instructions, reports, descriptions of processes, advice, and recommendations.

Report refers to a document containing information organized in a narrative, graphic or tabular form, and may refer to specific periods, events, occurrences, subjects.

Response for a specific purpose involves expressing viewpoints on a written or visual text, an experience, a process, an event, or new information. It may include responding to links between text and self (such as personal contexts), and prior knowledge of text and world, such as connections with knowledge, experience, and ideas.

LEVEL 4

Acknowledged refers to in-text citation, reference list, footnotes, or similar conventions of referencing, as appropriate to the audience.

Coherent refers to the presentation of ideas in a comprehensible manner and logical order.

Cohesive refers to how ideas are linked between and within paragraphs using cohesive devices. These include conjunctions, connectives, and pronoun reference.

Discursive text refers to a piece of writing that attempts to give two or more sides of a topic or issue. It contains an explanation of purpose, arguments for and against, and a conclusion.

Evaluation refers to the assessment of the topic against specific criteria and may include the evaluation of written text, audio-visual text, a product, website, event, community service, educational programme, or performance.

Explanatory text refers to statements of how or why the features or process of a phenomenon changes. It contains a general statement, which describes the phenomenon, an explanation of change, and a conclusion.

Inaccuracies refer to lapses in control of text structure, language features, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.

Moderately complex texts, refer to texts which include inter-related facts and/or ideas which are communicated using complex sentence structures.

Reading

Definitions applicable to all Level 1 - Level 3 reading unit standards (excluding Foundation Level 1)

Description refers to a description of a place, person or thing, beginning with a general statement of the topic, followed by detail.

Information text refers to writing that classifies and/or presents information that is stated without any personal involvement.

Main idea refers to the most important or central thought of a paragraph or larger section of text.

Personal response refers to engagement with each text. This involves evidence that the learner has made connections between how they feel about what they read, how it may relate to their own life or things they know, and what they think about the ideas in the text. Engagement may involve expressing viewpoints or critiquing the writer's views.

Persuasive text refers to the use of words to convince the reader of his/her view regarding an issue. It contains a statement of viewpoint, supporting evidence and restatement of viewpoint.

Recount refers to the retelling of past events. It contains an orientation, a record of events in a clear chronological sequence, and reorientation, using past tense verb forms.

Specific information refers to discrete items e.g. dates, times, places, names, prices, percentages, numbers, measurements, acronyms, addresses (including web addresses).

Supporting details refer to additional information that explains, develops, or illustrates the speaker/writer's main idea e.g. reasons, causes, examples.

LEVEL 1 (Foundation)

Basic refers to very short, written texts which use familiar everyday expressions and very basic words and phrases. These texts are related to self and family and areas of most immediate personal relevance.

Basic English language written information refers to texts that include a number of single ideas expressed in words, phrase and/or short, simple sentences related to common everyday practical purposes.

Key information refers to the most important information in texts.

LEVEL 1

Everyday contexts are of immediate need and relevance to the learner e.g. self, family, home, daily routines.

Key information refers to the most important information in texts.

Simple English language written text refers to a text that includes a number of ideas presented in simple and compound sentences and may include single words and phrases.

LEVEL 2

Connections refer to the links between ideas signalled by grammatical cohesive devices e.g. causal, sequential, and exemplification.

Routine practical purpose refers to a purpose which is familiar to learners because they have had multiple experiences and/or exposures to the context and/or text type.

Straightforward written texts refer to texts which are uncomplicated in terms of their content and structure.

LEVEL 3

Extended written text is one that merits two to three weeks of focus and is aligned with the complexity and range statements of this unit standard.

Familiar topic refers to a topic that is well-known and relevant to the learner

Grammatical cohesive devices refer to the use of language to relate ideas and information and make links between different parts of a text. Examples of grammatical cohesive devices are reference, substitution, ellipsis, and text connectives.

Lexical cohesive devices refer to the use of word associations or semantic relationships between vocabulary items which enable readers to make links between items in a text and track how meaning is developed. Examples of lexical cohesive devices are the use of synonyms, antonyms, repetition of keywords, collocation, class/sub-class relationships, and whole/part relationships.

Make connections refers to identifying similarities and differences in the selection of information, ideas, viewpoints, and/or approaches of writers to the connecting theme.

Moderately complex written texts refer to texts which include interrelated facts and/or ideas which are communicated, using complex sentence structures and some academic and/or specialised vocabulary.

LEVEL 4

Analysed refers to examining, breaking down, or thinking critically about information in order to draw conclusions.

Extended written text refers to text that merits more than two weeks of focus and is aligned with the complexity and range statements of this unit standard.

Evaluated refers to an evaluation of a text. It establishes context with background information, describes the text and concludes with an opinion or judgment.

Grammatical cohesive devices refer to the use of language to relate ideas and information and make links between different parts of a text. Examples of grammatical cohesive devices are reference, substitution, ellipsis, and text connectives.

Lexical cohesive devices refer to the use of word associations or semantic relationships between vocabulary items which enable readers to make links between items in a text and track how meaning is developed. Examples of lexical cohesive devices are the use of synonyms, antonyms, repetition of keywords, collocation, class/sub-class relationships, and whole/part relationships.

Moderately complex written texts refer to texts which include interrelated facts and/or ideas which are communicated, using complex sentence structures and some academic and/or specialised vocabulary.

Procedural text refers to a text which gives instructions or describes a process. Examples of procedural texts are instructions, directions, recipes.

Listening

Definitions applicable to all Foundation Level 1 – Level 2 listening unit standards

Enquiries refer to asking for information.

Requests refer to asking for assistance or services.

Definitions applicable to all Level 2 – Level 4 listening unit standards

Main ideas refer to the most important or central thought of a paragraph or larger section of text.

Specific information refers to discrete items, for example, dates, times, places, names, prices, percentages, numbers, measurements, acronyms, addresses (including web addresses).

LEVEL 1 (Foundation)

Basic English language spoken instructions refer to instructions that involve a number of single ideas expressed in words, phrases and/or short, simple sentences.

Basic spoken texts refer to very short, spoken texts which use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases. These texts are related to self and family and areas of most immediate personal relevance.

LEVEL 1

Simple English language spoken instructions refer to instructions that involve a number of ideas presented in simple and compound sentences and may include single words and phrases.

Simple everyday spoken interactions refer to short spoken discourse such as conversations and transactions of personal relevance.

Simple spoken texts refer to short spoken texts which use sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of immediate relevance.

Single-step instructions refer to clear, concise directives focusing on one action at a time for simplicity and ease of understanding.

Specific information refers to discrete items, for example, dates, times, places.

LEVEL 2

Familiar context refers to a context that is well known and relevant to the learner.

Familiar topic refers to a topic that is well-known and relevant to the learner.

Multi-step instructions refer to two or three sequential directives, each building upon the previous, to complete tasks.

Straightforward refers to instructions that are uncomplicated and easy to do or understand.

Straightforward interaction refers to a task requiring a simple and direct exchange in familiar situations e.g. seeking and giving information in personal, family, school, work, leisure or shopping contexts.

Straightforward spoken text refers to a spoken text that is uncomplicated in terms of its content and structure. It does not require learners to infer meaning.

LEVEL 3

Moderately complex spoken interaction refers to how speakers are taking turns in verbal interaction that involves extended responses, discussion or argument using moderately complex spoken structures.

Moderately complex spoken instructions refer to instructions with additional information. They are multi-step, requiring three or more related steps in the same instruction. (EL) 30986

Moderately complex spoken text refers to a text which includes inter-related facts and/or ideas which are communicated, using complex sentence structures.

Multi-step instructions refer to five related steps in the same sentence.

LEVEL 4

Complex spoken informational texts refer to texts which include inter-related facts and/or ideas, for example, presentations and broadcasts.

Complex spoken interactional texts refer to interactions that involve extended conversations between two or more participants, for example, interviews, discussions, meetings, negotiations, problematic transactions, complex instructional interactions.

Formal spoken texts refer to spoken texts encountered in a study environment relevant to the learner.

4.2. English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Unit Standards definitions for specific skills at each level

All definitions related to EAP unit standards Level 3 and 4 are included. Some definitions are common across both levels.

Writing

LEVELS 3 – 4

Appropriately refers to writing that addresses the research question in a manner suitable for the intended audience and academic purpose.

Cohesive devices refer to how ideas are linked between and within paragraphs using conjunctions, connectives, and pronoun reference.

Crafted text refers to an academic writing task, such as – essay, paper, report.

Formal writing style refers to lexical and grammatical features, and range of sentence structures common in academic writing. It does not usually contain slang, colloquialisms, or contractions.

Surface features refer to grammatical accuracy, lexical forms, punctuation and spelling.

Test conditions refer to a point in time assessment with a specific duration under supervised examination conditions.

LEVEL 3

Inaccuracies refer to lapses in control of text structure, language features, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.

Ideas are developed refers to the skills of clarifying and expanding upon ideas.

Relevant knowledge base means learners must have drawn upon a range of source materials at a level of complexity appropriate to the academic context.

LEVEL 4

Broad knowledge base means learners must have drawn upon a sufficient range of source materials at a level of complexity appropriate for learners preparing for university entrance.

Ideas are developed refers to the skills of clarifying and expanding upon ideas, drawing conclusions, e.g., incorporation of theoretical concepts, analytical interpretation, making informed judgments.

Well organised refers to logical paragraphing and cohesive devices, ensuring clear and coherent flow.

Listening

LEVELS 3 - 4

Learner's purpose refers to the specific goal a learner has while listening to a spoken academic text. This involves actively understanding the content, identifying main ideas, and applying the information beyond basic comprehension. The purpose may vary and can include activities like comparing, problem-solving, discussing, or forming arguments based on the text.

Simple information transfer is the straightforward sharing of facts or data without in-depth analysis or interpretation.

Specific information refers to discrete items, for example dates, times, places, names, prices, percentages, numbers, measurements, acronyms, addresses (including web addresses).

Supporting details refer to additional information that explains, develops or illustrates the speaker/writer's main idea, for example reasons, causes, examples.

Speaking (Presentations)

LEVELS 3 - 4

Clear for this standard refers to language that is free from confusion or ambiguity.

Non-verbal communication strategies refer to pauses, changes in pitch and volume, gestures for effect, eye contact.

Verbal communication strategies refer to greetings, formal address, questions, rhetorical questions, repetition, discourse markers, closing.

LEVEL 3

Relevant knowledge base means learners must have drawn upon a range of source materials at a level of complexity appropriate to the academic context.

LEVEL 4

Broad knowledge base means learners must have drawn upon a sufficient range of source materials at a level of complexity appropriate for learners preparing for university entrance.

Cohesive devices refer to how ideas are linked between and within sections using conjunctions, connectives, and pronoun reference.

Good control in an oral English presentation refers to the use of language structures, including grammar and vocabulary, to effectively convey ideas and engage the audience.

Reading

LEVELS 3 - 4

Learner's purpose refers to answering questions which may include but not limited to – comparing, contrasting, discussing, problem solving, explaining cause and effect and presenting an argument.

Simple information transfer refers to the straightforward sharing of facts or data without in-depth analysis or interpretation.

LEVEL 4

Writer's purpose refers to the specific reason or intention behind creating a piece of written content. It involves the goals, objectives, or motivations that drive an author to convey information, ideas, emotions, or opinions through their writing.