English Language Assessment Support Material

Unit standard	30998				
Title	Read and understand a moderately complex English language academic written text				
Level	4	Credits	5	Version	2

Assessor Guidelines

Assessors need to be very familiar with the outcome being assessed by the unit standard. The performance criteria and the guidance information contain information, definitions, and requirements that are crucial when interpreting the standard and assessing learners against it.

> **Note:**
>
> These guidelines are supplied to enable assessors to carry out valid and consistent assessment using this internal assessment resource.
>
> Assessors must manage authenticity for any assessment from a public source, because students may have access to the assessment schedule or student exemplar material.
>
> Use of this assessment resource without modification may mean that students' work is not authentic. While this resource exemplifies how to assess understanding of English language academic written texts, other assessment activities and approaches could be taken to make the context relevant to students in their environment and ensure that submitted evidence is authentic.
>
> See Gathering evidence of learner achievement
>
> Assessors should use innovative, valid and fair ways of recognising achievement, without overburdening themselves or the learner with too much assessment.

Context/Setting

This activity requires students to read and understand a moderately complex English language academic written text.

It is recommended that:

- the outcomes are assessed as part of an integrated unit of work, relevant to the learning context of the learner;
- assessment be conducted in conjunction with assessment against other English Language unit standards at this level.

Award of Grades

This unit standard can be awarded with an Achieved grade only.

For Achieved, learners must:

- Read and understand a moderately complex English language academic written text.

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Conditions of Assessment

This assessment will take place over a timeframe set by the assessor.

- All assessment activities must be conducted in English, which must not be the learner's first language.

- Learners may use a bilingual and/or English dictionary.

- Learner responses may be oral, or written, as relevant and appropriate.

Resource Requirements

- One moderately complex English language academic written text
- Questions to assess reading comprehension

Additional Information

- The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) describes language proficiency at six levels. This unit standard is at a level informed by the CEFR. Teachers and assessors are encouraged to refer to the descriptors in the *Supporting Document* to gain a clearer understanding of the competencies required by these standards.
- Learner responses may contain some minor textual or linguistic inaccuracies, but these must not impede meaning or interfere with fluency. This standard assesses reading skills, not spoken or written skills.
- A range of assessment tasks must be used for assessment against this unit standard, and may include, but is not limited to short answer questions, multiple choice, true/false/not given, sorting, matching, gap-fill, open-ended questions requiring explanation and interpretation.
- For this unit standard, a written text:
    - must be at least 1000 words
    - must be of an academic nature
    - may have complementary illustrations or diagrams;
    - must be related to contexts that are relevant to the learner;
    - must not have been seen by the learner prior to the assessment;
    - may be abridged versions designed for language learners;
    - must be guided by the New Academic Word List (NAWL) https://www.newgeneralservicelist.com/new-general-service-list-1
- The assessment schedule is for assessors only and not to be shared with learners during the assessment process.
- Refer to your organisation's policies before offering a resubmission or further assessment opportunity.

Assessment Activity

Unit standard: 30998

Standard title: Read and understand a moderately complex English language academic written text

Credits: 5

Resource title: **What's nature got to do with it? How the natural environment impacts on human health**

Assessor guidance: Use of this assessment resource without modification may mean that students' work is not authentic. The assessor will need to set a different context or topic and develop fresh and relevant texts that reflect the interests and circumstances of their students. The text example and questions in this assessment activity provide models of possible approaches.

Model Assessment

Assessor instructions for students

Introduction

This assessment activity requires you to read a moderately complex English language academic written text and answer questions about main ideas and supporting details, and questions that require you to make connections between different parts of the text. You will also be required to identify the purpose or viewpoint of the writer.

This activity will take place in class time.

Task

Your teacher will provide you with a text designed for an academic context.

You will need to read the text and then answer the questions.

You will need to show that you can:

- Identify the purpose or viewpoint of the writer (PC 1.1).

- Identify, analyse and evaluate main ideas and supporting details that are relevant to the purpose or viewpoint of the writer. You need to get at least three main ideas, and six supporting details correct (PC 1.2).

- Make connections within and across sections of the text. These connections may be causal, sequential, comparative, additive, and exemplification through lexical and grammatical cohesive devices (PC 1.3).

What's nature got to do with it?

How the natural environment impacts on human health

1   Global warming, pollution, and the loss of endangered species have been major concerns for decades, often with calls to protect the planet for future generations. However, one important aspect often left out is how closely human health is linked to the environment. When the environment is harmed by pollution, climate change, or the loss of biodiversity, human health also suffers. It's important to recognise this connection so we can take action, from personal choices to global efforts, to protect both the environment and our health.

2   When environmental issues are mentioned in relation to human health, most people think about pollution, and this is definitely a factor that impacts on human health. Air pollution is a well-known and serious global problem that causes around 9 million deaths each year and especially affects the developing world (Jones, 2024). However, this is not the only type of pollution. In recent years, the environment has become increasingly polluted by microplastics, partially due to the increase in 'fast fashion', where clothes are produced rapidly, sold cheaply, worn briefly and then discarded. As many of these clothes are made from synthetic fabrics, they release microplastics when they are thrown into landfills. The microplastics contain chemicals that can be toxic for animals and humans (Carbone, 2024) and that can lead to long-term and fatal conditions such as cancers.

3   Another well-known environmental issue, climate change, also has serious impacts on human health. Most obviously, increasing temperatures lead to weather events such as heatwaves and floods that can lead to bushfires and landslides. These, of course, can cause deaths. However, these kinds of events also have impacts that last long after the event. People who are dealing with the effects of floods and landslides, especially in developing nations, may face long periods of time with poor health through lack of food and clean water. Starvation and illness after the event may be as fatal as the event itself. Further, global warming has a significant impact on the spread of disease as it changes the distribution of animals that carry diseases. For example, rising temperatures have meant that mosquitoes carrying malaria and dengue fever have been able to spread into regions that have not previously had these diseases. In fact, researchers have shown that there is a direct relationship between rising temperatures and the spread of diseases like dengue fever (Xiang et al., 2017).

4   A lesser-known factor that has a very significant negative impact on human health is biodiversity loss and changes to existing ecosystems. Our environment is a delicately balanced system with a diverse range of animals, plants, fungi, and microorganisms. When the ecosystem is healthy and well-balanced, diseases are also kept under control. However, when something disrupts this balance, such as a change to the food chain, diseases can emerge and spread to humans. This happened in South America when forests were cleared to provide grazing areas for cattle. Tiny vampire bats had lived in the forests in small numbers, surviving by biting and drinking the blood from small animals like birds. However, when trees were cut and cattle were brought into the area, the bats started feeding off the cattle instead and rapidly increased in number. The bats spread rabies, a serious disease, to both cattle and humans (Johnson, 2014). Another example is the HIV virus. At first, this virus only affected apes, but during a famine, people killed the apes for food. The virus spread to the humans preparing the food and then onto other humans and became a global epidemic (Benatar, 2002). These examples show that even local disruptions to the system can end up having national or even global impacts.

5   On a basic level, maintaining and regaining health is very difficult without a healthy, biodiverse environment. Fresh water, for example, usually comes from forests and is purified and filtered by the many organisms living in the forests (Marselle et al., 2021). The food supply is also dependent on biodiversity. Meat sources are dependent on a complex food chain, and plant sources depend on pollinators like bees and butterflies. We also depend on a biodiverse nature for advances in medicine. Today, almost 75% of approved medicines come from nature (Marselle et al., 2021). This is despite the fact that we only know about the medicinal properties of a very small portion of plants, animals and organisms. Cures for serious diseases may well be

found in nature in the future, but this can only happen if we preserve the vast variety of species that exists in our environment.

6   Biodiversity is also important for preventing or improving health conditions that are common in the developed world, such as asthma, chronic stress and depression. Asthma is more common in the developed world, because people live in less biodiverse areas, and have less contact with microbes. However, asthma can to a large extent be prevented through contact with nature. Donovan et al. (2018) have shown that children are less likely to develop asthma if they live in a biodiverse area. Living in greener neighbourhoods with a variety of plants helps them develop a healthy immune system. Other health conditions common in developed, modern countries such as stress, anxiety and depression can also be improved through contact with nature. Research has shown that individuals who are able to spend time in nature, especially in areas rich in biodiversity, are able to lower their cortisol (stress hormone) and reduce stress (Marselle et al., 2021). A study by Hammoud et al. (2024) showed that biodiversity had a significant impact on mental health and that those who lived in – or spent time in – areas rich in biodiversity, were less likely to experience mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Maintaining natural spaces and biodiversity is therefore essential for our wellbeing, and further losses in these areas will likely have negative impacts on our health.

7   Our health is thus significantly impacted by the environment, and addressing environmental problems is becoming increasingly urgent, not just for future generations but also for ourselves. Fortunately, there are positive steps that can be taken, both on smaller and larger scales. On a global or national scale, it is very important that we continue to take measures to slow down climate change and to address pollution, through law changes and innovative technologies and to prevent practices that lead to biodiversity loss. However, there are also many actions that can be taken by communities and by individuals. Local communities and city planners can consider the need for including green spaces in the built environment. These green spaces should not just be parks and gardens with a limited range of plants but should promote biodiversity and the flora natural to the area. Investment in biodiverse green spaces has the potential to improve the health of the community and also to regulate increasing temperatures (Wang et al., 2021). Even individuals can contribute, not only through making positive choices, such as resisting fast fashion and using environmentally friendly modes of transportation, but also through creating biodiverse gardens.

8   For many years, human actions and choices have had significant negative impacts on the environment, and we are now seeing the impacts on human health. Through recent research combining environmental research and health research, we have also gained an increased understanding on the importance of the environment on our health. While this may be worrying, it may also be the wake-up call that is needed for us to look after the environment better.

1238 words

References

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Section A: Purpose or viewpoint of the writer is identified (PC 1.1)

1. What is the purpose of the writer of the text?

The purpose of the writer is to

_____

_____

Justify your answer, based on the text:

_____

_____

Section B: Main ideas and supporting details relevant to the purpose or viewpoint of the writer are identified, analysed and evaluated (PC 1.2)

Questions 1-4 are about paragraph 2.

1. Which statement best describes the main idea in paragraph 2?

    a) Pollution primarily affects the developing world.
    b) Many think that pollution is the environmental factor that impact humans the most, but this is not true.
    c) Pollution is particularly dangerous, as it can lead to cancer.
    d) Pollution is one of the threats to the environment that also is a threat to humans.

2. Identify two details which support the main idea in paragraph 2 and paraphrase these below. Do not copy directly from the text.

    a) _____

       _____

    b) _____

       _____

3. How does each detail support the main idea of the paragraph? This could include giving examples, explaining, giving more detailed information, giving contrasting information. Please justify your answer.

    a) The first detail supports the main idea by

       _____

       _____

b)   The second detail supports the main idea by

_____

_____

4. In your opinion, how effective is paragraph 2 (including main ideas and supporting details) in achieving the writer's purpose? You will not be marked on your opinion, but on how well you justify it and show that you have evaluated the information in the paragraph.

Paragraph 2 is very effective / effective / somewhat effective / not very effective (circle one)

This is because

_____

_____

_____

Questions 5–8 are about paragraph 3

5. What is the main idea of paragraph 3? Your answer should be no more than one sentence.

_____

6. Paragraph 3 outlines two main effects. What are these?

The main effects are a) _____ and b) _____ .

7. Analyse the two effects. Which one do you think is most serious? Why?

The most serious effect is _____. This is because

_____

_____ .

8. In your opinion, how effective is paragraph 3 (including main ideas and supporting details) in achieving the writer's purpose? You will not be marked on your opinion, but on how well you justify it and show that you have evaluated the information in the paragraph.

Paragraph 3 is very effective / effective / somewhat effective / not very effective (circle one)

This is because

_____

_____

_____

Questions 9–12 are about paragraph 6

9. Which statement best describes the main idea in paragraph 6?

   a) Health problems in modern societies can be improved by contact with a natural environment that has a variety of plants.
   b) Living in a rural area will make you feel happier.
   c) Some health conditions are more common in the developed world.
   d) In modern countries, spending time in green spaces like parks will improve your immunity.

10. Identify one detail which supports the main idea in paragraph 6.

   a) Paraphrase the supporting detail. Do not copy directly from the text.

   _____

   _____

   b) How does this support the main idea? This could include giving examples, explaining, giving more detailed information, giving contrasting information. Please justify your answer.

   c) _____

   _____

11. Identify a second supporting detail in paragraph 6.

   a) Paraphrase the supporting detail. Do not copy directly from the text.

   b) _____

   _____

   c) How does this support the main idea? This could include giving examples, explaining, giving more detailed information, giving contrasting information. Please justify your answer.

   _____

   _____

12. In your opinion, how effective is paragraph 6 (including main ideas and supporting details) in achieving the writer's purpose? You will not be marked on your opinion, but on how well you justify it and show that you have evaluated the information in the paragraph.

Paragraph 6 is very effective / effective /   somewhat effective / not very effective (circle one)

This is because

_____

_____

_____

Questions 13–16 are about paragraph 7.

13. Which statement best describes the main idea in paragraph 7?

   a) The main change we should be making is increasing biodiversity.
   b) We must act urgently to change things to ensure the health of future generations.
   c) Any small changes that we make now will have long-lasting impacts on climate change.
   d) We can still make changes in several areas, and we need to make them as quickly as possible.

14. The paragraph describes three levels of changes. Below, name these levels, and give one example of change for each:

   a) Level: _____

       Example of change: _____

   b) Level: _____

       Example of change: _____

   c) Level: _____

       Example of change: _____

15. On which level is do you think change most important? Choose one and explain your choice. You will not be marked on your choice, but on how well you justify it.

Most important are changes on the _____ level.

This is because:

_____

_____

_____

16. In your opinion, how effective is paragraph 7 (including main ideas and supporting details) in achieving the writer's purpose? You will not be marked on your opinion, but on how well you justify it and show that you have evaluated the information in the paragraph.

Paragraph 7 is very effective / effective / somewhat effective / not very effective (circle one)

This is because

_____

_____

_____

Section C: Connections within and across sections of the text are made (PC 1.3)

This section relates to the whole text.

1. In the table is a list of health problems used as examples in the text. Next to each one, indicate the cause, according to the text. Choose from the options in the box. You can select the same option more than once. In the last column, explain the link. The first one is done for you.

climate change	pollution	biodiversity loss	changes to the food chain

Health problem	Cause	Explain the link
Depression	*Biodiversity loss*	*We need to spend time in biodiverse natural spaces to lower our stress levels and improve our mood.*
a) Dengue fever		
b) Asthma		
c) Rabies		
d) Cancer		
e) HIV/AIDS		

2. The text suggests that a well-balanced, biodiverse ecosystem is necessary. In the table below, list three benefits of a healthy ecosystem. Use information from across the text.

Benefits of a healthy, diverse ecosystem

3. Explain the relationship between biodiversity and medication:

_____

4. What health issues may arise *after* a natural disaster or weather event?

_____

5. The text suggests three actions that individuals can take. List these actions and explain how they may contribute to better health for the environment and for humans. You will need to look at several different sections of the texts to answer this question.

    a) Action 1: _____

    Positive impact on environment:

    _____

    Positive impacts on human health:

    _____

    b) Action 2: _____

    Positive impact on environment:

    _____

    Positive impacts on human health:

    _____

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c) Action 3: _____

Positive impact on environment:

_____

Positive impacts on human health:

_____

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Assessment Schedule

Unit standard	30998				
Title	Read and understand a moderately complex English language academic written text				
Level	4	Credits	5	Version	2

Assessment Criteria

Performance Criteria	Evidence for Achievement	Judgements for Achievement
Outcome 1 Read and understand a moderately complex English language academic written text. Range: • texts may include but are not limited to journal articles, book reviews, textbook chapters, internet articles.	Refer to PC 1.1–1.3 below	A moderately complex English language academic written text is read and understood.
1.1 Purpose or viewpoint of the writer is identified.	Section A, Question 1. Answer similar in meaning to: *Convince/persuade the reader that we need to look after the environment in order to preserve our own health.* Or a different answer that has been justified convincingly.	The purpose of the writer is stated. If purpose is substantially different from model answer, it is convincingly justified.
1.2 Main ideas and supporting details relevant to the purpose or viewpoint of the writer are identified, analysed and evaluated.	Section B 1. *d – Pollution is one of the threats to the environment that also is a threat to humans.*	Three main ideas are identified: • Three of questions 1; 5; 9; 13 are correct.

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Range: • three main ideas and six supporting details.	2. a) Model answer: *One big problem is air pollution which affects mostly the developing world and kills people.* b) Model answer: *Microplastics (e.g. from fast fashion) cause chemical pollution and lead to cancer*. 3. a) Model answer: *providing an example of how pollution affects humans.* b) Model answer: *adding another example to show that there are other kids of pollution.* 4. Learner can select any option but must provide an evaluation. Example of evaluation: *Somewhat effective. This paragraph is not as effective as the others, as most people already know this information; however, the information is still relevant as an example of what people are already aware of.* 5. Model answer: *Climate change affects human health.* 6. a) Weather events b) Spread of diseases 7. Learner can select either option. Answer must provide evidence of analysis. Example: *Weather events. This is because they have immediate effects, e.g. through floods, but also long-lasting effects as food can become scarce and it can be difficult to find clean water.* 8. Learner can select any option but must provide an evaluation. Example of evaluation: *Effective. By highlighting effects of global warming that we may not know about, it gives us reason to act. It is also persuasive because it mentions diseases which may affect everyone as the temperatures rise.*	Six supporting details are identified: • Six of questions 2a; 2b; 6a; 6b; 10a; 11a; 14a; 14b; 14c are correct. Analysis is provided: • Three of questions 3; 7; 10b plus 11b; 15 are correct Evaluation is provided: • Three of questions 4; 8; 12; 16 are correct.

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9. *a – Health problems in modern societies can be improved by contact with a natural environment that has a variety of plants.*

10. a) Model answer: *Asthma can be prevented or improved through contact with nature, because it increases immunity.*
    b) Model answer: *It explains why biodiversity is so important to human health in the developing world.*

11. a) Model answer: *Contact with nature, especially biodiverse areas, improves mental health and reduces stress.*
    b) Model answer: *Adds more information on how biodiversity is important for wellbeing.*

12. Learner can select any option but must provide an evaluation. Example of evaluation: *Very effective. This information was new to me, and probably less well known. It also talks about the health of people in developed countries like New Zealand, so may be effective in convincing people.*

13. *d – We can still make changes in several areas, and we need to make them as quickly as possible.*

14. Answers similar in meaning to:
    a. *National/global*
       Law changes/innovation
    b. *Local/community*
       Include biodiverse green spaces
    c. *Personal/individual*
       Planting a biodiverse garden/resisting fast fashion/using environmentally friendly transportation

15. Learner can select any level. Answer must provide evidence of analysis. Example:

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	Local. This is easier to do because it is easier to influence your community. It can also have a significant effect on health and stress levels as well as temperature. 16. Learner can select any option but must provide an evaluation. Example of evaluation: *Very effective. This is probably the most effective because it shows exactly what can be done. However, it also relies on the information from the other paragraphs.*	

PC 1.3 Connections within and across sections of the text are made.
 	
Range:
 	
• connections may include but are not limited to causal, sequential, comparative, additive, and exemplification through lexical and grammatical cohesive devices.
	Section C
	
	1. Answers similar in meaning to:
	   a. *Climate change*
	     Disease-carrying animals who live in warmer temperatures, e.g. mosquitoes, can survive in new areas and spread disease there.
	   b. *Biodiversity loss*
	     Lack of contact with nature and microbes leads to lower immunity.
	   c. *Changes to the food chain*
	     Vampire bats increased because they had cattle to feed off, and they spread disease to cattle and to humans.
	   d. *Pollution*
	     Microplastics pollute the environment and this leads to chemical pollution that causes cancer.
	   e. *Changes to the food chain*
	     When people who were starving began to cook and eat apes, they caught the infection from them.
	
	2. *Clean water, Stable food supply, Diseases controlled* (3 required).
		Connections are made.
		
		Eight out of eleven answers are correct.
		
		The questions require understanding of the following connections:
		
		• Causal (Questions 1, 5)
		• Exemplification (Questions 2, 3, 5)
		• Sequential (Question 4)

| | 3. 75% of medications are derived from nature.
 4. *Starvation and sickness because of lack of food and clean water.*
 5. Answers similar in meaning to:
   a. *Resist fast fashion*
     Less landfill and less microplastic pollution
     Less risk of exposure to cancer-causing chemicals
   b. *Use environmentally friendly transport*
     Reduce global warming
     Fewer diseases and fewer weather events.
   c. *Plant a biodiverse garden*
     Biodiverse environment, lower temperatures, cleaner water
     Better immunity/lower stress/preserving natural sources for medication. | |

Final grades will be decided using professional judgement based on a holistic examination of the evidence provided against the criteria in the unit standard.

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