

Grade Descriptions for Cambridge International AS Level English Language 9093

What are grade descriptions?

Grade descriptions describe the level of performance typically demonstrated by candidates achieving the different grades awarded for a qualification. For Cambridge International AS Levels, they describe performance at three levels – grades ‘E’, ‘C’ and ‘A’.

Grade descriptions sit alongside other key documents that illustrate examination standards, including:

- the syllabus, which presents what students should be taught over a course of study and explains how this is assessed
- the specimen assessment materials, which exemplify the structure of the assessment and the kinds of tasks that candidates complete
- grade thresholds, which show the total mark required to achieve a grade.

Grade descriptions are produced with a wide range of audiences in mind. For teachers, they support lesson planning and curriculum development, while students may gain useful insights into what is required to achieve a high grade and what candidate performance at lower grades typically looks like. For university admissions staff and employers, and those less familiar with Cambridge, they paint a picture of typical performance at different grades.

Cambridge publishes grade descriptions for a qualification once examinations have taken place for the first time, and we review them when a qualification is substantially revised. They are developed by highly experienced examiners who understand performance standards in the subject area and have studied samples of candidate work.

How do I use this resource?

Grade descriptions are presented as a grid with content areas at the start of each row and the different grades at the top of each column.

The content areas group together various aspects of the syllabus – they reflect topics, assessment objectives, key concepts, syllabus aims and components. The way they are organised is specific to each subject.

For each content area, there is a descriptor for each grade. Reading across the row from left to right, the descriptors represent increasing levels of performance, with each grade descriptor building on, and including, the last.

Each column represents overall performance at a particular grade. Reading down the column from top to bottom, the descriptors capture the range of knowledge, understanding and skills that a candidate comfortably achieving the grade is likely to demonstrate.

Cambridge produces grade descriptions to support teaching and learning and the interpretation of candidate scores and grades. We do not use them to set grade thresholds. As such, they cannot be used to challenge the grade awarded to any individual candidate.

Grade descriptions

Area of knowledge, understanding and skills	Typical performance at grade E	Typical performance at grade C	Typical performance at grade A
Reading and understanding			
Understanding conventions, linguistic elements and literary features	<p>Students read and recognise a wide variety of linguistic and literary features, which may include parts of speech/word classes, vocabulary used for effect, figurative language, phonological features, morphological features, rhetorical devices, voice, aspect, tense, modality, narrative perspective, word ordering and sentence structure, paragraph- and text-level structure, formality/informality of tone and pragmatics.</p> <p>They describe some of these features and use them to create effects in their own writing.</p>	<p>Students explain clearly the effects created by a number of conventions, linguistic elements and literary features.</p> <p>They incorporate a variety of conventions, linguistic elements and literary features in their own writing in order to create some effects in their own writing with confidence.</p>	<p>Students explain with insight and in detail the effects created by a wide variety of conventions, linguistic elements and literary features.</p> <p>They demonstrate innovative use of conventions, linguistic elements and literary features in order to create writing which is engaging throughout.</p>
Understanding the significance of audience, genre, purpose and context	<p>Students read and recognise a wide variety of text genres, which may include advertisements, brochures, leaflets, editorials, news stories, articles, reviews, blogs, investigative journalism, letters, podcasts, (auto)biographies, travel writing, diaries, essays, scripted speech, narrative writing and descriptive writing.</p> <p>They describe the genre and context of text and identify its purpose in relation to the intended audience.</p>	<p>Students explain clearly the genre, purpose and context of stimulus material.</p> <p>They offer ideas on how language and style are used in stimulus material to create meaning and relate to audience.</p>	<p>Students provide detailed and insightful descriptions of genre, purpose and context, presented in a sophisticated manner.</p> <p>They provide insightful ideas in developed explanations of how language and style create meaning and relate to audience.</p>

Area of knowledge, understanding and skills	Typical performance at grade E	Typical performance at grade C	Typical performance at grade A
	They describe how language and style are used to create meaning as appropriate to the audience and overall purpose of stimulus material.		
Writing			
Demonstrating clarity of expression and accurately using language	Students provide clear written work with some attempt to use a range of language. Sentence structure is clear although there may be some lapses of tense and/or sentence demarcation. Vocabulary choices may be mainly high frequency with some errors that do not impede clarity and control of expression. Typically, students address and engage their audience with their language use to some extent.	Students use a range of language with some confidence. Some complex structures and low frequency lexis is used. There may be occasional errors that do not impede clarity and control of expression. Typically, the majority of a response is engaging to the intended audience.	Students use a sophisticated level of expression with ease and almost complete accuracy and precision. Audience engagement is maintained throughout.
Organising, structuring and developing ideas	<p>Students organise their work into a logical sequence of ideas which progress through separate paragraphs. Typically, they develop some ideas more than others although content of responses generally retains its relevance.</p> <p>Organisational structure of the student's response may reflect a chronological reading of stimulus material. Where comparison is required, the student may structure ideas using some of those from the stimulus material in tandem rather than in parallel.</p>	<p>Students develop ideas which progress fluently and with some confidence through a logical sequence of paragraphs. Typically, they ensure that the content remains relevant.</p> <p>Typically, the approach to structuring an analysis will be primarily thematic rather than chronological. Comparisons are generally drawn using stimulus material in parallel.</p>	<p>Students provide detailed and insightful commentary. Ideas flow naturally through a carefully considered and logical structural organisation. Content remains clearly relevant throughout.</p> <p>Students will take a thematic, rather than chronological, approach to analysis. Where comparison is required, they make a careful selection of ideas from the stimulus material to provide a cohesive overall structure.</p>

Area of knowledge, understanding and skills	Typical performance at grade E	Typical performance at grade C	Typical performance at grade A
Writing in response to stimulus material	Students create writing in response to stimulus material which may echo or contrast in terms of genre, form, structure, language and style. The response engages the audience but may be limited in the ways in which the stimulus material is reflected. Some features from the stimulus material may be directly reproduced in parts of the student's own writing.	Students incorporate ideas from stimulus material to create writing which reflects but does not reproduce the stimulus material.	Students make a careful selection of ideas or features from stimulus material to create a sophisticated and original creative response.
Analysing language, meaning and style			
Analysing form, structure and language	<p>Students recognise the appropriate structure as relevant to form and make some analysis of a selection of structural features.</p> <p>They recognise and make some analysis of where or how a writer is withholding key information in imaginative writing, juxtaposing counterarguments in discursive writing, or providing evidentiary logic in critical writing. Topic sentences, connectives, internal coherence and discourse markers are recognised.</p> <p>They analyse the form, structure and language of their own writing although commentary may be undeveloped or may be a generalised description of choices made.</p>	<p>Students analyse with some clarity a selection of structural features which are evidenced by the stimulus material.</p> <p>They recognise and make a reasonably confident analysis of where or how a writer is withholding key information in imaginative writing, juxtaposing counterarguments in discursive writing, or providing evidentiary logic in critical writing. Their analysis will cover a range of linguistic or literary features.</p> <p>They analyse the form, structure and language of their own writing with developed commentary.</p>	<p>Students provide detailed and insightful analysis of structural features which have been selected with care from stimulus material.</p> <p>They provide a strong and confident analysis of a writer's technique. Their analysis covers a very wide range of linguistic or literary features.</p> <p>They analyse the form, structure and language of their own writing, providing detailed technical commentary.</p>

Area of knowledge, understanding and skills	Typical performance at grade E	Typical performance at grade C	Typical performance at grade A
Analysing style	<p>Students recognise literary and linguistic features which contribute to the style of stimulus material and how it might contribute to create meaning for its intended audience. These may include imagery in descriptive writing, rhetorical devices in argumentative writing and evaluative lexis in critical writing.</p> <p>They analyse the stylistic choices of their own writing although commentary may be a generalised description of choices made.</p>	<p>Students analyse a reasonably wide selection of stylistic features which are evidenced in the stimulus material.</p> <p>They demonstrate confidence when analysing stylistic features of their own writing.</p>	<p>Students analyse a very wide range of stylistic features. They provide insightful, developed commentary which maintains a linguistic standpoint throughout.</p> <p>They provide a sophisticated analysis of their own writing in terms of stylistic features which have been used to create specific effects.</p>
Selecting features and using language to support analysis of texts	<p>Students make a limited selection from the stimulus material of literary or linguistic features for analysis. These features are typically those which are most obvious in the text and which the student feels they can analyse most confidently, possibly by identifying patterns of feature incidences.</p> <p>Typically, they use generalised terms to describe their analytical findings. Relevant evidence from the stimulus material is embedded into the response. Quotes may be lengthy rather than succinct.</p>	<p>Students select a variety of features for analysis following close reading of text from which a clear level of inference has been gained.</p> <p>Typically, they label their analytical findings with accuracy and confidence using technical terminology. Relevant, succinct quotes are embedded.</p>	<p>Students select a wide variety of features for analysis following deep reading from which insightful inference has been gained.</p> <p>They label their evaluative commentary with full accuracy and precision. They embed a carefully made selection of succinct and completely relevant quotes to evidence their claims.</p>

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