*Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students*, 6th Edition Teaching Notes

The book is designed to avoid lengthy theoretical instructions. Instead, the emphasis is on involving students as much as possible in writing activities, both individually or in pairs or groups, as teachers choose. In the first unit, for example, each of the first three sections asks students to complete a short exercise. Teachers should use their discretion about how closely the book is followed: not all students will need to complete all the exercises.

Note that some exercises could be usefully completed by students working in pairs to discuss the questions, but this is not always included in the instructions. Teachers need to decide when this would be helpful.

## Using the answer key

Teachers will appreciate that while some writing exercises have one definite answer, others are ‘open’ exercises with many possible responses. In these cases, a model answer is usually provided to give students an accurate example. However, teachers should emphasise that these models are only a guide and that other answers may be equally valid.

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# Part 1: The Writing Process and Writing Skills

This is organised as a comprehensive introduction to the process of academic writing. Depending on the level of the students, each unit should take two to three hours of classroom time. Extra practice material can be found on the website for some units. The cross references (e.g. ***See Unit 1.12 Editing and Proofreading***) are provided for students who require extra detail but are not necessary for completing the exercises.

## 1.1 Writing Basics

This unit introduces students to the differences between academic writing and other genres. The main features of academic papers are outlined, with their usual formats. Sentence and paragraph structure are also explained. The level may be rather elementary for some students, in which case the unit can be studied briefly as revision material.

1 may stimulate discussion on reasons for writing.

2 explains what makes academic writing distinctive from other forms of writing.

3 & 4 These sections introduce the names of the various tasks that students may have to write as part of their studies, and the format of common assignments.

5 Note that academic journals will mainly be used by students at master’s level and above.

6 Most students know the names of these features, but they are worth revising.

7, 8 & 9 Balancing short and longer sentences is dealt with in more detail in Unit 1.12 Academic Style. Writing paragraphs is practised in Unit 1.10. At this stage students just need to be aware of a paragraph’s function and importance.

10 Discussing generalising with students may avoid simplistic statements, which are often made at the start of a paper. The exercise could be done with partners.

11 & 12 This exercise could be completed individually or in pairs.

13 A more demanding task; it might be useful to give an example to begin.

14 & 15 These show how generalisations can be used to introduce a subject and how they can be linked to examples to develop a topic.

## 1.2 Understanding Essay Titles and the Planning Process

This unit provides practice for both exam and coursework planning, although in the latter case there is time to modify the outline. The planning process should help students to write better answers by carefully analysing the titles of essays.

1 introduces some of the most important instruction words and explains that many essay titles have two parts.

2 practises instruction words and could be completed in pairs to promote discussion. Note that some of the meanings are quite similar.

3 discusses the importance of planning to produce well-balanced work.

4 provides examples of the type of criteria teachers may use to evaluate student work.

5 explains brainstorming in the context of exam essays.

6 discusses the issue of essay length. It is important to decide how much space to give to each part of the answer, so that time is not wasted. However, the answers to the exercise can only be approximate.

7 provides models of outlines in alternative formats.

8 Students could prepare individual outlines and then compare with partners.

9, 10 & 11 explain how prefixes can be used to help understand new vocabulary. Students will be familiar with some prefixes but 10 provides a fuller list. Again, this does not need to be learned but is given for reference.

12, 13 & 14 Suffixes are most useful in indicating word class. Again, some students may not need to complete both practice exercises.

## 1.3 Reading: Finding Suitable Sources

This unit deals with the need to be selective when searching for reliable sources, in order not to waste time reading unsuitable material.

1 Learning effective reading methods is vital for students at this level.

2 This could also be completed in pairs or small groups, and ideally the teacher would show students examples of some of these sources. Much depends on the subject a student is studying, but it is helpful for all students to be aware of the three resource levels. Ideally, the students should be shown examples of relevant journals, either online or on paper.

3 contrasts two texts on the topic of water scarcity. Students could be asked to work in pairs, each student reading one text and sharing their opinion with their partner.

4 & 5 Students need to practise using search engines by themselves after studying these sections.

6 Reading abstracts should be linked to the introduction to journals in section 1 above. Remind students that abstracts allow them to choose which articles are worth reading.

7 provides extra practice in searching for sources.

8 Examining causes and effects is a common academic task. The flow chart illustrates the process.

8 & 9 explain the different structures using verbs and conjunctions. Practice A provides a variety of examples.

10 asks students to provide likely effects and causes.

11 & 12 These exercises offer further practice if needed. You may choose to leave out 11 if students seem confident.

13 This exercise would ideally be completed with a partner.

## 1.4 Reading: Developing Critical Approaches

Adopting a critical approach to sources involves questioning and evaluating what is read, rather than just accepting it. To do that, students must achieve a good level of understanding of the texts.

1 introduces the idea of critical thinking, which will be practised in the following sections.

2 asks students to assess texts in terms of objectivity: whether texts mix opinion with fact, and also whether the facts are true.

3 provides a comparison example of two internet sources, one of which is plainly unreliable.

4 advises about possible bias on internet websites, teachers should ensure that students are clear about the meaning of ‘bias’.

5 offers further practice in the critical reading of texts and could usefully be tackled in pairs.

6. Discussion-type writing assignments are common in academia, and this section introduces some basic vocabulary.

7 & 8 illustrate the two most common structures for this type of paper and offer practice.

9 provides further phrases for developing a discussion.

10 & 11 introduce the importance of counter-arguments in presenting a case, and give examples.

12 introduces ways of referencing sources to support your position, a subject developed in Unit 1.9 Contrasting Sources.

## 1.5 Finding Key Points and Note-making

Good note-making depends on students identifying the key sections of a text which are relevant to their area of interest. Students should avoid copying sections of text or writing notes in their own language. Although initially note-making may be a slow process, once these skills are developed it becomes a valuable technique.

1 introduces note-making and can be completed in pairs or groups.

2 demonstrates that key ideas are often found in the first sentence of a paragraph.

3 explains that students need to focus only on the points relevant to their research.

4 provides an example of the note-making process.

5 gives guidelines and suggestions for good practice in note-making.

6 gives practice with the techniques given in (5).

7 introduces and practises the language of problems and solutions, which are commonly presented in academic work.

8 & 9 give examples of different structures for this type of paper. Students could be asked to provide alternative solutions to those in the book.

10 asks students to write a different solution to this issue.

11 should be completed with a partner, so both could write the paragraph together.

12 could also be completed in pairs or as a whole-class exercise.

13 offers further practice if required.

## 1.6 Summarising and Paraphrasing

Although it is simpler to teach these two activities separately, in practice they tend to be employed together, and this should be explained to students. This unit deals with summarising first and then moves on to paraphrasing.

1 introduces the subject by demonstrating that summarising is an activity that everyone uses in normal life.

2 establishes the order in which a summary is carried out. It would be useful to do this exercise in pairs.

3 compares two summaries of a text and asks students to rank them. Again, this could be completed in pairs or small groups.

4 revises finding key points and then goes on to use these to build the summary, emphasising the flexible nature of summaries, which can be shortened or lengthened according to the writer’s needs.

5 introduces paraphrasing, with an example.

6 asks students to evaluate three paraphrases of a short text. As with (3) this is suitable for pair work.

7 demonstrates three techniques that are widely used in paraphrasing. Although these can be taught separately, students should be told that it is common to use them together.

8 practises paraphrasing techniques separately and jointly.

9 offers extra paraphrasing practice if required.

10 demonstrates the use of synonyms and explains that not all synonyms are equally valid.

11 illustrates the use of synonyms in a short text.

12 provides a matching exercise with common academic nouns and verbs. Note that this list is far from complete but gives many more common items.

13 gives an opportunity to use some of these synonyms.

## 1.7 References and Quotations

Referencing is an essential skill at any level of higher education and this unit provides examples of accurate referencing. However, as this is such a complex subject students need to use a more detailed source for full details of the referencing system used by their school or department – see companion website for links.

1 presents the methods of giving citations for summaries and quotations.

2 reminds students of the reasons for referencing. The exercise could be completed in pairs.

3 explains the range of reference systems. Individual students need to follow this up by studying the details of the system that their department expects them to use.

4 explains how quotations can be employed in students’ work. As with other sections, there is a lot of detail here which students will want to refer to when they are writing assignments.

5 gives practice in writing citations and references.

6, 7 & 8 deal with three further issues in this area: the special abbreviations used in citations, giving secondary references and internet references.

9 focuses on writing a list of references for the end of a paper. The example is of the Harvard system, which will not apply to all students, but most aspects of this model are relevant to the other systems.

Note that although this exercise introduces most common features of referencing, many more types of sources (e.g. oral testimony) may need to be referenced, which is why students need to use a comprehensive website for full details.

10 & 11 illustrate and practise reference verbs (or verbs of reference) which are generally used when mentioning sources. Using these suitably can only be achieved with practice, but these sections introduce the subject, and students should aim to take note of these verbs as their reading develops.

## 1.8 Avoiding Plagiarism

This unit introduces students to the problems of plagiarism, an issue of wide concern in academia. It explains different types of plagiarism and illustrates acceptable ways of acknowledging sources through citation.

1 defines plagiarism and explains why students need to understand its dangers.

2 provides an example of the commonest form of plagiarism and could be completed with a partner.

3 explains that plagiarism can take many forms, some less obvious than others. It should be answered by students working in groups or pairs to promote discussion.

4 gives examples of summarising and paraphrasing a short text, in both acceptable and unacceptable ways. This illustrates some of the situations in (3).

5 provides revision of the citation process.

6 offers further practice in writing citations.

7 The text is deliberately opaque. This section is designed to suggest ways of understanding difficult vocabulary items.

8 It is worth emphasising that not all new vocabulary needs to be learned. Students need to prioritise.

9 illustrates some common pairs of similar and, hence, confusing items. Teachers may have other examples.

10 These phrases do not need to be learned but are provided for reference.

## 1.9 Contrasting Sources

This unit explains that in the introductory section of a paper it is usual to refer to the work of other writers on a topic. These writers may deal with various aspects of the same subject. Students are expected to follow this pattern in their own writing.

1 gives an example of this format, on the subject of student expectations of higher education, which students are asked to analyse. As an introductory exercise this could be completed in pairs.

2 This is a follow-up exercise using the same topic. It could be set as homework.

3 involves reading three texts which present differing approaches to the subject of gender pay equality and then writing a paragraph which contrasts the different viewpoints. Before the writing task is attempted students must fully understand Texts 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3, so it might be worth setting up groups of three to discuss each text in turn. The writing can then be done individually.

4 gives suitable structures for presenting and balancing different sources.

5 gives practice in comparing and summarising two different approaches to the same question.

6 Accurate use of conjunctions is vital for good writing, and this section demonstrates their role.

7 & 8 Different kinds of conjunctions are shown here. Stronger students may not need to complete all the exercises.

9 offers a more extended text to practice conjunctions.

10 & 11 Conjunctions of opposition may cause the most difficulty for students, so this section gives further practice.

## 1.10 Organising Paragraphs

Paragraphs were briefly introduced in Unit 1.1, and here the focus is on their organisation. Students will write more coherently if they think in terms of building an argument in a series of well-linked paragraphs.

1 analyses an example paragraph on the topic of urban decentralisation, but it should be explained that paragraphs have no set structure and can consist of many different sentence types – as shown in 2) and 3).

2 & 3 both use paragraphs on the same subject of decentralisation (it may be necessary to explain this concept to some students). In (2) students have to organise the structure of the paragraph by thinking about the function of each sentence. In (3) they have to find the functions and also identify the cohesion of the paragraph.

4 provides the full text of three paragraphs so that students can analyse the overall structure and linkage.

5 gives phrases for beginning paragraphs and joining them together.

6 asks students to write two paragraphs on trams, using the notes, to practise organising their structure using conjunctions and other phrases.

7 offers more practice, if needed.

8 explains the use of reference words to provide cohesion.

9 These words are practised by analysing a short text.

10 demonstrates the risk of confusing the reader.

11 & 12 give an additional opportunity to use these words.

## 1.11 Introductions and Conclusions

Unit 1.2 discussed the space needed for introductions and conclusions. Here the aim is to clarify the components generally found in these sections of an essay, along with the standard order in which they are presented. However, it should be explained that there is no ‘normal’ format, and much will depend on the length and purpose of the paper. It is worth reminding students that for coursework, introductions are normally written after the main body is completed.

1 Part (a) is best completed in pairs, to give opportunity for discussion. Part (b) may be better studied individually at first, and then discussed by the whole class.

2 gives an example introduction, containing the seven components generally found in introductions. Again, it should be stressed that not every essay introduction will contain all of these.

3 deals with a common difficulty – getting started on writing. By practising with some of these titles (or others selected by the teacher) this difficulty may be overcome. Get students to compare their sentences and criticise each other’s suggestions.

4 & 5 follow the same pattern as (1) with conclusions. There is perhaps more variation with the structure of conclusions than with introductions, and much depends on the topic. However, it should be stressed that every paper needs a final section that includes most of these components.

6 This gives further practice in ordering the components of a conclusion.

7 Definitions are often needed in introductions, and these examples introduce the topic.

8 introduces category words, useful in many definitions.

9 & 10 provide more academic examples. It would be useful to ask students to define subjects from their own area of study.

## 1.12 Editing and Proofreading

This unit explains the final stages of the writing process. Editing is clearly not possible in exams, but proofreading should be attempted both in exams and for coursework.

1 & 2 suggest guidelines for editing and provide an example of a flawed introduction which students are asked to comment on. This is followed by an improved version which contains some of the suggestions made above. It might be helpful to ask students to complete (2) in pairs or groups.

3 continues the introduction to the same paper and requires students to repeat the process of criticism and rewriting (academic style is dealt with later in this unit).

4 introduces proofreading. The difficulty that students face here is identifying relatively minor errors which can, nevertheless, confuse the reader.

5 is designed to raise student awareness of the most common areas of error.

6 & 7 practise proofreading at both sentence and paragraph level.

8 revises the main points of the unit.

9 Style is a difficult subject to teach, but as an introduction, examples of good and poor style can be compared.

10 gives guidelines that are generally applicable, although, as ever, exceptions may be found.

11 offers more examples of unsuitable style.

12 deals with the common tendency to include redundant material.

13 suggests that varying sentence length creates a better style. It may be argued that many journal articles contain lengthy sentences, but these are not ideal models for aspiring writers.

14 & 15 explain the importance of using a cautious style, especially in certain situations, and provide practice.

## Progress Check 1

Teachers should use these questions to establish how well students have assimilated the preceding sections. However, they do not have to be treated as an exam. They could be completed in pairs, to promote discussion, or for homework, as teachers see fit.

# Part 2: Elements of Writing

In contrast to Part 1, the components of Part 2 are included to provide remedial material as and when required either by the teacher or individual students. This part is not intended to be taught from end to end, and students should be told that it is organised alphabetically to help them find the materials they need.

## 2.1 Comparisons

As a warmer for this subject ask students to compare weather/prices/food in two different places, e.g. ‘the weather here is wetter and warmer than in my country’. This will be echoed in the final exercise in the unit comparing Barcelona with a city known to the student.

1 offers revision of the basic structures of comparison. Note that Unit 2.5 Numbers offers more practice with quantitative comparison.

2 This exercise illustrates the use of comparison in a short text.

3 reminds students of the use of superlatives.

4 revises the structures presented in the first section.

5 provides further revision by asking students to identify errors. This could be usefully completed in pairs.

6 provides extra practice; stronger students may not need to complete this.

7 asks students to write a comparison of Barcelona with a city they know, perhaps the capital of their country. Clearly, they do not need to know all the details of their city: these can be invented if necessary.

## 2.2 Definite articles

1 revises the use of definite and indefinite articles.

2 provides the main rules for using definite articles.

3 explains the principal difficulty faced by students: deciding when a noun phrase is specific and so needs the definite article.

4 offers further practice at paragraph level.

## 2.3 Examples

1 illustrates the value of providing suitable examples.

2 offers the phrases used to give examples. Students are asked to think of relevant examples, so some may find it easier to complete this with a partner.

3 & 4 give further practice at paragraph level.

5 deals with restatement, which is often used by writers to clarify or give more detail.

## 2.4 Nouns and Adjectives

1 & 2 The list of nouns is not exhaustive but offers a useful starting point. Students should discuss any which are unclear with a partner, so they feel confident in using them in their work.

3 Students sometimes confuse the noun and adjective forms; this exercise should help clarify some common examples.

4 Writing example sentences is a demanding task and could be attempted in pairs or groups.

5 Learning adjectives in pairs of opposites is an efficient method. Students can be asked to write further examples to practise any adjectives they are unsure of.

6 The adjectives in the table are quite common, but can still cause problems, so are worth revising. Students should be able to tackle this individually.

7 provides additional practice with nouns and adjectives.

## 2.5 Numbers

In most fields of study students are expected to include statistical evidence to support their ideas. This is particularly important in fields such as Business and Economics but may be met in almost any discipline.

1 deals with the basic vocabulary of numbers. Non-native speakers may find numbers a challenging topic, so it may be worth providing more examples for weaker students, or practising with simple questions: ‘what’s the population of your country?’

2 Many students find percentages a confusing subject, but as they are critical in many areas they may need further revision.

3 provides a range of expressions which can be used to simplify numerical information. Students should be clear that these are effective in some, but not all, situations, but familiarity with them will improve reading comprehension.

4 gives practice in writing about statistical data.

5 provides further practice if the teacher feels it necessary.

## 2.6 Passives

Teaching the appropriate use of the passive and active voices might be best done on a remedial basis, when students feel confident and can produce quite accurate work.

1 highlights the most common use of the two voices.

2 explains how passive phrases are constructed.

3 demonstrates the most common uses of the passive in academic work.

4 introduces the common use of adverbs in passive constructions.

5 The intention of this exercise is to show how a text can be made more interesting by a mixture of passive and active. But make clear there are no hard-and-fast rules or definite answers.

## 2.7 Prepositions

It may be useful to teach this unit thoroughly with certain classes, but in other cases individual students may find the subject helpful on a remedial basis.

1 emphasises the importance of using prepositions correctly. Some students may find the range of prepositional phrases overwhelming, but the table presents a method of having a clear overview of the topic.

2 reinforces the ideas in (1).

3, 4 & 5 practise some of the most common uses of prepositions with nouns, in phrases, and for place and time. Students could be encouraged to add to the examples of prepositions in phrases.

6 provides paragraph-level practice with prepositional use.

7 & 8 Prepositions with verbs is probably the most difficult area for students. The list given here is not exhaustive but includes many common combinations.

## 2.8 Punctuation

This unit provides a lot of detailed information which weaker students may find hard to process at first; they can be encouraged to use it as a reference source as their writing develops.

1–8 Although some areas of punctuation are in a state of flux, notably the use of capitals, commas and hyphens, it is still useful to know the rules which apply to most areas. Correct punctuation is important to help the reader understand the writer’s ideas and is especially critical with lists of references, to demonstrate an awareness of academic conventions.

9 This exercise is suitable for completion in pairs.

10 Quite a challenging text to punctuate; again, it could be discussed with a partner.

## 2.9 Singular or Plural?

When to use plural forms can be confusing for some, but this is another topic which students could be referred to on a remedial basis.

1 These five areas are the most common cause of difficulty.

2 introduces a range of ‘group’ phrases that can cause errors.

3 One problem with teaching countable and uncountable nouns is that there is a trend to make some uncountable nouns plurals, e.g. ’accommodations’ is quite common in American English. The final section, on the changes of meaning, is worth focusing on.

4 & 5 provide further practice at sentence level.

## 2.10 Time Markers

In many disciplines students may need to write a narrative of events happening in a sequence. In order to make clear the order of events, ‘time markers’ are used. This unit introduces and practises these words.

1 provides an example paragraph and guide to the main uses of these markers, notably the tenses associated with them.

2 Note that in this exercise both alternatives are sometimes possible but with different meanings, e.g. in g) ‘while giving the lecture’ suggests she was interrupted throughout the lecture, which would be unusual!

3 explains where the present perfect tense is used, in comparison with the simple past or present tenses.

4 This exercise requires study of the main stages of Napoleon’s life before completing the paragraph.

5 provides further practice at paragraph level.

## 2.11 Academic Vocabulary: Verbs and Adverbs

1 Students need to learn to identify main verbs as the key to understanding sentences. This unit introduces the rather formal kind of verbs often used in academic work. Note that synonyms are examined in Unit 1.6.

2 The exercise should be attempted in pairs. Note that as with the nouns, not all the synonyms provided in the Answer Key are exact.

3 introduces the use of adverbs. It is worth mentioning that adverbs commonly employed in narrative, e.g. ‘luckily’ or ‘surprisingly’, are not generally suitable for more objective writing. Students do not need to memorise all the examples, just to understand their main uses in written work.

4 provides practice in using the adverbs from the table in 3) at sentence level.

## 2.12 Visual Information

This unit illustrates the more common types of visual devices, but students may meet more complex examples in textbooks and journals.

1 asks students to match nine basic types of visuals with the examples.

2 presents the language of line graphs. International students may have problems with some of the irregular past tenses, e.g. grow/grew. For further practice students could be asked to describe some of the charts in (1).

3 provides some language for describing charts and offers a model.

4 explains that correct labelling is important, especially in longer papers with many visuals.

5 & 6 provide further practice with describing charts. Students can be reminded that they should only mention the most significant features.

## Progress Check 2

The same comments apply here as in the previous set of questions. Teachers should feel free to use these in any way they want, including, of course, as a basic check on the understanding of individual students or the entire class.

# Part 3: Writing Models

The units in this part are primarily designed for individual rather than classroom use. Not every student has to write a literature review. However, if required, all these units can be taught in the classroom, although, in most cases, it would be best to require students to read the texts before the lesson, as they are quite lengthy.

## 3.1 Literature Reviews

1 & 2 The examples given here are from Politics and Urban Studies. If possible, further examples from the students’ own fields would be helpful.

3 It’s helpful to explain that students are more likely to write literature reviews at master’s level.

4 Students should be told that the model is taken from Business Studies. However, the topic should be of wider interest.

## 3.2 Case Studies

1 could be usefully completed in pairs.

2 Again, the model is taken from Business Studies, but the subject (i.e. IKEA) should be familiar to most.

## 3.3 Longer Papers

1 & 2 This unit does not give an actual model longer paper, which would occupy many pages, but focuses on the organisation needed to produce one.

3 The format given is quite comprehensive, and not all papers will include all these sections.

## 3.4 Reports

1 Clearly, many students in the humanities will not have to write reports, but there is a wide range of disciplines where they may be required. It is worth remembering that students’ future employers may also expect this skill.

2 provides a basic structure for any subject.

3 deals in more detail with scientific reports, which often describe work conducted.

4 provides a model report of a dilemma regarding student housing.