

Assessing Writing: Is the ship watertight?

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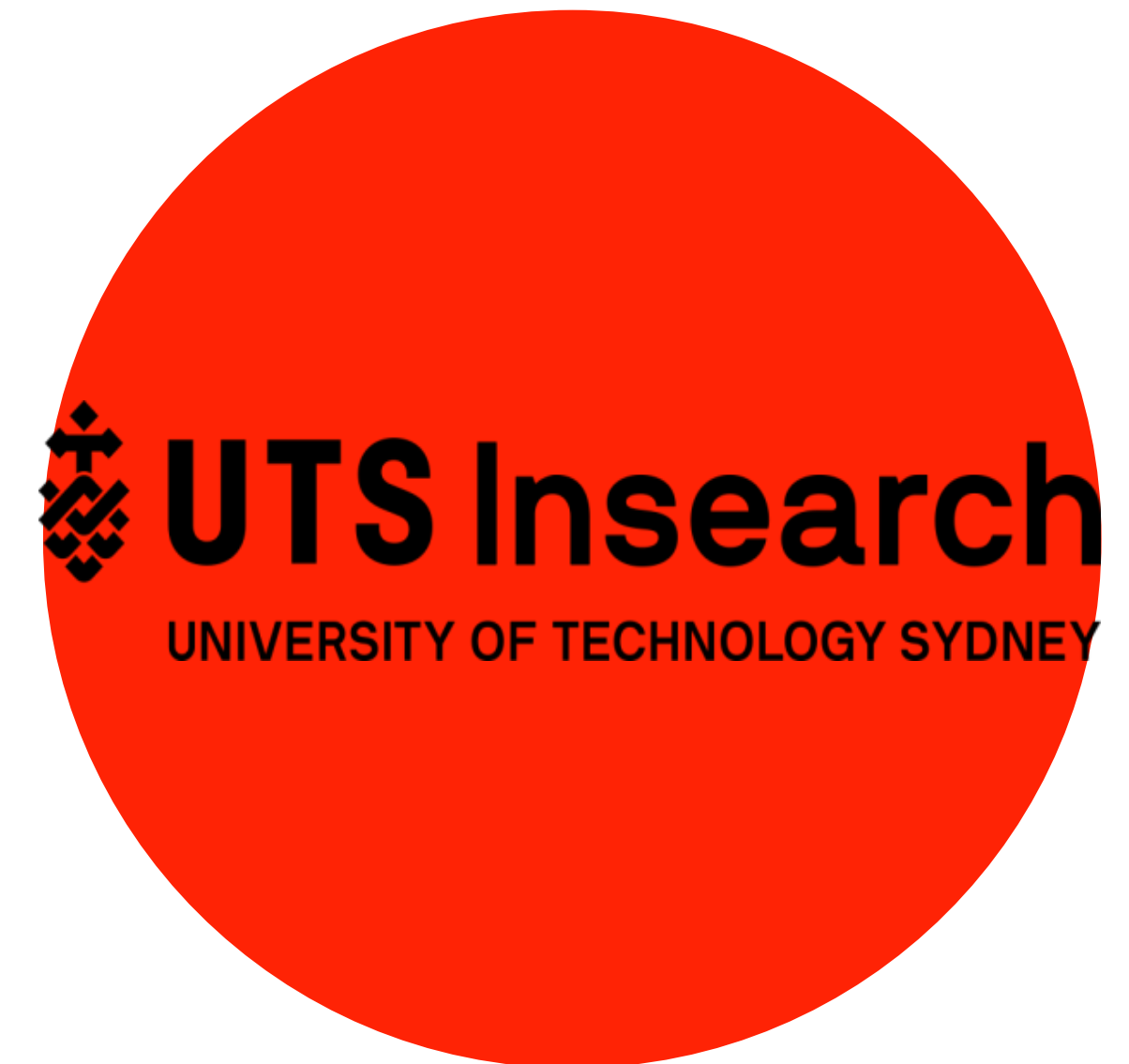
Assessing writing: Is the ship watertight?

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- 1) External comparison of exit standards (benchmarking)

- 2) Rating scale & descriptors

- 3) Standardisation & moderation



1. External comparison of exit standards (benchmarking)

1. Workshop with UTS academic staff

2. External criterion test (DELA)



1. Workshop with UTS academic staff:

What is an acceptable standard of writing?

- Senior staff from Bus., Eng. & IT faculties
- Sample writing exam scripts
- Outcome

Senior lecturers → Assoc. Dean

Range of grades, Fail → Credit;

Consensus on P and C grades;
Less concurrence on F grades.

“... the panel tended to evaluate (F) scripts more leniently” (O’Hagan et al. 2016)

2. External criterion test (DELA): *Diagnostic English Language Assessment*

- 82 exiting students
- Writing exam

Exit exam & DELA results compared

Exit exam: 16 Fail; 66 Pass or above

DELA: 18 At risk; 64 Borderline/Proficient

“Positive correlations ... in all cases” (O’Hagan et al. 2017)

“All correlations ... statistically significant”

2. Rating scale & descriptors

- Analytic scale
- Multiple criteria
- Assign multiple grades
- Analytic or holistic? (see Weigle 2002)
- Clear descriptors
- Easy to interpret
- Facilitates rater training
- IELTS-like

UTS Insearch
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Success Criteria for Writing Examinations (AE4b, AE5b)

	Content <small>Task achievement</small>	Structure <small>Coherence/cohesion</small>	Vocabulary <small>Lexical resource</small>	Grammar <small>Grammatical range/accuracy</small>
HD	Fully answered task with complete development of relevant information and few, if any, noticeable limitations. Excellent understanding of task is shown. An excellent amount of paraphrasing for this level. Correct use of citations.	Excellent organisation of whole text and paragraph levels with few, if any, noticeable problems for this level (e.g. topic sentences). Information is sequenced logically. Smoothly linked sentences within each paragraph – very good use of referents and linking words with ideas carried throughout.	Full range of appropriate vocabulary for this level with few, if any, noticeable problems. Skilful use of less common words and collocations. Consistent level of formality. Spelling errors are rare. Word form errors are rare.	Full range of structures for this level. Nearly all sentences are accurate (excluding article errors). All sentences clearly support meaning. No noticeable punctuation errors.
D	Very well answered task with suitable development of information and only minor limitations. Clear understanding of task is mostly shown. A very good amount of paraphrasing for this level. Mostly correct citations.	Very well organised at whole text and paragraph levels – there may be minor problems (e.g. topic sentences). Information is mostly sequenced logically. Most sentences are very well linked within each paragraph – good use of referents and linking words with ideas mostly easy to follow.	Wide range of appropriate vocabulary for this level with only minor problems. Very good use of less common words and collocations. Mostly consistent level of formality. May have minor spelling errors. There may be minor word form errors.	Wide range of structures for this level. Most sentences are accurate (excluding article errors), i.e. inaccurate sentences are few in number. Meaning is generally clear. There may be minor punctuation errors.
C	Generally well answered task with good development of information, but there are also some limitations (e.g. relevance). Understanding of task is generally shown. A good amount of paraphrasing for this level. There are more than two direct quotations (if any). Some citations may be incorrect.	Generally well organised at whole text and paragraph levels, but there may be some problems (e.g. topic sentences). There may be some problems in logic (i.e. relationships between ideas). Good sequencing of information. Sentences are generally well linked, but there may be some problems using referents/linking words – some ideas may be less easy to follow.	Good range of vocabulary for this level, but with some problems. May take risks with less common words and collocations, but with some errors. Level of formality may have some problems. May have some spelling errors. There may be some word form errors.	Good range of structures for this level. There are more accurate than inaccurate sentences (excluding article errors). Meaning tends to be clear. There may be some punctuation errors.
	Subsatisfactorily answered task with development of information, but there are	Subsatisfactorily organised at whole text and paragraph levels, but there are	Subsatisfactory but narrow range of vocabulary for this level with problems	Subsatisfactory (but narrow range of structures for this level)

2. Rating scale & descriptors

	Content Task achievement	Structure Coherence/cohesion	Vocabulary Lexical resource	Grammar Sentence structure
HD	Excellent			
D	Very good			
C	Good			
P	Satisfactory			
F3	Unsatisfactory			
F2	Poor			
F1	Very poor			

2. Rating scale & descriptors

Grammar sentence structure

- Range of sentence types (variety of simple, compound & complex sentences; range of complex structures)
- Accuracy
- Clarity of meaning
- Punctuation

Grammar Sentence structure
<p>Full range of structures for this level</p> <p>Nearly all sentences are accurate (excluding article errors).</p> <p>All sentences clearly support meaning.</p> <p>No noticeable punctuation errors</p>

2. Rating scale & descriptors

Vocabulary lexical resource

- Range of vocabulary
- Use of less common words and collocations
- Consistency of register
- Spelling
- Accuracy of word forms

a for Writing Examination

Vocabulary Lexical resource
<p>Full range of appropriate vocabulary for this level with few, if any, noticeable problems</p> <p>Skilful use of less common words and collocations</p> <p>Consistent level of formality</p> <p>Spelling errors are rare.</p> <p>Word form errors are rare.</p>

2. Rating scale & descriptors

Structure coherence & cohesion

- Whole text structure (introduction, body, conclusion)
- Paragraph structure (e.g. topic sentences)
- Logical sequencing of information
- Linking between sentences – ease of following ideas

IEY	Success Criteria
	Structure Coherence/cohesion
	Excellent organisation at whole text and paragraph levels with few, if any, noticeable problems for this level in e.g. topic sentences Information is sequenced logically. Smoothly linked sentences within each paragraph – very good use of referents and linking words with ideas carried throughout
	Very well organised at

2. Rating scale & descriptors

Content task achievement

AE 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

- Extent task is answered with relevant information
- Development of that information

AE 3, 4, 5

- Understanding of texts
- Amount of paraphrasing
- Citing



	Content Task achievement
HD	Fully answered task with complete development of relevant information and few, if any, noticeable limitations Excellent understanding of text/s shown An excellent amount of paraphrasing for this level Correct use of citations

2. Rating scale & descriptors

Content task achievement

AE 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

- Extent task is answered with relevant information
- Development of that information

AE 3, 4, 5

- Understanding of texts
- Amount of paraphrasing
- Citing

F3	<p>Unsatisfactorily answered task with development of information often irrelevant, incomplete or off topic</p> <p>Understanding of text/s not clearly shown</p> <p>An unsatisfactory amount of paraphrasing for this level</p> <p>There are several strings of copied text (unquoted or quoted).</p> <p>There may be no correct citations.</p>
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2. Rating scale & descriptors (footnotes: AE3 – 5)

Student production must reflect either the majority of a grade's descriptors to award that grade or a balance

A string of copied text contains five or more consecutive words.

Penalty on content for under length: 10-24% minus one grade, 25-49% minus two grades, 50+% minus th

Include copied strings in the word count, but not when assessing vocabulary and grammar.

Penalty for over 50% copying: **F1 in all categories**

Percentage of copying refers to the length of the script up to the recommended word limit.

reduction. Firstly, rapid urbanisation has becoming ^{or} ~~the~~ major site of economic ~~growth~~ growth in most countries, and coculate for a very high ~~benefit~~ benefit of national economic production.


3. Training, standardisation & moderation



UTS Insearch <small>UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY</small>				
Success Criteria for Writing Examinations (AE4b, AE5b)				
	Content <small>Task achievement</small>	Structure <small>Coherence/cohesion</small>	Vocabulary <small>Lexical resource</small>	Grammar <small>Sentence structure</small>
HD	Fully answered task with complete development of relevant information and few, if any, noticeable limitations Excellent understanding of task's focus An excellent amount of paraphrasing for this level Correct use of citations	Excellent organisation of whole text and paragraph levels with few, if any, noticeable problems for this level in e.g. topic sentences Information is sequenced logically Smoothly linked sentences within each paragraph – very good use of referents and linking words with ideas carried throughout	Full range of appropriate vocabulary for this level with few, if any, noticeable problems Skilful use of less common words and collocations Consistent level of formality Spelling errors are rare Word form errors are rare	Full range of structures for this level Nearly all sentences are accurate (excluding article errors) All sentences clearly support meaning No noticeable punctuation errors
D	Very well answered task with suitable development of information and only minor limitations Clear understanding of task's focus A very good amount of paraphrasing for this level Mostly correct citations	Very well organised at whole text and paragraph levels – there may be minor problems in e.g. topic sentences Information is mostly sequenced logically Most sentences are very well linked within each paragraph – good use of referents and linking words with ideas mostly easy to follow	Wide range of appropriate vocabulary for this level with only minor problems Very good use of less common words and collocations Mostly consistent level of formality May have minor spelling errors There may be minor word form errors	Wide range of structures for this level Most sentences are accurate (excluding article errors), i.e. inaccurate sentences are few in number Meaning is generally clear There may be minor punctuation errors
C	Generally well answered task with good development of information, but there are also some limitations (e.g. relevance) Understanding of task's focus generally shown A good amount of paraphrasing for this level There are more than two direct quotations (if used) Some citations may be incorrect	Generally well organised at whole text and paragraph levels, but there may be some problems in e.g. topic sentences There may be some problems in logic (i.e. relationships between ideas) Good sequencing of information Sentences are generally well linked, but there may be some problems using referents / linking words – some ideas may be less easy to follow	Good range of vocabulary for this level, but with some problems May take risks with less common words and collocations, but with some errors Level of formality may have some problems May have some spelling errors There may be some word form errors	Good range of structures for this level There are more accurate than inaccurate sentences (excluding article errors) Meaning tends to be clear There may be some punctuation errors
	Satisfactorily answered task with development of information, but some limitations	Satisfactorily organised at whole text and paragraph levels, but some limitations	Satisfactory but narrow range of vocabulary for this level with limitations	Satisfactory but narrow range of structures for this level

3. Training

- Thorough knowledge of the descriptors
- Awareness of the levels they represent



UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

Success Criteria for Writing Examinations (AE4b, AE5b)

	Content <small>Task achievement</small>	Structure <small>Coherence/cohesion</small>	Vocabulary <small>Lexical resource</small>	Grammar <small>Sentence structure</small>
HD	Fully answered task with complete development of relevant information and few, if any, noticeable limitations. Excellent understanding of text's shown. An excellent amount of paraphrasing for this level. Correct use of citations.	Excellent organisation of whole text and paragraph levels with few, if any, noticeable problems for this level in e.g. topic sentences. Information is sequenced logically. Smoothly linked sentences within each paragraph – very good use of referents and linking words with ideas carried throughout.	Full range of appropriate vocabulary for this level with few, if any, noticeable problems. Skillful use of less common words and collocations. Consistent level of formality. Spelling errors are rare. Word form errors are rare.	Full range of structures for this level. Nearly all sentences are accurate (excluding article errors). All sentences clearly support meaning. No noticeable punctuation errors.
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C	Generally well answered task with good development of information, but there are also some limitations (e.g. relevance). Understanding of text's generally shown. A good amount of paraphrasing for this level. There are more than two direct quotations (if any). Some citations may be incorrect.	Generally well organised at whole text and paragraph levels, but there may be some problems in e.g. topic sentences. There may be some problems in logic (i.e. relationships between ideas). Good sequencing of information. Sentences are generally well linked, but there may be some problems using referents / linking words – some ideas may be less easy to follow.	Good range of vocabulary for this level, but with some problems. May take risks with less common words and collocations, but with some errors. Level of formality may have some problems. May have some spelling errors. There may be some word form errors.	Good range of structures for this level. There are more accurate than inaccurate sentences (excluding article errors). Meaning tends to be clear. There may be some punctuation errors.
	Satisfactorily answered task with development of information. Not shown yet.	Satisfactorily organised at whole text and paragraph levels. Not shown yet.	Satisfactory but narrow range of vocabulary for this level with problems.	Satisfactory but narrow range of structures for this level.

3. Standardisation

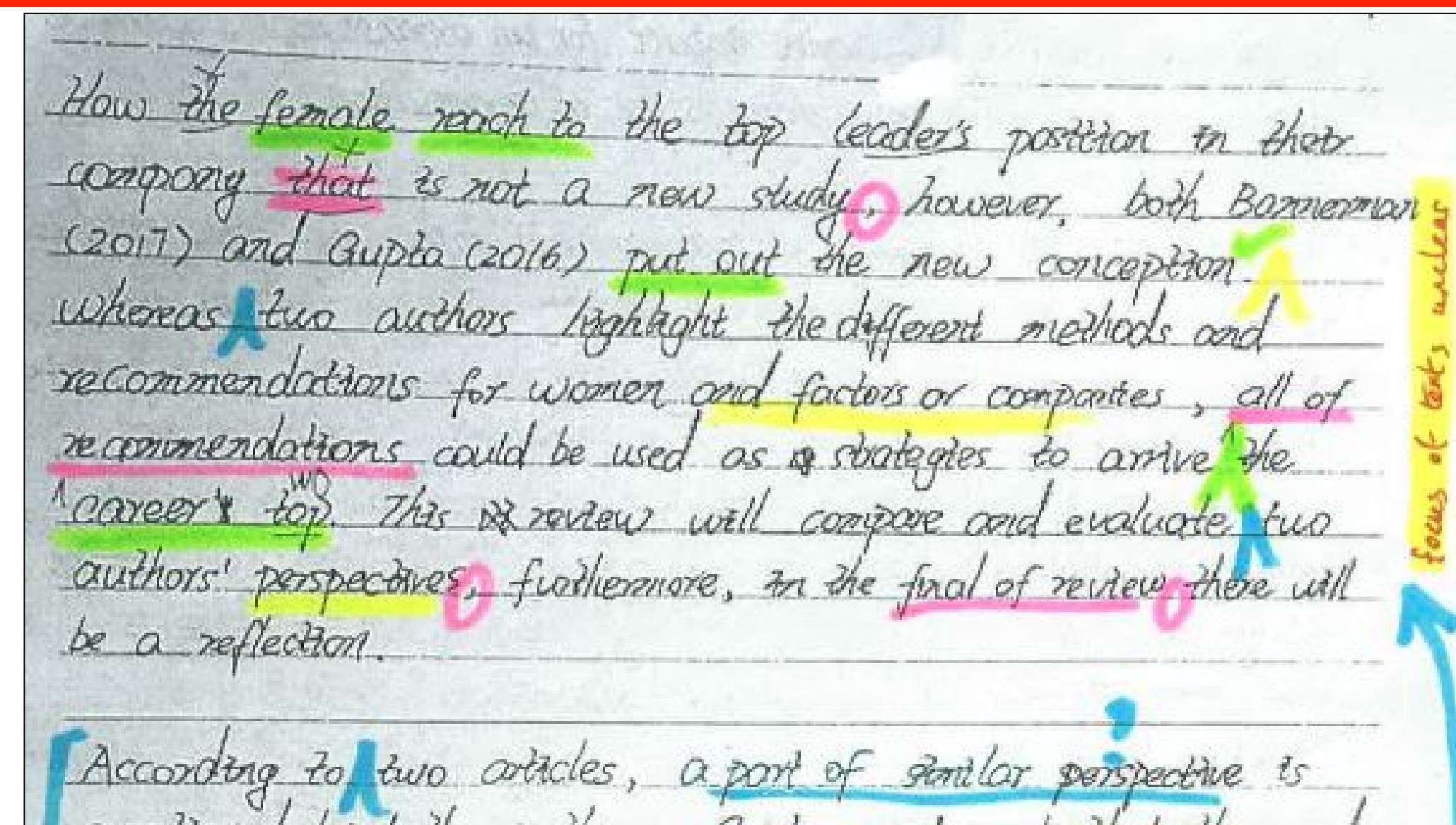
- Thorough knowledge of descriptors
- Awareness of the levels they represent
- 3 Standardisation sessions per 10 weeks
- Grade & discuss sample scripts

from career success. More specifically, this essay will compare and evaluate these articles in relation to their perspectives on the barriers of female leaders and some recommendations for women to achieve success in their career.

Although the two articles discuss the challenges of female leadership in broad terms, they differ in almost every other respect. To begin with, both authors assert that it is common to find unfair rules in many areas, which limit the development of female career. Furthermore, Bannerman cites in the journal suggesting that women are in a double bind when they adopt male behaviours (Hopkins 2013, cited in Bannerman, para 8). Gupta, however, strongly points out that it is too difficult for women leaders to balance work and family in India. In fact, women need to take more responsibility for family because of the traditional society stereotypes (paras 4-5). A second suggestion of both authors is

3. Standardisation

- Thorough knowledge of descriptors
- Awareness of the levels they represent
- 3 Standardisation sessions per 10 weeks
- Grade & discuss sample scripts
- Compare with standard & supporting comments
- Colour-annotated scripts



	Content (task achievement)	Structure (coherence/cohesion)	
Grade	F3 → F2	F3	
Comment	<p>Unsatisfactory answer – fails to clearly convey the focus, context or perspectives of the texts</p> <p>Understanding of the texts sometimes but not convincingly shown</p> <p>Satisfactory-to-good amount of paraphrasing – some short copied strings (P)</p> <p>Penalty for under length</p>	<p>Unsatisfactory</p> <p>Coherence affected by weak preview and weak topic sentences (no controlling ideas)</p> <p>Cohesion affected by referent and linking problems</p>	<p>Man</p> <p>Som</p> <p>offer deep mas.</p> <p>Som (P)</p> <p>Man</p>

3. Standardisation & moderation

- Thorough knowledge of descriptors
- Awareness of the levels they represent
- 3 Standardisation sessions per 10 weeks
- Grade & discuss sample scripts
- Compare with standard & supporting comments
- Colour-annotated scripts
- **Exam marking involves moderation**

	Content (task achievement)	Structure (coherence/ cohesion)	Vocabulary
NLICC Grade	P	P	P
Sydney Grade	F2	F3	F3
Comment	<p>Unsatisfactory: development is weak and often irrelevant (F3)</p> <p>Poor understanding of the texts</p> <p>Only 1 citation (Gardner not cited)</p> <p>*41% is copied (185 words)</p>	<p>Satisfactory overall structure but unsatisfactory at paragraph level.</p> <p>Many problems in logic, relationship between and sequencing of ideas</p> <p>General lack of cohesion makes ideas difficult to follow</p>	<p>Range limited by a copying</p> <p>Many introduced w irrelevant, e.g. <i>water</i>, <i>loss of habitat</i>, <i>adaptation</i></p> <p>Many word/collocation incl. wrong/missing</p> <p>Significant sp. & W e.g. <i>has v 'gas'</i>, <i>aff</i>, <i>sources v services</i></p>

References:

Four Corners 2019, television program, ABC TV, 6 May.

Jacobs, H., Zinkgraf, S., Wormuth, D., Hartfiel, V. & Hughey, J. 1981, *Testing ESL composition: a practical approach*, Newbury House, Rowley, MA.

O'Hagan, S., Czajkowski, M., Elder, C. & Knoch, U. 2016, *UTS Insearch Assessment Review Stage 5: Level AE 5B writing standards verification; Level AE 5B graduate perceptions survey*, University of Melbourne: Language Testing Research Centre.

O'Hagan, S., Wattam, C. & Knoch, U. 2017, *UTS Insearch Assessment Review Stage 6: Statistics for language assessment training AE Level 5B external criterion comparison*, University of Melbourne: Language Testing Research Centre.

TEQSA 2019, *Guidance note: ELICOS direct entry*, viewed 27 May 2019, <<https://www.teqsa.gov.au/latest-news/publications/guidance-note-elicos-direct-entry>>.

Weigle, S.C. 2002, *Assessing writing*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

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Thank you!

Q&A