



Focus on success: **GCSE English Language**

Writing

Pre-session reading

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Using this pack

This pack is designed to be facilitated by a Head of Department/Subject Leader of English, but these materials can also be used by individual teachers for self-delivered purposes. Pitched with new and experienced teachers in mind, the materials can be used flexibly and adapted accordingly. You may choose to deliver the course in the sequence provided or use the pre-session reflection and route map to build a more bespoke session that focuses on the areas your colleagues (or you) are less confident teaching.

We have collated content from our hub network meeting materials and other AQA resources to create this teaching pack, which has been designed to support you and your teaching colleagues in understanding the assessment and preparing students for the writing tasks in their GCSE English Language exams.

During the course of the session, you will explore a variety of ways in which students' writing skills can be developed in order to be successful in their responses to the writing tasks on Paper 1 and Paper 2.

There will also be opportunities to explore:

- assessment objectives and the mark scheme
- examiner insights and feedback
- typical features of different levels of response
- example student responses
- teaching ideas, strategies and activities to support students.

Before the session

- When delivering the session to your colleagues, ask each to complete the pre-session reflection (page 9 in this booklet).
- Use these responses to tailor the training session to the needs of your colleagues. The route map on page 6 will help you plan which activities to focus on in the session.
- If delivered to colleagues, each should have a copy of the Activities and Handouts booklets.

Running the session

- When delivering to your colleagues, establish the specific areas colleagues indicated they wanted to focus on.
- Explain that this session isn't an attempt to prescribe how to teach writing (in a broad sense) and instead focuses on clarifying aspects of the assessment and contains some teaching ideas to develop students' writing skills and strategies to support students in the exam itself. (Though we would encourage you to use this as an opportunity to also reflect on pedagogy and practice in teaching writing at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4).
- The presentation slides will guide you through the activities.
- The post-session reflection should be completed at the end of the session.

After the session

- If the session is delivered in a group context, discuss how you can support each other to embed the learning in your teaching.

Summary of activities

Below is a brief overview of the activities which are provided in the *Activities booklet*. These are written from the perspective of group delivery by a Head of Department/Subject Leader of English, but the activities can still be attempted when completing this pack on your own as part of your professional development.

Activity 1: Box-planning

Box planning is one way of thinking spatially. Remember, students have the option of using the image provided for ideas to support their imagination. It could be that the image reminds them of something from their own experience. **It is important to note that students' responses must be connected in subject/topic/theme to the task provided in the exam.** For example, the image provided on slide 20 is of a lake, therefore students could use boxes to help them plan ideas about the different elements of this mountainous area, such as mountains, birds and people.

Having reflected on the different ways students engage with the image (as cited in the comments from the examiner reports), invite colleagues to try out this suggested planning strategy that students can use in the exam. You could take this further by asking colleagues to proceed to write a short piece of writing in controlled, timed conditions. This serves as a reminder of the pressured context students are performing under, which is perhaps helpful to be mindful of as the session continues (plus, it's a rare opportunity to be creative!).

Activity 2: Writing in action – Paper 1

Invite colleagues to read the extracts from the two student responses, considering which is the better response and why. Then use the full version of Extract 1 to explore features/qualities that typify a Level 2 response (note, these are responses to the November 2017 narrative writing task: write a story, set in a mountainous area).

Activity 3: Level 3 responses

Guide colleagues to read the two complete Level 3 student responses (to the same writing task) in the *Handout booklet* (page 13). They then answer the questions, completing the grid and annotating the responses accordingly. This activity is designed to exemplify that there are different, equally-valid ways of achieving the same level of achievement.

Activity 4: Level 4 responses

Similar to Activity 2, colleagues compare two extracts from Level 4 responses. Encourage colleagues to engage with the activity before looking at the examiner commentary provided. Again, the full responses are provided for reference and further exploration, if desired.

Activity 5: Writing in action – Paper 2

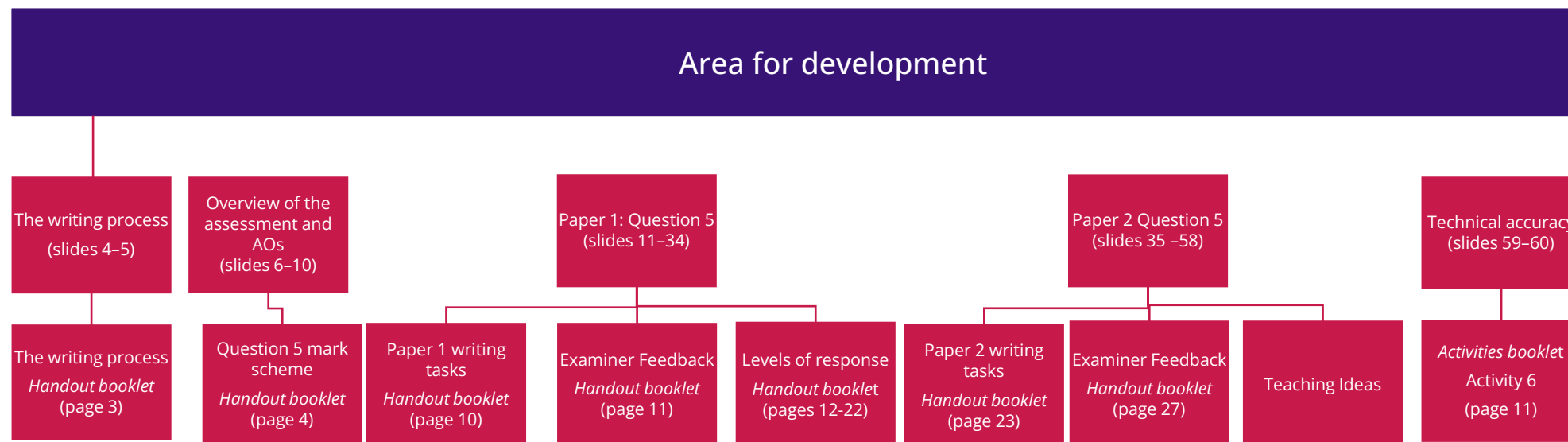
An example student response for each level of performance is provided in the *Handout booklet*. Please note, these are responses to the November 2017 Paper 2 writing task: Write a speech for your school or college Leavers' Day to explain what you think makes a good education. Decide how you want colleagues to engage with these responses. You could look

at each level in turn or focus on specific levels, and either use the exemplars to have a go at identifying the typical features of each level of response or search for evidence of the typical features that are already highlighted on the presentation slides. Go on to look at Level 4 responses in more depth by completing the grid provided in the booklet and annotating the response accordingly. The purpose is to deconstruct how students writing at this level produce coherent and cohesive arguments.

Activity 6: Technical accuracy

The session is concluded by touching on technical accuracy, with a specific focus on the importance of sentences and how students can progress up through the mark scheme by varying sentence forms and structures. Invite colleagues to read through the four short extracts provided and rank them in order of success.

Focus on writing route map



Pre-session health check

Reflecting on your teaching experience, rate your current level of confidence in the teaching of writing (for Paper 1 and 2) and use the following prompts to complete the table below:

- What do you enjoy about teaching writing?
- What do you find challenging?
- Which aspects of the writing assessment are secure and where do you need more clarity?
- Thinking of your GCSE teaching group(s), what level(s) are they currently working at and what's their potential? In which areas do they need more support/development?

Paper	Confident – areas of strength/secure knowledge	Less confident – areas needing clarity/more support
Paper 1		
Paper 2		

Post-session health check

Grade the area of development statements according to your confidence where 0 is not confident at all and 5 is very confident.

Area of development	Grading 0-5	Reasons/notes
Paper 1		
Paper 2		

Notes

Notes

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