

GAC015 Academic English III: Reading & Writing Skills

GAC Academic English

What this module is, and how it is marked

GAC015 is the last written English module, and its output is an in-depth academic essay built from sources you have found, judged and combined yourself.

Assessment: an **annotated bibliography** 注释性参考书目, a substantial **essay** 论文 with a reference list, reading tasks, and **coursework**. The essay is the largest single piece of writing in the programme.

- The essay is marked on **argument**, not on coverage. A well-supported narrow claim beats a broad description of everything you read.
- △ Referencing is now assumed. Errors in it cost marks that the content cannot win back.

Issues in education: critical and analytical reading

- **Critical reading** 批判性阅读 asks what the author wants you to accept, what they offer for it, and what they leave out.
- **Analytical** 分析性 reading breaks an argument into its parts: claim, evidence, warrant, and the assumption joining them.
- The **assumption** 假设 is where most academic disagreement actually lives, and it is almost never stated.

Worked example. “Class sizes should be cut, because smaller classes raise attainment.”

Claim: cut class sizes. Evidence: smaller classes raise attainment. Assumption: the money spent doing so could not raise attainment more some other way.

Nobody wrote the assumption down, and it is the thing an examiner wants you to notice.

Issues in medicine: evaluating and referencing sources

- **Select, evaluate and reference** — the three verbs of the module, in that order.

- Prefer a **peer-reviewed** 同行评审 source where one exists, and say when you could not find one.
- Record the citation as you read, not afterwards. This is the same rule as GAC002 and it is still where accidental plagiarism starts.

Legal issues: building an argument from data

- An **argument** is a claim plus reasons a reader can check, in an order that leads somewhere.
- Data does not speak. *Crime fell 8%* becomes an argument only when you say what it is evidence for, and against what alternative explanation.
- Handle a **counter-argument** properly: state it at its strongest, then answer it. A counter-argument stated weakly is a signal to the marker that you could not answer the strong version.

Political issues: the annotated bibliography

- An **annotation** 注释 is not a summary. It summarises, then **judges**: how reliable, how relevant, how you will use it.
- Sixty words per source is usually enough, and the judgement should occupy half of them.
- Keep the research question at the top of the page. Every annotation is written towards it.

Worked example. A usable annotation.

“Wang (2022) surveys 1,200 households in three cities on street-tree cooling, with temperature logging rather than self-report. The sample is urban only, so it says nothing about towns, but the measurement method is stronger than the studies it cites. I will use it for the size of the effect and flag the urban limit.”

Summary, judgement, limitation, use. Four moves, sixty words.

Communications: planning and writing the in-depth essay

- Plan to the **word count**: an essay of 2,000 words has roughly six body paragraphs, so the outline has six lines.
- State the **thesis** in the introduction. Level III still expects the answer up front.
- Signpost across paragraphs, not only inside them: each opening sentence should tell a reader where the argument now stands.

- **Synthesis** across sources is the difference between Level II and Level III writing, and it is visible in whether your paragraphs are organised by idea or by author.

The future: revision and the final read

- Revise for **structure** first — an unfixable paragraph order cannot be rescued by better sentences.
- Then for **argument**: does every paragraph serve the thesis, and is every claim supported?
- Then for **language**, and only then. Editing sentences in a paragraph you are about to delete is the commonest waste of an evening.
- Read the final draft **aloud**. It is the fastest way to find a sentence that does not work, and it costs ten minutes.