

GAC008 Academic English II: Reading and Writing Skills

GAC008-aligned reading and writing practice; the centre's assessment brief and referencing rules set the requirements.

From the paragraph to the researched text

GAC008 builds the researched text — reading critically, avoiding plagiarism in practice, and citing properly.

Referencing is now marked, not merely expected

- Information literacy is a named outcome: selecting appropriate research material and referencing it accurately.
- Referencing is marked directly.
- An essay with good ideas and no citations loses marks it cannot recover.

Your turn: the unrecoverable essay

Your turn

An essay has strong ideas and no citations. What does the marker see?

- ☐ A. A well-argued personal essay that deserves full credit
- ☐ B. A piece whose ideas cannot be traced to their sources, losing marks it cannot recover
- ☐ C. An essay that needs a longer conclusion
- ☐ D. A referencing style error

The features of academic writing

Feature	What it looks like
Impersonal voice	The study measures, rather than "I think"
Hedged claims	"Tends to", "may", "suggests" keep certainty honest
Defined terms	Key words get a stated definition before use
Evidence before conclusion	Support arrives first; the claim follows it

Nominalisation: why academic prose feels dense

- 1 **Start with the action** "We investigated the samples."
- 2 **Turn the process into a noun** "The investigation of the samples."
- 3 **See what changed** The verb becomes a noun phrase: nominalisation.
- 4 **Read dense text by reversing it** Unpack the noun back into who did what, then rebuild the sentence.

Decision

Nominalisation packs information; unpacking it restores the action.

Identify the genre before writing

Genre	Its shape, its reader
A report	Structured sections; a reader who needs findings fast
An essay	A sustained argument; a reader following reasoning
A case study	One instance examined in depth; a reader applying it
A review	Assesses existing work; a reader choosing what to read

Claim and evidence are different animals

- Distinguish a claim from the evidence that supports it.
- Most weak reading treats both as facts.
- A claim is the author's assertion; evidence is what they offer for it.

Stance, and the missing counter-argument

- Find the author's stance: what do they want you to accept, and where do they hedge?
- Mark the counter-argument if there is one.
- A text that never concedes anything is usually persuasion rather than analysis.

Worked example: one sentence, four labels

The sentence

"Although early trials were small, three subsequent studies found the same effect, which suggests the result is robust."

Claim: the result is robust. Evidence: three studies replicating. Concession: the early trials were small. Hedge: suggests.

Reading a sentence this way, four labels on one sentence, is the skill the unit is built on.

Notice

The concession and the hedge are as informative as the claim.

Your turn: label the sentence

Your turn

In "Although the sample was small, two later surveys confirmed the pattern, indicating the finding holds", what is the hedge?

- A. Although the sample was small
- B. Two later surveys
- C. Indicating
- D. The finding holds

Collocation: the partner word matters

You say	Not
conduct research	make research
draw a conclusion	take a conclusion
raise a question	give a question

Use the evidence

The wrong partner word reads as non-native even when the meaning is right.

Decode dense vocabulary systematically

- Decode unknown vocabulary and idiom from context, word parts and grammar — as in GAC002, but now in denser text.
- Context first: the surrounding explanation or contrast.
- Word parts next: the prefix and root carry a clue.
- Grammar last: the word's position tells you its role.

Record terms with a real sentence

Record new terms with a real sentence, not a translation — the sentence carries the collocation.

Complex sentences, used deliberately

- Level II expects complex sentences used deliberately.
- Subordination shows which idea matters — it is not decoration to sound advanced.
- The main clause carries the point; the subordinate clause carries its condition or context.

The cohesive devices

Device	Example
Reference words	"The trial... it... this approach"
Substitution	"A larger sample" replaces a repeated phrase
Ellipsis	The omitted words the reader can rebuild
Connectives	"Because", "although" fit the actual logic

The however-stuffed paragraph

A paragraph stuffed with however, moreover and furthermore is not cohesive — it signposts relationships that are not there.

Synthesis: one argument of your own

- Synthesis combines several sources into one argument of your own.
- Group sources by idea, not by author.
- One paragraph per idea, citing whoever supports it.

The test of synthesis

The test of synthesis: could a reader tell which sentence came from which source? If yes, you have summarised in sequence rather than synthesised.

Worked example: street trees, three sources, one sentence

Not synthesis

"Li (2020) says trees cool cities. Chen (2021) says the same. Wang (2022) says they need water."

One sentence per source; no relationship stated between them.

Synthesis

"Street trees measurably cool a city (Li, 2020; Chen, 2021), although the effect depends on irrigation in exactly the dry months when cooling matters most (Wang, 2022)."

One sentence, three sources, and a relationship no single source stated.

Your turn: spot the synthesis

Your turn

Which sentence is synthesis?

- A. Park (2021) found higher attendance. Luo (2022) found higher attendance too
- B. Attendance rose in both studies (Park, 2021; Luo, 2022), though neither measured why
- C. Park (2021) is a good source about attendance
- D. Attendance is an interesting topic with many studies

Citation points to the reference list

- A citation points to a full entry in the reference list.
- Both are marked.
- Every in-text citation must have a list entry; every list entry must be cited.

One style, used consistently

- Use one referencing style consistently.
- Which style matters far less than consistency.
- Follow the style your centre's brief names.

Evaluate a source before citing it

- 1 **Authority** Who wrote it, and are they in a position to know?
- 2 **Currency** Is it recent enough for a claim about now?
- 3 **Primary or secondary** Is it the original study, or someone's account of it?
- 4 **Then cite accordingly** A strong, current, primary source can carry a strong claim.

Decision

The strength of your citation limits the strength of your claim.

The secondary citation, honestly labelled

Citing a source you have not read

Citing a source you have not read, because another author cited it, is a secondary citation.

It must be labelled as one: cite the author who reported it, as cited in the source you read.

Presenting it as a directly-read source overstates what you did.

Your turn: the honest trail

Your turn

You cite a 1998 study that you only saw mentioned in a 2024 review. What is required?

- ☐ A. Cite the 1998 study as if you read it
- ☐ B. Cite it as reported in the 2024 review, labelled as a secondary citation
- ☐ C. Cite neither, because you read neither directly
- ☐ D. Cite the review but call it the 1998 study's finding without labels

Check yourself

- Name the four features of academic writing.
- In the worked sentence, which word was the hedge?
- What is the test that distinguishes synthesis from sequence-retelling?
- What must a secondary citation always carry?