

1. Learners & course

Learners would mostly be adults, studying for the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE). The online course would be a writing course focussing on the requirements of the exam, providing opportunities for analysis and practice of all task types in the paper.

2. Course fit

This conference would be held within the first month of the course. Prior to this the students would have done activities based on the basic facts of the CPE writing paper – length, task type, compulsory/optional elements, etc.

Ss would also know the basic requirements of CPE writing, part 1:

- Task focus (discursive)
- Purpose of input (provide 3 content points to be addressed)

3. Objectives

1. to help Ss analyse a CPE Paper 2 part 1 writing question
2. to help students plan for CPE Paper 2 Part 1 writing questions
3. to help students identify good features of CPE Paper 2 Part 1 answer

4. Numbers of learners

8-12 (divided into 2-3 teams for team work)

5. Materials and/or Links (see appendix)

- CPE Practice Tests 4
- CPE Handbook

6. Anticipated Problems with Solutions

One potential problem is the ability of the participants to identify two of the criteria from the question list in ET2 and ET3. If participants are new to Cambridge style writing tasks, then knowing the format and language content of a task answer would be very difficult to pinpoint.

To overcome this problem, I would provide a Week's Reading, which would include pages from the CPE handbook (or my own variation of it) explaining task type and format, and target language for reference. I have not included that here due to length factors, but I can provide it on request.

Activities or Procedure Page

1. Tasks or activities and stages

	Participant	Tutor
ET1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 post on their approach to planning Reply to other's posts Reply to queries about their own post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor Field queries Respond/thank participants Summarise e-tivity
ET2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to task input and questions as a group Reply to other's posts Reply to queries about their own post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor Field queries Respond/thank participants Summarise e-tivity Provide further feedback to group
ET3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to task input and questions individually Reply to other's posts Reply to queries about their own post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor Field queries Respond/thank participants Summarise e-tivity Provide further feedback to group
ET4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to sample input and questions as a group Reply to other's posts Reply to queries about their own post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor Field queries Respond/thank participants Summarise e-tivity Provide further feedback to group
Reflection Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 post on the conference activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor Field queries Summarise e-tivity Respond/thank participants

2. Grouping arrangements

	Post 1	Replies
ET1	individual	2 individual replies (with whole group)
ET2	team work	1 or more individual replies (with whole group)
ET3	individual	2 individual replies (with whole group)
ET4	team work	1 or more individual replies (with whole group)
Reflection Room	individual	-

3. Conference Time

Total conference time would be 7 days, divided thus:

ET1: 36 hours	ET2: 48 hours	ET3: 24 hours	ET4: 48 hours	ET5: 24 hours
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Each e-tivity would be opened sequentially near completion of the previous e-tivity in order to keep the important steps separate.

N.B. I realise that this timing might be rather demanding on participants, especially related to team work, but I have factored in the idea that they have already gained experience of both conferencing and team work in the weeks prior to this conference, thus are aware of the tools and methods at their disposal to make the best use of their time

4. Learning time: I would expect a total (asynchronous) time of 5-8 hours for each participant

5. Assessment

There would be no specific assessment for this part of the course, except as part of their overall participation grade. Further full writing tasks would be assessed in full in later conferences.

Conference Instructions

ET1: Spark – Planning

To what extent do you plan your writing?

Your writing for CPE will be assessed on both the organisation of the whole answer and on the organisation of individual paragraphs. This e-tivity has the objective of asking you to explain and consider your current planning practice.

Instructions

Post 1: Write a brief explanation of any planning you do for writing tasks and why you do it that way.
(If you generally don't plan, then explain why you don't.)

Reply 1: Respond to 2 posts: Ask for clarification, or comment on their explanation.

Reply 2: Reply to any comments to your Post 1 or clarify where asked.

ET2: Planning 1 (team work)

Team Planning

Planning a writing task has as its focus your ability to identify key criteria. Being able to identify and include these criteria are the first crucial steps in writing a successful answer to a given question. In this e-tivity, you will discuss a sample task with your team before formulating a team response.

Instructions

Post 1 (team): Individually read the sample 1 writing task (attached) and consider the answers to the following questions:

- Who is going to read this?
- What am I going to write (a report, a review, etc?)
- What style is it going to be in? Why?
- What are the important formatting features of this type of writing? (.e.g. headings, salutations, etc.)
- How many content points are there?
- What are the content points?
- What sort of language do I need to use? (e.g. presenting and defending an argument)

Discuss the questions with your team and decide on your team's answers. A representative of the team should post your team's answers. Do not forget to use an appropriate post title.

Reply 1 (individual): Individually read the other team's answers, and ask for clarification and/or comment on the plan

Reply 2(individual): Respond to any replies that your team's Post 1 receives

Look for the tutor's summary at the end of the e-tivity, which will include clarification of any issues that come up during the e-tivity.

ET3: Planning 2 (Individual work)

Planning alone

Writing in CPE is, of course, a solo activity. ET1 enabled you to share your ideas with your group before posting your basic plan to the conference. For ET3, you will be examining and planning a sample task on your own.

Instructions

Post 1 (individual): Read sample 2 writing task (attached) and consider the answers to the following questions:

- Who is going to read this?
- What am I going to write (a report, a review, etc?)
- What style is it going to be in? Why?
- What are the important formatting features of this type of writing? (.e.g. headings, salutations, etc.)
- How many content points are there?
- What are the content points?
- What sort of language do I need to use? (e.g. presenting and defending an argument)

Post your answer to the question to the conference, no forgetting an appropriate post title.

Reply 1 (individual): Reply to at least 2 posts, commenting or asking questions about the plan.

Reply 2 (individual): Respond to any replies that your Post 1 receives

Reply 3 (individual/optional): Look at the tutor's summary at the end of the e-tivity, which will include clarification of any issues that come up during the e-tivity. Respond or ask for clarification as appropriate.

ET4: Analysis (Group work)

What can we learn from seeing the answers of others?

We can learn a lot when we see other's answers to writing tasks – it gives us good practice in identifying important features and language, and provides models for us to emulate or helps us learn what to avoid. In this final e-tivity of the week, we shall be examining an example answer to sample task 1 (which we looked at in ET2)

Instructions

Post 1 (team work): With your group, discuss the sample answer (attached) and decide answer to the following questions:

1. Are the 3 content points addressed? In which paragraphs?
2. Find evidence of appropriate register (give at least 2 examples):
3. Find evidence of good vocabulary (give at least 2 examples):
4. Find evidence of a good range of grammar (give at least 2 examples):
5. Is the paragraphing appropriate? Why (not)?
6. Are linkers used appropriately? Why (not)?
7. Is it in the right format?
8. Would the reader understand the writer's point of view?

Your representative should post the team's answers to the questions with an appropriate title.

Reply 1 (Individual): Comment on another team's answers, asking for clarification where necessary.

Reply 2 (Individual): Reply 2 (individual): Respond to any replies that your team's post 1 receives.

Reply 3 (individual/optional): Look at the tutor's summary at the end of the e-tivity, which will include clarification of any issues that come up during the e-tivity. Respond or ask for clarification as appropriate.

ET5 Reflection Room

This week we have examined the practice of planning our writing for the CPE writing paper. To what degree do you think your view has changed during this week, and why? Think back to ET1 and your explanation of your planning practice – would you know change that? Explain why (not).

Instructions

Post 1 (individual): Post your reflections to the conference

Post 2 (individual/optional): Reply to any posts as appropriate

3 Guiding principle/important roles & activities?

Planning an answer to a CPE writing task is something which, generally, students have little experience of. The general principle underlying the plan is that Ss need guidance in explicitly formulating the necessary criteria for a successful answer. The mix of team and individual work is designed to give individuals a supportive environment to encourage good planning of tasks. Future conferences will involve students providing plans of writing tasks before they submit the writing itself, to emphasize how important this practice is.

The tutor's role would be to monitor and answer queries during the activities. Crucially, the summary of each activity would not only need to include a summary of participant's work, but also feed in further answers and guidelines about planning. The summary, and participants' participation in any ensuing discussion is therefore a very important component of the activities.

APPENDIX

ET2: Sample task 1 (to be attached as a document with the e-tivity instructions)

You **must** answer this question. Write your answer in **300 – 350** words in an appropriate .

1 The following comments were made during a radio discussion by young people talking about different attitudes to work. Listeners to the discussion were invited to send in their views to the programme editor. You decide to write a letter responding to the points raised and giving your own opinions.

“What matters most to me is job satisfaction. I only want to do a job that I really enjoy.”

“I want a job that leaves me with plenty of time.”

“I want to earn lots of money – that’s all I care about.”

Write your **letter**. Do not write any postal addresses.

Source: *CPE Handbook, Cambridge ESOL*

ET2: Possible answers (to be included in the tutor’s summary/weave

Who is going to read this?	<i>The editor of a radio programme</i>
What am I going to write, a report, a review etc?	<i>A letter</i>
What style is it going to be in? Why?	neutral because it’s to the editor of a radio programme and s/he may broadcast your ideas/opinions
What are the important formatting features of this type of writing? (.e.g. headings, salutations, etc.)	<i>Letters should have an opening salutation, clear paragraphing and closing phrasing.</i>
How many content points are there?	<i>3 + your own opinions on them</i>
What are the content points?	<i>A good job is one where:</i> <i>you earn a lot of money</i> <i>you have plenty of free time</i> <i>you have job satisfaction and the job is enjoyable</i>
What sort of language do I need to use?	<i>A discussion of the issues raised including presenting and defending an argument, expressing and justifying opinions, evaluating ideas.</i>

ET3: Sample Task 2 (to be attached as a document with the e-tivity instructions)

You **must** answer this question. Write your answer in **300 – 350** words in an appropriate style .

1 You have read the extract below in an international environmental magazine which has asked its readers to contribute articles to a feature entitled *Crisis, what crisis?* You decide to write an article responding to the points raised and expressing your own views.

‘Some scientists have suggested we are facing an uncertain future and a possible global crisis. The way many people live is seriously damaging the environment and we know that some natural resources are rapidly disappearing. Perhaps it is not too late for people to change their lifestyle and their attitudes to prevent further environmental damage.

Write your **article**.

Source: CPE Practice Papers 4. ISBN 0-521-61152-0

ET3: Possible answers (to be included in the tutor’s summary/weave

Who is going to read this?	The editor of an international environmental magazine
What am I going to write, a report, a review etc?	An article
What style is it going to be in? Why?	Neutral/formal because it's to an international readership of a specialist magazine
What are the important formatting features of this type of writing? (.e.g. headings, salutations, etc.)	Needs a headline and possibly sub-headline Paragraphs with clear main idea; linking within and between paragraphs
How many content points are there?	3 + <i>own opinions</i>
What are the content points?	we are facing an uncertain future, possible global crisis the way many people live is seriously damaging the environment and some natural resources are rapidly disappearing Perhaps people can change their lifestyle and attitudes to prevent further environmental damage
What sort of language do I need to use?	A discussion of the issues raised including presenting and defending an argument, expressing and justifying opinions, explaining a problem and suggesting a solution, evaluating ideas and perhaps making recommendations

ET4: Sample Answer to Sample Task 1 (to be attached as a document with the e-tivity instructions)

Dear Editor

I am writing in response to a discussion, I recently listened to on the radio, regarding different attitudes to work. I would like to share my ideas with you.

Some people argue that wealth is what they mostly want to achieve through their career. They commit themselves entirely to work, with a view to becoming rich. It is an undeniable fact that the financial factor has a significant impact on peoples' lives. To a certain extent, our happiness is related to our financial situation. Owing to the needs in the modern world, we have come to believe that we need to strive for affluence in order to be able to fulfil these needs. Consequently, some individuals can consider only money as the main objective in their career.

However, as other people pointed out, it is essential that our job allows us plenty of free time so as to be able to enjoy our personal lives and our leisure activities. Our life would be dull and uninteresting if we could not satisfy other needs such as social interaction, which helps our self-development and considerably contributes to our level of happiness. In addition, if we have not enough free time when are we going to spend our money?

Moreover, there are some individuals who pursue a career according to their personal interests and they gain satisfaction from work, only when it is a pleasurable experience, apart from stress and strain. For the best part of our day we are at work. To succeed in our career, first of all, we must enjoy it. Besides, professional dissatisfaction can lead to problems in our personal life. For instance, if we work in a boring or stressful environment this can result in bringing these feelings to our relationships.

To sum up, it appears that our incentives for work vary. We should reconsider our attitude to work so that money is not our only aim. Only when one gains satisfaction at work and free time off work, can one lead a happy life.

I look forward to hearing others listeners' views on this subject.

Yours faithfully

[352 words]

Source: *CPE Handbook, Cambridge ESOL*

ET4: Possible answers (to be included in the tutor's summary/weave

1. **Are the 3 content points addressed? In which paragraphs?** (all points are covered in paragraphs 2, 3 and 4)
2. **Find evidence of appropriate register (give at least 2 examples):** (this is appropriate. E.g. I am writing in response to...; it is an undeniable fact that...; Moreover, there are some individuals who pursue a career...)
3. **Find evidence of good vocabulary (give at least 2 examples):** (there is an adequate range of vocabulary, e.g.: for the best part of our day; has a significant impact on...; to strive for affluence...)
4. **Find evidence of a good range of grammar (give at least 2 examples):** (there is an adequate range of grammar, e.g.: we have come to believe that we need to strive for affluence in order to be able to...)
5. **Is the paragraphing appropriate? Why (not)?** (paragraphs are used clearly to deal with each separate point, and to introduce and conclude the letter)
6. **Are linkers used appropriately? Why (not)?** (Linkers are used well and mostly appropriately)
7. **Is it in the right format?** (Yes, the writer has used the appropriate conventions to begin and end the letter)
8. **Would the reader understand the writer's point of view?** (Yes, the reader can understand the writer's key points.)