

C1 Essays

C1 level essays will have these features:

Feature	Discussion	Evaluation	Markers	Allowable negatives
Relevant	All parts of the essay should be relevant to the question set.	Evaluate the relevance of the content.	Relevant and supported ideas and opinions. Examples are relevant to the topic and question. The data reported is relevant.	Minor points may be less relevant to the central question. This would mean the essay could not score the highest band for task response.
Conventional structure	The essay should be organised like an essay: with a clear introduction, body paragraphs and clear conclusion.	Does it look like an essay? Read the first sentence of each paragraph – is it what is expected?	It looks like an essay.	No allowable negatives on this criterion. An essay without such clear paragraphs should fail in this band score.
Clear, well-structured and organised paragraphs	Each paragraph should be clearly and logically structured. The topic of each paragraph should be clear at the very beginning or very near the beginning of the first sentence of the paragraph. The topic + comment sequence of the sentences in each paragraph will be logical. A range of cohesion techniques will be used appropriately and unobtrusively. This will mean that the text is coherent.	Evaluate the sequence of sentences and ideas in the text. Is the topic+ comment sequence logical? Is it clear at all times what the writer means and what the writer is referring to (both inside and outside the text)? Do you notice the cohesive devices used?	Clear topic sentences. Each sentence in the paragraph builds on what came before and is clearly linked to it by referencing devices (e.g. the topic sequence, or referencing words like 'this').	There may be occasional overuse of or inaccuracies in use of mechanical sentence initial cohesive devices, but these will not impede communication. There may be rare inaccuracies in referencing, but these will not impede communication.
Fully developed with well-supported arguments and opinions.	There should be the minimum required number of ideas for the task. All ideas in the essay should be fully supported with reasons and examples, and the writer's opinion should be clear (either implicitly or explicitly stated) and justified.	Count the ideas. Are there enough? Are there enough relevant reasons and examples? Where is the writer's opinion?	Ideas. Reasons. Examples. Opinion.	Some of the support for an idea might be less convincing but it will still be relevant. One of the ideas might be slightly more fully developed than the others but this will not mean the essay is (necessarily) unbalanced.

<p>Balanced</p>	<p>The essay should be balanced in terms of length of each paragraph – the body paragraphs will be of roughly equal length, which indicates that the parts of the question are being addressed equally. The introduction and conclusion will be shorter than the body paragraphs.</p>	<p>Look at the length of the parts of the essay. Are all parts of the question appropriately addressed?</p>	<p>A balanced essay will address all parts of the question roughly equally and at the same level of detail.</p>	<p>One of the body paragraphs might be slightly more fully developed than the other one but this will not be noticeable or extreme. Note that exam boards do not seem to worry too much about this aspect, but that does not mean that we should not.</p>
<p>Appropriate and accurate grammar</p>	<p>The grammar will be to the required sophistication to address the question asked and to argue the writer’s viewpoint. The verbs will be of the necessary complexity. The noun phrases will have the necessary pre- and post-noun modification and there will be no ambiguity about meaning or reference; pronouns will be used correctly. Prepositional phrases and adverbial phrases will be used appropriately.</p>	<p>Appropriacy: is the grammar used of an appropriate enough sophistication to meet the writer’s purpose and answer the essay question? How many errors are there? Are these errors systematic or non-systematic? What is their impact on the reader?</p>	<p>Modal verb used appropriately. Passive voice used as appropriate. Accurate verb agreement. Effective nominalisation (use of a verb or adjective as a noun). Effective pronoun substitution. Post-noun modification (e.g. full defining and non-defining relative clauses, reduced relative clauses, doing clauses, to do clauses, prepositional phrases, noun content clauses).</p>	<p>Occasional slips but no impeding errors. Any errors will be non-systematic, that is, there should be evidence in the text that they can use the form correctly. For example, if all examples of ‘the’ are errors then that is a systematic error. If ‘the’ is used correctly once and incorrectly twice, then that is a non-systematic error. Exam boards seem to allow more errors in grammar than the CEFR descriptors would seem to allow.</p>
<p>Appropriate and accurate lexis</p>	<p>All lexis will be relevant to the topic of the essay. A range of lexis should be used. Synonyms will be used to avoid repetition.</p>	<p>Are the words used the right words? Are the collocations used the correct collocations? Are synonyms used or is there a lot of avoidable repetition? How many errors are there in word choice, formation, or spelling? Are these errors systematic or non-systematic? What is their impact on the reader?</p>	<p>A wide range of appropriate lexis used. Words used from the appropriate lexical field related to the topic. Written idiomatic expressions used. Appropriate style and connotation.</p>	<p>Occasional word choice or word formation errors but no impeding errors. Some spelling slips. Exam boards seem to allow more errors in lexis than the CEFR descriptors would seem to allow.</p>

Positive impression on the reader	The essay should have a positive impact on the reader. The impression given should be of a mature, well-considered, sophisticated response to the essay question.	How did you feel as you read the essay? What was your feeling at the end?	You were impressed by the sophistication of the response.	A C1 response is not perfect; remember that there is also C2!
------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------

At B2 level the students will have met practically all the grammar they will need but they will not have mastery of it. They will have a range of lexis, but they might resort to repetition and might avoid using synonyms. They will be able to write essays which generally make sense, with few impeding errors, but they might have frequent slips and non-systematic errors and some systematic errors in grammar and lexis. They will probably resort to mechanical use of overt cohesive devices; spoken cohesive devices and phrases might feature in the text as the candidate lacks the command of the written language. Their essay will not be as fully developed or as sophisticated in terms of the language used and the quality of ideas expressed as a C1 level response.

At C1 their response will be better in terms of text organisation (at a text and paragraph level) and in the number of ideas and how well-supported they are.

Grammar will be used appropriately and there will be fewer grammar errors, practically none of these will be impeding errors.

Verb forms will be used to structure the argument in terms of topic and comment e.g. the use of the passive.

Overt cohesive devices might still be used but better responses will use more implicit cohesion techniques.

Noun phrases will be more sophisticated than B2.

A wider range of lexis will be used, with more synonyms used to avoid repetition.

Any errors will be slips rather than systematic or impeding errors.

Overall, the essay will look and read like an essay. It will be a mature, well-thought out and well-supported response. You will enjoy reading it.

Marking Essays

When marking an essay at a band, like C1, there will be different levels of performance within the band – good and bad essays. An essay marked at C1 which fails on **all** the criteria is not a C1 essay. An essay might fail on one or two of the criteria but still be a weak C1 effort.