

ESAC Integrated Writing Assessment (IWA)

Rubric: Generative AI in Higher Education

Essay Topic

The integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in higher education: challenges to academic integrity, benefits for learning, and the extent of institutional adoption.

Assessment Criteria Overview

Criterion	Weight
1. Task Response & Argument	20%
2. Critical Thinking & Evaluation	20%
3. Use of Sources & Referencing	20%
4. Academic Writing Style & Register	15%
5. Organisation & Cohesion	15%
6. Language Accuracy & Control	10%
Total	100%

1. Task Response & Argument (20%)

Band	Descriptor
Band 9 (Excellent)	Fully addresses all parts of the task with a clear, insightful, and original argument. Demonstrates a nuanced understanding of GenAI’s challenges and benefits. Position on university adoption is sophisticated and consistently sustained.
Band 8 (Strong)	Addresses all aspects of the task effectively with a clear and well-developed argument. Demonstrates strong understanding of the topic with minor lapses in depth or nuance. Position is clear and well supported.
Band 7 (Good)	Addresses the task competently but may place uneven emphasis on certain aspects (e.g., more challenges than

Band	Descriptor
	benefits). Argument is clear but may lack refinement or full balance.
Band 6 (Satisfactory)	Responds to the task but may partially address key elements or present a simplistic position. Argument may be descriptive rather than analytical.
Band 5 and below (Limited–Poor)	Does not adequately address the task. Argument may be unclear, underdeveloped, or largely descriptive with significant omissions.

2. Critical Thinking & Evaluation (20%)

Band	Descriptor
Band 9	Demonstrates excellent critical engagement with sources and ideas. Evaluates implications, limitations, and counterarguments insightfully. Shows independent thinking and synthesis.
Band 8	Demonstrates strong critical evaluation of issues and sources. Ideas are analysed rather than merely described, with some acknowledgement of complexity.
Band 7	Shows reasonable critical thinking but analysis may be uneven or rely too heavily on source perspectives. Limited exploration of counterarguments.
Band 6	Limited critical evaluation; tends to summarise sources rather than analyse them. Few links between evidence and argument.
Band 5 and below	Minimal or no critical engagement. Largely descriptive or opinion-based with weak support.

3. Use of Sources & Referencing (20%)

Band	Descriptor
Band 9	Integrates a wide range of high-quality academic sources seamlessly. Paraphrasing is sophisticated and accurate. Referencing is fully consistent with ESAC conventions.
Band 8	Uses an appropriate range of sources effectively. Paraphrasing is accurate with only very minor lapses. Referencing is largely correct with occasional minor errors.
Band 7	Uses relevant sources but integration may be mechanical. Some paraphrasing issues or minor referencing inconsistencies.
Band 6	Limited range of sources or over-reliance on a few. Paraphrasing may be weak or too close to original wording. Referencing errors are noticeable.
Band 5 and below	Inadequate sourcing, poor paraphrasing, or frequent referencing errors. Possible risk of plagiarism.

4. Academic Writing Style & Register (15%)

Band	Descriptor
Band 9	Consistently formal, precise, and sophisticated academic tone. Excellent control of discipline-appropriate vocabulary.
Band 8	Appropriate academic register throughout with strong lexical choice. Minor occasional slips do not affect clarity.
Band 7	Generally academic but may include some informal phrasing or repetitive vocabulary.
Band 6	Inconsistent academic tone. Overly simple or conversational language appears.
Band 5 and below	Inappropriate register with frequent informal or unclear language.

5. Organisation & Cohesion (15%)

Band	Descriptor
Band 9	Exceptionally well-structured with clear progression of ideas. Paragraphing is logical and cohesive, with excellent use of linking devices.
Band 8	Clear and logical structure. Paragraphs are well-developed with effective cohesion. Minor organisational lapses may occur.
Band 7	Overall structure is clear, but paragraph development or transitions may be uneven.
Band 6	Organisation is weak or repetitive. Ideas may be loosely connected.
Band 5 and below	Poor organisation. Lack of coherence and clear paragraph structure.

6. Language Accuracy & Control (10%)

Band	Descriptor
Band 9	Near-native accuracy. Errors are extremely rare and insignificant.
Band 8	High level of grammatical accuracy with only occasional minor errors that do not impede meaning.
Band 7	Some grammatical or lexical errors, but meaning remains generally clear.
Band 6	Frequent errors that occasionally interfere with clarity.
Band 5 and below	Persistent errors that significantly impede understanding.

Overall Band Guide

Final Band Performance Summary

Band 9	Outstanding, publication-level academic writing
Band 8	Strong, effective university-level academic writing
Band 7	Competent and clear, but lacks depth or polish

Final Band Performance Summary

Band 6 Adequate but limited academic performance

Band ≤5 Insufficient for ESAC IWA standards
