

ANSWERS Unit Four Continuous Assessment Essay Gap Fill

There is some dispute whether the best method of assessing students is to use examinations or some form of continuous assessment. **This is a complex issue** and my belief is that there is probably no one method that applies to all educational systems.

There are three major **arguments in favour of** retaining exams. One is that they provide a clear and objective measure of what students have learned, whereas any form of continuous assessment is probably going to be far more subjective. An **additional point is** that testing tends to be an excellent way of motivating learners to study harder and to reward the students who do best. Likewise, examinations test the ability of students to work under pressure, and this is a vital life skill for their later careers.

On the other hand, there are **still occasions when** it can be better to relieve the students of exam pressure and to measure their abilities through continuous assessment. This is **particularly the case in** lower age groups where young children can be affected negatively by stress and underperform in exams. It can **also be argued that** continuous assessment is a more effective way of testing some subjects such as design and technology, which are more creative and less academic. A further point is that often continuous assessment can allow teachers to reward students who work hard, but who may be less able and not do well in more formal testing.

In conclusion, while continuous assessment may be **fairer in some contexts**, there are still times when traditional exams may be more appropriate. A **possible compromise would be** to use both forms of testing together, allowing teachers to reward both ability and hard work.

Coherence and cohesion reviewed

Coherence is really just how readable your writing is. Your goal should be to make your writing as clear as possible so that the examiner understands instantly what you are saying. Some tips for you are:

1. **Essay structure:** Outline your position in the introduction to the essay and summarise it in the conclusion. If you “top and tail” your essay like this, the examiner should have a clearer idea of what you are saying in the content paragraphs and finish the essay thinking that it was well-organised.
2. **Paragraph structure:** start each content paragraph by explaining what the purpose of that paragraph is: Are you arguing in favour or against? Does this paragraph add to or contradict the points made in the previous paragraph?
3. **Link your sentences:** make sure that each sentence links in some way to the sentence before. This does not just mean using words like “Furthermore”, you can also link by using words like “this” or by explaining the sentence before.

Paragraph coherence – count the reasons why

One possible way to structure a paragraph and make it coherent is to number the arguments for or against an idea. This is the “firstly”, “secondly”, “thirdly” paragraph. This is a useful structure for when you get a complex question where you can think of lots of different arguments. Rather than try and explain one complex idea, you outline 3 different ones in brief. I have two connected tips for you:

Tip 1: start your paragraph by saying that you are going to make a number of different arguments. For example, some language you could use here is:

There are several arguments why...

There are a number of different reasons why...

There are at least three points that can be made in favour of

This works because the examiner now knows what is going to come next. That is coherence. Your writing is now more readable.

Tip 2: count your arguments and vary your “counting language”, don’t just go “firstly”, “secondly”, “thirdly”. You should have seen from my example below that I “count” out the different arguments in favour of exams. I make it easy for the examiner to see what I am doing. Coherence again. It really helps if you use some variation in your vocabulary. It’s a very simple structure so we want some more complex vocab. Possible language to use is:

The most important argument is...

Another point that can be made is...

A second reason why...

There is also the idea that...

The next argument is...

See an example of how it works

There are three major arguments in favour of retaining exams. One is that they provide a clear and objective measure of what students have learned, whereas any form of continuous assessment is probably going to be far more subjective. An additional point is that testing tends to be an excellent way of motivating learners to study harder and to reward the students who do best. Likewise, examinations test the ability of students to work under pressure, and this is a vital life skill for their later careers.

Now look at another way of doing it

On the other hand, there are still some occasions when it can be better to relieve the students of exam pressure and to measure their abilities through continuous assessment. This is particularly the case in lower age groups where young children can be affected negatively by stress and underperform in exams. It can also be argued that continuous assessment is a more effective way of testing some subjects such as design and technology, which are more creative and less academic. A further point is that often continuous assessment can allow teachers to reward students who work hard, but who may be less able and not do well in more formal testing.

Notes

You should see that this paragraph has almost exactly the same structure as the first. I have only used rather different language.

I don't do the counting thing in the first sentence. You want to vary your writing techniques – there are marks for that. I do however say there are “some occasions“. This is the same idea really.

My linking language between sentences is different too. I use “This is the case” for the first idea and then “also” and “further” for the later ideas. The structure of the writing should be obvious and this helps make my writing clear and coherent.

Understanding the question

Some people believe that exams are an inappropriate way of measuring students' performance and should be replaced by continuous assessment. Do you agree or disagree with this view?

This is an agree/disagree type question that asks you for your opinion. My tip is that if you get a question of this type is to remember that there is always a 3rd way of answering it: you half agree and you half disagree.

Unless you have strong feelings about the question, I suggest this approach because

- you can use all the arguments you can think of – both for and against
- it allows you to organise your essay in a simple way (and in IELTS simple is good)
- you can use some good cautious academic language (good for your range of grammar)

Structuring the essay – getting the content right

The question demands that you talk about both continuous assessment and exams. You will not have answered the question fully if you only write about exams or continuous assessment. With this in mind, the sensible choice is to use one content paragraph for exams and another for continuous assessment – then you are sure to cover the content. So my rough plan looks like this:

intro: the answer depends on context – both exams and continuous assessment have points in their favour

para 1: reasons why exams work (objective) (motivation to study) (preparation for life)

para 2: reasons why continuous assessment works (good for young kids) (good for skills based subjects) (rewards hard work)

conclusion: both can work – perhaps they should be used together

A note about academic language

Simple language can be good language. There is a danger though that you make your writing too simple. That you don't want. One tip is to add in a little academic caution language. Done well, this can really improve your writing, not least because you will use a greater range of grammar.

How does it work? If you find yourself writing the verb “is” or “are”, you should ask yourself the question whether what you are writing is 100% true, or whether you want to qualify it in some way. In my essay, this allows me to use this language:

“there is probably no one”

“major arguments”

“is probably”

“tends to be”

“This is particularly the case”

“often continuous assessment can allow teachers to”

“may be fairer in some contexts”

“a possible compromise would be”

Put together, this language helps this essay get a band score 9.0.

See more notes on the vocabulary

Some people believe that exams are an inappropriate way of measuring students' performance and should be replaced by continuous assessment. Do you agree or disagree with this view?

There is some dispute whether the best method of assessing students is to use examinations or some form of continuous assessment. **This is a complex issue and my belief is that there is probably no one method that applies to all educational systems.**

There are three **major** arguments in favour of retaining exams. One is that they provide a clear and objective measure of what students have learned, whereas any form of continuous assessment is **probably** going to be far more subjective. An additional point is that testing **tends to be** an excellent way of motivating learners to study harder and to reward the students who do best. Likewise, examinations test the ability of students to work under pressure, and this is a vital life skill for their later careers.

On the other hand, there are still occasions when **it can be** better to relieve the students of exam pressure and to measure their abilities through continuous assessment. **This is particularly the case** in lower age groups where young children **can be** affected negatively by stress and under-perform in exams. It can also be argued that continuous assessment is a more effective way of testing some subjects such as design and technology, which are more creative and less academic. A further point is that **often** continuous assessment **can allow** teachers to reward students who work hard, but who **may be** less able and not do well in more formal testing. **In conclusion, while continuous assessment may be fairer in some contexts**, there are still times when **traditional exams may be more appropriate**. A **possible** compromise **would be** to use both forms of testing together, allowing teachers to reward both ability and hard work.

(280 words)

Notes

the cautious/academic language is in red

the introduction and conclusion match each other: topping and tailing the essay to make it coherent

my second content paragraph links back to the first content paragraph by using “On the other hand”. This phrase is probably best used to link paragraphs

Vocabulary

One problem with this essay is that you are bound to use the words “continuous assessment” and “examination” a lot. I get some variation by using the word “test” and some good exam collocations/phrases: traditional exams/formal testing/exam pressure

I also use some precise educational vocabulary:

educational systems/some subjects like design and technology/academic

Other phrases to note include:

vital life skills/later careers/work under pressure

<http://www.dcielts.com/blog/exams-and-continuous-assessment-sample-ielts-essay/#ixzz3mbXe9tIG>