

Chapter 7

Task 2: Task Achievement

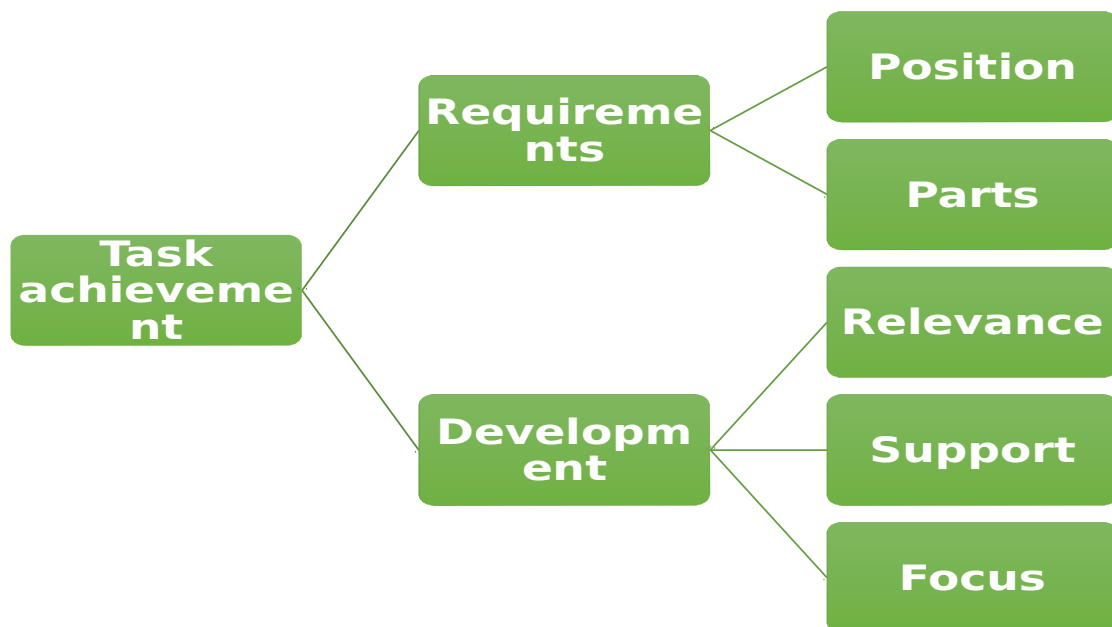
In this unit, you will:

- develop a better understanding of the various requirements related to the domain “Task Achievement”,
- read and discuss writing exemplars using the assessment standards of “Task Achievement”,
- evaluate and improve writing exemplars following the assessment standards of “Task Achievement”.

NOTE: *Exemplars included in this chapter are written by university students and teachers. These exemplars are sometimes edited for the purpose of illustrating certain aspects of the IELTS writing assessment standards. Nevertheless, these exemplars are not edited to be error-free.*

Activity 1 Understanding the assessment standards of “Task Achievement”

- Read the concept map which summarizes the assessment standards of “Task Achievement” of Task 2.
- Discuss with your partner the meanings of these keywords. Note down any differences in your understanding.



Content requirements

There are two keywords under the “requirements” aspect of this domain: (1) position and (2) parts. Write down the two keywords next to the corresponding definitions.

Keyword	Definition
	The writer’s standpoint or thesis statement, usually placed in the introductory paragraph
	The essential components of a Task 2 essay, usually comprises an introduction, two body paragraphs, and a conclusion

Content development

Three keywords are identified from the official IELTS writing descriptors which help explicate the expectations for candidates to develop their ideas. These keywords include (1) relevance, (2) support, and (3) focus. Write down the keywords next to the corresponding definitions.

Keyword	Definition
	Explanations, examples, reasons given by the writer to elaborate on or substantiate his/her points
	A clearly defined topic for each paragraph, usually demonstrated by a clear topic sentence at the beginning of each body paragraph
	Ideas discussed in the essay are related to the question and the standpoint

To understand more about these keywords, let’s read two writing exemplars (Exemplars 7.1-7.2) written by university students to see what they (should not) look like in action.

T2-09

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task. Write about the following topic:

Due to the rapid technological development, new career options have emerged such as online store owners, and vloggers. People become less willing to work in an office. Do you think the advantages of having a ‘virtual’ career outweigh its disadvantages?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own

knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Exemplar 7.1

Recently, there has been a popular trend of being vloggers or online store owners because of the rapid development of the Internet and modernization of lifestyle. Moreover, many people start to consider the aforesaid ‘virtual’ roles as their full-time jobs and stop working in a physical workplace. Undoubtedly, there must be advantages and disadvantages of having a virtual career. Yet, it is my belief that the advantages outweigh its disadvantages.

To begin with, pursuing a virtual career, namely running an online store, brings flexible time schedule to the owners which enables them to design their personal timetable every day, including day-offs. Moreover, people like vloggers can kill two birds in one stone. In particular, they can videotape their daily matters while enjoying their time, such as, shopping and eating. Furthermore, the number of people who are obsessed with the Internet world continue to surge due to technological advancement which provides a major opportunity for those who have a virtual career to be well-known. In addition, these virtual jobs are not paid in monthly salary; therefore, the “workers” have the ability to earn a lot more by being slash workers.

On the other hand, opponents to having a virtual career contend that it is risky to have a profession that relies solely on Internet communication. Specifically, while most of the “workers” invest all of their time and money in order to be successful and popular, there is no guarantee that they would succeed; from what is reported on the news and social media, countless people have failed during the journey of becoming “online celebrities”.

To conclude, every coin has two sides. Admittedly, while it is not necessary that being a youtuber or vloggers will bring you fame and glory eventually, I personally consider taking risk as a key to success and it will be worthwhile, especially to teenagers.

Remarks

Parts: Introduction

Standpoint/thesis statement

Parts: Body 1

A clear topic sentence focusing on advantages

Parts: Body 2

A clear topic sentence focusing on disadvantages

Support through explanation

Support through providing examples

Parts: A concluding paragraph

Exemplar 7.2	Remarks
<p>For example, Ricky Wong, a businessman, after his failure of getting a free TV license, he changed to open a TV channel and open an online store, he succeeded in attracting young people buying his products and make great money rewards. I think being a successful man need not to follow the traditional track, but have to learn innovation. I will take this as a good example.</p>	<p>Irrelevant example because the topic is about virtual career, but the example given is a successful businessman in Hong Kong</p>

Activity 2 Writing a position

- Read the following questions (T2-02 & T2-03) and read Exemplars 7.3-7.4
- Evaluate how well the exemplars are written by referring to the definitions and examples of the related terms. If necessary, use the following guiding questions to help your evaluation:
 - Did the student state his/her standpoint or thesis statement of his/her essay clearly?
 - Did the student present the position in a succinct manner?
 - Was there enough scaffolding (e.g. background information) before the position statement is introduced?

T2-02

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task. Write about the following topic:

Advocates of high-stakes standardized tests believe that they provide an objective description of students' abilities; on the contrary, some teachers expressly underscore the many problems that these tests bring to the quality of their teaching.

Discuss both these views and give your opinion.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Exemplar 7.3

Supporters of high-stakes standardized tests believe that they provide an objective description of students' abilities while some teachers concern about the quality of their teaching because of these standardized tests.

Guiding question	Yes/No	Explanation
-------------------------	---------------	--------------------

Did the student state his/her standpoint or thesis statement of his/her essay clearly?		
Did the student present the position in a succinct manner?		
Was there enough scaffolding (e.g. background information) before the position statement is introduced?		

T2-03

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task. Write about the following topic

Many university students are required to enroll in a number of General Education courses. These courses are usually related to the social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual lives of young people.

How important are General Education courses to university students? Should these courses be compulsory?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Exemplar 7.4

It is important for the General Education courses to university students and I agree that it should be a compulsory course for the students, it is because the General Education courses contains different types of information and knowledge which students should learn. For example, social, cultural, psychological and spiritual types of information and knowledge. The above of knowledge and information are good for student development. I will give reasons and explain my answer in this article.

Guiding question	Yes/No	Explanation
Did the student state his/her standpoint or thesis statement of his/her essay clearly?		
Did the student present the position in a succinct manner?		

Was there enough scaffolding (e.g. background information) before the position statement is introduced?		
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--

Activity 3 Writing a four-part essay

- Read the following question (T2-04) and Exemplar 7.5
- Evaluate how well the exemplar is written by referring to the definitions and examples of the related terms. If necessary, use the following guiding questions to help your evaluation:
 - Did the student include an introduction?
 - Did the student include at least two body paragraphs?
 - Were the body paragraphs organized in a focused and logical manner?
 - Did the student include a conclusion?
 - Do you think the essay is too long? How can it be shortened?

T2-04

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task. Write about the following topic:

Some parents believe in educating their children themselves and homeschool their children. What are the advantages and disadvantages of homeschooling?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Exemplar 7.5

Homeschooling has become an increasingly hot topic among parents. Parents might have seen failure in their children at standard schools, or might have seen talents in their children which could not be developed in schools, and start to wonder if homeschooling is their right option.

While it is still widely recognized as an unlawful act for a parent to deprive their children's right to receive education by stopping them from going to school, more and more parents realized that there are exceptional cases which can apply to the Education Bureau for exemption where parents can demonstrate to the Education Bureau that they are giving proper education to their children.

However, there are both advantages and disadvantages arisen from the homeschooling practice which we shall discuss below.

One size doesn't fit all. While we appreciate that each student is a special individual, how can we not question if the standard curriculum is suitable for all children? Even in a class of 40, there are students who are good at mathematics and students who are good at music. Standard curriculum is designed for "average" children that for example, when 80% of students in Primary 3 are ready to learn how to do the multiplication 3 x 3, the standard curriculum neglects the need of those who can do 1+1 only, and those who are doing 33 x 33 at the same age. Schools taught these standard curriculums to build our children into a gear in the mechanism of the society, like a clerk, an accountant, a doctor. It is not flexible enough to fit every student's need.

Homeschooling can be advantageous to students who have individual strength that cannot be developed at school, and those with special education needs which cannot be catered at school as well. Moreover, during homeschooling, parents can develop their relationship with their children and build a harmonious family.

On the other hand, parents have to be very careful if they adopt homeschooling. Currently there are insufficient supports and lack of resources for parents to conduct homeschooling. If the parents have not received sufficient education themselves, it is questionable how the effect of their homeschooling would be. Also, there are no standard assessment for the parents to understand the development level of their children. Parents could not provide the best teaching to their children based on the feedback results.

It is also important for the parent to understand that schools are not a place only to develop their children's academic abilities, but also a place to teach children social skills, ethical values, physical strength, to ensure students' whole person development. Children who receive education at home lack the chance to socialize with fellow classmates and are deprived of the chance to develop social skills. Someday when they are back to school or when they go to work to have to cooperate with others, they will have a hard time if they hadn't developed their social skills in an early stage.

Homeschooling can be advantageous to certain kind of students, but there are lots of things that parents have to be careful of. If parents decide to take this route, they must be well advised of all the advantages and disadvantages of homeschooling, and make the right choice for their children.

Guiding question	Yes/No	Explanation
Did the student include an introduction?		
Did the student include at least two body paragraphs?		
Were the body paragraphs organized in a focused and logical manner?		

Did the student include a conclusion?		
Do you think the essay is too long? How can it be shortened?		

Activity 4 Writing with relevant ideas

- Read the following question (T2-05) and Exemplars 7.6-7.8.
- Evaluate how well the exemplars are written by referring to the definitions and examples of the related terms. If necessary, use the following guiding questions to help your evaluation:
 - Were the ideas relevant to the topic?
 - Were the ideas relevant to the position?

T2-05

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task. Write about the following topic:

Distance education enables students to study at their own pace. Nevertheless, it also creates problems including high withdrawal rate and lack of interaction between teachers and students. Explain some possible reasons for these problems and suggest some solutions.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Exemplar 7.6

Distance education allows students to study in wherever they want. However, it also creates problems including high withdrawal rate and lack of interaction between teachers and students. I reckon that inadequate monitoring and communication between teachers and students become more time-consuming are the causes of the above problems.

First and foremost, inadequate monitoring brought by distance education will cause high withdrawal rate. By adopting distance education, teachers and students are no longer sitting in the same classroom in class - students are required to watch pre-recorded video lesson instead. In view of the phenomenon that most parents need to work in daytime, there will not be any authorities to supervise students in classes. As a result, this may contribute to a high withdraw rate. Offering a tutor

for every student is clearly unaffordable. Therefore, assigning after-lesson quiz for students is a way to surmount the problem. If all students are required to take a test regarding teaching content after lesson, they will be more willing to attend online lesson with a view to get a pass. The pupils will attend and be concentrated in online class after implementation of live lessons.

Guiding question	Yes/No	Explanation
Were the ideas relevant to the topic?		
Were the ideas relevant to the position?		

Exemplar 7.7

Distance education means that students can study at their own pace. They can choose the time and the place to study. Technology is an important element in distance education. Online education is the focus of distance education.

...

Moreover, distance education causes the lack of interactions between teachers and students. As the distance education is not face-to-face study, students do not have time to communicate with teachers. They only need to finish the task and learn themselves. When they don't have much time to interact with teachers, their relationships are not close. It makes teachers not familiarize with students. It is difficult to help them to make an efficient teaching plan. Students cannot get the efficient way to learn too.

Guiding question	Yes/No	Explanation
Were the ideas relevant to the topic?		
Were the ideas relevant to the position?		

Exemplar 7.8

As technology develops, many students learn by themselves in distance education. However, students who study in front of the computer lack interaction with teachers and it causes high withdrawal rate. In this article, I will provide some reasons and solutions to solve these problems.

The main reason is that students lack supervision in distance education. It is good that students can dominate their own study and learn flexibility. However, it requires students to have high self-regulated skill, which is challenging for some students. For example, students may play with the phone during the class. Also, teachers are hard to assess students' real performance because students can search for answers online. The solution is that parents can be the supervisors to supervise

their children's learning to ensure the effectiveness of distance education.

Guiding question	Yes/No	Explanation
Were the ideas relevant to the topic?		
Were the ideas relevant to the position?		

Activity 5 Writing with support

- Read the following question (T2-06) and Exemplars 7.8-7.9.
- Evaluate how well the exemplars are written by referring to the definitions and examples of the related terms. If necessary, use the following guiding questions to help your evaluation:
 - How are the ideas elaborated (e.g. giving examples, explanations)?
 - Are the supports provided effective and adequate? Why/why not?
 - If your answer is 'no' for Q2, how can the support be strengthened?

T2-06

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task. Write about the following topic:

Family-friendly measures (e.g. flexible working hours) should be adopted by companies to ensure the work-life balance of their employees.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Exemplar 7.8

First and foremost, some caring initiatives commonly implemented by companies, for example, the change of working environment from office to home could do employees a range of benefits which lead to the rise of ultimate productivity. Parents could make use of the extra time to be with their children which undoubtedly strengthen their relationship and help relieve pressure from work. Meanwhile, workers could concentrate on their projects in a less crowded environment. While the mental status of staffs is becoming positive, companies which offer similar flexible measures would enjoy relatively higher productivities

than those without family caring policies for sure.

Q1. How are the ideas elaborated (e.g. giving examples, explanations)?

Q2. Are the supports provided effective and adequate? Why/why not?

Q3. If your answer is “no” for Q2, how can the support be strengthened?

Exemplar 7.9

Without a doubt, long working hours have been the pain in the neck for almost all the employees and the reason for insisting in pushing them to beat their brains out and work until the last moment of the day is to ensure a high level of productivity of the company. Ironically, the weekly working hours in Germany are 30 hours and the counterpart in Hong Kong are 50 hours. However, the former leads to greater productivity than the latter. This demonstrates that the working quality should be the key to a company’s high productivity instead of long working hours. Therefore, companies should take good care of their employees by conducting measures like flexible working hours, instead of simply prolonging their employees’ working hours.

Q1. How are the ideas elaborated (e.g. giving examples, explanations)?

Q2. Are the supports provided effective and adequate? Why/why not?

Q3. If your answer is “no” for Q2, how can the support be strengthened?

Activity 6 Writing with a clear focus

- Read the following question (T2-07) and Exemplars 7.10-7.11.

- Evaluate how well the exemplars are written by referring to the definitions and examples of the related terms. If necessary, use the following guiding questions to help your evaluation:
 - What is the topic sentence of the paragraph?
 - Is the topic sentence focused and clear?

T2-07

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task. Write about the following topic:

It is not uncommon nowadays for people to work overseas. Working overseas allows people to experience different cultures and extend their social and professional connections. However, some find it hard to adapt due to nostalgia and acculturation.

Discuss both these views and give your opinion.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Exemplar 7.10

However, working overseas is a double-edged sword, which could cause the pros and cons, because people from different countries own their distinct culture. For example, the westerners and Chinese people treat their co-workers differently, like being friendly or working with a hierarchical relationship. As a result, people may feel awkward by interacting with local people, and at the end, provoking the positive or negative effects. For instance, I used to work in Beijing for my internship. I was an administrator assistant in a corporation. Because of the language barrier, it caused me to miss Hong Kong. Luckily, the local people were pleasant to care of every single colleague, and I convinced myself to adapt to the new environment in order to learn new working skills. Hence, no matter what people earn in working overseas, balancing their mindset is the crucial factor.

Q1. What is the topic sentence of the paragraph?

Q2. Is the topic sentence focused and clear?

Exemplar 7.11

On the one side of the argument, oversea working experience enables people to

have cultural explorations. People who work abroad might face the challenges of new languages, different customs and distinctive lifestyles. All of these cultural aspects provide them with valuable cultural experiences in both work and personal life in other countries. Apart from the cultural experience, working abroad facilitates people's extension of their social and professional connections. They can meet and work with local people and people from all walks of life in their workplace, which allows them to establish friendships and partnerships during cooperating with not only their colleagues but also business partners. Therefore, working abroad provides chances to enrich people's cultural experiences and helps the formation of international relationships in their professional lives.

Q1. What is the topic sentence of the paragraph?

Q2. Is the topic sentence focused and clear?

—

Activity 7 Peer evaluation

Based on your understanding of the assessment standards of “Task Achievement”, provide feedback to Exemplar 7.12 written by a university student. The guiding questions at the end of each paragraph focus on the different facets of the “Task Achievement” domain we discussed in this chapter.

T2-12

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task. Write about the following topic:

It is popular nowadays for people to order takeaway food (e.g. lunch) from their workplace because they are too busy to prepare meals. However, there are still many people who bring home-made food to eat in their workplace because they think DIY food is healthier.

Discuss both these views.

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Exemplar 7.12

Nowadays, it is common for people to order takeaway food (e.g. lunch) from their workplace because they are too busy to prepare meals. Yet, there are numerous people who bring homemade food to eat at workplace as they consider DIY food is

healthier. In this essay, both advantages and disadvantages of two methods will be discussed.

Questions for paragraph 1:

Q1. What is the position given by the writer?

Q2. Is the position given in a concise manner?

Q3. Is the position scaffolded by background information?

Q4. Is the position relevant to the question?

To begin with, ordering takeaway is undoubtedly convenient for people as they basically only need seconds to decide what they want to have for lunch and pay for it. The whole process does not take more than 3 minutes so this way helps to save time as well, which is vitally important in a hectic and fast-paced society. However, the food is believed to be less healthy as lots of sugar, salt, oil and seasoning must be added into most of the dishes.

Questions for paragraph 2:

Q1. What is the topic sentence?

Q2. Is the topic sentence focused and clear?

Q3. How does the writer provide support to his/her topic sentence?

Q4. Is the support in the paragraph adequate and relevant to the topic sentence? If not, give suggestions.

On the other hand, making homemade food means that the person can design the most suitable recipe for his own. For example, if the person is allergic to specific kinds of ingredients or food, he is able to avoid it when he cooks his lunch. Moreover, cooking at home saves money. Furthermore, making DIY food can ensure the hygiene of the food. However, people will be less likely to take a rest as

they need extra time to prepare a meal every day at night.

Questions for paragraph 3:

Q1. What is the topic sentence?

Q2. Is the topic sentence focused and clear?

Q3. How does the writer provide support to his/her topic sentence?

Q4. Is the support in the paragraph adequate and relevant to the topic sentence? If not, give suggestions.

-

To sum up, ordering takeaway or bringing home-made food have their merits and drawbacks. What matters is that the person has to see the time available and requirements for his lunch before making the decision.

Questions for paragraph 4:

Q1. How many parts are there in this exemplar? What are the parts?

Activity 7 Exercise

Based on your understanding of “task achievement”, appreciate the merits of the essay of T2-10 using the guiding questions in the form. Try to imitate one by finishing T2-29.

T2-10

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task. Write about the following topic:

Given the greater longevity of people these days, some argue that people should retire at a later stage. What are some of the problems if people’s retirement is delayed?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

People have a longer life expectancy nowadays so some may suggest retirement can be delayed, since they believe the old citizens can still enjoy a meaningful life. However, others think the retirement age should not be delays as it may pose a threat to social mobility and to the long-term development of a company.

On the one hand, delaying retirement age may affect social mobility because it obstructs the younger generation to enhance their social status and financial capability. As the elder generation starts their career earlier than the younger, the former is much more experienced and sophisticated. Thus, it is conceivable that the elder generation usually is at the higher position in workplace. When they decide to retire, then those who are younger and capable enough would be promoted. However, if the society encourages people to retire at a later stage, there would be insufficient vacancies to raise the young to a higher rank. Despite the numerous attempts of the younger generation, they may still fail to improve their social status.

On the other hand, postponing the retirement age can be detrimental to the development of an institution. To demonstrate, as people begin to age, they are destined to experience slow metabolism, which exerts an undesirable influence on both their body and mind. As a consequence, they tend to act slowly in their job position, having a negative effect on their working efficiency and quality. In addition, the elderly people are also inclined to show less commitment to their career. This is attributed to the fact that the older generation face less challenges and difficulties in their work. Therefore, they are likely to balance more weight on their family and leisure life, which may lead to their under-performed results.

The later people retire, the lower the social mobility and the worse the institution develops. This probably is the concern of both the young generation and the decision-makers of those corporations.

Guiding question	Yes/No	Explanation
Did the student state the standpoint clearly?		
Did the student include at least two body paragraphs?		
Was there a topic sentence in each body paragraph?		
Were the ideas relevant to the topic?		
Were the ideas elaborated by giving sufficient and appropriate examples and explanations?		

T2-29

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task. Write about the following topic:

An increasing number of domestic appliances (air purifiers and water purifiers) are

provided in the market to tackle water pollution and air pollution. Why is this the case? And is this a positive indicator of the development of human beings?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.