



Literacy CAAs (Co-Requisites)

Cheat Sheet & Study Guide

Years 9/10/11/12

Literacy (Writing) CAA

5 credits

Updated for 2026

TRAJECTORY
EDUCATION

Title

Write texts to communicate ideas and information

Credits

5 (Unit Standard)

Topics covered

Formal writing, spelling/grammar.

Exam layout

There are 3 parts to the exam:

- Part 1 & 2 are **essay-style** questions (150 – 350 words each).
- Part 3 are **multi-choice** questions.

We'll take you through...

- 1 **Essay-style questions** (pages **3 - 4** of this Guide)
- 2 **Marking schedule** (pages **5 - 9** of this Guide)
- 3 **Multi-choice questions** (pages **10 - 11** of this Guide)



First, a bit about the Writing CAA...

Why do I need to pass the Writing CAA?

- The Writing CAA, like the Reading CAA and the Numeracy CAA, are required to be passed in order to gain an NCEA qualification at any level.
- In other words, you cannot get NCEA Level 1, 2, or 3, without achieving all 3 of the CAAs (there are exceptions to this, however).

What is the structure of the test?

- **Q1:** Essay-style question (usually a letter or email, usually 150 – 250 words).
- **Q2:** Essay-style question (usually an article, newsletter, or opinion piece, usually 250 – 350 words).
- **Q3:** Multi-choice questions (spelling, grammar, punctuation and syntax).

Will I get credits for passing this?

- Yes, you will get:
 - **5 credits** for the Writing CAA (which this Study Guide focusses on).
 - **5 credits** for the Reading CAA.
 - **10 credits** for the Numeracy CAA.
- Because these 3 CAAs are all 'Unit Standards', the best you can get is **Achieved** (you can't get Merit or Excellence credits).

How long will I get given to do the test?

- The test is designed to be completed in 60 minutes, however, technically you can have **as long as you need to finish it**. If you need more time, tell this to your teachers.

What are the test conditions?

- You will complete the test on a **computer** (either your own device or a school computer). You won't have access to the internet/ChatGPT/notes/etc.
- If you are entitled to Special Assessment Conditions (for example if you have Dyslexia), you will also have access to a reader-writer.

Will I get a spellchecker in the test?

- Sort of. Each school manages this slightly differently. Usually, you will get a **limited spellchecker**. This means that, if you spell a word wrong, the spellchecker will underline the word in **red** – however the spellchecker **won't give you options to correct the word**.
- Furthermore, the spellchecker won't help you with grammar/punctuation/syntax.

What happens if I don't pass the test?

- Don't beat yourself up. It's a tough test and nearly half of students fail the first time around.
- You get to attempt the CAAs (including the Writing CAA) as many times as you like, but you will need to wait until the next testing round. There are two testing rounds per year, one in May (Term 2) and one in September (Term 3).

Where can I find past exams for the Writing CAA?

- You'll find these on our website, along with past exams for the other CAAs.
www.trajectory.co.nz/resources/

I need extra help. Where can I go?

- We know these tests are daunting, especially when you've fallen behind the class, are having troubles understanding the teacher, or have had learning challenges.
- At Trajectory, our expert tutors offer personalised, 1 : 1 tutoring for students looking to beat these assessments. We've been guiding students to success in the 3 CAAs since they were first introduced in 2022. **Get in touch with us:** www.trajectory.co.nz/first-lesson-free/



1 Essay-style questions

Parts 1 & 2 of the exam

The Writing CAA contains **two** 'essay-style' questions.

One of these has a minimum word count of 150. The other has the minimum word count of 250.

Typically, one of the essay questions will be **an email or a letter**. The other essay question will be **an article/newsletter, opinion, or other piece of writing**.

BASIC TEMPLATE

EMAILS & LETTERS

Dear [Name],

Start by... [introducing yourself, **(only if appropriate)**] + [explaining what the purpose of your email/letter is – why are you writing?].

[Body]

Finish by... [reiterating the purpose of your email, **(only if appropriate)**] + ['next steps'].

Kind regards/Yours Sincerely,

[Name]

EXAMPLE QUESTION 1 (from the Term 3 2025 CAA exam)

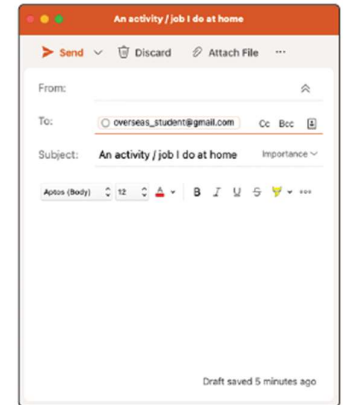
Everyone in your class has been asked to write an email to a student in another country. In this email **explain an important activity OR job you do at home**.

Activities or jobs might include being a member of a group/sport, washing dishes, vacuuming, looking after a sibling.

Write between 150 and 250 words.

In your answer, you should:

- begin your email with an appropriate greeting
- describe the activity or job that you do at home
- explain why this activity or job is important to your household.



EXAMPLE QUESTION 2 (from the Term 2 2024 CAA exam)

Write between 150 and 250 words.

Think about a school or community event or activity.

This could be a cultural event, school camp, school production, school trip, sports trip, community fundraiser, or community music event.

Write an email of thanks or appreciation to someone who organised or helped out with the community event or activity.

In your answer, you should:

- introduce yourself
- describe what you liked about the event/activity
- explain why the event/activity was valuable/important for your community.



BASIC TEMPLATE

ARTICLES, NEWSLETTERS & OPINIONS

Introduction [Start with an eye-grabbing first sentence, summarise the topic (and your stance on it if relevant), summarise the purpose of the article/newsletter]

Body para 1 [Talk about topic/point # 1, follow up with an example, finish with an explanation connecting it back to your point]

Body para 2 [Talk about topic/point # 2, follow up with an example, finish with an explanation connecting it back to your point]

Body para 3 (optional) [Talk about topic/point # 3, follow up with an example, finish with an explanation connecting it back to your point]

Conclusion [Summarise your points # 1 - # 3, strong finishing sentence about the topic]

EXAMPLE QUESTION 1 (from the Term 3 2024 CAA exam)

Write between 250 and 350 words.

Write an article for a school or community website on ONE of the following topics.

***EITHER* Topic A:**

What are THREE important subjects to study at school and why?

You could consider:

- subjects for future success
- subjects that look after your well-being
- subjects that teach general life skills.



***OR* Topic B:**

Why are pets an important part of people's lives?

You could consider:

- caring and responsibility
- providing friendship
- improving health and well-being.



EXAMPLE QUESTION 2 (from the Term 2 2024 CAA exam)

Write between 250 and 350 words.

Write an article for a school or community website on ONE of the following topics.

***EITHER* Topic A:**

Internet access should be free for everyone. Do you agree? Disagree? Perhaps you can think of ideas for both sides?

Some possible ideas you could use include:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Equity/fairness | Too costly to provide |
| Learning and opportunities | Too much screen time |

***OR* Topic B:**

Everyone should help with household chores. This could include doing the dishes, looking after animals, mowing lawns, cleaning, or tidying. Do you agree? Disagree? Perhaps you can think of ideas for both sides?

Some possible ideas you could use include:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| Preparation for living with others | Too busy |
| Taking responsibility for day-to-day living | Too boring |



2 The Marking Schedule

Parts 1 & 2 of the exam

To pass the Writing CAA, you need to meet at least
'sufficient evidence' in each of the following 4 criteria.

1 CONTENT -----

2 STRUCTURE -----

3 LANGUAGE -----

4 ACCURACY -----

Writing rubric	No evidence	Minimal evidence	Weak evidence	Sufficient evidence	Strong evidence
Content 1.1 Quality of ideas / information and their development. Focus on what is said, rather than how it is said.	No response or limited to a few words or lines.	Idea(s) / information not relevant / appropriate for purpose and audience, and / or lack sufficient detail.	Idea(s) / information show some relevance / appropriateness for purpose and audience. Ideas are simple / straightforward with little development.	Idea(s) / information are relevant and appropriate for purpose and audience. Ideas show evidence of development / elaboration.	Idea(s) / information elaborated with specific details / examples / reasons that work together to build reader understanding.
Structure / organisation 1.2 Overall flow of ideas across the text as a whole (e.g., connection and coherence).	No response or limited to a few words or lines.	Text structures inappropriate / do not assist reader understanding.	Text structures evident but used inconsistently / inappropriately. Text may lack coherence or require reader to 'fill in the gaps'.	Text structures support reader understanding of ideas / information through logical sequencing / linking / paragraphing.	Text structures clearly support the communication of ideas / information to the reader (e.g., overall coherence and cohesion). Paragraphs may be used as appropriate to text type.
Language choices 1.3 Appropriateness for purpose and audience (e.g., sentence types and variety, word choice, and language features).	No response or limited to a few words or lines.	Register and tone not appropriate for purpose and audience. Language features (e.g., vocabulary and sentence types) are general and / or basic.	Register, tone, and language features, particularly vocabulary and sentence types, are sometimes appropriate for purpose and audience but lack variety / interest / consistency.	Register, tone, and language features, particularly vocabulary and sentence types, are appropriate for purpose and audience with some variety / interest for the reader.	Register, tone, and language features, particularly vocabulary and sentence types, have variety / interest for the reader and work effectively together for purpose and audience.
Accuracy 1.4 Correct use of text conventions (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling). Includes correct use of sentence structures, tenses, singular / plural forms, pronouns, and verb forms.	No response or limited to a few words or lines.	Technical errors (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling) interfere with meaning / reader understanding.	Text conventions (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling) communicate idea(s) / information but require work from the reader.	Text conventions (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling) used with sufficient accuracy to communicate idea(s) / information clearly.	A range of text conventions (e.g., grammar punctuation, spelling) used with accuracy and control to communicate idea(s) / information effectively.

Next, let's break down exactly what you need to do to meet each of these 4 criteria.





CONTENT

Writing rubric	No evidence	Minimal evidence	Weak evidence	Sufficient evidence	Strong evidence
Content 1.1 Quality of ideas / information and their development. Focus on what is said, rather than how it is said.	No response or limited to a few words or lines.	Idea(s) / information not relevant / appropriate for purpose and audience, and / or lack sufficient detail.	Idea(s) / information show some relevance / appropriateness for purpose and audience. Ideas are simple / straightforward with little development.	Idea(s) / information are relevant and appropriate for purpose and audience. Ideas show evidence of development / elaboration.	Idea(s) / information elaborated with specific details / examples / reasons that work together to build reader understanding.

Content is about *what* you write, rather than *how* you write it.

To meet the **content** criteria, you need to:

- stay on topic and actually do what the task is asking you to do;
- be specific;
- use appropriate language (formal or informal, depending on the purpose and audience);
- create relevant details.

Example: You are applying for a job at your local supermarket. Write an application email to the hiring manager, Hannah Woods. In your email you should:

- Introduce yourself;
- Explain why you are applying for the role; and
- Explain what skills you have which are relevant to the role.

To meet the **content** criteria for this task, you **should**:

- use formal but friendly/respectful language (since you don't know Hannah personally);
- use **specific** details - Which supermarket is it? Which specific skills do you have that make you suitable for the role? Why are you interested in applying?;
- say things that you would typically say when applying for a job (asking if they need any more information, saying that you can provide references if needed, etc).

You **should not**:

- use casual language;
- be vague;
- drift off topic (talk about how hard it is to find a job these days, or talk about how you like to listen to music while working, etc);

"I'm writing to you to apply for the open role at your supermarket."



Not specific enough. Also, if the task asks you to do something (introduce yourself) you need to make sure you do it.

"My name is Andrew Hinman and I'm writing to you to apply for the open Checkout Operator role at Pak'nSave Moorhouse."



"The reason I'm applying for this role is to make more money. I'm also looking to build up my skills."



Not specific enough.

"The reason I'm applying for this role is to help fundraise for an upcoming rowing regatta that I'm competing in. I'm also looking to build up my customer service skills."



"If you need any additional information, or if you have any questions, please let me know. Thank you for considering my application."



Fits the purpose of the text (shows an understanding of what the email is actually about). **Tone suits the audience** (formal but respectful).





STRUCTURE

Writing rubric	No evidence	Minimal evidence	Weak evidence	Sufficient evidence	Strong evidence
Structure / organisation 1.2 Overall flow of ideas across the text as a whole (e.g., connection and coherence).	No response or limited to a few words or lines.	Text structures inappropriate / do not assist reader understanding.	Text structures evident but used inconsistently / inappropriately. Text may lack coherence or require reader to 'fill in the gaps'.	Text structures support reader understanding of ideas / information through logical sequencing / linking / paragraphing.	Text structures clearly support the communication of ideas / information to the reader (e.g., overall coherence and cohesion). Paragraphs may be used as appropriate to text type.

Structure is about how you *organise* your writing..

To meet the **structure** criteria, you need to:

- have a clear beginning, middle, and end (with good flow between them);
- use writing conventions which fit the type of text (e.g. letter, article).
- use paragraphs;

Example: You are applying for a job at your local supermarket. Write an application email to the hiring manager, Hannah Woods. In your email you should:

- Introduce yourself;
- Explain why you are applying for the role; and
- Explain what skills you have which are relevant to the role.

To meet the **structure** criteria for this task, you **should**:

- Write your ideas in a **logical order**. For example, you should begin by introducing yourself and explaining the purpose of your email. At the end, you should finish by talking about 'next steps' (for example, "I look forward to hearing back from you about my application" or "If you have any inquiries for me, please let me know."
- Use **paragraphs**. One idea per paragraph is good. For an email/letter, paragraphs typically contain 1 - 2 sentences, while for an article/newsletter paragraphs typically contain 3 - 4 sentences.
- Make sure to use letter/email conventions (starting with "Dear ____," and finishing with something like "Yours Sincerely,").

Dear Hannah,

My name is Andrew Hinman, and I'm writing to you to apply for the open role at New World Fendalton (in the butchery team). I found this role advertised on Student Job Search.

The main reason that I feel like I would be a good fit for this role is.....

.....

If you need any more information from me, please let me know. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Andrew Hinman



Good paragraphing (1 - 2 sentences per paragraph is typical for a letter/email)



Clear beginning, middle & end



Email conventions used

- "Dear Hannah" followed by a paragraph and a new line
- "Kind regards," followed by a paragraph and your name



3

LANGUAGE CHOICES

Writing rubric	No evidence	Minimal evidence	Weak evidence	Sufficient evidence	Strong evidence
Language choices 1.3 Appropriateness for purpose and audience (e.g., sentence types and variety, word choice, and language features).	No response or limited to a few words or lines.	Register and tone not appropriate for purpose and audience. Language features (e.g., vocabulary and sentence types) are general and / or basic.	Register, tone, and language features, particularly vocabulary and sentence types, are sometimes appropriate for purpose and audience but lack variety / interest / consistency.	Register, tone, and language features, particularly vocabulary and sentence types, are appropriate for purpose and audience with some variety / interest for the reader.	Register, tone, and language features, particularly vocabulary and sentence types, have variety / interest for the reader and work effectively together for purpose and audience.

Language choices is about your vocabulary and the *style* of your writing.

To meet the **language choices** criteria, you need to:

- show a strong vocabulary
- demonstrate variety in your writing style
- use vocabulary which fits the purpose & audience

Example: You are applying for a job at your local supermarket. Write an application email to the hiring manager, Hannah Woods. In your email you should:

- Introduce yourself;
- Explain why you are applying for the role; and
- Explain what skills you have which are relevant to the role.

To meet the **language choices** criteria for this task, you **should**:

- Use a strong vocabulary. Avoid using basic language.
- Demonstrate variety in your writing style. For example:
 - avoid starting each sentence the same way ("I am writing to you to..." "I am interested in this role because..." "I believe I have the right skills for this role because..."
 - use a variety of short and long sentences.
- Use appropriate vocabulary (keep it formal but respectful, since we've never met Hannah before).

"Thank you for thinking about hiring me in this role. I think I would be really good in this role.

"I greatly appreciate your consideration for this role. I believe I would be very suitable in this position."



Repetitive ('think' x 2 and 'this role' x 2)
Weak vocabulary



Better vocabulary
More suited to audience (formal)



Writing rubric	No evidence	Minimal evidence	Weak evidence	Sufficient evidence	Strong evidence
Accuracy 1.4 Correct use of text conventions (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling). Includes correct use of sentence structures, tenses, singular / plural forms, pronouns, and verb forms.	No response or limited to a few words or lines.	Technical errors (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling) interfere with meaning / reader understanding.	Text conventions (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling) communicate idea(s) / information but require work from the reader.	Text conventions (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling) used with sufficient accuracy to communicate idea(s) / information clearly.	A range of text conventions (e.g., grammar punctuation, spelling) used with accuracy and control to communicate idea(s) / information effectively.

Accuracy is about writing mostly free from errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

To meet the **accuracy** criteria, you need to:

- avoid run-on sentences
- have (mostly) fine spelling
- use (mostly) correct punctuation (full stops, commas, apostrophes, etc)

Example: You are applying for a job at your local supermarket. Write an application email to the hiring manager, Hannah Woods. In your email you should:

- Introduce yourself;
- Explain why you are applying for the role; and
- Explain what skills you have which are relevant to the role.

Failing to meet the accuracy criteria is the most common reason for not passing the Writing CAA.

To meet the **accuracy** criteria for this task, you need to get your spelling and grammar mostly correct, **but you don't need to be perfect.**

Tips:

- Run-on sentences are a very common mistake. If you feel a sentence is too long, **don't be afraid to split it up into 2 or more smaller sentences.**
- Check the easy ones: capital letters, full stops, 'too' instead of 'to', etc.
- Remember, you get **pretty much unlimited time to complete the Writing CAA.** Therefore, there's no excuse for you not to **carefully proofread your work** (over and over if necessary) to make sure it all looks good.

I've got fantastic customer service skills, I also have alot of free time in the evenings. So I could pick up some night shifts.



- 1st sentence is a **run-on sentence**
- 2nd sentence **begins with a conjunction** (you should avoid beginning sentences with 'so', 'but', 'because', 'and')
- 'alot' → a lot

I've got fantastic customer service skills. I also have a lot of free time in the evenings. so I could pick up some night shifts.



I am available to start work on monday at the earliest. Would that be suitable for you.



- monday → Monday
- 2nd sentence needs to finish with a '?'

I am available to start work on Monday at the earliest. Would that be suitable for you?



3 Multi-choice questions

Part 3 of the exam

The Writing CAA also contains a series of **multi-choice** questions on spelling, grammar, and spelling.

These questions focus on common mistakes (for example, using 'there' instead of 'their').

Tips:

- **Read the questions/options out loud to yourself.** Doing so helps you identify what the most natural-sounding answer is.
- **Take your time.**
- The best way to get confident with these multi-choice questions is with **past exams**. These can be found here: www.trajectory.co.nz/resources/

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS (from the Term 3 2025 CAA exam) (answers on next page)

- (a) Select (✓) the answer that uses the correct punctuation.
- ☐ The chef prepared a delicious cake, the smell filled the kitchen. This made the waiting customers extra hungry.
- ☐ The chef prepared a delicious cake. The smell filled the kitchen, this made the waiting customers' extra hungry
- ☐ The chef prepared a delicious cake. The smell filled the kitchen. This made the waiting customers extra hungry.
- ☐ The chef prepared a delicious cake the smell filled the kitchen, this made the waiting customer's extra hungry.
- (b) Circle (○) the best option in each shaded box to complete this sentence.
- I like all vegetables **expect** | **accept** | **except** broccoli.
- (c) Select (✓) the answer that uses the correct punctuation.
- ☐ Do you want extra cheese on your burger? We are having burgers for dinner?
- ☐ Do you want extra cheese on your burger? We are having burgers for dinner.
- ☐ Do you want extra cheese on your burger. We are having burgers for dinner.
- ☐ Do you want extra cheese on your burger. We are having burgers for dinner?
- (d) Circle (○) the best option in each shaded box to complete this sentence.
- The apples **are** | **is** | **be** on the table.
- (e) Circle (○) the best option in each shaded box to complete this sentence.
- My mum loves strawberries, and **it** | **she** | **we** eats them every day.
- (f) Circle (○) the correct option in each shaded box to complete this sentence.
- He **bought** | **brung** | **brought** a pie from home.
- (g) Select (✓) the answer that uses the correct punctuation.
- ☐ The soup was too salty so, I added some more water to it. After I had stirred it well, the flavour improved greatly.
- ☐ The soup was too salty, so I added some more water to it after I had stirred it well, the flavour improved greatly
- ☐ The soup was too salty so I added some more water to it, after I had stirred it well, the flavour improved greatly.
- ☐ The soup was too salty, so I added some more water to it. After I had stirred it well, the flavour improved greatly.
- (h) Circle (○) the best option in each shaded box to complete this sentence.
- I wanted a burger, **but** | **if** | **or** my friend ordered me a pizza.



ANSWERS (Term 3 2025 CAA exam)

(a)	The chef prepared a delicious cake. The smell filled the kitchen. This made the waiting customers extra hungry.
(b)	except
(c)	Do you want extra cheese on your burger? We are having burgers for dinner.
(d)	are
(e)	she
(f)	brought
(g)	The soup was too salty, so I added some more water to it. After I had stirred it well, the flavour improved greatly.
(h)	but

