Assessment

Different approaches to marking

When we assess a piece of work, we are collecting marks to meet our own institutional requirements. We are also playing an important part in students' development by providing information on how they could develop their writing abilities. We also affect motivation when we provide feedback. There are various ways in which we can assess work:

Correction We can tick what is good and correct what is wrong. This clearly identifies how something should be written, and provides the student with the corrected form. However, it takes a lot of time, and leaves no space for the student to take responsibility for his or her own corrections.

Correction code We can use a correction code with which the students are familiar. This draws attention to mistakes which have been classified for the students by the teacher. This approach has the advantage that it gives students support, but at the same time leaves them to think through mistakes they have made and possibly to correct them. The following is a simple correction code. You may adapt such a code, for example by adding symbols for common mistakes your students keep making.

P	punctuation (including capitals)
Sp	spelling
^	omission
/	unnecessary word
T	wrong tense
WO	word order
Gr	grammar
WW	wrong word

The danger with using a correction code only is that you assess accuracy alone, and do not pay enough attention to content. This does not provide any guidance to students in how to improve this aspect of their writing, and it does not credit students whose writing is imaginative and interesting, but whose accuracy is poor.

Marking Menu

Marking menu One way to provide a more balanced assessment of students' work would be to have a 'menu' of aspects of both accuracy and content to focus on in each piece of writing. The aspects of accuracy listed concern mechanical features of writing, whereas aspects of content concern ideas, the expression and organization of ideas, and the effect of the writing on the reader. This menu should reflect what is required by the particular writing task. In the Teacher's Book, a marking menu is provided for each unit. The next section deals with marking menus in more detail.

Marking menus

Here is a comprehensive marking menu for the writing activities in Book 3, giving the various possible scales on which you could grade a piece of work. The writing may fall at any point between the positive (+) and the negative (−) ends of the scales.

Accuracy	Content
+ error-free use of the unit 'limit grammar' − many errors + accurate use of vocabulary − limited or inaccurate vocabulary + good punctuation, capitalization and spelling − many errors in these + neat writing − illegible + appropriate conventions, e.g. letter format − inappropriate format	+ effective / clear − uncommunicative + sufficiently detailed − too simple + logically organized − confusing for the reader + appropriate style − inconsistent or inappropriate style + original / interesting − modelled directly from another text + ambitious use of vocabulary − repetitive, simplistic vocabulary + good title / introduction / conclusion − no, or poor title / introduction / conclusion + believable, consistent story or other content − nonsense + ideas connected − no connection between ideas

It would be too much for both the student and the marker to use all of these scales for all pieces of writing which are handed in. It is more realistic to use a more limited marking menu fitted to each specific writing task. Suggested marking menus are given for each unit in the book.

This is the marking menu for Unit 1:

Accuracy	Content
• accurate use of vocabulary • neat writing	• detail (sufficient to identify the character in the picture?) • appropriate style (informal)

The **Accuracy** scales are chosen to reflect the teaching points of the unit, for example the points covered in the **Review Your Writing** section, or the 'limit grammar'. You should consider not correcting grammar points which are beyond the 'limit grammar' at that stage of the course, since this might discourage students from being ambitious in their expression of ideas. The **Content** scales are chosen to be appropriate to the kind of content we expect that the writing task for that unit will generate.

You should feel free to add additional criteria for your own particular class. This might come from aspects of language use highlighted in your main coursebook, or ideas that have emerged during exploitation of the pre-writing activities for that particular unit.

It may be too complicated and time-consuming to award marks separately for each point in the marking menu. However, we do suggest awarding marks separately for accuracy and content, since this helps to combat a natural tendency to focus only on accuracy. In some cases we may weight accuracy and content equally, say a total of five points for each. In other cases you may want to weight the marking in favour of one or the other. For example, if the 'limit grammar' is very easy for your students, you might want to highlight, for example, the successful organization of ideas or originality. In this case, you could give a total of seven points for content and only three for accuracy.

Although you may not give separate marks for the individual points in the menu, you can use these to guide your marking. The next section shows how this would work in practice.

Unit 13 The Life of a Tree

Accuracy (5 marks)	Content (5 marks)
• grammar (past passive) • spelling	• ambitious use of vocabulary (descriptive adjectives) • consistent (always from the tree's point of view?) • ideas connected (in time)

Text 2

> The Life of a Tree
>
> When I was young I lived in a forest.
> The forest is ø beautiful and big. My
>   T
> family lived near me, the forest is New
>   P
> Zeland, in Wellington. Twenty years after,
>   WW
> then people cut the other trees, and my
> family. I was alone in the forest, in the
> dark, in the world.... As time went by,
> the people built, town around me, but
>   ∧
> five years after one plane destroyed the
>   WW
> city (town). Fifty years later people
> rebuilt the town, but the town had more
> pollution. Destroyed the town one bomb,
>   WO
> but I was live. After grew trees around
>   WW   WO
> me. I was happy!
>
> A good composition. You imagine the
> tree's point of view well.
> You could use more passive voice in
> the story.
> Also, look again at words and
> expressions to show time.
>   6/10

Text 3

> My story
>
> When I was young, I used to live in a
> beautiful forest. 30 years later, my fathers and
>   WW
> me was in village, the scenery was changed.
>   Gr   ∧
>   Then the other trees (my family and my
> friends), cut down and I was alone in the
>   ∧
> garden of a house in the small town.
>   As time went by, the town become a big
>   T
> city and I was in the central street, I was sad
>   P
> because I was alone, the children painted in
>   P
> my body and I couldn't do enything.
>   Sp
>   Then, the war started and the city was
> destroyed and I was help but nobody listened,
>   WW   ∧
> me. I was unhappy.
>   Now, I'm an old tree in the forest and I'm
> around of young trees. I'm happy.
>   WW
>
> An excellent composition. I enjoyed
> reading this very much.
> Can you correct the grammar mistakes?
>   8½/10

Accuracy: 2 / 5
The limit grammar (past passive) is avoided and cannot be assessed. Quite good spelling.

Content: 4 / 5
Interesting description of being alone.
Consistently from point of view of tree.
Time connectors used, but sometimes inappropriately.

Accuracy: 4/5
Good use of grammar but auxiliary sometimes omitted. Good self-correction. Good spelling.

Content: 4½ / 5
Vocabulary good, though limited to unit vocabulary.
Consistently from tree's point of view.
Good use of time connectors.