

CHAPTER 3: WRITING LITERACY

Introduction

This chapter sets the framework for the assessment of Writing Literacy in English for grades VI and IX. Grade III has been excluded from the Writing Literacy domain. It was deemed more appropriate to assess Writing Literacy of students at higher grades as younger students require more time to develop the skills assessed in this domain. Typically, Writing Literacy is assessed only at higher grades in large scale assessments. In the context of Bhutan, the educational system is moving towards abolishing written exams up to grade V.

Initially, Writing Literacy will be assessed only in grade VI. Depending upon the relevance and reliability of the data gathered, the Writing Literacy assessment may be extended to grade IX in subsequent cycles. This framework, however, describes the Writing Literacy domain for both grades VI and IX. The Language strand (grammar) will also be assessed in this domain.

This chapter first discusses the importance of Writing Literacy. It moves on to describe how 21st century competencies will be assessed in the Writing Literacy assessment, the definition of Writing Literacy, the organisation of the domain, and how it is to be assessed. The LOs to be assessed are then specified to establish a link to the curriculum.

The English Curriculum Framework PP-XII, REC (2013, p.10), describes the importance of Writing thus:

Writing is more than creating a record of discovery and accomplishment. It is also a way of thinking and learning. It is a process with which thoughts are refined and the language in which they are written made more precise. The writing process allows the writers to explore ideas and keep track of the explorations on paper.

The curriculum framework goes on to describe the various purposes for which Writing is used throughout life. Writing can be used for personal purposes such as communicating one's thoughts in a journal, diary etc. and for transactional purposes such as, conducting business, which entail a

more formal kind of writing and finally, writing for creative purposes such as writing poems and stories.

Like Reading, Writing is also considered a foundational skill in the 21st century as it is considered crucial for future learning and for an individual’s full participation in the economic, political and social life as an adult.

Assessing 21st century competencies

One of the objectives of NEA in Bhutan is to assess the prevalence of the 21st century competencies among Bhutanese students. The nine attributes defined in the Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024 are used to specify the 21st century competencies on the basis of the four learning and achievement imperatives – Knowledge, Competencies (Skills), Values and Attitudes. Typically, assessment instruments focussed on the cognitive domain are not the best instruments to measure Values and Attitudes. However, the limitations of pen and paper test such as, the NEA to be implemented in Bhutan mean that all aspects cannot be measured in a similar manner. Therefore, Knowledge and Competencies will be assessed as part of the domain. All tasks will reflect the Values that are important in the Bhutanese socio-cultural context and the Attitudes will be addressed through the contextual questionnaires.

Table 3.1 Attributes to be measured in Writing Literacy

Attributes	
1.	<p>Knowledge and understanding – The ability to acquire the basic concepts of literacy in order to fulfil their potential and adapt intelligently to challenges and contribute to society. A literate citizen demonstrates the following knowledge and understanding competencies while writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates a deep understanding of personal, local and global issues; • demonstrates the ability to use different literary forms and techniques appropriately; • conveys ideas in an articulate manner taking into account the audience; and • discusses complex issues with deep understanding at the personal, local and global levels.
2.	<p>Intellectual competence - The ability to apply critical thinking, problem-solving and innovative skills to generate new possibilities, and to create new ideas or knowledge. A literate citizen demonstrates the following competencies while writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applies prior knowledge and information in an innovative manner to create new knowledge; • uses reasoning skills to provide solutions to complex real-life problems; • links relevant information from various sources in an appropriate manner to create new knowledge and innovative solutions; • develops arguments using relevant information and with deep understanding of issues; • evaluates ideas critically to draw relevant conclusions; and

- generates imaginative texts using various literary techniques and in different literary forms.

3. **Communicative competence** – The ability to express opinions and understand complex issues through mastery of English. A literate citizen demonstrates the following communicative competencies while writing:

- reformulates concepts and information in a manner appropriate to the audience;
- expresses opinions with appropriate elaboration;
- discusses issues and solutions in order to contribute to inter-personal, local or global discourses;
- analyzes, clarifies, and interprets complex information and issues effectively and responds appropriately; and
- exhibits the skills to influence readers.

Defining Writing Literacy

The objective of this assessment is to go beyond the curriculum to evaluate students' ability to utilise their knowledge and skills to become contributing citizens, and to successfully integrate and participate in society. Therefore, this assessment takes the 'literacy' approach following international best practices in assessments such as the PISA. The 'literacy' concept goes beyond the knowledge, understandings and skills inherent in each learning domain. It encompasses the ability to *acquire* and *apply* such knowledge and skills.

The definition of Writing Literacy in the NEA is as follows:

Writing Literacy is the ability of an individual to construct meaning by generating texts to fulfil personal and social needs and be a contributing member of the society.

Writing Literacy ...

The term 'Writing Literacy' is preferred to Writing to convey the breadth of coverage. Writing Literacy goes beyond the mere forming of words. While it includes the ability to write words, it also includes skills such as generating and organising ideas, applying vocabulary, using linguistic structures, textual features, etc. The term is also intended to indicate that writing is done in a context and for a purpose.

... is the ability of an individual to construct meaning by generating texts ...

Writing Literacy is an ability that students demonstrate by creating and developing meaning through words to convey ideas and information to an intended audience. The words ‘construct’ and ‘generating’ are used to emphasise that the ideas come from the writer.

... to fulfil personal and social needs ...

Texts are created for specific purposes in particular contexts. No text is written in isolation. Therefore, Writing Literacy must comprise various contexts and purposes to reflect the authenticity of writing in real life scenarios. This phrase must, however, be read from the perspective of the individual and understood in that context. For instance, writing for personal needs could include writing stories and writing for social needs could include writing editorials, letters, etc.

... be a contributing member of society.

It is important to understand the significance of Writing Literacy not just from the perspective of the individual but also from the perspective of society at large. This phrase is intended to convey that Writing Literacy is essential for a citizen to be able to meaningfully engage with society and contribute to its progress.

Organisation of the Writing Literacy domain

The NEA Writing Literacy domain comprises tasks requiring students to construct their responses. It is described in terms of *contexts*, *text types* and *writing sub-skills*.

1.1.1 Contexts

The Writing Literacy encompasses various purposes and contexts in which writing takes place. As the contexts in which texts are created are likely to be the same as those in which they are read, the same contexts that have been defined for the Reading Literacy domain will be appropriate for this domain. Appropriate representation of each category will be ensured. The descriptions of the different contexts for Writing Literacy domain are provided below.

Personal contexts have an individual focus. The primary audience for such texts is the author him- or herself and include topics such as personal health, personal transport or travel. Writing tasks

fitting a personal context include those that are primarily for personal expression, enjoyment or reflection, such as writing a story or a diary.

Local contexts have an interactive focus requiring engagement with other individuals or with elements of the community, including the nation. This type of context involves day-to-day situations and activities at home, school, local community and the country where the focus of thought and action lies in connections and interactions with people or objects to which the learners are familiar with. Writing texts reflecting a local context include a letter from a friend, a school timetable or a description of one's hometown or the country.

Global contexts have an external focus on broader situations that may affect whole communities or countries, or have an even wider, global relevance. Tasks fitting this context type include those dealing with broad social issues such as public policy, transport systems, environment, or advertisements. Writing texts that reflect a wider-world context include formal letters or essays on global issues such as the environment.

1.1.2 *Text types*

In this assessment, students will be asked to respond to a single cluster of tasks. Each cluster will consist of two or three tasks. Each task will, in turn, require students to develop a type of text from the five types listed below, all of which are included in the English curriculum. The number of tasks in a cluster will depend on the time taken for each task and the difficulty level of each task. All the clusters will have a similar level of difficulty and will be allotted the same amount of time. The difficulty level of tasks and the time to be allotted will be decided based upon data from the piloting.

Imaginative texts present and develop characters, events and themes, and deal with questions relating to *when*, or *in what sequence*. Examples of imaginative writing are short stories, plays, comic strips etc.

Since the ability to write poems require additional skills, students will not be asked to write poems in this assessment.

Descriptive texts present information about concrete objects like people, places or items or abstract concepts or constructs; these kinds of texts present details on *what* and some *how*. Description includes forms of writing sometimes referred to as an ‘exposition’. Examples of descriptive texts include describing a person, place, plant, problem, feeling, a phenomenon, or a label for an image.

Persuasive texts deal with opinions and points of view and are used to persuade the reader. They address some of the *which* and *why* questions. Examples of persuasive texts are a letter to an editor, a book review, an advertisement, a job application, and a discussion of the benefits or disadvantages of a certain public policy.

Instructional texts explain what to do in order to complete a specified task, and thus address some of the *how* and *when* questions. Examples of instructional texts are giving directions to find a location, listing materials and steps required to make an object, and explaining what to do in an emergency.

Transactional texts aim to achieve a specific purpose involving an exchange of information between two or more parties, such as arranging for something to be done. Transaction is represented by writing tasks such as a message to a friend or correspondence related to the delivery of goods.

1.1.3 *Writing sub-skills*

The Writing Literacy comprises the sub-skills as defined below which will be used as criteria for assessment.

Code	Sub-skills	Description
W1.	Generate ideas	Writing tasks typically require creation, selection and crafting of ideas. The quantity and quality of ideas and their appropriateness for the task are constituents of this skill. The nature of ideas will vary from one text type to another. For example, in story writing (narrative), strong characterisation and storyline are important. In persuasive writing, the logic, relevance and persuasiveness of argument are important, as is the ability to maintain critical distance. In descriptive writing, completeness of the description, salience of details included, and precision and richness of the picture created for the reader are all important.
W2.	Control text structure and organisation	Different text types have different structures. Effective writers have knowledge of the structural features of texts and select a suitable organisational form for the writing task. For example, if writing a recipe, the writer will start with a set of ingredients, and then describe or list a sequence of steps. If writing a narrative,

		conventionally the writer will start with an orientation, follow this with a complication, and end with a resolution. They will also know what to include in each of these sections. For example, the orientation will introduce main characters and establish the setting.
W3.	Manage coherence	Good writers can structure texts in such a way that the links between ideas are clear to the reader. Coherence is achieved through a logical progression of ideas that express meaning consistent with the reader's general world knowledge, as well as through syntactic features such as reference, and lexical features such as discourse markers and connectives. Good writers make use of paragraphing to group ideas around a central topic, or use other graphical means such as headings to indicate the relationship between ideas.
W4.	Vocabulary and spelling	Writing involves not just knowledge of words but also an understanding of how they can be used in specific contexts. Good writers can draw on a wide range of vocabulary to present ideas precisely and concisely. They choose words that are appropriate for the purpose, audience and context. A wide range of vocabulary allows writers to present arguments effectively, and to give life to images in descriptive or narrative writing.
W5.	Control syntax and grammar	Writers need to understand implicitly how the rules of grammar govern the way words are put together to form phrases, clauses and sentences. Good writers produce grammatically correct meaningful sentences, and make use of a range of syntactic structures. They link ideas with a variety of cohesive devices and use sentence structures appropriate to the writing task.
W6.	Handwriting	Handwriting has been considered as it contributes to reading fluency and presentation.

Each sub-skill will be assessed using various criteria that will depend upon the task and the text type. The criteria will be operationalized using rating scales which may be dichotomous (0, 1) or may have multiple categories. Each category in each criterion is a score point and can be considered an 'item'.

The table 3.2 illustrates the desired proportion of score points belonging to each process across the whole set of tasks. In order to achieve these proportions, every task may not be assessed on all the criteria but only the most relevant ones.

Table 3.2 Distribution of sub-skills in the Writing Literacy assessment

Sub-skills	Grade VI	Grade IX
Generating ideas	15-25%	15-25%
Controlling text structure and organisation	10-20%	10-20%
Managing coherence	15-25%	15-25%
Vocabulary and Spelling	10-20%	10-20%

Controlling syntax and grammar	25-30%	25-30%
Handwriting	0-5%	0-5%

Controlling syntax and grammar has been given the maximum weighting as the LOs from the Language (grammar) strand will be included under this sub-skill. Handwriting has been given the least weighting as students would have developed adequate handwriting skills at these grades.

Assessing the domain

The domain will be assessed through CRTs which will either be open or closed type. Each task will have a rubric attached to it. The rubrics will be used to assess various sub-skills defined above. Every sub-skill may not be assessed in every task as it may not be appropriate to do so.

The sub-skills will be reflected as criteria in the rubric. Under each criteria, various levels or categories are described. These are the score points and will act as the items for the domain. The number of categories in each criteria will vary. Some may be dichotomous (0 or 1), for instance, handwriting will only be scored as legible or illegible. Other criteria may have up to five or six categories. The number of categories for a criterion depends on the number of defined and distinguishable categories into which student responses can be divided.

Each writing task may not be judged on the same criteria. Various tasks will be judged on a variety of parameters but not necessarily all the criteria. For example, a creative writing task may be judged on the quality of ideas generated, vocabulary used, cohesiveness and structure. Another descriptive task may include generating ideas, handwriting, spelling, grammar and cohesiveness as criteria to judge student writing. The specific criteria to be included for a particular writing task will be discussed and decided at the time of item development.

At this stage, all criteria are applicable to both grade levels and, therefore, will act as link items to generate a single proficiency scale for both grades.

Item difficulty

It is important for an assessment of this nature to include a broad range of writing tasks which will give students at various ability levels the opportunity to attempt a task and express themselves.

Item review and pilot data will be used to ensure that a sufficient number of items from an appropriate range of difficulty levels are included in the assessment.

Measurable Learning Outcomes

Realistically, it is not possible to measure all the LOs prescribed in the curriculum in a single assessment. Therefore, the LOs have been reviewed and the measurable ones have been selected. In order to ensure that the assessment provides an opportunity for all students to demonstrate their ability, appropriate LOs from two grades below and two grades above the targeted grades have been reviewed and included, e.g., LOs for grade VI assessment include LOs from grade IV to VIII.

Table 3.3 Measurable Learning Outcomes for the Writing Literacy

Grade VI	
GIV W1	Write detailed compositions based on picture sequences.
GV W 2	Spell correctly the words they are using.
GV W3	Use punctuation – capital letters, full stops, question marks, commas, exclamation marks and quotation marks (inverted commas) – correctly.
GV W4	Develop ideas more effectively in longer paragraphs in which they use both simple and compound sentences.
GV W5	Write using a wider variety of forms encountered in their reading including formal letters, applications, invitations and adventure stories.
GVI W6	Use punctuation marks, including the use of the apostrophe for omission (contractions) and possession.
GVI W7	Enhance the effectiveness of their writing with the use of figurative language – simile, metaphor, personification and onomatopoeia.
GVII W8	Write coherent paragraphs using simple compound complex sentences.
GVII W 9	Take notes to prepare reports and summaries, and complete information transfer.
GVII W10	Write for a range of purposes and audiences using a variety of forms encountered in their reading including, explanations, summaries, invitations, realistic fictions, resume, reports, narrative essays and fantasy.
GVIII W11	Use punctuation and paragraphing to organise ideas.
GVIII W12	Write compositions using a range of sentence structures to achieve different effects.

Grade IX	
GVII W1	Spell correctly the words they are using.
GVII W2	Write for a range of purposes and audiences using a variety of forms encountered in their reading including explanations, summaries, invitations, realistic fictions, resume, reports, narrative essays and fantasy.
GVII W3	Write coherent paragraphs using simple, compound and complex sentences.
GVIII W4	Use punctuation and paragraphing to organise ideas.
GVIII W5	Write compositions using a range of sentence structures to achieve different effects.
GVIII W6	Use figurative language effectively.
GIX W7	Write for a variety of purposes and audiences using a wider variety of forms encountered in their reading to include memoir, narrative and descriptive essays.
GIX W8	Use rhetorical devices, including irony, antithesis, in their writing.
GIX W9	Maintain purpose and sense of audience in a piece of writing.
GIX W10	Use discourse markers like “however”, “therefore”, “in so far as” to achieve cohesion in their writing.
GIXW11	Select and use diction appropriate to the writing task.
GX W12	Write for a variety of purposes and audiences using a wider variety of forms encountered in their reading to include expository essays, letters of application and resumes.
GX W13	Write reports on assigned and self-selected topics.
GXI W14	Write a short story in which they show control of the elements of the short story form.
GXI W15	Write a persuasive essay in which they show understanding and control of the elements of the different essay forms.
GXI W16	Demonstrate that they can make fine distinctions in grammar and diction to achieve precision in their writing.
GXI W 17	Recognise and apply in their writing, the features of short stories and argumentative essays.

Similarly, the table 3.9 shows the list of LOs selected from the Language strand.

Table 3.4 Measurable Learning Outcomes for the Language Strand

Grade VI	
GIV G1	Use direct and indirect speech . Identify some parts of speech (noun, verb, adjective, preposition) and the definite and indefinite article in the texts they are reading and writing.
GIV G2	Use simple word order: subject – verb – object in simple sentences.
GIV G3	Use subject – verb agreement correctly.
GIV G4	Use punctuation marks (full stop, question mark, exclamation mark, comma) in their writing
GIV G5	Use capital letters for the beginning of sentences and for proper nouns.
GIV G6	Use subject – verb agreement correctly.
GIV G7	Use punctuation marks (full stop, question mark, exclamation mark, comma)
GV G8	Use direct and indirect speech
GV G9	Use word order (article – subject – verb – adjective – object) in longer sentences correctly.
GV G10	Use the degrees of comparison (positive, comparative and superlative) of adjectives.
GV G11	Use the progressive/continuous forms of tenses (continuous present, continuous past, continuous future).
GV G12	Tell the infinitive, simple past and past participle of regular verbs (play, played, played).
GVI G13	Construct complex sentences, which contain one main (principal) clause with a subordinate clause.
GVI G14	Use question tags
GVI G15	Use compound tenses: present perfect and past perfect
GVI G16	Use possessive pronouns,
GVII G17	Use active and passive voice.
GVII G18	Use phrasal verbs correctly.
GVII G19	Use prepositions correctly

GVIII G20	Use some conjunction coordinators and correlatives (either... or; neither... nor; not only... but also) correctly.
GVIII G21	Use the continuous forms of the compound tenses (present perfect, past perfect and future perfect).
GVIII G22	Distinguish among the moods – indicative, imperative, interrogative, subjunctive.
Grade IX	
GVII G1	Use possessive pronouns appropriately.
GVII G2	Use question tags correctly.
GVII G3	Tell the parts of commonly used regular and irregular verbs.
GVII G4	Use simple, compound and complex sentences.
GVII G5	Use articles correctly.
GVII G6	Use active and passive voice.
GVII G7	Change from direct to indirect speech and vice-versa correctly.
GVII G8	Show how the meanings of words are changed by adding prefixes and suffixes to root words
GVII G9	Use phrasal verbs correctly.
GVII G10	Use punctuation marks and question tags appropriately.
GVII G11	Use prepositions correctly.
GVIII G12	Use relative pronouns appropriately.
GVIII G13	Use some conjunction coordinators and correlatives (either... or; neither... nor; not only... but also) correctly.
GVIII G14	Use idiomatic expressions in appropriate contexts.

GIX G15	Use modal auxiliaries (can, could, should, must, may and might) to indicate a shift in mood.
GIX G16	Use indefinite pronouns appropriately.
GIX G17	Use periodic sentences correctly. Use a wider range of discourse markers correctly including “however”, “in so far as”, “therefore”, “henceforth”.
GIX G18	Use conjunction coordinators and correlatives (hardly... when; scarcely... when; no sooner... than) correctly.
GX G19	Use gerunds and participles appropriately
GX G20	Use phrasal verbs appropriately
GXI G21	Know and use transitive and intransitive verbs appropriately.
GXI G22	Use literal and figurative language appropriately.