

The language of the Australian Citizenship Test

A review and guide for test development

Part 1

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Executive summary

SCOPE This report reviews the Australian Citizenship Test and offers recommendations and guidelines for test item writers. The focus of this review is the Australian Citizenship Test, in particular, the practice test questions, as indicative of the operational test questions. The informational content of the associated test materials is not within the scope of this review. The review is framed in four key considerations from assessment theory: the **test purpose**, the **target domain** of knowledge (including language knowledge) the nature of the **population** that takes the test, and the fairness of the **pass** mark. These considerations should also guide future item writing. The review has drawn on academic literature, text analysis tools and a qualitative analysis of the practice test items by a panel of assessment specialists.

FOCUS The Australian Citizenship Test has two purposes: (1) to determine whether applicants have a basic knowledge of English and (2) to determine whether they have an adequate knowledge of Australia, its democratic system, beliefs and values, and the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship. The test can be described as a content-based language test for citizenship purposes. The test has a pass mark of 75%, with a higher priority placed on the questions in the “Australian Values” section of the test. There is no information available as to the rationale for the pass mark.

For the purposes of this review, the **target domain** of the test is defined narrowly as the testable section of the government-produced booklet *Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond – Testable* (OCB). Although the focus of the review is on the practice test questions (“test items”), the nature of the OCB text is relevant to the accessibility of the items.

METHOD In a general sense, **test accessibility** means that the population is able to do the test. Specifically for citizenship testing, it means that: regardless of their linguistic, cultural or educational background, the population has a fair chance of passing the test if they have made a reasonable effort to prepare for it. In this review, test accessibility has been investigated through quantitative word and text analyses, and a qualitative review of the practice test items by language assessment specialists.

FINDINGS 1 Automated text analysis tools showed that most sections of OCB are relatively advanced. While these measures are not purpose-built, they indicate that the texts that underpin the test items are fairly complex, with implications for the items themselves. Further analysis on the individual words that are used in the practice test items and the OCB texts provides insight on these measures. While most English texts rely on 2000 or so common words, the OCB texts and practice test items require knowledge of around 4000 word families. In this regard, the glossary is useful as a reading aid, but it could be expanded or enhanced through digital functionality. In future item writing, writers can use word frequency analysis to evaluate whether or not less common words should be retained, paraphrased, translated, glossed or replaced. It should also be remembered that some very familiar words combine to form a more complex idiomatic usage, and some common words are used in their less common meanings. It is also the case that some relatively rare words are actually necessary, while others are not a barrier to comprehension in the context of the Australian Citizenship Test.

FINDINGS 2 While automated text analyses can be revealing about the lengths and frequencies of words, and texts, the panel review focused on the meaning of the items. Detailed qualitative analyses of individual practice test items are provided in Appendix A. The panel found that the target content of items (language content and/or knowledge of society content) could be refocused and revised to increase the accessibility of the items in terms of linguistic simplicity, structural and stylistic consistency, clarity and correctness. Maximizing the relevance and usefulness of the content selected as the focus of items for participation in Australian society was raised as another way to increase their accessibility. A number of other means of improving accessibility are noted, including the use of visuals, translation, changes to test conditions and activities beyond the test itself. It is also noted that there are already several accessibility strategies in place, for example the text to speech function and the text translations.

IMPLICATIONS & NEXT STEPS The findings are illustrated using existing practice test items and revisions where relevant. These will be used as a basis for item writer guidelines. The accessibility and validity of the test could be improved through enhancing the fit between the population, the target domain, the test purpose and the pass mark. Specifically, simplifying the language and clarifying the focus of the test items will improve accessibility. Seeking an empirical basis for the difficulty of items and the pass mark will be useful steps. It is noted that even with enhanced accessibility, the test content is unlikely to become readily accessible to adults with low English print literacy. For this group, alternatives should be explored.

Introduction

This report reviews the Australian Citizenship Test and offers recommendations and guidelines for test item writers. The focus of this review is the Australian Citizenship Test and not the accompanying official booklet: *Our Common Bond*. The booklet text is referred to only where it is relevant to the test items. The review is based on two areas of theory and practice: (1) the accessibility and simplification of written English, and (2) language testing. This first part of the report is review of the language, content and item structure of the Australian Citizenship Test using the practice test items as indicative of the actual test items. Based on this review, guidelines for writing citizenship test items will be provided in the second part of the report.

A general principle of all testing is that a test should be well matched to the intended purpose of the test so that decisions – in this case, whether or not to grant citizenship – are based on relevant evidence. For citizenship tests, known as *knowledge of society* tests, the test content usually comprises information that is considered important for responsible citizenship. In the Australian Citizenship Test, examples of such knowledge are commemoration events, human rights, national symbols, citizen responsibilities, electoral processes. This content is tested through multiple choice questions in written Standard Australian English. Thus, *knowledge of society* tests such as the Australian Citizenship Test are typically configurations of three ingredients: an official language, designated informational content and particular types of test questions, e.g., multiple choice questions. Each of these aspects of a test can affect how accessible the test is for the people that have to do it.

The Australian Citizenship Test is a mandatory part of the application for Australian citizenship for most applicants. The test comprises 20 multiple choice questions which are based on information contained in a booklet titled *Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond - Testable*. The test itself is in English only, but the booklet is available in 40 community languages. The “main points” from the testable section of the booklet are also available in an audio recording. These materials are available for test preparation, but no materials may be accessed during the test. Text-to-speech technology is available during the test which enables test-takers to listen to the questions and answer options (Department of Home Affairs, 2020). Applicants have 45 minutes to complete the test or 90 minutes as a requested accommodation. A practice test is available on the Department of Home Affairs website and in the booklet and it is this version of the test that forms the basis of this review.

Key considerations in test accessibility

In this section, we describe four key considerations in the design and evaluation of tests (**purpose, pass, population** and **domain**) in relation to the Australian Citizenship Test. Each facet is defined and applied to the Australian Citizenship Test. In the next section, the four facets are linked to the notion of test accessibility.

PURPOSE: What is the test for?

The *test purpose* is the reason for implementing a test (as opposed to other types of policy activities) as an instrument for a particular policy. The purpose is what guides the test design, including how to deliver the test (e.g., in what language, through which modalities), what test methods to use (e.g., multiple choice questions, interview) and what informational content to cover (e.g., which historical events, which citizen responsibilities, which societal values).

According to the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, a pass on the citizenship test indicates that applicants have:

1. a basic knowledge of the English language
2. an understanding of what it means to become an Australian citizen
3. an adequate knowledge of Australia and the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship

4. an understanding and commitment to Australian values based on freedom, respect and equality

(Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2022)

As described in *Our Common Bond*, the citizenship test is “designed to assess whether you have an adequate knowledge of Australia, its democratic system, beliefs and values, and the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship” (*Our Common Bond*, p. 3).

It can be gleaned from these statements that there are two purposes of the Australian Citizenship Test, one to do with language and one to do with knowledge of society: (1) **to determine whether applicants have a basic knowledge of English** and (2) **to determine whether they have an adequate knowledge of Australia, its democratic system, beliefs and values, and the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship**. It can be described as a content-based language test for citizenship purposes.

PASS: What does it mean to pass the test?

The test has a pass mark of 75%, with a higher priority placed on the questions in the “Australian Values” section of the test, as stipulated below.

To pass the Australian Citizenship test, applicants must:

1. answer 20 multiple choice questions
2. answer all 5 of the Australian values questions correctly, and
3. get a mark of at least 75% overall.

(Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2022)

When tests are used in implementing a policy, “pass marks” have a meaning beyond the score itself. The meaning of a pass mark is related a specific level or ability in the domain of skill or knowledge. Based on the test purpose statements, 75% correct answers of the 20 multiple choice questions *means* that an applicant has demonstrated two main things: a basic knowledge of English and an adequate knowledge of Australia, its democratic system, beliefs and values, and the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship. In the wording used, the levels are described as ‘basic’ and ‘adequate’. These can be understood as qualitative descriptions of how much is enough to pass. However, there is no information available as to the rationale for the pass mark, the procedure for setting it, or the rationale for the hurdle of 5 correct *Australian values* questions.

Test items (i.e., multiple choice questions) naturally differ from each other in terms of how difficult they are. Therefore, it’s important that each test-taker gets a selection of items that is of equivalent difficulty. If not, the meaning of a ‘pass’ may differ between applicants, with some having a more difficult threshold than others. Typically, standardized tests undergo analysis to ensure that any single test-taker receives a test version that is equivalent to other test versions, and pass marks are set according to the actual domain, i.e., the minimum score that indicates that an applicant has adequate knowledge of English and of Australian society for responsible and informed citizenship. However, it is important to note that there is no research which investigates what kind of language or societal knowledge is most useful or salient for citizenship purposes. Furthermore, the basis for pass marks – that is, what an adequate amount of such knowledge is – is generally not discussed, much less established empirically (Shohamy, 2009; Winke, 2011).

DOMAIN: What area/s of knowledge or skill does the test target?

The **target domain** of a test is the specific area of knowledge or ability that the test is intended to capture. In a general sense, the relevant domain for citizenship is the language competence and societal knowledge necessary for upholding the responsibilities and privileges of being a citizen. In countries where testing for citizenship purposes takes place, the level of knowledge required (language and/or societal) is generally not established empirically. However, it is possible to determine the domain of a citizenship test on a more empirical basis. For example, research could explore what

language citizens need to know in order to carry out certain responsibilities (a “needs analysis”, see ALTE, 2016), or what existing citizens *do* know about society, government, national symbols, etc. (e.g., Winke, 2011). However, in current practice, the content to be learnt by citizenship applicants in preparation for a citizenship test tends to be determined by governments and set out in official documents, as is the case with the Australian Citizenship Test. Therefore, for the purposes of this review, when we use the term *target domain*, we are referring to the officially prescribed knowledge that is contained in the testable section of a booklet produced by the Australian Government: *Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond* (henceforth “OCB”) (Department of Home Affairs, 2020). The English language component of the target domain, then, is any English language necessary to answer the test questions. This includes the English language used in OCB, as well as the language required to do the test, e.g., understanding question forms such as *Which of these statements about government in Australia is correct?*. Although answering the test questions requires only the selection of multiple choice options, and the main content and test questions are available in audio recordings and translations, the test does require English literacy skills because completing the test is not possible without a knowledge of written English, or familiarity with the genre of multiple choice tests.

POPULATION: Who takes the test?

Applicants for citizenship are a highly heterogenous group in terms of cultural and linguistic background, and their prior experience of political systems. Recent statistics indicate that new citizens come from countries which designate English as an official or national language (e.g., New Zealand), as well as from countries in which English is a foreign language that is not widely used or taught (e.g., Afghanistan) (Department of Home Affairs, 2023). This means that the test-taker population will include people who have had limited experience with English prior to their mandated minimum of four years in Australia. Evidence from second language acquisition research suggests that the population at most risk of failing citizenship tests in English as a second language are those who (a) have limited print literacy or access to schooling in their first languages, and (b) grew up in an environment where English was not widely used or taught (Shohamy, 2009). Developing reading and writing skills later in life is extremely difficult, requiring time, persistence and conducive literacy content and environments (Windisch, 2015). Pass rate data from the UK, which also uses a Knowledge of Society test delivered in English, shows that people from the origin countries of USA and Canada have pass rates of over 90% whereas Afghanistan, Iraq and Bangladesh have pass rates of under 50% (Bassel et al., 2017). It has also been suggested that certain groups may be disadvantaged or unfairly excluded by knowledge of society tests (Bruzos et al., 2018; Kunnan, 2009; Van Avermaet, 2009).

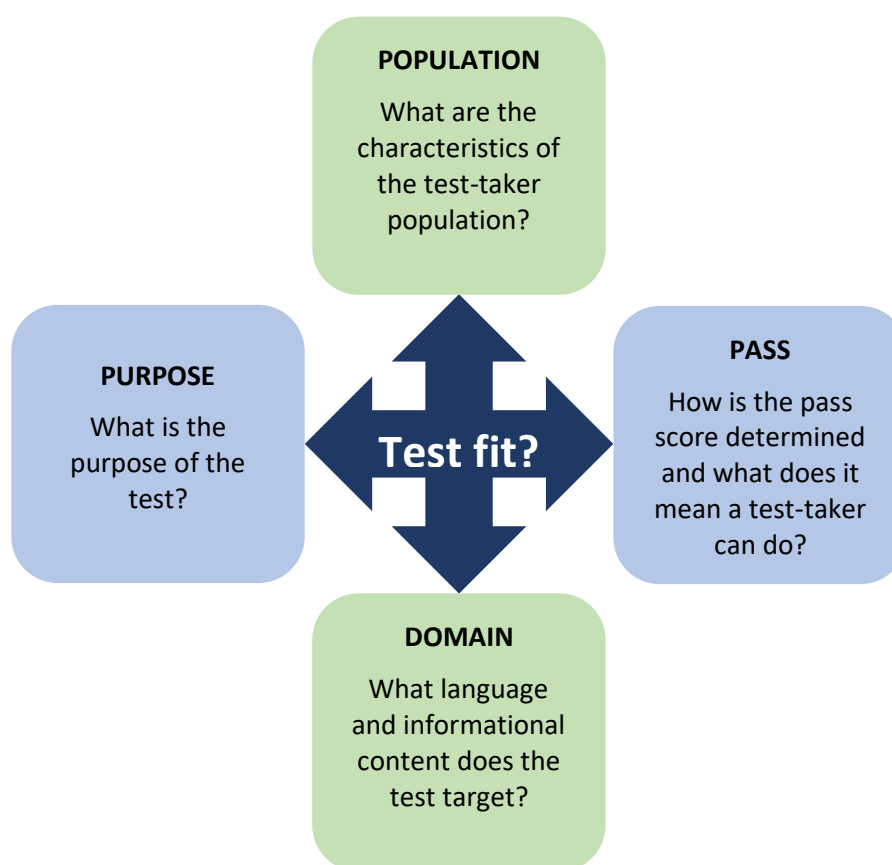
While people under aged 18 or over age 60 are not required to sit the test, the applicant population will include people who have learnt to read, and to read English, later in life (i.e., after puberty). Research in the field of second language acquisition shows that the older a learner is when they encounter a second language, the lower their ultimate proficiency in that language (e.g., Hakuta et al., 2003). A further compounding factor for some applicant groups may be the linguistic distance between their first and second (written) languages.

Given these ‘at-risk’ characteristics, it is important that the English language of the test is simple enough that the test content can be accessed by people with lower levels of experience with written English. While not all concepts or knowledge can be faithfully or fully represented in simple or ‘plain’ English, every effort should be made to make sure that the language is as simple and accessible as it can be given the nature of the citizenship applicant population and the high stakes of the test. This is also aligned with one of the test purposes, to test a *basic knowledge* of the English language.

Accessibility in citizenship testing

As discussed in the previous sections, there are four facets of the policy environment that should inform test design and content, including ongoing item writing (See Figure 1). No test can be properly evaluated without considering its **purpose**, the **domain** of knowledge, including the language of delivery, the nature of the **population** that takes the test, and the fairness of the **pass** mark. These four aspects should be clearly articulated and considered in the test development process (e.g., when writing or selecting informational texts, selecting question types, constructing questions and possible answers, and determining a pass score). The test design and items should ‘fit’ with each of these facets, and the facets themselves should be articulated in relation to each other. For example, the **domain** should be meaningfully aligned to the **population** (What do new citizens need to know about Australian government?) and the **pass** score should be meaningfully aligned to the test **purpose** (How much English language ability/societal knowledge is necessary for responsible citizenship?). Where possible, evidence-based answers should be sought for these questions.

Figure 1: Key considerations in test development for accessibility



Let us consider how these four facets relate to test accessibility. In a general sense, **test accessibility** means that the population can do the test. Specifically for citizenship testing, it means that: regardless of their linguistic, cultural or educational background, the population has a fair chance of passing the test if they have made a reasonable effort to prepare for it. Obviously, what constitutes a ‘reasonable effort’ is an important and difficult question. Applicants will have various levels of prior knowledge of the target domain in OCB. Some applicants may simply need to read and remember a few historical details in their first language. Others will have to read and remember information about unfamiliar topics in a language they didn’t grow up with. Some may also need to find considerable time and space away from work or carer responsibilities to do this. So, while the focus of this review is on the test itself, test accessibility is clearly about addressing a range of potential barriers that might prevent the

population from passing the test. For the purposes of this review, we define test accessibility as follows: **accessibility is the extent to which the whole test-taker population has the potential to pass the test using language and content knowledge aligned with the intended purpose of the test.** Let us now turn to the test itself.

Increasing the accessibility of the test

There are many approaches to simplifying English language for public communication, and there are various guidelines for best practice in writing test items. In this section, we provide a high-level overview of some of the approaches and tools from both these fields which may be helpful in writing and revising the questions on the citizenship test and any accompanying materials. It is important to understand that although there are many approaches (e.g., style/accessibility guidelines, readability measures, word lists), accessibility is relative to audience, and therefore the fairest approach is to consider the group or groups for whom the test is least accessible. In the case of the Australian citizenship test, this is likely to be older adults with low print literacy, fewer years of formal education and little exposure to English growing up.

The approaches and findings detailed in this section come from three sources: (1) literature on text accessibility and educational assessment, (2) analyses of readability and word frequencies, and (3) a qualitative review of the practice test items. The review of test items was carried out with a panel of seven experienced test item writers at the Language Testing Research Centre, University of Melbourne. Each panel member individually reviewed the items before coming together to discuss them. Many of the approaches to increasing accessibility recommended by the review panel were in line with those suggested in the literature. In the following section, we list the various approaches and provide, where possible, examples from the practice items in OCB. All linguistic examples come from the practice items, or from OCB where it is relevant. More detailed notes on each of the practice test items can also be found in Appendix A.

Readability and discourse measures

A very common way of determining how easy a text will be to read is the use of *readability* measures such as the Flesch Reading Ease measure. These measures are usually based on word length, syllable counts and sentence length as indicators of morphosyntactic complexity. Certain thresholds are presumed to equate to the difficulty of texts that children at different year levels in US schools are capable of understanding. Although widely used, readability is not very useful in evaluating multiple choice test items because multiple choice items are brief, self-contained texts, which do not always conform to typical sentence patterns. An important point to note is that readability levels in these measures are based on the concept of developing literacy through formal education in English as a first language. As mentioned earlier, the Australian citizenship applicant population includes many people who do not share this background of English print literacy. Comprehension challenges for second language readers are likely to be a combination of word, phrase, sentence, textual and contextual elements which are not captured in commonly used readability formulas (Biler, 2019).

Therefore, readability measures that do not consider the frequency or familiarity of the actual words and phrases used in test items are unlikely to be revealing (Lenzner, 2014). In fact, using word and sentence length as a guide may even promote item writing practices that are confusing. That said, some studies have found a relationship between readability measures and test item difficulty (Homan et al., 1994). Systematic qualitative evaluation of test items by people with expertise in second language acquisition and knowledge of the population, domain and purpose of the test is recommended, and any quantitative measures should be used advisedly (Oakland & Lane, 2004). The qualitative review of the practice test items revealed complex syntactic structures, especially the question forms. These are discussed in more detail in the section on *Item Writing* below and individually analysed in Appendix A.

While readability measures may not be especially helpful with test item writing, they can provide a quantitative perspective on the target domain texts. For this purpose, a more complex readability measure developed for second language reader populations can be applied: the L2 Readability Index (RDL2) (McNamara et al., 2014). This measure includes syntactic complexity (as syntactic similarity in adjacent sentences and words per sentence), word frequency and a measure of cohesion (repeated nouns in adjacent sentences). As with other readability measures it is not sensitive to the target domain, but comparing OCB sections can give an indication of the levels of difficulty of the source texts for the test items. In Table 1 below, the OCB sections are listed in the lefthand column and the readability scores are in the right. The measure ranges from 0-40, with lower scores indicative of more difficult texts. According to McNamara et al.'s proficiency range norms (2014), easy passages are in the 22-27 range, intermediate passages are 15-19 and advanced texts are in the 11-13 range. As can be seen in Table 1 below, the OCB passages range from easy to advanced, with the majority intermediate or higher level. This kind of analysis is not sensitive to the target domain and population, and therefore should be supplemented with qualitative appraisal of how comprehensible the texts are for relevant populations in relation to the intended purpose of the test.

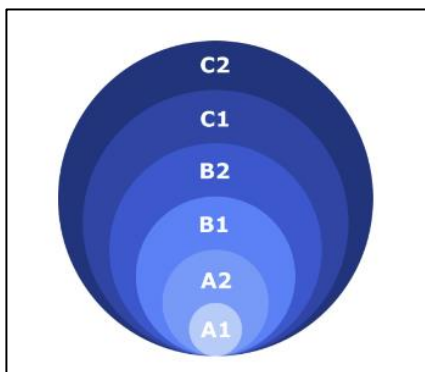
Table 1: Readability (using RDL2 from McNamara et al., 2014).

OCB Section	Readability (RDL2)
How is the power of government controlled?	27.05
Australia's flags	25.24
How are laws enforced?	22.65
Responsibilities	22.64
Australia's states and territories	22.47
How are laws made?	21.42
How is Australia governed?	21.35
Who is Australia's Head of State?	20.66
Australia's symbols	20.56
Our freedoms	20.31
Privileges	19.78
Important days for Australians	19.72
How is the Australian Government formed?	19.23
Our values	19.06
Our equalities	18.97
Participating in Australian society	18.97
How do I have my say?	18.62
Responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship	18.50
Our democratic beliefs	17.94
The nation of Australia	17.42
Our community	16.91
Australian values introduction and conclusion	16.17
Early days of European settlement	15.95
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	15.66
How did we establish our system of government?	14.07
What do the three levels of government do?	13.80
Who are some of Australia's leaders?	13.77
Traditions	10.68

Estimating text difficulty based on a language framework

One possible method of establishing text difficulty is by relating the reading difficulty to a language proficiency framework, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2018) was developed to provide a common description of language proficiency levels of learners across European languages. This was developed to arrive at a common meaning of level descriptions across language syllabi, curriculum guidelines, textbooks and assessment tools. The CEFR defines levels of proficiency which learners pass through on their language learning journey. Figure 2 (from Council of Europe, 2018, p. 36) below shows that the levels range from A1 (the lowest level) to C2 (the highest level). Descriptions of what learners ‘can do’ at these different levels are shown in Appendix B.

Figure 2: CEFR Levels



These levels are often considered too broad for meaningful improvements in language proficiency to be visible, and for this reason, plus levels have also been described (e.g., Level B2+). While descriptions in the CEFR refer to what learners ‘can do’ at different levels, in recent years, there has also been an effort to analyse text difficulty in a way to create a direct link to learner proficiency, so that a text can be described to be, for example, at B2+ level. This helps test developers and curriculum designers in selecting texts of appropriate difficulty. Figure 3 sets out how the CEFR levels relate to IELTS test scores (taken from IELTS, 2023).

To estimate the text difficulty of the materials in OCB on the CEFR scale, we used English Vocabulary Profile (Text Inspector, 2023). The results are presented in Table 2 below. The left column lists the OCB section headings. As shown in the table, most texts are B2 level and above which suggests they are relatively advanced. As with readability and other vocabulary-based measures discussed earlier, the levels should be interpreted as a general indication of level, rather than a precise guideline for text writing. Qualitative appraisal of the texts in relation to the intended purpose is important.

Figure 3: Comparison of CEFR and IELTS levels (taken from IELTS, 2023)

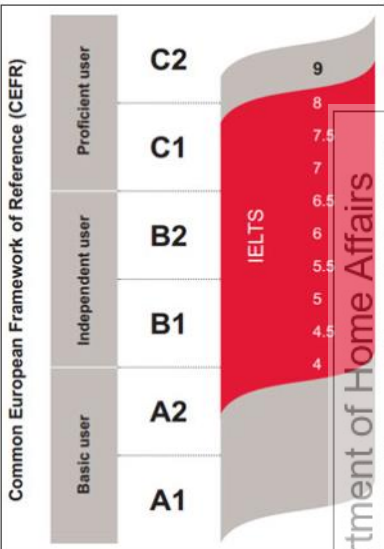


Table 2: CEFR levels – English Vocabulary Profile (Text Inspector, 2023)

OCB Section	CEFR level
Early days of European settlement	B1+
Our equalities	B1+
Who are some of Australia's leaders?	B2
How are laws made?	B2
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	B2+
Important days for Australians	B2+
Australia's flags	B2+
Australia's symbols	B2+
Our freedoms	B2+
Responsibilities	B2+
Privileges	B2+
How do I have my say?	B2+
How is the power of government controlled?	B2+
How is the Australian Government formed?	B2+
Australian values introduction and conclusion	B2+
The nation of Australia	C1
Australia's states and territories	C1
Our democratic beliefs	C1
Participating in Australian society	C1
Who is Australia's Head of State?	C1
How is Australia governed?	C1
How are laws enforced?	C1
Our community	C1
Traditions	C1+
How did we establish our system of government?	C1+
Our values	C1+
Responsibilities and privileges of Australian citizenship	C2+
What do the three levels of government do?	C2+

Word frequencies

Another kind of analysis is a word frequency analysis, which allows test writers to see how common the words they have used in the texts and items are. The advantage of this kind of analysis is that it categorises the words explicitly (rather than just producing a quantity or rating), so writers can evaluate whether or not specific words should be retained, paraphrased, translated or replaced.

Many English words are not used very often. In fact, English texts tend to rely on around 2000 frequent words. These high-frequency words usually cover around 80-90% of a text (Nation, 2006). Therefore, one way to simplify a text is to reduce the amount of relatively infrequent words. While frequencies are a useful reference point, simplification in this way cannot be purely quantitative. For example, the word "kangaroo" is a relatively rare word in most corpora, but it is unlikely to pose a problem for anyone who lives in Australia. For this reason, frequency findings should be evaluated qualitatively, in relation to the test purpose, the domain (i.e., the word usage in OCB) and the population (see Figure 1).

With the limitations in mind, word frequency analysis can give a sense of which individual words might be in need of paraphrasing, glossing or translating for greater accessibility. Typically, a word frequency analyser (e.g., Compleat Web VP v.2.6, Cobb, 2023a, used for the analysis below) is used to compare the individual words in a text to the numerical frequency patterns that are found in a very large English corpora (e.g., the *Corpus of Contemporary American English*). Word families are grouped into different frequency levels, based on how common these words are in English texts. The most common words

are in the 1000k band, the 2000k band are the next most commonly-occurring words, and so on. The higher the band, the rarer the words.

Looking just at the practice test items (see Table 1), we can see that almost 80% of the words used in the items are in the 1000 most frequent English words (K-1). The number of words in less frequent 1000-level bands (K-2 to K-7) decreases with each frequency level (see Table 3). While this general pattern is relatively typical of English texts, there are nonetheless, many less common words used in the citizenship test items (see Table 4). Some of these are reasonable given the target domain (e.g., *passport*) and others less so (e.g., *corps*). Some words may be relatively common in daily adult life, but it may not be this everyday sense of the word that is used in the test (e.g., *making an appointment* is reasonably common but *approving the appointment of ministers* is not).

Table 3: Number of words from the practice test items in different word frequency bands

Frequency band	No. words	Cumulative %
K-1	543	79.9
K-2	76	91.1
K-3	33	96.0
K-4	10	97.5
K-5	14	99.6
K-7	3	100.0

Table 4: Practice Test words in frequency bands other than the 1000 most frequent English words, excluding proper nouns

Frequency band	Words_[number of repetitions]
K-2	apply_[2] appointment_[2] army_[2] attend_[1] belongs_[1] capital_[1] citizens_[3] commonly_[1] community_[4] contribute_[1] contributing_[1] correct_[3] council_[1] current_[1] discussed_[1] effort_[2] elections_[2] encourage_[1] equal_[1] equality_[1] equally_[1] example_[3] flag_[1] fund_[1] identifies_[1] intend_[1] January_[1] language_[3] legal_[1] minister_[1] official_[1] opinions_[1] opportunity_[1] peaceful_[1] peacefully_[2] political_[1] prime_[1] property_[1] protest_[1] respect_[2] role_[1] separate_[1] speech_[1] states_[1] strengthen_[1] topics_[1] united_[1] values_[3] vote_[6] voting_[2]
K-3	approved_[1] candidate_[1] charity_[1] colonies_[1] constitution_[3] demonstrates_[1] disagree_[2] disagreement_[1] document_[1] executive_[1] federal_[1] integrate_[1] interpret_[1] legislative_[1] mutual_[1] offended_[1] parliament_[2] permanent_[1] reflects_[1] religion_[2] religions_[1] religious_[1] residents_[1] symbol_[1] territory_[1] violence_[2] volunteering_[1]
K-4	corps_[2] federation_[2] fleet_[1] insulted_[1] judicial_[1] premiers_[1] secular_[1] tolerate_[1]
K-5	commemorate_[1] commonwealth_[4] passport_[4] passports_[1] referendum_[3] visa_[1]
K-7	Aboriginal_[1] anthem_[1] cove_[1]
K-21	Anzac_[1]

The word frequency patterns in the test items echo those in the OCB, where around 30% of the words fall outside the 2000 most frequent English words, and 5.29% are words that tend to be common in academic texts (Cobb, 2023b). The percentage of text made up of the most common 1000 words and proper terms (e.g., *Australia*, *Judeo*) is relatively low (78.6%). Examples of the words at each of the frequency levels are shown in Table 5. Research has shown that English learners need to know 98% of

the words in a text to understand it (Nation, 2006). Based on the analysis in Table 3, to understand 98% of OCB, learners would need to know 4000 word families.

Table 5: Frequency levels of the words in OCB (using Compleat Web VP v.2.6, Cobb, 2023a)

Frequency Level	No. word families (%)	No. different words at this level (%)	Cumulative amount of text coverage (%)	Example words from OCB
K-1 + proper terms	559 (51.6)	826 (53.53)	78.6	<i>are, in, the, number, with, Australia, our</i>
K-2	240 (22.1)	355 (23.01)	90.4	<i>active, community, engage, environment</i>
K-3	172 (15.9)	228 (14.78)	97.0	<i>discriminate, interpret, privilege, senate, penalty</i>
K-4	43 (4.0)	50 (3.24)	98.0	<i>judicial, senator, spouse, undermine</i>
K-5	31 (2.9)	36 (2.33)	98.9	<i>bribe, commonwealth, electorate, tolerance</i>
K-6	17 (1.6)	17 (1.10)	99.4	<i>compulsory, gem, multicultural</i>
K-7	12 (1.1)	13 (0.84)	99.8	<i>anthem, consul, toil</i>
K-8-K21	10 (1.0)	12 (0.78)		<i>Assent, custodian, kangaroo, emu, shire, polygamy, girt, wattle, Anzac</i>
Off-List:	-	6 (0.39)	99.91	<i>equalities</i>
Total	1084	1543 (100)	≈100.00	

The frequency of individual words does not tell the whole story, however. Words tend to occur in multiword combinations that are meaningful together, and not at an individual word level (Wray, 2002). For example, *to sign something* is a relatively common phrase whereas *to sign something into law* has a specialised meaning. Similarly, a very common individual word, e.g., 'get', may have a simple meaning by itself, but in combination with other words, it may form a complex whole, e.g., *get to know* or *to get a job ahead of someone*. The glossary contains a number of multiword phrases but when writing test items, an awareness of less transparent meanings or more idiomatic phrasings is necessary, e.g., *a show of hands* in the practice test and *have a say in running the country* in OCB.

In summary, a lexical analysis of the words in the practice test items, and in OCB, shows that there is a large amount of infrequent terminology used. While some less frequent words may be unavoidable (e.g., *senate*) and some will be easily understood in this context (e.g., *kangaroo*), the general pattern shows that the test demands an advanced level of vocabulary knowledge. The glossary and translated versions of OCB addresses this to some extent, but efforts to reduce the use of less frequent vocabulary in the test should be made where possible.

Domain relevance

The choice of words and phrases is interrelated with the nature of the test target domain. Maximizing the relevance and usefulness of the language and societal knowledge selected as the focus of items for participation in Australian society is one way to increase its accessibility. This reflects views across the literature on *plain language* (Plain Language Action and Information Network, 2023) as well as *test usefulness* (Bachman & Palmer, 1996) and *adult literacy* (Windisch, 2015), which stresses that interest and relevance are significant factors in reaching an audience via texts and tests.

For example, in the following item from the practice test, knowing what the expression “a coat of arms” means is arguably less useful in the fulfillment of citizen responsibilities than being able to identify the image of the Australian coat of arms on a government building. In the following item, however, the focus is on knowing what the expression “a coat of arms” means.

What is the Commonwealth Coat of Arms?

- a. The national anthem*
- b. Australia’s national flower*
- c. The official symbol of Australia, which identifies Commonwealth property*

The item could be re-written so that the target content is the ability to identify the actual image of the Australian “coat of arms”.

Similarly, the focus of items should be the key concepts (i.e., the underpinning civic or democratic principle) rather than how they are expressed. In the following item from the practice test, for example, the focus is on understanding the complex terms *legislative, executive and judicial* (and the unusual sense of *arm*), rather than the concept of ‘division of power’ which is arguably more relevant and useful.

Which arm of government has the power to interpret and apply laws?

- a. Legislative*
- b. Executive*
- c. Judicial*

This item might be revised to the following which captures the main concept of division of power in simpler language (using the wording from OCB in the correct answer):

Why is government in Australia divided into three powers (legislative, executive, judicial)?

- a. To stop one person or group from holding all the power.*
- b. To control the people who elect the government.*
- c. To give government workers more power to make laws.*

In sum, accessibility relates not just to the language, mode of delivery and administration of the test, but also to the relevance of the test content to Australian citizens. This relates to the ‘fit’ between the population and the domain (see Figure 1). Making the focus of the test content as relevant as possible to the needs of new citizens can increase the potential for a close fit between the domain and the population. Examining the existing domain for what Australian citizens actually know is one way to empirically establish the relevance and usefulness of the content (for a study of this nature in the US context, see Winke, 2011).

Item writing

In this section we summarise the qualitative evaluation of the practice test items carried out by the panel of experienced item writers and assessment specialists. A detailed evaluation and analysis of each item can be found in Appendix A. In this section we comment on (1) item stems, and (2) item options. Further guidelines for item writing will form part of Part 2 of this report.

We use the following terminology when referring to aspects of multiple choice items:

What are the colours of the Australian Aboriginal Flag? [STEM]

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <u>Black, red and yellow</u> [ANSWER] b. Green, white and black [DISTRACTOR] c. Blue, white and green [DISTRACTOR] | } | OPTIONS |
|---|---|---------|

Item stems

The practice test items follow a uniform question and 3-option response format. All stems are full questions, for example:

What is a referendum?

Which of these statements about voting in Australian elections is correct?

While there may be benefit in maintaining structural similarity (i.e., full questions as stems) across the test, the questions tend to be grammatically complex.

The question in the box below, for example, is a complex 12-word structure comprising three noun phrases ("these statements", "Australian values", "freedom of expression"), a relatively academic verb phrase ("best demonstrates") and a complex textual reference ("Which of these x..."). Even with the text-to-speech option available, such structures are likely to be difficult for speakers of English as an additional language. If possible, simpler, shorter questions should be used, as illustrated below.

Complex question stem: *Which of these statements best demonstrates Australian values about freedom of expression?*

Simplified sentence stem: *Which statement is true in Australia?*

An alternative stem type is an incomplete sentence. This structure may be easier to comprehend in some cases. For example, the following incomplete stem may be easier to comprehend than the complex question structure in the practice test:

Practice test question stem: *Which of these is a responsibility of Australian citizens aged 18 years or over?*

Revised incomplete sentence stem: *Australian citizens who are aged 18 years and over have to...*

Finally, question forms that include modal auxiliary verbs such as *should* and *can* are difficult to use in objective multiple choice options because they are inherently uncertain. Modal auxiliary verbs are used to express degrees of certainty, permissibility, etc. The *Australian values* section, in particular, tends to use words such as 'should', e.g., *Should people in Australia make an effort to learn English?* For this kind of content, other item types, such as scenario-based items may be more suitable. In these stems, a scenario is provided and the test-taker has to choose the best course of action.

It is advisable to thoroughly field test any new items and item types prior to introducing them, and to include clear examples of any new item stem types in practice materials so that test-takers know what to expect.

Item options

There are several general principles in writing options and these will be set out in the item writer guidelines in Part 2 of this report. The following suggestions are based on the review of the practice test items. As mentioned, detailed analysis of each item can be found in Appendix A.

CONSISTENCY Avoid sudden style shifts between impersonal third person to first or second person, for example the use of first person in option b below is unexpected.

Which of the following is an example of contributing to the Australian community?

- a. Volunteering or fundraising for a charity is a great opportunity to strengthen our community*
- b. I should not make any effort to get to know other people*
- c. People in Australia should not contribute to the community because Australia is a free country*

Maintain syntactic consistency in options where possible. The following option, for example, could be revised using an incomplete sentence stem so that all options are consistent.

Practice test item: *Which of these is a role of the Governor-General?*

- a. The appointment of state premiers*
- b. Signing all Bills passed by the Australian Parliament into law*
- c. The appointment of the Head of State*

Revised item: *A role of the Governor-General is...*

- a. to appoint...*
- b. to sign...*
- c. to appoint...*

YES/NO OPTIONS If using 'yes' and 'no' answers, maintain coherence between the stem and the yes/no answers and use the same style across all options. The options in the following item, for example, are not consistent, with only one (the answer) using a yes/no response.

Should people in Australia make an effort to learn English?

- a. People in Australia should speak whichever language is most commonly spoken in their local neighbourhood*
- b. There is no expectation to learn any particular language in Australia*
- c. Yes, English is the national language of Australia and it helps to get an education, a job, and to integrate into the community*

LENGTH Keep options about the same length – avoid correct options that look noticeably different to the other two options, as in the example below.

Which of these is a role of the Governor-General?

- a. The appointment of state premiers*
- b. Signing all Bills passed by the Australian Parliament into law*
- c. The appointment of the Head of State*

CONFUSING STRUCTURE Avoid negative phrasing where it might be confusing, e.g., in option c below.

- Which of these is an example of freedom of speech?*
- a. People can peacefully protest against a government action*
 - b. Men and women are treated equally in a court of law*
 - c. Australians are **free to not follow** a religion*

CORRECTNESS Multiple choice questions, by definition, contain more informational content than just the correct answer. In principle, to answer a question correctly, the incorrect answers (the 'distractors') must be understood and discounted. Thus, the societal knowledge and language knowledge targeted in an item includes knowing that the content of the distractors is *incorrect*, as well as knowing that the content in the correct option is correct. In the item below, for instance, a test-taker may know the answer is Canberra, or she may know it is *not* Brisbane or Perth. If a test-taker is only aware that all cities are capital cities somewhere in Australia, he needs to know that "the" designates Canberra as the correct answer. Thus, answering the question correctly may draw on knowing (1) what is correct, (2) what is incorrect or (3) a combination of both.

- What is the capital city of Australia?*
- a. Brisbane*
 - b. Canberra*
 - c. Perth*

There are various ways in which options can be incorrect in a test item. They may be incorrect in general, or just incorrect in relation to the question asked. In the following item, the target content is the concept of "freedom of speech" as it is interpreted in Australia.

- Which of these is an example of freedom of speech?*
- a. People can peacefully protest against a government action*
 - b. Men and women are treated equally in a court of law*
 - c. Australians are free to not follow a religion*

The term, "freedom of speech", is complex conceptually as well as linguistically. As it is tested in this item, the correct example is the ability to protest peacefully, noting that 'protest' may take many forms, not all of which involve speaking or speech. Therefore, in relation to language knowledge, the item tests the figurative and literal aspects of the meaning of "freedom of speech". In relation to society knowledge, the two incorrect statements (options b and c) are actually correct bits of information about Australian society. They are also not directly relevant to the question, even though "Commitment to the Rule of Law", "Freedom of speech" and "Freedom of religion" are all sub-headings in the "Australian Values" section of OCB. What makes *options b* and *c* incorrect is that,

despite being Australian values, they are not examples of “freedom of speech”. However, it is worth considering the impact of recontextualising *correct* information that forms part of the intended societal knowledge as *incorrect* in this way.

This can be compared with the following question on “freedom of expression”.

Which of these statements best demonstrates Australian values about freedom of expression?

- a. Everyone can peacefully express their opinions within the law*
- b. People with different views from me need to keep quiet*
- c. Only approved topics can be discussed*

In the item above, *option a* is the only option which is actually correct in the Australian context, regardless of the question. In this item, also, all options are correct or incorrect on the target topic, and not related to other topics, as in the previous example. This item, therefore, is a more focused and substantial assessment of the target concept and doesn’t risk teaching applicants that correct information is incorrect.

To summarise, it is necessary to consider the nature of the content and language contained in the whole item in item design. Distractors are just as important as the correct answer. In the detailed analysis of each item in Appendix A, the target language and target societal content is noted for each item (by which we mean what appears to be targeted, regardless of whether or not this is intended by the item writer). When writing and reviewing items, it is advisable to specify the target content of the item. Doing this will make it easier to evaluate what the item is (supposed to) be capturing and whether it is clearly focused in terms of item structure, and usefully focused in terms of domain relevance.

Use of visuals and other modalities

Visuals such as diagrams, images and colours can be used instead of written language to reduce the literacy burden of the test and, for some target content, it may be a more authentic way to present and test the information. Citizenship knowledge is not just bound up in language, for example, things like flags, maps, and national symbols may be best represented visually because this is the most typical and authentic form. The following item, for example, could have visual options rather than written ones.

What are the colours of the Australian Aboriginal Flag?

- a. Black, red and yellow
- b. Green, white and black
- c. Blue, white and green

As has already been mentioned, during the citizenship test, an audio version of the test is available on request. Podcasts containing key information from the testable section of *Our Common Bond* booklet are also available.

Translation

Translation is already used as an accessibility technique in *Our Common Bond* booklet, which is translated into 40 community languages. As with the English version of the booklet, a glossary is provided at the end of the booklet. A further accessibility technique that could be explored is providing translations of rare words used in the test, especially those which are already provided as translations

in the available community languages. It is also possible to test the knowledge of society content via other languages and test the English language through a proficiency test targeting domains more relevant to everyday life. Any use of translation (either of a whole test instrument or part of it) requires careful development and trialling.

Use of a glossary

A glossary of key terms is provided at the end of *Our Common Bond* booklet and available in all translations of OCB. Providing a definition for key words in the test is a further possible accessibility technique, where this is appropriate. These might be pop up links embedded in the text which can be activated by hovering with the mouse.

Test conditions

Test accommodations are changes to the conditions of the test to enable people with different needs to access the test equitably. Because these kinds of changes are not of a linguistic nature, they are just mentioned here in the interest of providing a comprehensive view of accessibility. Common test accommodations include:

- Allowing more time
- Offering changed formats, e.g., larger print
- Offering changed venues
- Allowing breaks
- Offering at-home options

Materials, activities and other resources

It takes time, exposure and engagement to acquire new information through a second language. Thus, one way to create greater accessibility is to provide more materials, activities and opportunities for learning (e.g., classes) for test-takers.

Conclusion and recommendations

This report has reviewed the practice questions of the Australian Citizenship Test, drawing on literature, text analysis tools and a qualitative review of the practice test items by a panel of assessment specialists. The review of the test is framed in four key considerations from the assessment literature (**purpose, pass, population and domain**). These facets should also guide future item writing.

The target domain is defined narrowly as the testable section of OCB. Automated text analysis tools showed that many sections of OCB may be relatively difficult to read (using RDL2 from McNamara et al., 2014) and are relatively advanced in terms of English vocabulary levels (using English Vocabulary Profile at Text Inspector, 2023). While these measures are not purpose-built, they indicate that the texts that underpin the test items are fairly complex, with implications for the items themselves. Further analysis on the individual words that are used in the practice test items and the OCB texts provides insight on these measures. While most English texts rely on 2000 or so common words, the OCB texts and practice test items require knowledge of around 4000 word families. In this regard, the glossary is useful as a reading aid, but it could be expanded or enhanced through digital functionality. In future item writing, writers can use word frequency analysis to evaluate whether or not less common words should be retained, paraphrased, translated or replaced. It should also be remembered that some very familiar words combine into more difficult idiomatic usage, and some common words are used in their less common meanings. It is also the case that some relatively rare words are actually necessary, while others are not a barrier to comprehension in this context.

While automated text analyses can be revealing about the lengths and frequencies of words, and texts, the panel review focused on the meaning of the items. Detailed qualitative analyses of individual practice test items are provided. The panel found that the target content of items (language content and/or knowledge of society content) could be refocused and revised to increase the accessibility of the items in terms of linguistic simplicity, structural and stylistic consistency, clarity and correctness. Maximizing the relevance and usefulness of the content selected as the focus of items for participation in Australian society was raised as another way to increase their accessibility. These findings are illustrated using existing practice test items and revisions where relevant. A number of other means of improving accessibility are listed, based on assessment practices more generally, including the use of visuals, translation, changes to test conditions and activities beyond the test itself. Although there are various ways to increase the accessibility of the Australian Citizenship Test, these are unlikely to make the test content accessible to adults with low print literacy who learnt English later in life. For this group, alternatives should be explored.

These findings will be the basis for a set of specific item writer guidelines in the second part of this report. General recommendations for test development are as follows:

1. **RELEVANCE** In general, the test (both materials and items) should be well matched to the intended purpose of the test so that decisions – in this case, whether or not to grant citizenship – are based on relevant evidence. Ongoing development and review of the test should consider its **purpose**, the **domain** of knowledge, including the language of delivery, the nature of the **population** that takes the test, and the fairness of the **pass** mark.
2. **SIMPLIFICATION** The English language of the test should be simple enough that the test content can be accessed by people with lower levels of experience with written English and domain concepts. While not all concepts or knowledge can be faithfully or fully represented in simple or 'plain' English, every effort should be made to make sure that the language is as simple and accessible as it can be given the heterogenous nature of the citizenship applicant population and the high stakes of the test. Automated text analysis and meaning-based qualitative review by informed stakeholders and assessment specialists are useful methods of examining accessibility. Quantitative texts analyses should always be used in conjunction with interpretative methods. While revisions will improve accessibility generally, adults with low

print literacy in English are unlikely to be able to access written multiple choice items, especially on relatively abstract topics.

3. **TEST ITEM ACCESSIBILITY** A number of techniques and strategies will help increase the accessibility of test items. These include trialling a greater range of stem types, clarifying and simplifying item options, and paying attention to the properties of items which make the answer 'correct'. Improving the relevance of the target content will also be constructive. Examples and explanations for these strategies are provided. When writing and reviewing items, it is advisable to specify the target content of the item. This process makes it easier to evaluate what the item is (supposed to) be capturing, and whether the item is (a) clearly focused in terms of item structure, and (b) usefully focused in terms of domain relevance. It is advisable to thoroughly field test any new items and item types prior to introducing them, and to include clear examples of any new item types in practice materials.
4. **EVIDENCE-BASED PASS MARK** There is currently no available rationale or evidence basis for the pass mark. A stronger fit between the domain, the population, the test purpose and the pass mark might be established by investigating how citizens and non-citizens perform on the test.
5. **TEST EQUIVALENCE** Test items (i.e., multiple choice questions) naturally differ from each other in terms of how difficult they are. Steps should be taken to ensure that each applicant receives a selection of items of equal difficulty. Item writer guidelines will assist with item consistency. Statistical analyses of how test items perform in test administrations are a good way of examining item difficulty.

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Appendix A: Practice test item review

Practice test questions – Panel review

Definitions

Item: A multiple choice question (also called the **stem**) and its three response options

Option: One of the alternative answers in a multiple choice item. The incorrect options are called **distractors** and the correct option is the **answer** or **key**.

Rare word or phrase: a word or phrase that fits all the following criteria:

1. The word/phrase is not one of the 2000 most frequent words in English, nor is it a frequently used academic word;
2. The word/phrase is not necessary for demonstrating 'knowledge of society' as represented in *Our Common Bond* (e.g., *Australians* would be expected knowledge, *commemorated* would not);
3. The word/phrase is not included in the OCB glossary;
4. There is a simpler, more frequent alternative word or phrase, or the word could be avoided.

Syntax: Grammatical structure

Target content: The information or language contained in the item. This is analysed into two categories: *Target Knowledge of Society (KoS)* and *Target Language*. The areas of content may or may not be intended by the item writers.

Target Knowledge of Society (KoS): The knowledge of society which forms the focus of the item.

Target Language: Aspects of English language included in the item. Not all linguistic features are noted, just the more complex aspects. All questions, for example, contain interrogative forms or question syntax. This is only comment upon where it is especially complex.

Question	Panel review points
Section: Australia and its people	
What do we commemorate on Anzac Day? a. <u>The landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps at Gallipoli, Turkey during World War I</u> b. The arrival of the first free settlers from Great Britain c. The landing of the First Fleet at Sydney Cove	• Target KoS: Anzac day and the landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps at Gallipoli, Turkey during World War I • Target Language: <i>commemorate, Anzac day, ANZAC, arrival, first free settlers, Great Britain, landing, First Fleet, Sydney Cove, Gallipoli, Turkey, World War I</i> • “commemorate” is a rare word • Correct answer is obviously longer than other answers, which can make it noticeable as the correct answer. • If a test-taker understood Anzac day (correctly) as a general commemoration of Australians killed in military operations but did not know about the original Gallipoli event, they may get this wrong. A more general description of Anzac day could be targeted in this item (as per the information in OCB). • Options b and c are other historical events. The descriptive language of these events is contested.
What are the colours of the Australian Aboriginal Flag? a. <u>Black, red and yellow</u> b. Green, white and black c. Blue, white and green	• Target KoS: the colours of the Australian Aboriginal Flag • Target Language: colour words, <i>the Australian Aboriginal Flag</i> • This target content might be more authentically and effectively captured with visual options
What is the Commonwealth Coat of Arms? a. The national anthem b. Australia’s national flower c. <u>The official symbol of Australia, which identifies Commonwealth property</u>	• Target KoS: The meaning and use of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms • Target Language: understanding of the phrase <i>Commonwealth Coat of Arms</i> and other terms, e.g., <i>national flower, national anthem, official symbol of (a country), identify, Commonwealth property</i> • All options test the meaning of “a coat of arms”, rather than what the Commonwealth Coat of Arms depicts. • The correct option is longer than the others, and it is distinguished by a different kind of information about the use of the Coat of Arms. Both these qualities make option c noticeably correct. • The item draws on other symbols mentioned in OCB. • This item might also be made more accessible with visuals.
What happened in Australia on 1 January 1901? a. The Australian Constitution was changed by a referendum b. <u>The separate colonies were united into a federation of states called the Commonwealth of Australia</u>	• Target KoS: the date and description of the Australian federation event • Target Language: passive structures, several glossary terms • The correct answer is noticeably longer than the others. • Option a is vague and doesn’t target any event in particular. • Option c does not appear to be mentioned in OCB; “corps” is a rare word

c. The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was formed	
What is the capital city of Australia? a. Brisbane b. <u>Canberra</u> c. Perth	• Target KoS: the name of the capital city of Australia • Target Language: city names, <i>capital city</i> • This question depends to some extent on understanding the distinction between 'a' and 'the', a distinction in English articles which tends to be very difficult to learn (each city is a capital, but only one is <i>the</i> capital).
Section: Australia's democratic beliefs, rights and liberties	
Which of these is an example of freedom of speech? a. <u>People can peacefully protest against a government action</u> b. Men and women are treated equally in a court of law c. Australians are free to not follow a religion	• Target KoS: the meaning of "freedom of speech" • Target Language: complex question structure (which of these x is x of x?) <i>example, freedom of speech, can, court of law, treated equally, be free not to do something, follow a religion, peacefully protest, government action</i> • Correct information from the target KoS domain is reframed as incorrect because it is used in the distractors. • Avoid negative phrasing, which can be confusing, e.g., Australians are free to not follow a religion • 'Australians' could be 'people' (as in <i>option a</i>).
Which of these statements about government in Australia is correct? a. The government does not allow some religions b. <u>The government in Australia is secular</u> c. Religious laws are passed by Parliament	• Target KoS: the meaning of "freedom of religion" • Target Language: complex question structure (which of these x about x is x?), <i>does not allow, secular, religion, religious law, government</i> • Option c is a different pattern syntactically and lexically (a: government, b: government, c: parliament). Keep the option syntactic pattern as consistent as possible. • Option c is not mentioned in OCB • "Secular" is defined in OCB text, and the glossary, however is it a word that doesn't occur frequently in English and this item depends entirely on knowledge of that word.
Which of these is an example of equality in Australia? a. Everyone follows the same religion b. <u>Men and women have equal rights</u> c. Everyone belongs to the same political party	• Target KoS: the meaning of "equality" and "gender equality" • Target Language: complex question structure (which of these x is x of x?), <i>example, equality, equal rights, religion, the same, political party</i> • The correct answer contains "equal": it may be better to keep the phrase "the same" across all option, i.e. <i>Men and women have the same rights</i>. Noting that the glossary uses "the same" in the definition of "equality" • <i>Options a and c are focused on the possible linguistic confusion between 'equality' and 'sameness' (a linguistic focus rather than a content focus). For this reason, options a and c have little to do with equality as it is presented in OCB.</i> • Possible revision: <i>Everyone has to follow the same religion. Everyone has to belong to the same political party.</i> This target KoS may be better tested through a scenario or example.
Which of these is a responsibility of Australian citizens aged 18 years or over? a. To attend local council meetings	• Target KoS: The term "responsibility" meaning a civic obligation and compulsory voting

b. <u>To vote in federal and state or territory elections, and in a referendum</u> c. To have a current Australian passport	• Target Language: complex question structure (which of these is x of x?), <i>responsibility, attend meetings, local council, vote in elections, current passport, various glossary terms</i> • The correct answer is noticeably longer than the others. • This question depends on the understanding of “responsibility”. This stem might be simplified, e.g., in question form <i>What do Australian citizens aged 18 years and over have to do by law?</i> Or incomplete sentence form <i>By law, Australian citizens who are aged 18 years and over have to...</i>
Which of these statements about passports is correct? a. <u>Australian citizens can apply for an Australian passport</u> b. Permanent residents can hold an Australian passport c. Australian citizens need a passport and visa to return to Australia	• Target KoS: that citizens can apply for a passport • Target Language: complex question structure (which of these x about x is x?), <i>apply for a passport, hold a passport, need x to do something</i> • Avoid having two components to an option, e.g. “a visa” is added in option c, just to make it wrong. Australian citizens do need a passport, just not a visa, so the partial correctness here may be confusing.
Section: Government and the law in Australia	
Which of these statements about voting in Australian elections is correct? a. <u>People are free and safe to vote for any candidate</u> b. Voting is by a show of hands c. People must write their name on their vote	• Target KoS: being free and safe to vote, secret ballot • Target Language: complex question structure (which of these x about x is x?), <i>statement, vote, election, candidate, show of hands</i> • Option a (correct) uses the exact wording from OCB, which is advisable. • “a show of hands” is idiomatic, even though each word in the idiom is very common • Keep options similar if possible (option a and c both start with “people”) • Option c is also tapping into the notion of a secret ballot.
What is the name of the legal document that sets out the basic rules for the government of Australia? a. The Australian Federation b. The Australian Commonwealth c. <u>The Australian Constitution</u>	• Target KoS: meaning of “Australian Constitution” in relation to “Federation” and “Commonwealth” • Target Language: complex question structure (what is x of x that x for x?), <i>basic rules, commonwealth, federation, constitution, legal document</i> • Exact wording from OCB used: the legal document that sets out the basic rules for the government of Australia
What is a referendum? a. A vote to change the government b. <u>A vote to change the Australian Constitution</u> c. A vote to change the Prime Minister	• Target KoS: meaning of “referendum” in relation to Australian constitution, Prime Minister, government • Target Language: simple question structure, <i>vote to do something, constitution, Prime Minister</i> • Exact wording from OCB used: “change the Australian Constitution” • This item may be rephrased as a stem sentence, e.g., “A referendum is a vote to change...” to reduce reading burden.
Which arm of government has the power to interpret and apply laws?	• Target KoS: definition of “Judicial power” • Target Language: complex sentence structure (Which x of x has x to x?), <i>arm of government, have the power to do</i>

a. Legislative b. Executive c. <u>Judicial</u>	<i>something, interpret law, apply law legislative, executive, judicial</i> - Exact wording from OCB used: “interpret and apply” - This sense of “arm” is a rare word - Preferable to test the concept rather than the terminology - Very complex terminology, even though it is explained in OCB and in the glossary
Which of these is a role of the Governor-General? a. The appointment of state premiers b. <u>Signing all Bills passed by the Australian Parliament into law</u> c. The appointment of the Head of State	Target KoS: the role of the Governor-General as signing bills into law vs appointment of state premiers and Head of State Target Language: complex sentence structure (Which of x is x?), <i>role, Governor-General, appointment, state premiers, signing bills into law, pass bills</i> - Keep options similar if possible (both <i>options a</i> and <i>c</i> start with “the appointment of”), which makes the correct answer more obvious. - Complex interrogative syntax: “Which of these is a role of...”; possible revision: <i>A role of the Governor-General is...</i> <i>to appoint...</i> <i>to sign...</i> - Exact wording from OCB used: “Signing all Bills passed by the Australian Parliament into law” (very formal/rare language) - Option <i>c</i> targets knowledge of “Head of State” (i.e., knowing that the Governor-General is the representative of the Head of State and therefore cannot appoint them); option <i>b</i> targets knowledge of state and federal Governor roles. This kind of target content may be inherently less accessible for new citizens due to its very limited relevance to fulfilling the responsibilities of Australian citizenship.
Section: Australian values	
Which of these statements best demonstrates Australian values about freedom of expression? a. <u>Everyone can peacefully express their opinions within the law</u> b. People with different views from me need to keep quiet c. Only approved topics can be discussed	Target KoS: the meaning of “freedom of expression” in terms of expression opinions, views or talking about topics Target Language: complex sentence structure (which of these x best demonstrates x about x of x?), <i>statements, values, freedom of expression, peacefully, express opinion, within the law, views, can, need to, keep quiet, approved topics, discuss, passive sentence structure</i> - Question has complex syntax and vocabulary, with an academic style - Option <i>b</i>: “from me” is first person viewpoint and inconsistent with the rest of the test
Should people in Australia make an effort to learn English? a. People in Australia should speak whichever language is most commonly spoken in their local neighbourhood	Target KoS: the belief that people should learn English Target Language: <i>should</i> (modal – meaning appropriate/right), <i>make an effort to, learn English, whichever, commonly spoken, local neighbourhood, no expectation to</i> - Exact wording from OCB used: “make an effort to learn English”

b. There is no expectation to learn any particular language in Australia c. <u>Yes, English is the national language of Australia and it helps to get an education, a job, and to integrate into the community</u>	• Use of “should” in values questions makes the question inherently ambiguous (compared to factual questions, or questions relating to law). A less ambiguous alternative might be to focus the question on English as the main language of government, education, healthcare etc. in Australia. • <i>Option a</i> could be correct, especially if the language of the local neighbourhood is English. It could be argued that it is advisable (as expressed in modal ‘should’) to learn the language of your local community. • The use of yes/no answers as options is a different style to the previous sections of the test (conversational). This is another problem with ‘should’ questions. • <i>Options a</i> and <i>b</i> are long and unwieldy as options, potentially causing extra comprehension burden. Avoid having two components to an option, e.g. “and it helps to get an education, a job, and to integrate into the community”
In Australia, can you encourage violence against a person or group of people if you have been insulted? a. Yes, if you do not intend to carry out the violence b. <u>No, it is against Australian values and the law</u> c. Sometimes, if I feel very offended	• Target KoS: the illegality of violence, applied to the specific situation of being insulted • Target Language: encourage violence against someone, if-clause syntax for hypothetical, insulted, offended, carry out violence, carry out, intend, against the law, against values, can (modal – meaning permission) • Use of <i>can</i> – modal verb meaning ‘allowable’ is ambiguous because ‘can’ also means ‘possible’ • The use of yes/no answers as options is a different style to the previous sections of the test (conversational) • Second person viewpoint used in question • <i>Option c: “I”</i> is first person viewpoint and inconsistent with the rest of the test • insult/offence is not in OCB
Should people tolerate one another where they find that they disagree? a. It is against the law to disagree with one another b. No, people only need to treat each other with respect if they agree with one another c. <u>Yes, peaceful disagreement reflects Australian values in relation to mutual respect</u>	• Target KoS: the concepts of “mutual respect and tolerance for others” as relevant to situations in which people disagree • Target Language: complex question structure (Should + relative clause), should (modal – meaning appropriate/right), tolerate one another, disagree (with one another), find, against the law, treat each other with respect, if-clause syntax for hypothetical, peaceful, reflect, values, in relation to, mutual respect • Very close to OCB wording: tolerate one another where they find that they disagree; the term “mutual respect” is a heading in the values section • Use of “should” in values questions makes the question inherently ambiguous (compared to factual questions, or questions relating to law) • The use of yes/no answers as options is a different style to the previous sections of the test (conversational). <i>Option c</i> is not in same response style. The tone is formal and academic. <i>Option a</i> has no ‘yes’ or ‘no’. • This kind of content may be better suited to a scenario-based question.

Which of the following is an example of contributing to the Australian community? a. <u>Volunteering or fundraising for a charity is a great opportunity to strengthen our community</u> b. I should not make any effort to get to know other people c. People in Australia should not contribute to the community because Australia is a free country	• Target KoS: the concept of “making a contribution” to the community, as applied to volunteering and fundraising and contrasted to getting to know people and not having to contribute on the basis of personal freedom. • Target Language: complex question structure (which of x is an example of x?), <i>contributing</i> (meaning to add positively through deeds), <i>volunteering, fundraising, charity, a great opportunity, strengthen our community, make any effort, should not</i> (modal – meaning advisable not to), <i>get to know people, a free country</i> • <i>Option b:</i> “I” is first person viewpoint and inconsistent with the rest of the test • The subjects/agents in each option are different, which may be confusing: (a) No agent, (b) I, (c) People • <i>Options b</i> and <i>c</i> do not directly answer the question. • <i>Option c</i> doesn’t make sense; “should not” is ambiguous and it is not logical, i.e., because Australia is a free country people <i>should not</i> contribute. Modal meaning may be confused with ‘don’t have to’.
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Appendix B: CEFR Global Scale

This table has been reproduced from Council of Europe (2001, p.x).

PROFICIENT USER	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
INDEPENDENT USER	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
BASIC USER	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

The language of the Australian Citizenship Test

A review and guide for test development

Part 2

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Overview

In Report 1 (Macqueen et al., 2023), we saw that there are multiple ways in which language may be simplified or made more accessible but that linguistic adaptations are constrained by the content of the test.

As noted in Report 1, this review did not include the content or the language of *Our Common Bond* (OCB) and therefore, the advice provided in this report does not include these aspects of the Australian Citizenship Test other than improvements to accessibility as far as this is possible. The written format of the test remains a hurdle to any applicants who learnt English later in life and who have limited print literacy. The issues regarding *domain relevance* mentioned in Report 1 are addressed as far as possible in item revisions based on existing content (see Appendix A), but any future revisions to the OCB text itself should carefully consider the *domain relevance* aspect of accessibility.

This second report comprises four practical components:

1. Test development procedures
2. Item writer guidelines
3. Item reviewer checklist
4. Revised existing items and explanatory notes

Test development procedures: Item writing for the Australian Citizenship Test should follow a set of test development procedures which reflect best practice in test development. We have spelled out proposed test development procedures which should be followed every time new items are produced. These procedures set out key stages which are best practice in the development of any standardized test. The procedures can be found in Section 1 of this report.

Item writer guidelines: To standardize the work by item writers creating new items for the Australian Citizenship Test, a set of ‘item writer guidelines’ has been produced. This can be found in the second section of this report. Item writer guidelines are an important document in the development of any standardized test because they provide the blueprint or specifications for any version of the test. The guidelines help to manage the ease/difficulty of items, the coverage of content and consistency of test style and format. Guidelines can be reviewed when problems emerge in trials or operational items so that any issues are systematically addressed in future item development. These item writer guidelines set out ‘rules’ about how to create clear multiple-choice items in general, and more specifically, in relation to the Australian Citizenship test. They include advice about how the language used in the test items might be simplified or made more accessible where this is possible. Advice is provided on the relationship between the textual input – the testable section of OCB – and the test items, with a view to maximising the accessibility of the tested content. Sample questions are included to illustrate each of the points made, showing how the guidelines can be implemented. While item writer guidelines are a set of general rules and procedures, it may be necessary to apply them flexibly at times. For example, shortening a statement to reduce the reading burden may also reduce clarity or accuracy. The guidelines can be found in Section 2 of this report.

Item reviewer checklist: As proposed in the test development procedures, after an item has been drafted, it needs to be reviewed by other experienced item writers to ensure it meets the requirements set out in the item writer guidelines. This process is referred to as ‘item panelling’. To guide the item reviewers in the panelling process, an item writer checklist has been created to be used alongside the item writer guidelines. This can be found in Section 3 of this report.

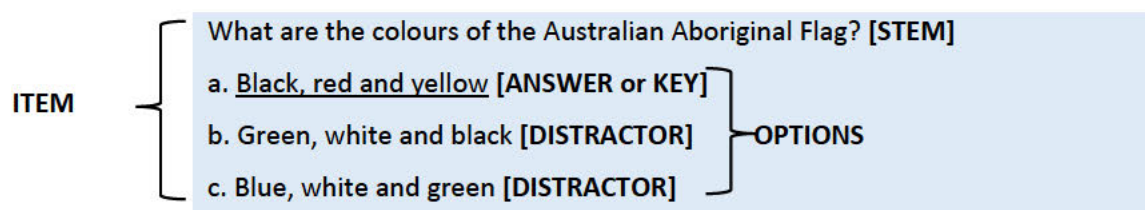
Revised existing items and explanatory notes: Revised items are provided in Appendix A to exemplify points made in the review of the practice test items and in the item guidelines. Sometimes more than one revised item has been provided to demonstrate alternative wording and item content. Because the practice test items are based on particular ideas in existing test items, it was not always possible to maximise domain relevance (i.e., aspects of OCB that are most relevant to potential test-takers).

The revised items have not been trialled. A test trial and statistical analysis would provide more information about the quality of the revised items.

Definitions

Item: A multiple choice question (also called the **stem**) and its three response options

Option: One of the alternative answers in a multiple choice item. The incorrect options are called **distractors** and the correct option is the **answer** or **key**. The correct option is underlined in each item below.



Syntax: Grammatical structure

Target content: The information or language contained in the item. This is two categories according to the test purpose: *Target Knowledge of Society (KoS)* and *Target Language*.

Target Knowledge of Society (KoS): The knowledge of society which forms the focus of the item.

Target Language: Aspects of English language included in the item.

Section 1: Item development and monitoring procedures

In this section, we set out some item development and monitoring procedures for the Australian citizenship test. These are based on best practice in educational assessment. These procedures are presented as three stages: (1) item writing and panelling stage, (2) trial stage, and (3) item monitoring stage. Item writing and reviewing is typically done by a group of people to ensure that there are multiple perspectives on the target content (i.e., what is selected from the “testable section”), and on each item.

Item writing and panelling stage

1. Instruct item writer on the number of items required from each section of the testable section of OCB.
2. Send OCB to item writer with item writer guidelines.
3. Item writer writes items.
4. (if feasible, before step 6), another person reviews items using item review checklist (found in Section 3 of this report) and suggests revisions.
5. (if Step 4 went ahead) Original item writer makes revisions.
6. Panelling – a small group does the items independently (as if they are test-takers) and returns feedback in written form and/or a group session in which people discuss the items
7. Leading item writers revise items again based on feedback, and send items back to panel members to check the items.

Trial stage

8. Trial the items with a sample of the test-taker population (or people with the same characteristics as expected test-taker population, preferably including representatives of the most at risk groups mentioned in Part 1 of this report)
9. Analyse the items for those that performed less well, e.g., those that were too difficult, multiple-choice options that did not work well. We recommend using simple statistical analysis techniques such as checking the reliability of a test form and item statistics, such as facility value and discrimination indices.
10. Remove or revise any items that did not perform well.

Creating test from item bank

11. Items should be stored in an item bank, ideally with associated difficulty information and test section information. If item bank includes several items that target one aspect of target content in the OCD (e.g., freedom of religion), those should represent a single choice by the item bank selector mechanism.

Item monitoring stage

12. Once used operationally, items should be regularly monitored to ensure that they are still performing as desired. If particular areas of content are consistently problematic, these may require changes to item writer guidelines or aspects of the OCB materials.

Section 2: Item writer guidelines

There are three steps to creating items for the Australian citizenship test:

- A. Deciding on the purpose and target content of the item
- B. Writing the multiple-choice item
- C. Checking the language of the multiple-choice item

The item writer guidelines describe each of these separately.

A. Deciding on the purpose and target content of the item

The first consideration is what the item is designed to test – that is, which content from the Our Common Bond (OCB) (testable section) is targeted by the item. Steps for refining the item focus are listed in the table below.

ITEM DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS	EXAMPLES (APPENDIX A)
<u>What is the item designed to test?</u>	
1. Note down the target Knowledge of Society (KoS) content to be tested.	Item 1 Practice test and possible revision. Note how the KoS for the original practice test item was the historical origins of the date of ANZAC day. In the possible revision, the item targets the importance of the day in Australian society instead.
2. Consider whether this knowledge is useful for new citizens in Australia (is this content important to learn for new citizens in Australia?) and whether most Australian born and educated citizens would know this concept.	Item 3, left column Appendix A: this is an example where the item is designed to test the meaning of the complex expression “Coat of Arms” while it would probably be more valuable for new citizens to be able to identify it and understand what it is used for. Item 14 left column, Appendix A. Here the complex terminology (<i>legislative, executive, judicial</i>) is tested, rather than how the of separation of powers

	actually plays out in government decision-making (for example). See suggested revision in the right-hand column in Appendix A.
3. Select content for the entire item (answer and distractors) that focuses on one main idea. Write distractors that are meaningful and relevant to the knowledge in focus. Take care not to use correct OCB information as distractors (incorrect answers) in a way that might be confusing. Bear in mind that answering the question correctly may draw on knowing (1) what is correct, (2) what is incorrect or (3) a combination of both. To summarise, it is necessary to consider the nature of the content and language contained in the whole item in item design. Distractors are just as important as the correct answer. In the detailed analysis of each item in Appendix A, the target language and target societal content is noted for each item (by which we mean what appears to be targeted, regardless of whether or not this is intended by the item writer). When writing and reviewing items, it is advisable to specify the target content of the item. Doing this will make it easier to evaluate what the item is (supposed to) be capturing and whether it is clearly focused in terms of item structure, and usefully focused in terms of domain relevance.	Item 6 The two incorrect statements (options b and c) are actually correct bits of information about Australian society. What makes <i>options b</i> and <i>c</i> incorrect is that, despite being Australian values, they are not examples of “freedom of speech”. Using this kind of question introduces the danger of prospective test-takers inadvertently ‘learning’ (as they prepare for the test) that “Men and women are treated equally in a court of law” is actually incorrect <i>in general</i>, rather than just within the context of this question.” This can be compared with Item 16 on “freedom of expression” in which <i>option a</i> is the only option which is actually correct in the Australian context, regardless of the question. In this item, also, all options are correct or incorrect on the target topic, and not related to other topics, as in the previous example.

B. Writing the multiple-choice item

ITEM DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS	EXAMPLES (APPENDIX A)
<u>General guidelines</u>	
4. Minimise the amount of reading in each item	The length of the stem in item 16 has been reduced from a lengthy question to a five-word stem: Which of these statements best demonstrates Australian values about freedom of expression?

5. Keep the vocabulary and sentence structure as simple and as clear as possible. Where appropriate, use wording from <i>Our Common Bond</i> unless there is a simpler way (that is still accurate) to express the idea. Avoid semantic confusion.	• <i>Freedom of speech</i> means that ... In item 1 in Appendix A and the possible revision, 'commemorate' has been replaced with the more common word 'remember'. In item 8 in Appendix A, there may be unnecessary semantic confusion between 'equality' and 'sameness'. This makes the focus a semantic one, rather than the OCB information about equal rights.
6. Use frequent words and expressions if possible. Avoid less common words or rare words that fit all the following criteria: • The word/phrase is not one of the 2000 most frequent words in English, nor is it a frequently used academic word; • The word/phrase is not necessary for demonstrating 'knowledge of society' as represented in <i>Our Common Bond</i> (e.g., <i>Australians</i> would be expected knowledge, <i>commemorated</i> would not); • The word/phrase is not included in the OCB glossary; • There is a simpler, more frequent alternative word or phrase, or the word could be avoided. Avoid idiomatic expressions, such as 'show of hands', 'be above the law', 'have a say in running the country'. Note that while the individual words may be common, the meaning of idiomatic expressions may not be obvious even if each word is familiar.	Item 11, left column – Appendix A uses 'show of hands' which has been avoided in the revised items (right column).
<u>Guidelines for writing the stem</u>	
7. Base each item on a specific idea/topic clearly stated in the stem. Ensure the central idea is in the stem, rather than the distractors and the key.	
8. The stem should be as clear and as simple as possible.	<u>Complex question stem:</u> <i>Which of these statements best demonstrates Australian values about freedom of expression?</i> <u>Simplified sentence stem:</u> <i>Which statement is true in Australia?</i>

	See also Item 15, left column Appendix A and the suggested revision.
9. The stem can be in the form of either a question, an incomplete statement, (sometimes with a brief statement), whichever presents the ideas clearly and concisely.	Question stem: <i>Which of these is a responsibility of Australian citizens aged 18 years or over?</i> Incomplete sentence stem: <i>By law, Australians aged 18 or over must...</i> Statement and incomplete sentence stem: <i>In Australia, we believe in mutual respect and tolerance. This means that you can...</i>
10. Include as much of the idea as possible in the stem. Rather than repeating words or phrases in each option, place such material in the stem to decrease the reading burden and more clearly define the question.	In Item 13, left column, Appendix A, 'a vote to' is repeated in each option. In the possible revision in the right column, this has been moved to the stem to avoid unnecessary repetition.
11. If possible, avoid modal auxiliary verbs such as 'should' and 'can', in the stem. If these cannot be avoided, ensure that such items are carefully monitored because the meaning is more susceptible to interpretation. Make sure distractors are clearly incorrect and the key is clearly correct in all possible interpretations of the question/idea. If deciding between 'must' and 'have to', use 'must'.	Item 17, left hand column, Appendix A. The use of 'should' here makes it difficult to say that the distractors are unambiguously incorrect. A less ambiguous revision is provided. Item 18, left hand column – Appendix A. The use of 'can' is ambiguous. Here it is used as 'allowable'. 'Can' can also mean 'possible'. While the interpretation is unlikely, the values questions are a hurdle requirement. In OCB, the notion of 'responsibility' is used in two ways: (1) legal obligation (e.g., vote) and (2) moral action (e.g., assist neighbours, volunteer, etc.). For meaning (2) moral action, the modal verb 'should' may be appropriate as long as the distractors are unambiguously incorrect and the key is unambiguously correct
12. Word the stem positively, avoid negatives such as NOT or EXCEPT.	
<u>Considerations for options</u>	
13. Consider whether visuals can be used to reduce the reading load, especially for content which is more authentically visual, e.g., flags, visual symbols.	Item 2 – Appendix A could use visual options of flags.
14. When writing the distractors (i.e., the incorrect options), ensure that these are contradicted by information in Our Common Bond. That is, do NOT use	See Item 6 left column in Appendix A as an example where this rule is broken.

information that is correct from Our Common Bond (but not correct for this item) as incorrect options (distractors). To the greatest extent possible, ensure that all distractors directly contradict information given in Our Common Bond.	
15. Keep the length of the alternatives about equal.	Item 1 – Appendix A correct answer is much longer, making it stand out as obviously different.
16. Options should be clear and as short as possible.	Sometimes it is possible to reduce the length and complexity of the options by moving that information into the stem. See Item 13, left column Appendix A where this would be an option. The stem could be changed to: A referendum is a vote to change...
17. Where possible, keep alternatives similar in content and grammatical structure.	Item 15: <i>Which of these is a role of the Governor-General?</i> <i>a. The appointment of state premiers</i> <i>b. <u>Signing all Bills passed by the Australian Parliament into law</u></i> <i>c. The appointment of the Head of State</i> Revised item: <i>A role of the Governor-General is...</i> <i>a. to appoint...</i> <i>b. to sign...</i> <i>c. to appoint...</i>
18. Ensure there is no shift in agents/subjects in the options.	Item 20, left hand column – Appendix A: The subjects/agents in each option in this item (see below) are different, which may be confusing: (a) No agent, (b) I, (c) People <i>Which of the following is an example of contributing to the Australian community?</i> <i>a. <u>Volunteering or fundraising for a charity is a great opportunity to strengthen our community</u></i> <i>b. I should not make any effort to get to know other people</i> <i>c. People in Australia should not contribute to the community because Australia is a free country</i>

19. If using 'yes' and 'no' answers, maintain coherence between the stem and the yes/no answers and use the same style across all options.	Item 17, left hand column, Appendix A – Option c shifts to the use of 'yes'; item 18 left hand column has a similar problem The options in the following item, for example, are not consistent, with only one (the answer) using a yes/no response. <i>Should people in Australia make an effort to learn English?</i> <i>a. People in Australia should speak whichever language is most commonly spoken in their local neighbourhood</i> <i>b. There is no expectation to learn any particular language in Australia</i> <i>c. <u>Yes, English is the national language of Australia and it helps to get an education, a job, and to integrate into the community</u></i>
20. Ensure that the key is the only correct option.	Item 17, left hand column – Appendix A. Option a could be correct (even though this is a distractor), especially if the language of the local neighbourhood is English.
21. Keep the alternatives independent (mutually exclusive); they should not be overlapping in content.	
22. Avoid using NONE OF THE ABOVE and ALL OF THE ABOVE.	
23. Phrase alternatives positively; avoid negatives such as NOT.	Avoid negatives such as in this example: <i>Which of these is an example of freedom of speech?</i> <i>a. People can peacefully protest against a government action</i> <i>b. Men and women are treated equally in a court of law</i> <i>c. Australians are free to not follow a religion</i>
24. Avoid adverbs of frequency such as <i>always, never, completely, and absolutely</i>.	
25. Avoid blatantly absurd, ridiculous options.	

C. Checking the language of the multiple-choice item

Ideally the language used in all items should be checked by someone with expertise in second language teaching and learning and knowledge of the test taker population. Other possible checks of language are included in the table below.

Reviewing the vocabulary used: Word frequency analysis 26. Check the words in the item are predominantly in the 1000k and 2000k word lists by pasting text into: Compleat Web VP v.2.6 or later: https://www.lexutor.ca/vp/comp/ Review words that are listed in 3000k or higher lists and consider whether they can or should be simplified/revised.	See Appendix B for screenshot
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D. Creating the final item for panelling

Layout for final item for panelling 27. Specify target content from Our Common Bond (testable section). 28. Underline the answer (so it stands out from the distractors). 29. Highlight any vocabulary that is outside of the 1000k and 2000k vocabulary lists (also create a 'clean' version without highlighting for panelling). 30. Vary the location of the key and the distractors across items.	
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Section 3: Item reviewer checklist

What is the item designed to test?	
1.	Does the content targeted by this item represent one main idea, that is useful knowledge for new citizens, and something that Australian born citizens generally know?
General guidelines	
2.	Minimise the amount of reading in each item
3.	Keep the vocabulary and sentence structure simple. Only use language from 'Our Common Bond' directly if it meets this criterion.
4.	Avoid idiomatic expressions, such as 'show of hands', 'be above the law', 'have a say in running the country'.
Guidelines for writing the stem	
5.	Base each item on a specific idea/topic clearly stated in the stem. Ensure the central idea is in the stem, rather than the distractors and the key.
6.	The stem should be as clear and as simple as possible
7.	The stem can be in the form of either a question or an incomplete statement, whichever presents the ideas more clearly and concisely.
8.	Include as much of the item as possible in the stem, but do not include irrelevant material. Rather than repeating redundant words or phrases in each alternative, place such material in the stem to decrease the reading burden and more clearly define the question.
9.	Ensure modal auxiliary verbs such as 'should', 'would' etc are avoided, if possible, in the stem. If these cannot be avoided, ensure that such items are carefully monitored because the meaning is more susceptible to interpretation. If deciding between 'must' and 'have to', use 'must'.
10.	Word the stem positively, avoid negatives such as NOT or EXCEPT.
Considerations for options	
11.	Consider whether visuals can be used to reduce the reading load, especially for content which is more authentically visual, e.g., flags, visual symbols.
12.	When writing the distractors (i.e., the incorrect options), ensure that these are contradicted by information in Our Common Bond. That is, do NOT use information that is correct from Our Common Bond (but not correct for this item) as incorrect options (distractors)
13.	To the greatest extent possible, ensure that all distractors directly contradict information given in Our Common Bond.
14.	Keep the length of the alternatives about equal
15.	Options should be clear and as simple as possible

16. Where possible, keep alternatives homogenous in content and grammatical structure
17. Ensure there is no shift in agents/subjects in the options
18. If using 'yes' and 'no' answers, maintain coherence between the stem and the yes/no answers and use the same style across all options.
19. Ensure that the key is the only correct option
20. Keep the alternatives independent (mutually exclusive); they should not be overlapping in content
21. Avoid using NONE OF THE ABOVE and ALL OF THE ABOVE
22. Phrase alternatives positively; avoid negatives such as NOT
23. Alternatives should not be longer than the stem or vice versa
24. Avoid adverbs of frequency such as <i>always, never, completely, and absolutely</i> .
25. Avoid blatantly absurd, ridiculous options.
<u>Reviewing the vocabulary used: Word frequency analysis</u> 26. Check the words in the item are predominantly in the 1000k and 2000k word lists by pasting text into: Compleat Web VP v.2.6 or later: https://www.lex tutor.ca/vp/comp/ Review words that are listed in 3000k or higher lists and consider whether they can or should be simplified/revised.

Appendix A: Practice test item review & suggested revisions

This appendix contains the practice test item review which accompanied the first part of the report in the first two columns. In the third column, there are suggested revisions to these items (which were not included in the first part of the report). The revisions are suggested improvements to the practice test items. They provide models for item writing in line with the *Item Writer Guidelines* and may be useful for training purposes. Because the practice test items are based on particular ideas from Our Common Bond (OCB), it is not always possible to maximise domain relevance (i.e., aspects of OCB that are most relevant to potential test-takers). The revised items have not been trialled. In a test trial, more information about the quality of the revised items could be revealed through statistical analysis.

Practice test item	Review notes of the practice test item on left	Possible revision/s to the item on left
Section: Australia and its people		
1. What do we commemorate on Anzac Day? a. <u>The landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps at Gallipoli, Turkey during World War I</u> b. The arrival of the first free settlers from Great Britain c. The landing of the First Fleet at Sydney Cove	• Target KoS: Anzac day and the landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps at Gallipoli, Turkey during World War I • Target Language: <i>commemorate, Anzac day, ANZAC, arrival, first free settlers, Great Britain, landing, First Fleet, Sydney Cove, Gallipoli, Turkey, World War I</i> • “commemorate” is a rare word • Correct answer is obviously longer than other answers, which can make it noticeable as the correct answer. • If a test-taker understood Anzac day (correctly) as a general commemoration of Australians killed in military operations but did not know about the original Gallipoli event, they may get this wrong. A more general description of Anzac day could be targeted in this item (as per the information in OCB). • Options b and c are other historical events. The descriptive language of these events is contested.	Target KoS: <i>Anzac Day is a solemn day when we remember the sacrifice of all Australians who served and died in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations.</i> Note that in writing an item based on this information, there are several difficult words in the OCB text above (<i>solemn, sacrifice, conflicts, peacekeeping</i>) which should be avoided. The following two items demonstrate different types of question stem syntax, an incomplete sentence (1.1) and a question (1.2): 1.1 On ANZAC day, Australian people remember... a. <u>all Australians who have fought and died in wars.</u> b. the creation of an independent Australian nation. c. the arrival of Aboriginal people in Australia. 1.2 What do Australians remember on ANZAC Day? a. <u>Australian people who have served and died in wars.</u>

		b. The creation of an independent Australian nation. c. All the people who live in Australia and New Zealand.
2.What are the colours of the Australian Aboriginal Flag? a. <u>Black, red and yellow</u> b. Green, white and black c. Blue, white and green	• Target KoS: the colours of the Australian Aboriginal Flag • Target Language: colour words, <i>the Australian Aboriginal Flag</i>	Target KoS: <i>the colours of the Australian Aboriginal Flag</i> This target content might be more authentically and effectively captured with visual options
3.What is the Commonwealth Coat of Arms? a. The national anthem b. Australia's national flower c. <u>The official symbol of Australia, which identifies Commonwealth property</u>	• Target KoS: The meaning and use of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms • Target Language: understanding of the phrase <i>Commonwealth Coat of Arms</i> and other terms, e.g., <i>national flower, national anthem, official symbol of (a country), identify, Commonwealth property</i> • All options test the meaning of "a coat of arms", rather than what the Commonwealth Coat of Arms depicts. • The correct option is longer than the others, and it is distinguished by a different kind of information about the use of the Coat of Arms. Both these qualities make <i>option c</i> noticeably correct. • The item draws on other symbols mentioned in OCB. • This item might also be made more accessible with visuals.	Target KoS: <i>The Commonwealth Coat of Arms is the official symbol of the Commonwealth of Australia. It represents our national unity. It identifies the authority and property of the Commonwealth of Australia.</i> [plus visual image of the Coat of Arms] The following item uses the visual image which is a more authentic and useful representation of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms. In the revised item, there is no requirement to understand or define the complex expression "Coat of Arms". 3. Which image is used to show that something is owned by the Commonwealth of Australia? a. [insert image of wattle from OCB] b. [insert image of an opal from OCB] c. [insert image of Commonwealth Coat of Arms from OCB]
4.What happened in Australia on 1 January 1901? a. The Australian Constitution was changed by a referendum	• Target KoS: the date and description of the Australian federation event • Target Language: passive structures, several glossary terms • The correct answer is noticeably longer than the others.	Target KoS: <i>the date and description of the Australian federation event</i> In the following revision, the distractors have no reference to OCB to avoid unnecessary confusion.

b. <u>The separate colonies were united into a federation of states called the Commonwealth of Australia</u> c. The Australian and New Zealand Army Corps was formed	• <i>Option a</i> is vague and doesn't target any event in particular. • <i>Option c</i> does not appear to be mentioned in OCB; "corps" is a rare word	4. When did the separate colonies join together to become the Australian nation? a. 1601 b. <u>1901</u> c. 2001
5. What is the capital city of Australia? a. Brisbane b. <u>Canberra</u> c. Perth	• Target KoS: the name of the capital city of Australia • Target Language: city names, <i>capital city</i> • This question depends to some extent on understanding the distinction between 'a' and 'the', a distinction in English articles which tends to be very difficult to learn (each city is <i>a</i> capital, but only one is <i>the</i> capital).	Target KoS: <i>the name of the capital city of Australia</i> In the following revision, 'national' emphasises the target information. 5. What is the national capital city of Australia? a. Brisbane b. <u>Canberra</u> c. Perth
Section: Australia's democratic beliefs, rights and liberties		
6. Which of these is an example of freedom of speech? a. <u>People can peacefully protest against a government action</u> b. Men and women are treated equally in a court of law c. Australians are free to not follow a religion	• Target KoS: the meaning of "freedom of speech" • Target Language: complex question structure (which of these <i>x</i> is <i>x</i> of <i>x</i>?) <i>example, freedom of speech, can, court of law, treated equally, be free not to do something, follow a religion, peacefully protest, government action</i> • Correct information from the target KoS domain is reframed as incorrect because it is used in the distractors. • Avoid negative phrasing, which can be confusing, e.g., Australians are free to not follow a religion • 'Australians' could be 'people' (as in <i>option a</i>).	Target KoS: <i>the understanding of "freedom of speech" in practice</i> Freedom of Speech is a complex concept that is very hard to convey in simple language. The important understanding is that people can express their opinion without being punished by the government. In the following revisions this main understanding is targeted. Each distractor is an incorrect answer to the question, as well as incorrect in relation to all information given in OCB. The following two items demonstrate different types of question stem syntax, a statement + incomplete sentence (6.1) and a question (6.2):

		6.1 Australians believe in freedom of speech. This means that... a. <u>people can say what they think about politics.</u> b. men have more legal rights than women. c. everyone must follow a religion. 6.2 Which statement is an example of freedom of speech? a. <u>People can peacefully protest against a government action.</u> b. People are free to break the law. c. Only men are free to express their opinions.
7. Which of these statements about government in Australia is correct? a. The government does not allow some religions b. <u>The government in Australia is secular</u> c. Religious laws are passed by Parliament	• Target KoS: the meaning of “freedom of religion” • Target Language: complex question structure (which of these x about x is x?), <i>does not allow, secular, religion, religious law, government</i> • Option c is a different pattern syntactically and lexically (a: government, b: government, c: parliament). Keep the option syntactic pattern as consistent as possible. • Option c is not mentioned in OCB • “Secular” is defined in OCB text, and the glossary, however is it a word that doesn’t occur frequently in English and this item depends entirely on knowledge of that word.	Target KoS: <i>The Australian government is secular</i> In the following revised items, the infrequent term ‘secular’ is replaced with ‘separate from religion’ and the stems are less complex:. 7.1 The Australian government... a. does not allow some religions. b. <u>is separate from religion.</u> c. prefers some religions over others. 7.2 In Australia, the government ... a. tells people which religion to follow. b. <u>is separate from any religion.</u> c. makes laws based on the official religion.

8. Which of these is an example of equality in Australia? a. Everyone follows the same religion b. <u>Men and women have equal rights</u> c. Everyone belongs to the same political party	• Target KoS: the meaning of “equality” and “gender equality” • Target Language: complex question structure (which of these x is x of x?), <i>example, equality, equal rights, religion, the same, political party</i> • The correct answer contains “equal”: it may be better to keep the phrase “the same” across all options, i.e. <i>Men and women have the same rights</i>. Noting that the glossary uses “the same” in the definition of “equality” • <i>Options a and c</i> are focused on the possible linguistic confusion between ‘equality’ and ‘sameness’ (a linguistic focus rather than a content focus). For this reason, <i>options a and c</i> have little to do with equality as it is presented in OCB. • Possible revision: <i>Everyone has to follow the same religion. Everyone has to belong to the same political party</i>. This target KoS may be better tested through a scenario or example.	Target KoS: <i>Understanding the concept of “gender equality”</i> In the following revised item, the emphasis has been shifted to understanding gender equality rather than exemplifying the term or distinguishing it semantically from ‘uniformity’. 8. Which is correct in Australian law? a. Men and women have equal rights. b. Men have more rights than women. c. Women have more rights than men
9. Which of these is a responsibility of Australian citizens aged 18 years or over? a. To attend local council meetings b. <u>To vote in federal and state or territory elections, and in a referendum</u> c. To have a current Australian passport	• Target KoS: The term “responsibility” meaning a civic obligation and compulsory voting • Target Language: complex question structure (which of these is x of x?), <i>responsibility, attend meetings, local council, vote in elections, current passport, various glossary terms</i> • The correct answer is noticeably longer than the others. • This question depends on the understanding of “responsibility”. This stem might be simplified, e.g., in question form <i>What do Australian citizens aged 18 years and over have to do by law?</i> Or incomplete sentence form <i>By law, Australian citizens who are aged 18 years and over have to...</i>	Target KoS: <i>Practical differences between responsibilities and privileges</i> In the following revised item, the emphasis has been shifted to understanding how responsibilities play out in life, rather than knowledge of the term “responsibility”. There is a choice between ‘must’ and ‘have to’ as modal verbs indicating strong obligation or responsibility. Although both are semantically complex, ‘must’ may be clearer. 9. By law, Australians aged 18 or over must... a. attend local council meetings. b. <u>vote in Australian elections.</u> c. join the Australian Defence Force.

10. Which of these statements about passports is correct? a. <u>Australian citizens can apply for an Australian passport</u> b. Permanent residents can hold an Australian passport c. Australian citizens need a passport and visa to return to Australia	• Target KoS: that citizens can apply for a passport • Target Language: complex question structure (which of these x about x is x?), <i>apply for a passport, hold a passport, need x to do something</i> • Avoid having two components to an option, e.g. “a visa” is added in option c, just to make it wrong. Australian citizens do need a passport, just not a visa, so the partial correctness here may be confusing.	Target KoS: <i>that citizens can apply for a passport</i> In the following revised item, the terminology and syntax has been simplified. Note: There may not be enough information in OCB to support a question solely on passports. 10 Which of the following is true? a. <u>Australian citizens can get an Australian passport.</u> b. Permanent residents can get an Australian passport. c. Australian citizens need a visa to enter Australia.
Section: Government and the law in Australia		
11. Which of these statements about voting in Australian elections is correct? a. <u>People are free and safe to vote for any candidate</u> b. Voting is by a show of hands c. People must write their name on their vote	• Target KoS: being free and safe to vote, secret ballot • Target Language: complex question structure (which of these x about x is x?), <i>statement, vote, election, candidate, show of hands</i> • Option a (correct) uses the exact wording from OCB, which is advisable. • “a show of hands” is idiomatic, even though each word in the idiom is very common • Keep options similar if possible (option a and c both start with “people”) • Option c is also tapping into the notion of a secret ballot.	Target KoS: <i>being free and safe to vote, secret ballot</i> In the following revised item, the stems and the language of the options have been simplified. In Australian elections, ... a. <u>you are free and safe to vote for any candidate.</u> b. you must tell the police who you voted for. c. you must write your name on your vote.
12. What is the name of the legal document that sets out the basic rules for the government of Australia? a. The Australian Federation b. The Australian Commonwealth c. <u>The Australian Constitution</u>	• Target KoS: meaning of “Australian Constitution” in relation to “Federation” and “Commonwealth” • Target Language: complex question structure (what is x of x that x for x?), <i>basic rules, commonwealth, federation, constitution, legal document</i> • Exact wording from OCB used: the legal document that sets out the basic rules for the government of Australia	Target KoS: <i>understanding of what the Australian constitution is</i> In the following revised item, the emphasis has been shifted from defining the term <i>Australian Constitution</i> to showing an understanding of what the constitution contains and what it does not contain (religious rules). The item also includes implicit mention of the role of referendums in distractor c.

		12. The <i>Australian Constitution</i> is a legal document. The document... a. contains religious rules. b. contains <u>rules of government</u>. c. can never be changed.
13. What is a referendum? a. A vote to change the government b. <u>A vote to change the Australian Constitution</u> c. A vote to change the Prime Minister	• Target KoS: meaning of “referendum” in relation to Australian constitution, Prime Minister, government • Target Language: simple question structure, <i>vote to do something, constitution, Prime Minister</i> • Exact wording from OCB used: “change the Australian Constitution” • This item may be rephrased as a stem sentence, e.g., “A referendum is a vote to change...” to reduce reading burden.	Target KoS: meaning of “referendum” in relation to Australian constitution, Prime Minister, government In the following revised item, the number of words has been reduced. 13. In Australia, a referendum is a vote to change... a. the government. b. <u>the Australian constitution</u>. c. the Prime Minister
14. Which arm of government has the power to interpret and apply laws? a. Legislative b. Executive c. <u>Judicial</u>	• Target KoS: definition of “Judicial power” • Target Language: complex sentence structure (Which x of x has x to x?), <i>arm of government, have the power to do something, interpret law, apply law legislative, executive, judicial</i> • Exact wording from OCB used: “interpret and apply” • This sense of “arm” is a rare word • Preferable to test the concept rather than the terminology • Very complex terminology, even though it is explained in OCB and in the glossary	Target KoS: separation of power In the following revised items, the complex terminology (<i>legislative, executive, judicial</i>) is avoided. Keys are the exact or almost exact wording from OCB. 14.1 In Australia, judges ... a. <u>are independent of government</u>. b. control government decisions. c. do not follow the laws that other people do. 14.2 In Australia, the parliament ... a. <u>makes and changes the laws</u>. b. is chosen by the Prime Minister. c. is controlled by judges.

15. Which of these is a role of the Governor-General? a. The appointment of state premiers b. <u>Signing all Bills passed by the Australian Parliament into law</u> c. The appointment of the Head of State	• Target KoS: the role of the Governor-General as signing bills into law vs appointment of state premiers and Head of State • Target Language: complex sentence structure (Which of x is x?), <i>role, Governor-General, appointment, state premiers, signing bills into law, pass bills</i> • Keep options similar if possible (both <i>options a</i> and <i>c</i> start with “the appointment of”), which makes the correct answer more obvious. • Complex interrogative syntax: “Which of these is a role of...”; • Exact wording from OCB used: “Signing all Bills passed by the Australian Parliament into law” (very formal/rare language) • Option c targets knowledge of “Head of State” (i.e., knowing that the Governor-General is the representative of the Head of State and therefore cannot appoint them); option b targets knowledge of state and federal Governor roles. This kind of target content may be inherently less accessible for new citizens due to its very limited relevance to fulfilling the responsibilities of Australian citizenship.	Target KoS: <i>powers of the Governor-General</i> In the following revised item, the focus is shifted away from the Governor-General’s ceremonial responsibilities to a more general understanding of the role. Item 15.2 is a rephrasing of the original item on the left, but it retains the complex phrase ‘to sign bills into law’. 15.1 The Governor-General represents ... a. our head of state, the King of Australia. b. a political party. c. the current Prime Minister. 15.2 A role of the Governor-General is... a. to appoint state premiers. b. to sign bills into law. c. to appoint the Head of State.
Section: Australian values		
16. Which of these statements best demonstrates Australian values about freedom of expression? a. <u>Everyone can peacefully express their opinions within the law</u> b. People with different views from me need to keep quiet	• Target KoS: the meaning of “freedom of expression” in terms of expression opinions, views or talking about topics • Target Language: complex sentence structure (which of these x best demonstrates x about x of x?), <i>statements, values, freedom of expression, peacefully, express opinion, within the law, views, can, need to, keep quiet, approved topics, discuss, passive sentence structure</i>	Target KoS: <i>an understanding of the practical aspects of living in a country that values Freedom of Speech as well as the limits of this freedom</i> In the following revised item, the stem and the options have been simplified. The key is close to the wording in OCB. 16. <i>Freedom of speech</i> means that ... a. <u>people can say and write what they think.</u>

c. Only approved topics can be discussed	- Question has complex syntax and vocabulary, with an academic style <i>Option b</i>: “from me” is first person viewpoint and inconsistent with the rest of the test	b. people can force others to agree with them. c. people must always agree with the government.
17. Should people in Australia make an effort to learn English? a. People in Australia should speak whichever language is most commonly spoken in their local neighbourhood b. There is no expectation to learn any particular language in Australia c. <u>Yes, English is the national language of Australia and it helps to get an education, a job, and to integrate into the community</u>	Target KoS: the belief that people should learn English Target Language: <i>should</i> (modal – meaning appropriate/right), <i>make an effort to, learn English, whichever, commonly spoken, local neighbourhood, no expectation to</i> - Exact wording from OCB used: “make an effort to learn English” - Use of “should” in values questions makes the question inherently ambiguous (compared to factual questions, or questions relating to law). A less ambiguous alternative might be to focus the question on English as the main language of government, education, healthcare etc. in Australia. <i>Option a</i> could be correct, especially if the language of the local neighbourhood is English. It could be argued that it is advisable (as expressed in modal ‘should’) to learn the language of your local community. - The use of yes/no answers as options is a different style to the previous sections of the test (conversational). This is another problem with ‘should’ questions. <i>Options a</i> and <i>b</i> are long and unwieldy as options, potentially causing extra comprehension burden. Avoid having two components to an option, e.g. “and it helps to get an education, a job, and to integrate into the community”	Target KoS: <i>the usefulness of the English language in Australia</i> In the following revised item, the ambiguity is decreased. The distractors require knowledge that people with language backgrounds other than English can become citizens and that not all Australian communities are English-speaking. Yes/no response options are changed to a statement format. 17. Why is it important for people living in Australia to learn English? a. Only people who speak English as a native language can become Australian citizens. b. English is the only language that is spoken in Australian communities. c. <u>Speaking English helps to get an education and a job.</u>
18. In Australia, can you encourage violence against a person or group of people if you have been insulted?	Target KoS: the illegality of violence, applied to the specific situation of being insulted	Target KoS: <i>understanding the illegality of violence</i> In the following revised item, the yes/no format has been revised. The stem format has been revised to an incomplete

a. Yes, if you do not intend to carry out the violence b. <u>No, it is against Australian values and the law</u> c. Sometimes, if I feel very offended	• Target Language: <i>encourage violence against someone, if-clause syntax for hypothetical, insulted, offended, carry out violence, carry out, intend, against the law, against values, can (modal – meaning permission)</i> • Use of <i>can</i> – modal verb meaning ‘allowable’ is ambiguous because ‘can’ also means ‘possible’ • The use of yes/no answers as options is a different style to the previous sections of the test (conversational) • Second person viewpoint used in question • <i>Option c:</i> “I” is first person viewpoint and inconsistent with the rest of the test • insult/offence is not in OCB	sentence. This particular OCB content is difficult to form into a multiple-choice format. Values items tend to require complex hypothetical statements (e.g., <i>The use of violence against a person or a group of people is ok if they are a different religion</i>) on more ambiguous and complex subject matter. Because the values questions are a hurdle requirement in the marking structure of the test, this section should be simple and unambiguous. 18. In Australia, the use of violence against a person or a group of people is... a. ok if they are a different religion. b. ok if they have a different opinion. c. <u>never ok because it is against the law.</u>
19. Should people tolerate one another where they find that they disagree? a. It is against the law to disagree with one another b. No, people only need to treat each other with respect if they agree with one another c. <u>Yes, peaceful disagreement reflects Australian values in relation to mutual respect</u>	• Target KoS: the concepts of “mutual respect and tolerance for others” as relevant to situations in which people disagree • Target Language: complex question structure (Should x + relative clause), <i>should (modal – meaning appropriate/right), tolerate one another, disagree (with one another), find, against the law, treat each other with respect, if-clause syntax for hypothetical, peaceful, reflect, values, in relation to, mutual respect</i> • Very close to OCB wording: tolerate one another where they find that they disagree; the term “mutual respect” is a heading in the values section • Use of “should” in values questions makes the question inherently ambiguous (compared to factual questions, or questions relating to law) • The use of yes/no answers as options is a different style to the previous sections of the test (conversational). <i>Option c</i> is not in same response style. The tone is formal and academic. <i>Option a</i> has no ‘yes’ or ‘no’.	Target KoS: <i>legality of disagreeing with someone; understanding the concepts of mutual respect and tolerance for others</i> In the following revised item, the options have been made more consistent. In 19.1, the stem has been simplified to two less complex statements, noting that the vocabulary and concepts remain very complex. In 19.2, the wording is complex, but it is very close to that of OCB. 19.1 In Australia, we believe in mutual respect and tolerance. This means that you can... a. physically fight someone when you disagree with them. b. <u>peacefully disagree with someone.</u> c. only agree with people from the same religion. 19.2 In Australia, the values of mutual respect and tolerance mean ...

	This kind of content may be better suited to a scenario-based question.	a. disagreeing with people who are from a different background. b. being violent to other people when you disagree with them. c. <u>listening to others and respecting their opinions.</u>
20. Which of the following is an example of contributing to the Australian community? a. <u>Volunteering or fundraising for a charity is a great opportunity to strengthen our community</u> b. I should not make any effort to get to know other people c. People in Australia should not contribute to the community because Australia is a free country	Target KoS: the concept of “making a contribution” to the community, as applied to volunteering and fundraising and contrasted to getting to know people and not having to contribute on the basis of personal freedom. Target Language: complex question structure (which of x is an example of x?), <i>contributing</i> (meaning to add positively through deeds), <i>volunteering, fundraising, charity, a great opportunity, strengthen our community, make any effort, should not</i> (modal – meaning advisable not to), <i>get to know people, a free country</i> <i>Option b:</i> “I” is first person viewpoint and inconsistent with the rest of the test - The subjects/agents in each option are different, which may be confusing: (a) No agent, (b) I, (c) People <i>Options b and c</i> do not directly answer the question. <i>Option c</i> doesn’t make sense; “should not” is ambiguous and it is not logical, i.e., because Australia is a free country people <i>should not</i> contribute. Modal meaning may be confused with ‘don’t have to’.	Target KoS: <i>what it means to make a contribution to society</i> In the following revised item, the stem has been simplified and the structure of each option has been simplified and made more consistent in style and syntax. In OCB, the notion of ‘responsibility’ is used in two ways: (1) legal obligation (e.g., vote) and (2) moral action (e.g., assist neighbours, volunteer, etc.). For meaning (2) moral action, the modal verb ‘should’ may be appropriate as long as the distractors are unambiguously incorrect and the key is unambiguously correct. 20. In Australia, volunteering is important because... a. <u>it strengthens our community.</u> b. it earns people lots of money. c. we have to do it by law.

Appendix B: Using Compleat Web VP v.2.6

Open Compleat Web VP by going to the following link: <https://www.lex tutor.ca/vp/comp/>

The following page will open:

Paste text in the box indicated. Instructions are in the box for your reference.

The following instructions appear in the text box the item needs to be pasted in:

Instructions copied here:

INSTRUCTIONS: Type or paste your text here and click the yellow SUBMIT_window button.

VocabProfile will tell you how many words the text contains from frequency bands as determined by analysing research corpora. For a demonstration, enter this text, or one of the sample texts below.

TEXT SET-UP

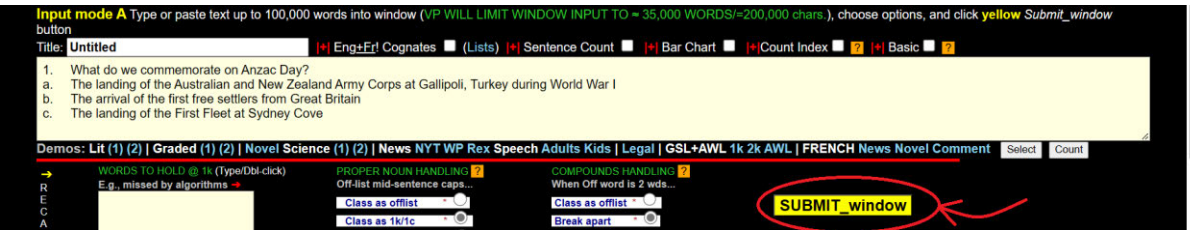
General: Include an empty space after every comma or full stop.

Research: Deal with spelling errors and proper nouns.

SIZE LIMITS: Web form input is currently max about 25,000 words - use UPLOAD method below for larger files (must be ~.txt; send in straight from your own hard drive). Text is NOT stored on Web VP's server

Example using the following item:

- 1. *What do we commemorate on Anzac Day?*
 - a. *The landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps at Gallipoli, Turkey during World War I*
 - b. *The arrival of the first free settlers from Great Britain*
 - c. *The landing of the First Fleet at Sydney Cove*



Paste text in box and click “SUBMIT_window”.

The results will appear as follows:

- Input Mode is WINDOW - smaller texts, richer info (colour text, editing, barchart, proper noun/compound options, cognates, VP-negative - depending on user choices and size of input)

TITLE: Untitled

MODIFY: VP FOR: Untitled PROFILED BY: BNC-COCA-K IN UNIT: <Families> & PROPRS: Classed 1k & COMPOUNDS: Broken Apart [Change/Submit](#)

↓ [EDIT-TO-A-PROFILE SPACE](#) ↓ [K-LISTS TYPES + extract + morpholex](#) ↓ [K-LISTS FAMILIES + VP-Negative](#) ↓

User Re-Cats + Proprs (Off-List Mid-Sentence Capped Words) => 1k: (6 types / 6 tokens): Australian_1 Britain_1 Gallipoli_1 Sydney_1 Turkey_1 Zealand_1

Offlist Compounds separated and re-fed into analysis (0 types / 0 tokens)

Text Pre-Processing Notes: In the output text, punctuation is eliminated; all figures (1, 20, etc) are replaced by the word number; contractions are replaced by constituent words (won't => will not); type-token ratio is calculated using these modified constituents; and in the 1k sub-analysis content + function words may sum to less than total (depending on user treatment of proper nouns as well as program decision to class numbers as 1k although not contained in 1k list); single letters are eliminated as words except for 'a', 'i', and in French 'y', 'a', and 'e'.

Freq. Level	Families (%)	Types (%)	Tokens (%)	Cumul. token (%)
K-1 :	29 (82.9)	29 (82.86)	39 (88.7)	88.7
K-2 :	1 (2.9)	1 (2.86)	1 (2.2)	88.9
K-3 :				
K-4 :	2 (5.7)	2 (5.71)	2 (4.4)	93.3
K-5 :	1 (2.9)	1 (2.86)	1 (2.2)	95.5
Coverage 95				
K-6 :				
K-7 :	1 (2.9)	1 (2.86)	1 (2.2)	97.7
K-8 :				
K-9 :				
K-10 :				
K-11 :				
K-12 :				
K-13 :				
K-14 :				
K-15 :				
K-16 :				
K-17 :				
K-18 :				
K-19 :				
K-20 :				
K-21 :	1 (2.9)	1 (2.86)	1 (2.2)	99.9
Coverage 98				
K-22 :				
K-23 :				
K-24 :				
K-25 :				
Off-List:	??	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	
Total (unrounded)	35+?	35 (100)	45 (100)	≈100.00

RELATED RATIOS & INDICES	
<i>Pertaining to whole text</i>	
Words in text (tokens):	45
Different words (types):	35
Type-token ratio (TTR):	0.78
Tokens per type:	1.29
Lexical density (content [29]/total [45]):	0.64
<i>Pertaining to onlist only</i>	
Tokens:	45
Types:	35
Families:	35
Tokens per Family :	1.29
Family/token ratio (FTR) :	0.78
Types per Family :	1.00
Singletons ratio Fams(n=1)[24] / total [35]	0.69

[Pop-out for paste to Word/Excel](#)

Horizontal profile line for paste to Excel sheet to record **comparative coverages**. To compare several texts, track learner writing over time, sequence texts by lexis (TIP, sort spreadsheet by K-1% to get more basic lexis first), etc. Note that comparison requires use of the same framework (BNC/COCA, NFL7, etc.)

K-1	86.7	K-2	88.9	K-4	93.3	K-5	95.5	K-7	97.7	K-21	99.9	OFF	≈100
-----	------	-----	------	-----	------	-----	------	-----	------	------	------	-----	------

[pop-out](#) (then Select All, Copy => easy Paste to Excel row)

↓ [Jump-Links to Sections Below : Types \(with Extract and Morpholex options\)](#) ↓ [Families \(with VP-Negative option\)](#) ↓

VP-1-word for:

Thesaurus:

Editing text

[Grab lower-right corners of left text to resize/align with right text]

EXISTING WORDS RECATEGORIZED (Add/delete as needed)

Australian Britain Gallipoli Sydney Turkey Zealand

NEW RECATS - Dbl-Click or type to add words (Tokens, not Families)

Alt-Dbl-Click words to send to VP-1 and Thesaurus Boxes

1. What do we commemorate on Anzac Day? a. The landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps at Gallipoli, Turkey during World War I. b. The arrival of the first free settlers from Great Britain. c. The landing of the First Fleet at Sydney Cove

Edit-to-a-Profile

Profile summary

K-1	39	86.7
K-2	1	88.9
K-4	2	93.3
K-5	1	95.5
K-7	1	97.7
K-21	1	99.9
OFF		≈100
	(0.00)	

REPEATED
may be inferable
(remove with care when simplifying)

+ UNREPEATED
less likely to be inferable

3 UNREPEATED 3++
Singletons to note
anzac commemorate
corps cove fleet

Profiled text Edit, Check with RE-VP, and SAVE

number-1 what-1 do-1 we-1 commemorate-5 on-1 anzac-21 day-1 a-1 the-1 landing-1 of-1 the-1 the-1 australian-1 and-1 new-1 zealand-1 army-2 corps-4 at-1 gallipoli-1 turkey-1 during-1 world-1 war-1 i-1 the-1 arrival-1 of-1 the-1 first-1 free-1 settlers-1 from-1 great-1 britain-1 the-1 landing-1 of-1 the-1 first-1 fleet-4 at-1 sydney-1 cove-7

(numbers indicate k-level)

- Input Mode is WINDOW - smaller texts, richer info (colour text, editing, barchart, proper noun/compound options, cognates, VP-negative - depending on user choices and size of input)

TITLE: **Untitled**

MODIFY: VP FOR **Untitled** PROFILED BY: **BNC-COCA-K** IN UNIT **<Families> & PROPRS** Classed **1k** & COMPOUNDS **Broken Apart** Change-Submit

↓ **EDIT-TO-A-PROFILE SPACE** ↓ **K-LISTS TYPES + extract + morpholex** ↓ **K-LISTS FAMILIES + VP-Negative** ↓

User Re-Cats + Proprs (Off-List Mid-Sentence Capped Words) => **1k**: (6 types / 6 tokens): Australian_1 Britain_1 Gallipoli_1 Sydney_1 Turkey_1 Zealand_1

Offlist Compounds separated and re-fed into analysis (0 types / 0 tokens)

Text Pre-Processing Notes: In the output text, punctuation is eliminated; all figures (1, 20, etc) are replaced by the word *number*; contractions are replaced by constituent words (won't => will not); type-token ratio is calculated using these modified constituents; and in the 1k sub-analysis content + function words may sum to less than total (depending on user treatment of proper nouns as well as program decision to class numbers as 1k although not contained in 1k list); single letters are eliminated as words except for 'a', 'i', and in French 'y', 'a', and 'à'.

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K-2 :	1 (2.9)	1 (2.86)	1 (2.2)	88.9
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K-5 :	1 (2.9)	1 (2.86)	1 (2.2)	95.5
Coverage 95				
K-6 :				
K-7 :	1 (2.9)	1 (2.86)	1 (2.2)	97.7
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K-17 :				
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K-19 :				
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Coverage 98				
K-22 :				
K-23 :				
K-24 :				
K-25 :				
Off-List:	??	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	
Total (unrounded)	35+?	35 (100)	45 (100)	~100.00

RELATED RATIOS & INDICES	
Pertaining to whole text	
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Tokens:	45
Types:	35
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Pop-out for paste to Word/Excel

Horizontal profile line for paste to Excel sheet to record **comparative coverages**. To compare several texts, track learner writing over time, sequence texts by lexis (TIP, sort spreadsheet by K-1 to get more basic lexis first), etc. Note that comparison requires use of the same framework (BNC/COCA, NFL7, etc.)

K-1	86.7	K-2	88.9	K-4	93.3	K-5	95.5	K-7	97.7	K-21	99.9	OFF	~100
-----	------	-----	------	-----	------	-----	------	-----	------	------	------	-----	------

pop-out (then Select All, Copy => easy Paste to Excel row)

↓ Jump-Links to Sections Below : **Types** (with Extract and Morpholex options) ↓ **Families** (with VP-Negative option) ↓

VP-1-word for

Thesaurus:

Editing text
[Grab lower-right corners of left text to resize/align with right text]
EXISTING WORDS RECATEGORIZED (Add/delete as needed)
Australian Britain Gallipoli Sydney Turkey Zealand
NEW RECATS - Dbl-Click or type to add words (Tokens, not Families)
automatically recategorized words otherwise off-list
Alt-Dbl-Click words to send to VP-1 and Thesaurus Boxes
1. What do we commemorate on Anzac Day? a. The landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps at Gallipoli, Turkey during World War I b. The arrival of the first free settlers from Great Britain c. The landing of the First Fleet at Sydney Cove

Edit-to-a-Profile
Profile summary
K 39 86.7
K-2 1 88.9
K-4 2 93.3
K-5 1 95.5
K-7 1 97.7
K-21 1 99.9
OFF (0.00) ~100
REPEATED
may be inferrable (remove with care when simplifying)
+ UNREPEATED
less likely to be inferrable
5 UNREPEATED 3k+ Singletons to note
anzac commemorate corps cove fleet

Profiled text Edit, Check with RE-VP, and SAVE
summary
each word colour-coded & labelled
number-1 what-1 do-1 we-1 commemorate-5 on-1 anzac-21 day-1 a-1 the-1 landing-1 of-1 the-1 the-1 australian-1 and-1 new-1 zealand-1 army-2 corps-4 at-1 gallipoli-1 turkey-1 during-1 world-1 war-1 i-1 the-1 arrival-1 of-1 the-1 first-1 free-1 settlers-1 from-1 great-1 britain-1 the-1 landing-1 of-1 the-1 first-1 fleet-4 at-1 sydney-1 cove-7
(numbers indicate k-level)

Scroll down the page to get to the “Profile Summary”, which shows the number and cumulative percentage of words falling into each 1000-word band. A more detailed breakdown is available at the top of the page.

Profile summary		
K	#	cumul%
K-1	39	86.7
K-2	1	88.9
K-4	2	93.3
K-5	1	95.5
K-7	1	97.7
K-21	1	99.9
OFF	(0.00)	≈100

Beside it is the actual text, with each word colour-coded and labelled to match the Profile summary.

number-1 what-1 do-1 we-1 commemorate-5 on-1 anzac-21 day-1 a-1 the-1 landing-1 of-1 the-1 australian-1 and-1 new-1 zealand-1 army-2 corps-4 at-1 gallipoli-1 turkey-1 during-1 world-1 war-1 i-1 the-1 arrival-1 of-1 the-1 first-1 free-1 settlers-1 from-1 great-1 britain-1 the-1 landing-1 of-1 the-1 first-1 fleet-4 at-1 sydney-1 cove-7

Note that some words have been recategorized for you (see “EXISTING WORDS RECATEGORIZED”). This is because on the text input page, the default is to have proper nouns classed as 1k. The words on the recategorized list should be checked.

Australia Australian Britain Torres

The screenshot shows the VocabProfile software interface. At the top, there's a title bar and a menu bar. Below that, there's a text input area with instructions. The 'WORDS TO HOLD' section is highlighted with a red box, showing options for 'PROPER NOUN HANDLING' (Class as offlist, Class as 1k/1e, Eliminate) and 'COMPOUND HANDLING' (Class as offlist, Break apart). A red arrow points to the 'Class as 1k/1e' option. The 'SUBMIT_window' button is visible on the right.

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