BRITISH COUNCIL

TeachingEnglish

Academic and General English

January 2023

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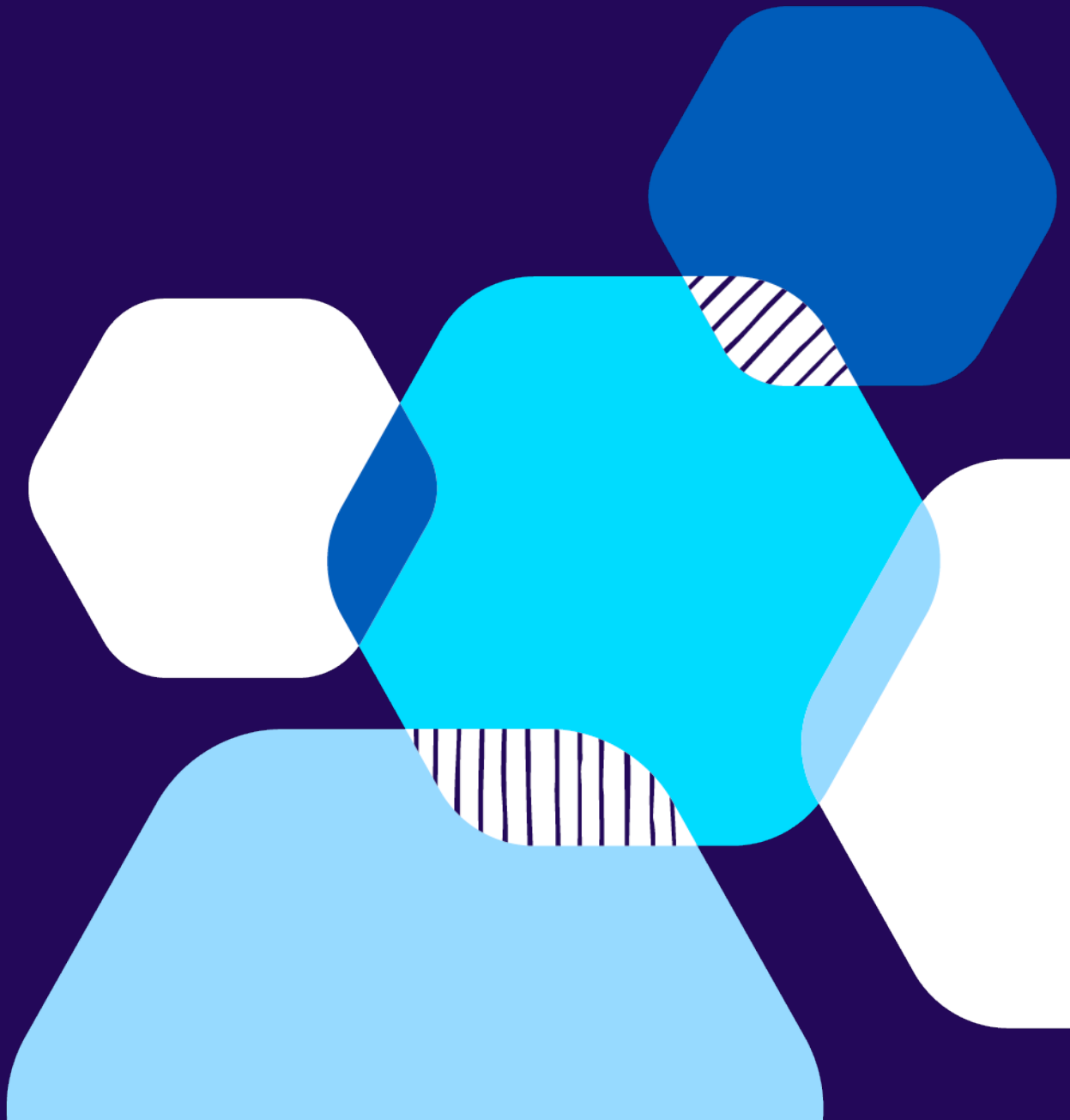
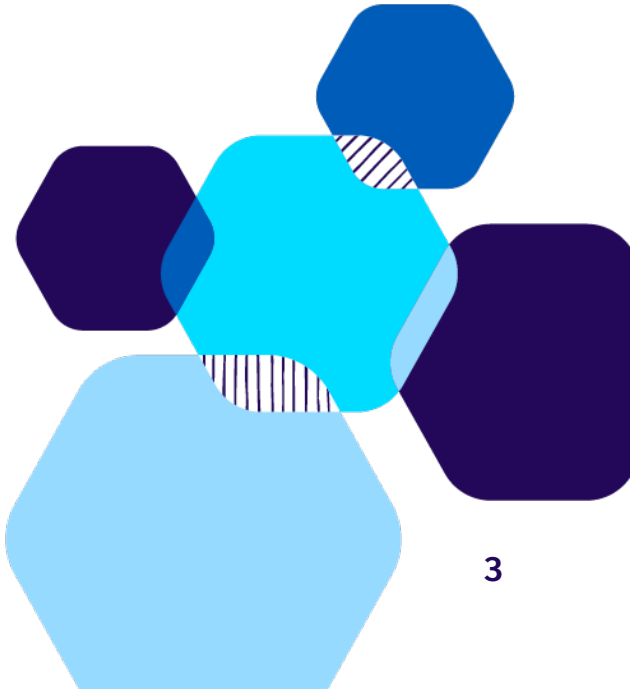
1. Speaking Task



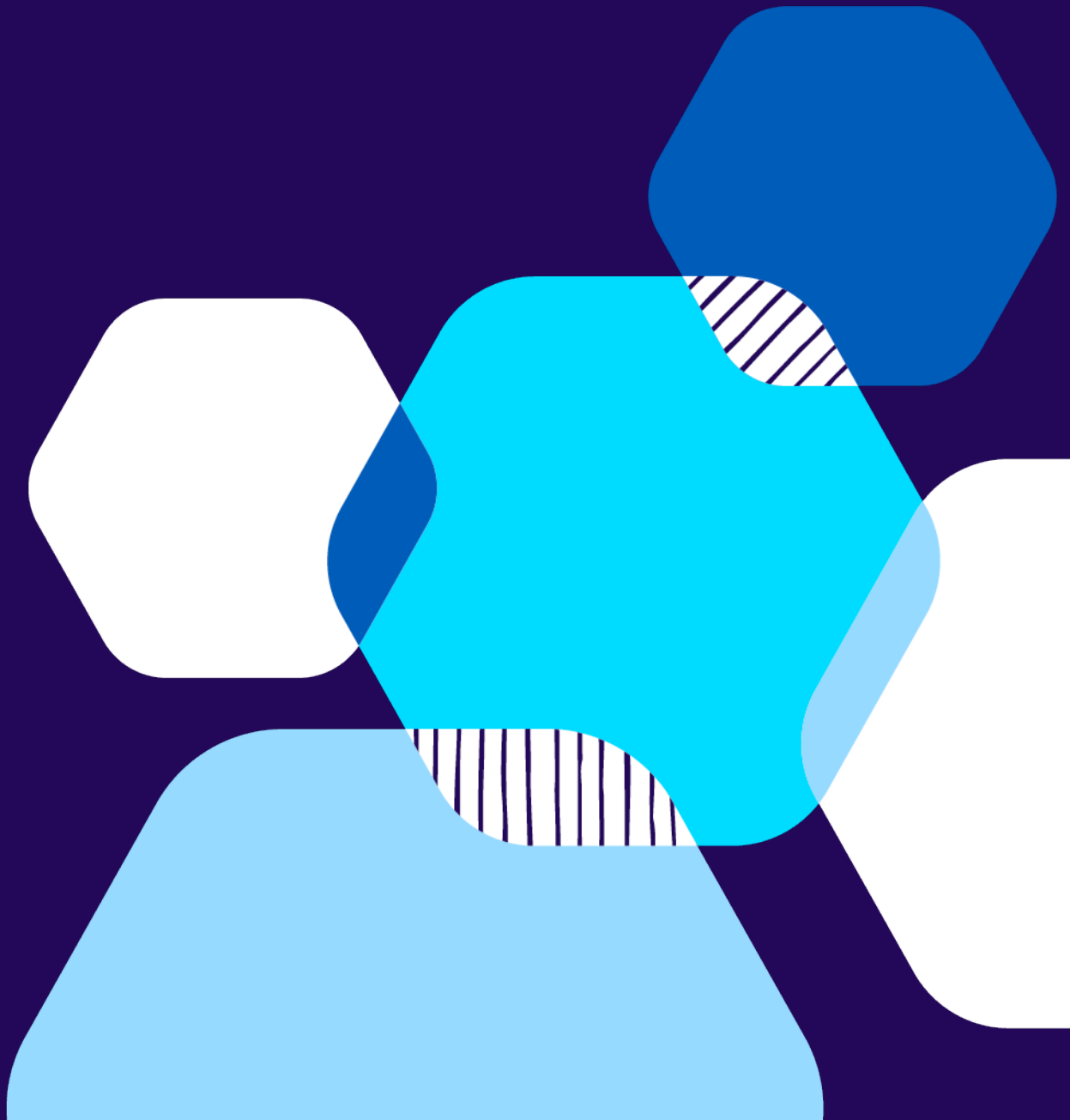
1. Speaking task

Discuss the following questions in small groups.

- What are the main differences between ‘general’ and ‘academic’ English?
- What are some of the best ways to improve your academic English?
- Should students be allowed to use AI (e.g. Chat GPT) to write their essays? Should HE assessment be reformed because of technology?
- Is higher education good value for money?
- Could higher education do more to support students who have had fewer opportunities – for example their economic situation, or where nobody in their family has been to university before?



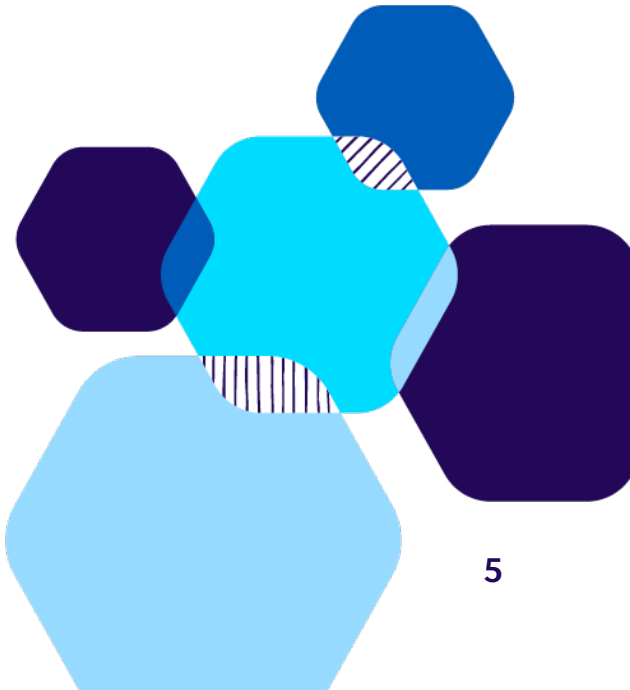
2. Grammar task



2. Grammar task – Adjective building

What are the adjectival forms of the following nouns?

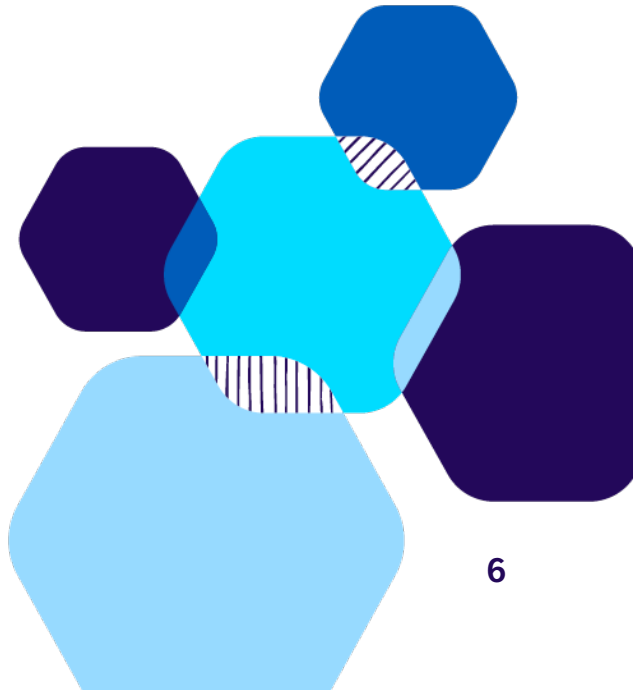
1. institution – _____
2. Trauma – _____
3. academia – _____
4. awareness – _____
5. context – _____
6. effect – _____
7. caution – _____
8. flexibility – _____
9. criticality – _____
10. response – _____



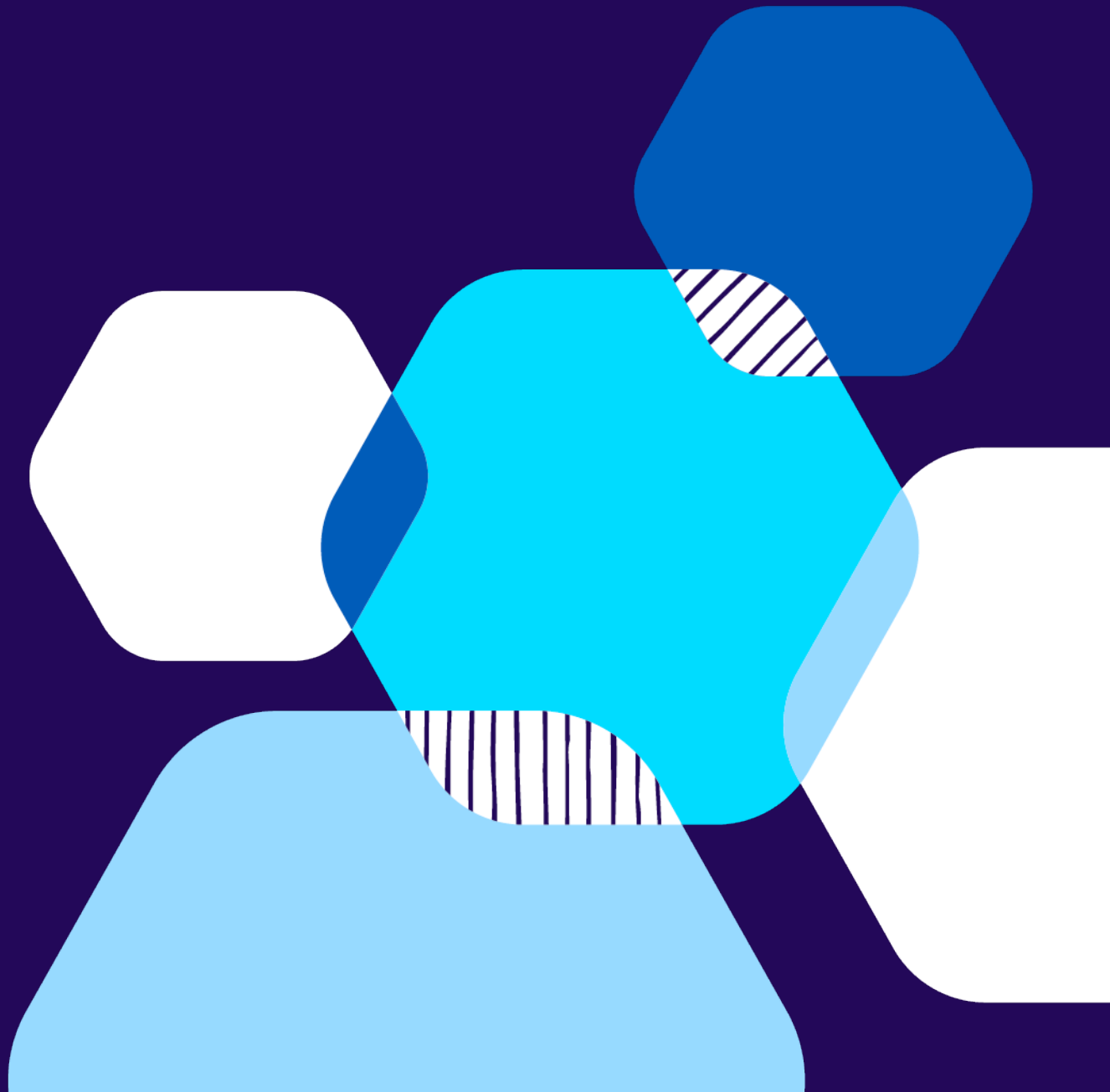
2. Grammar task

Noun-adjective pairs

1. institution – institutional
2. trauma – traumatic
3. academia – academic
4. awareness – aware
5. context – contextual
6. effect – effective
7. caution – cautious
8. flexibility – flexible
9. criticality – critical
10. response – responsive



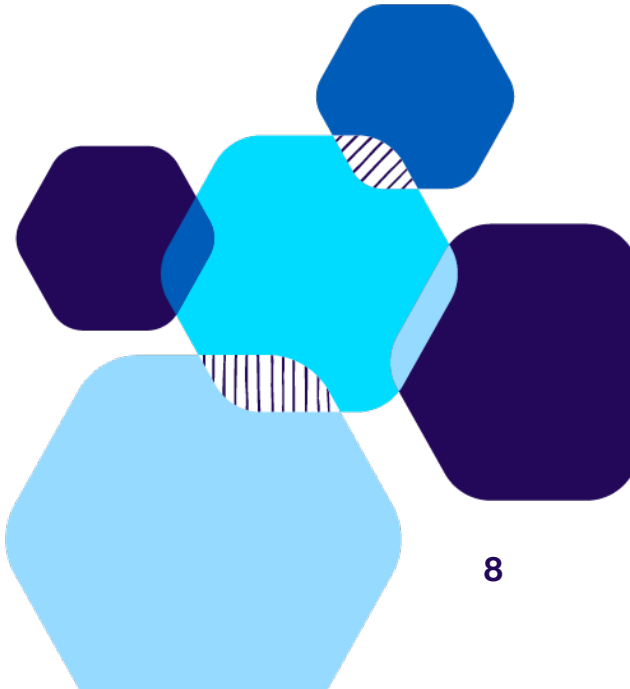
3. Language task



Definitions

Work in pairs and look at these sentences from the field report. Explain the meaning of the underlined words.

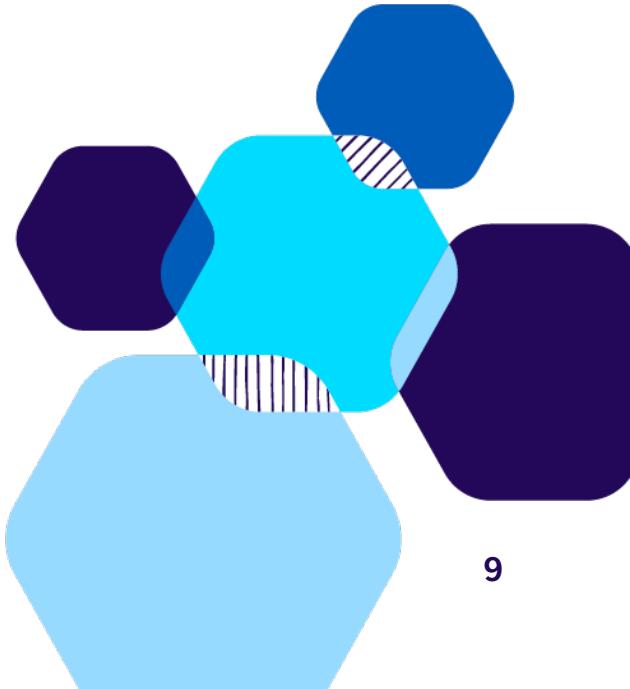
1. It's not just in the teaching itself, that we're trying to mitigate the effects of trauma.
2. One of the core things that we've been trying to bear in mind when designing the materials is the level of personalisation.
3. They're already discriminating against people who don't have the money.
4. We have had to be very responsive and flexible and understanding.
5. We're trying to help them develop our awareness of what it would be like to study in a UK HE context, how to study independently.



Definitions

Work in pairs and look at these sentences from the field report. Explain the meaning of the underlined words.

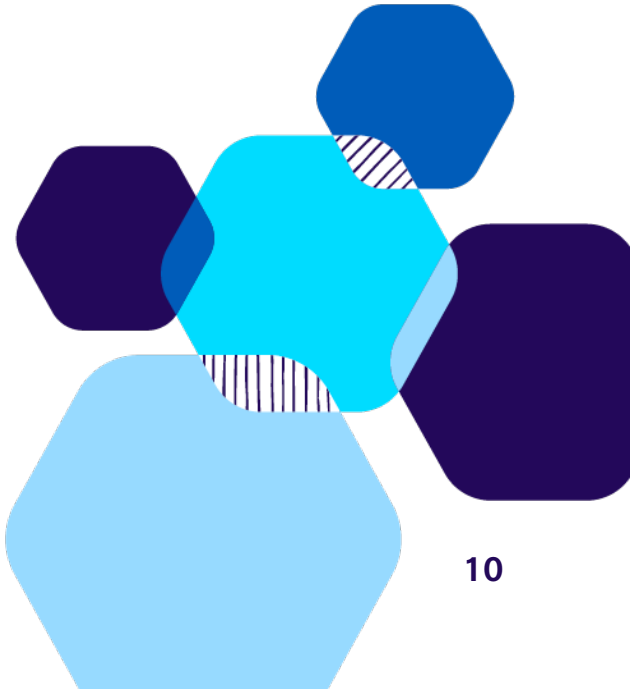
6. One of the schemes that encourages this is the Universities of Sanctuary Award Scheme.
7. I think a lot of refugees spend a lot of time, years sometimes, basically in limbo, waiting for someone else to make a decision about something.
8. [Students gain] insight in how decisions are made rather than just imposing things on them.
9. So for example, topics like home, we're a bit cautious of that and giving students a choice as to the level of personalisation that they want to bring into the classroom.
10. We also tried to be very inclusive so there's an element of social justice.



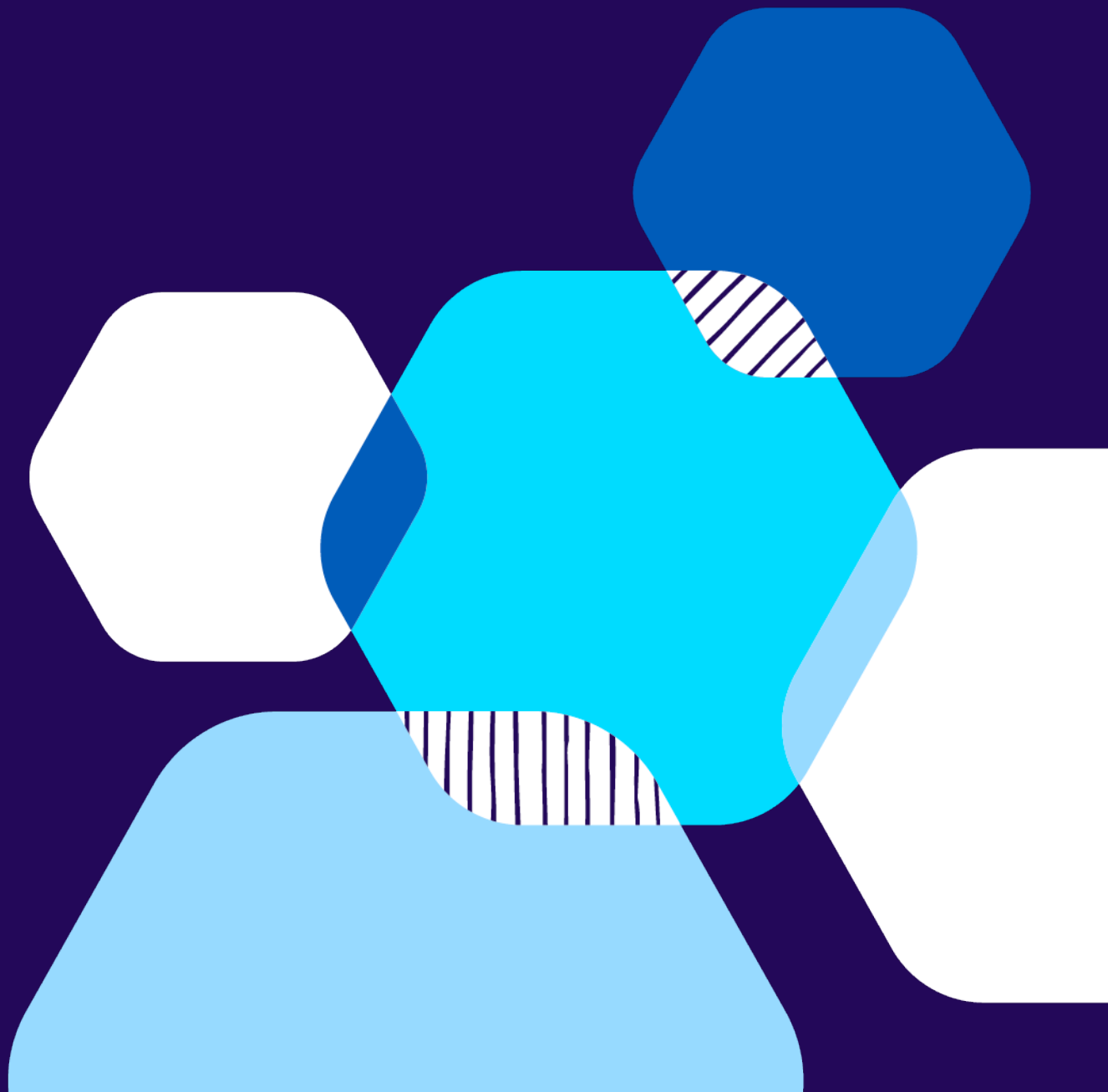
Definitions – in use

Now write a paragraph in which you use at least five of these words / phrases correctly.

mitigate	core	bear in mind
discriminating	flexible	independently
schemes	in limbo	insight
Imposing	cautious	personalisation
justice	element	



4. Listening task



Listen to the following extract from the podcast, and answer these questions.

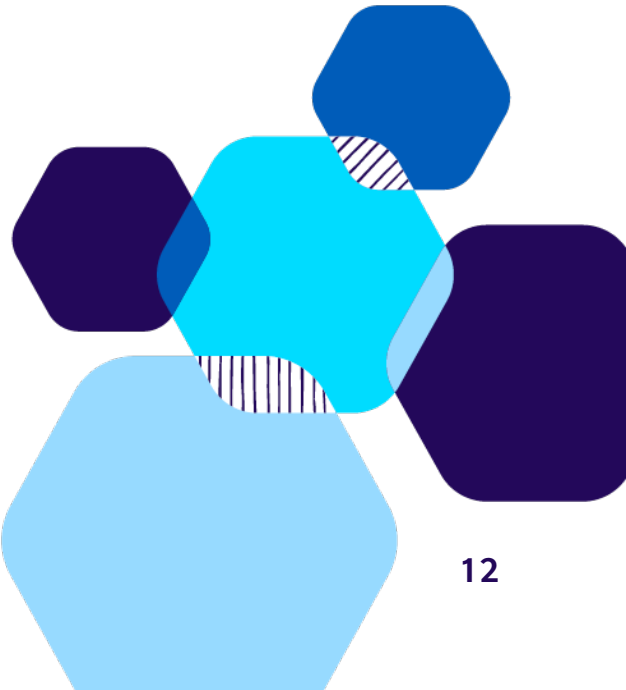
1.What is one area that Tracey believes is a difficulty for students when it comes to academic language?

2.How does Tracey suggest approaching the use of academic language in the classroom?

3.According to Tracey, what is the relationship between academic language and general language?

4.Why does Tracey believe it is important to understand where students are coming from in terms of their language use?

5.How does Tracey suggest approaching the task of using academic language in terms of assessment or external requirements?



Tracey: Absolutely. So one, one area I think is how this type of language and these types of institutions I think can often be quite intimidating for people. They don't feel like they should be speaking in these very formal ways or writing in these formal ways. So kind of encouraging people to feel comfortable with that language. I think there's some quite interesting work looking at this idea of academic language and how often it can be put against general language or general English or whatever language we're talking about. Somehow there's an opposite like academic language is better than something. And I think that binary or that tension is often a difficulty for students and something that isn't really necessary I think. So if we think that you know, we have all kinds of language that we use so trying to understand where are students coming from? What language are they coming into the classroom with? And how can we build on that? Rather than say, you know, this is wrong, you've got to have this language. We say, okay, well, what do we need to do? How do we need to do it? How are people within our different disciplines or different subject areas? How are they talking about these things? And that this type of language is being a choice. So it's not something that kind of comes in and replaces, you know, other language because somehow that other language isn't good enough or isn't appropriate enough, but actually, if we're trying to achieve this task in a way that is expected of us in terms of assessment or in terms of, you know, other external requirements, then we might need to make adjustments

Answers

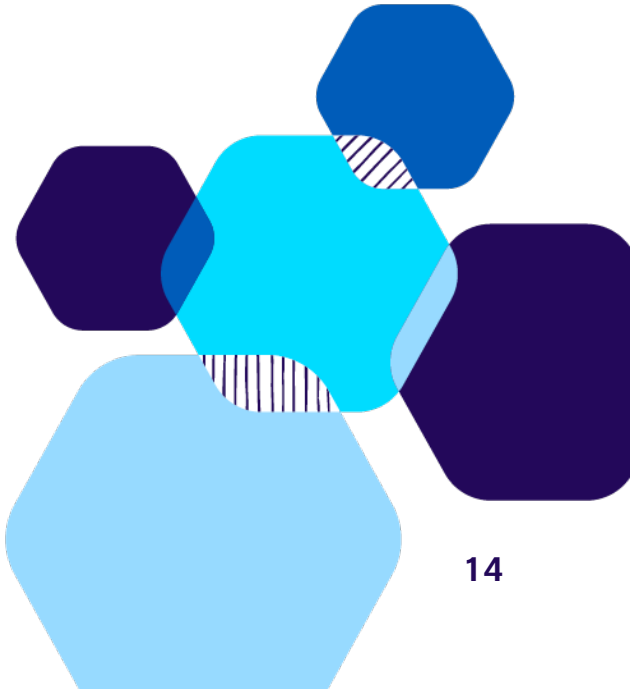
1.One area that Tracey believes is a difficulty for students when it comes to academic language is that it can often be quite intimidating for people and they don't feel like they should be speaking or writing in these formal ways.

2.Tracey suggests approaching the use of academic language in the classroom by encouraging people to feel comfortable with that language and building on the language that students come into the classroom with, rather than saying that their language is wrong and needs to be replaced.

3. There is a binary or tension often between academic language and general language that is often unnecessary. She suggests understanding where students are coming from in terms of their language use and how people within different disciplines or subject areas are talking about these things, and that this type of language is a choice.

4.Tracey believes it is important to understand where students are coming from in terms of their language use in order to build on that and help them feel comfortable with academic language, rather than making them feel like their language is not good enough or appropriate.

5.Tracey suggests approaching the task of using academic language in terms of assessment or external requirements by making adjustments and understanding the language requirements of the task at hand, rather than trying to replace the students' language with academic language.



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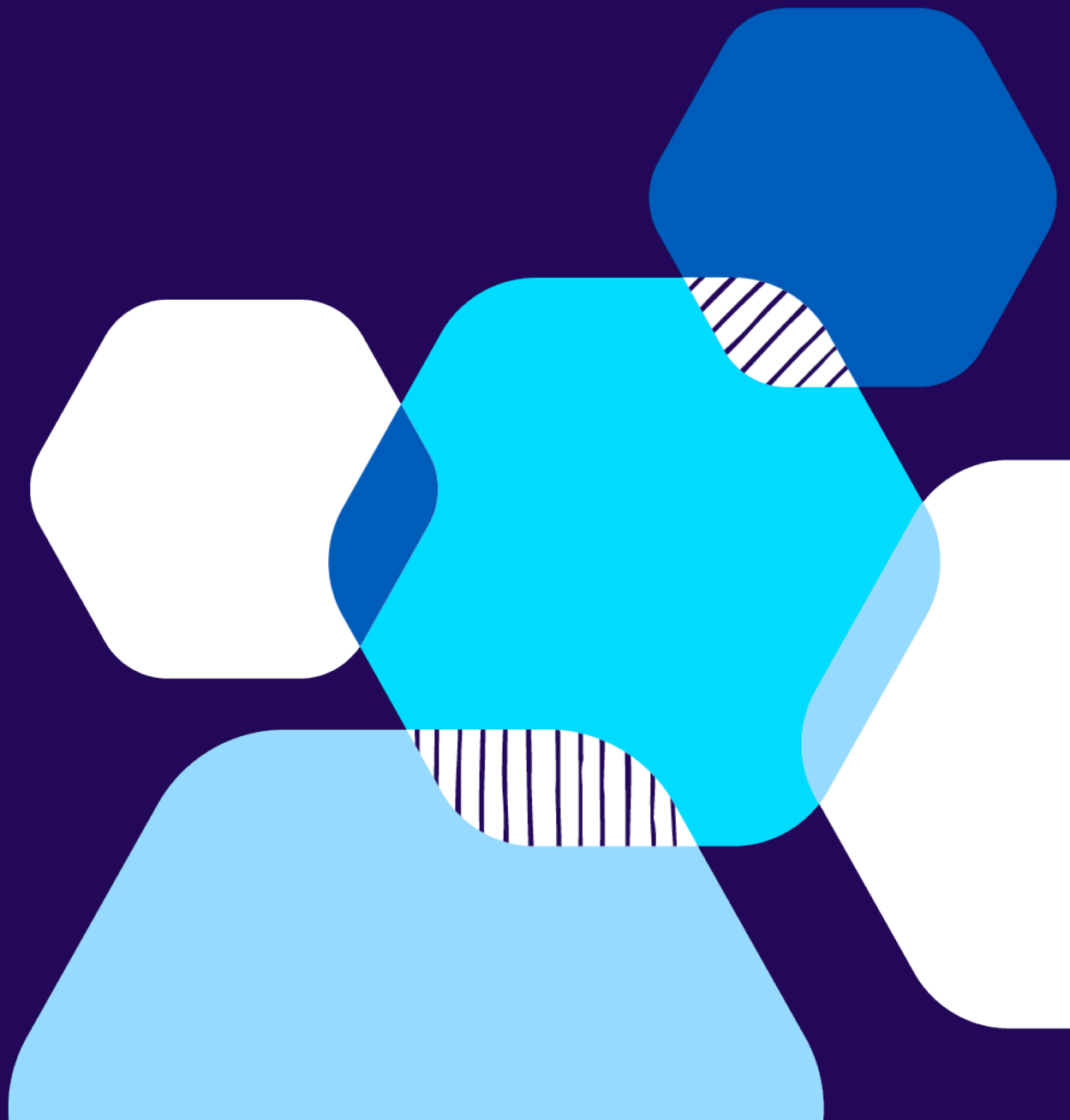

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