

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT English: Language Study (Access 3)

NUMBER D8VH 09

CLUSTER English (Access 3)

SUMMARY

While each unit in the Access 3 cluster of units requires deployment and development of reading, writing, talking and listening skills for a range of purposes, the Language Study unit focuses on writing of different kinds and on reading for writing. Candidates will read and learn about a wide variety of texts whose purposes are informative, expressive and creative/imaginative. Reading skills will be developed as texts are studied and discussed.

The content of the unit comprises:

- the basic skills required for informational, expressive and creative writing
- the basic skills required for reading informational and literary texts and for gaining access to information technologies
- the basic skills required for individual talk, discussion and listening.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Understand, analyse and evaluate non-fiction print text which conveys basic information.
- 2 Compose a piece of writing in a particular genre.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, the unit is designed to build upon skills and experience gained in previous English language learning.

Administrative Information

Superclass: KC

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CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Access 3.

CORE SKILLS

This unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete core skills for the unit None

Core skills components for the unit Written Communication Access 3.

Additional information about core skills is published in the *Catalogue of Core Skills in National Qualifications* (SQA, 2001).

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT English: Language Study (Access 3)

Acceptable performance in this unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

OUTCOME 1

Understand, analyse and evaluate non-fiction print text which conveys basic information.

Performance criteria

Understanding

Responses demonstrate understanding of the main points of the text.

Analysis

Responses recognise some ways in which aspects of structure, style and language contribute to the meaning/effect/impact.

Evaluation

Comment is made on the effectiveness of the text which shows some awareness of the writer's purpose(s) and is supported by some reference to the text.

Evidence requirements

Written or spoken responses to unseen questions on an unseen non-fiction text which conveys basic information.

Responses must be written or spoken in the presenting centre under supervision.

The candidate must meet all of the performance criteria in response to one text.

The text will be characterised by content which communicates information and ideas at a basic level (factual content which conveys a clear stance); vocabulary which is accessible; sentence structure which is simple; several key ideas or facts; straightforward layout; vocabulary and degree of formality appropriate to the particular form of writing.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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OUTCOME 2

Compose a piece of writing in a particular genre.

Performance criteria

Content

A few simple points of content which are appropriate to purpose are included.

Structure

The sequence of content is clear enough to enable the reader to follow the writer's thoughts; the writing reaches a conclusion.

Expression

Some awareness is shown of obvious conventions of the genre; choice of words conveys meaning in simple personal terms; and there is some variation of simple sentence structures.

Technical Accuracy

Spelling, grammar and punctuation are sufficiently accurate to convey meaning largely at first reading.

Note: according to purpose, content is likely to be reflection, ideas, opinion, argument, information.

Evidence requirements

A piece of writing which must be expressive or creative or a report.

The piece of writing, poetry excepted, must be at least 100 words in length. The length of a piece of poetry will depend on the chosen form, but it should be enough to allow the achievement of all the performance criteria to be demonstrated.

The piece of writing must be unassisted and produced under a system of supervision which guarantees authenticity through a process requiring the candidate to submit the following at appropriate stages:

- draft title and proposals
- outline plan
- first draft
- final version.

Draft materials must be retained as evidence of authenticity.

Candidates must meet all of the performance criteria in one piece of writing.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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Expressive

Expressive writing includes reflective, persuasive and argumentative forms.

Reflective: this writing will aim to interest or give pleasure, rather than simply convey information; it will concern itself usually with a single idea, insight or experience and will include some reflection on knowledge, thoughts or feelings engendered by it.

Persuasive: this writing will persuade to a purpose or point of view (for example, to sell a product, or influence opinion/belief), usually concerning itself with a single topic or issue.

Argumentative: this writing will treat a topic or issue in a way which presents a line of argument, dealing with two or more varying viewpoints.

Creative

Creative writing includes work in poetry or drama or prose fiction.

In relation to technical accuracy, the creative writer has scope to depart from convention to achieve particular effects. Such departures must, however, be intentional.

Report

The report must contain a relevant selection of basic information drawn from at least two sources. In order to meet the requirements of the performance criteria, material drawn from sources must be recast and paraphrased in some way appropriately for purpose. The report must achieve a specified purpose. The writer's point of view and tone will depend on the nature of the purpose. It is likely that the point of view attempted will be one of detached objective presentation of information and the appropriate tone is likely to be impersonal or formal.

National Unit Specification: support notes

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This part of the unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

GUIDANCE ON THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THIS UNIT

While all language purposes may be covered in this unit, there will be particular focus on informing, expressing and creating.

The candidate will identify, locate, study and respond to a selection of texts such as:

- extracts from reference texts, including print and electronic texts
- simple reports or extracts from more detailed reports
- brief factual articles from journalistic texts
- brief news articles and broadcast news items/reports
- short factual broadcasts or extracts from an extended broadcast
- extracts from accessible feature articles and documentaries dealing with different points of view
- persuasive texts including advertisements
- extracts from biography and autobiography
- letters and extracts from memoirs
- interviews and discussions with others
- literary texts from different genres.

The candidate will engage in a variety of reading, writing, talking and listening activities such as:

- recognising and using different reading skills/purposes
- recognising and using different writing skills/purposes
- deploying different research techniques
- identifying sources
- keeping records
- creating banks of information
- evaluating sources/texts
- collating information/ideas
- identifying point of view
- recognising and using persuasive techniques
- participating in creative writing workshops
- examining model texts and structures
- recognising and using literary and linguistic devices and techniques
- constructing different forms
- recognising and using different questioning techniques
- engaging in individual and collaborative talk on familiar topics.

Outcomes

- 1 Understand, analyse and evaluate non-fiction print text which conveys basic information.
- 2 Compose a piece of writing in a particular genre.

The candidate will be assessed in close reading and produce a piece of writing of at least 100 words in length (poetry excepted).

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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The summary table gives indication of content and context. Opportunities for talking and listening activities will arise as candidates pursue study in this unit.

Where appropriate, Scottish texts/materials will feature in the unit.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

Close Reading

Opportunities should be provided throughout the enquiry for the candidate to read a variety of non-fiction texts and graphical and pictorial representations which offer a range of reading demands: for example, books (including biography, autobiography, memoirs, letters); newspapers and magazines; pamphlets; notices; advertisements; instructions; graphs; tables; charts and reports.

The texts chosen should be appropriate to the needs of the candidate group.

Learning and teaching approaches should be active and candidate-centred, utilising a variety of tasks and activities including class and group discussion of texts, collaborative activities and individual study.

Formative activities that develop reading skills may be part of personal investigations and practical activities drawn from this unit for from social or vocational contexts.

Writing

Research and discussion may link with Outcome 1 of this unit or with any of the writing tasks specified, but more naturally with argumentative or persuasive or report writing.

The following notes will assist teachers/lecturers and candidates in identifying different writing techniques, in defining genre specifications and recognising qualities sought at this level.

Expressive

The main requirements of the personal **reflective** essay are that it will:

- convey the gist of a personal experience
- make some attempt to communicate to the reader a sense of the writer's personality through a statement of thoughts, feelings or reactions

The personal reflective essay at Access 3 may simply give an account of an experience although candidates should be encouraged to reflect on their experience and consider the thoughts and feelings engendered by it.

The main requirements of the **persuasive** essay are that it will:

- make some attempt to use persuasive techniques, such as assertion, statement of need, plea, use of 'emotive' words.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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The main requirements of the **argumentative** essay are that it will:

- present two sides of an argument
- make some attempt to convey an argumentative tone
- make some attempt to communicate to the reader a sense that the writer has weighed up different aspects of the argument before drawing conclusions
- make some use of argumentative techniques, such as comparison, contrast.

Candidates will choose their own topics for a piece of expressive writing in consultation with the supervising teacher/lecturer. Stimulus material for writing will come from a variety of sources similar to the range of texts suggested for close reading:

- journalism extracts
- essays by literary authors
- essays in biography/autobiography
- pressure group handouts
- advertising
- extracts from literary texts
- speeches
- thematic studies across genres and media: for example, tolerance, homelessness, equal opportunities, animal rights.

Teaching approaches will have wide application, and attention to the following will assist in the development of appropriate skills: structure, line of argument, linking, topic sentences, breadth of vocabulary, clarity of expression, personal involvement (as appropriate), the place of detail and the use of examples and illustrations to clarify ideas.

Creative

The candidate will choose the topic and form for the piece of creative writing in consultation with the supervising teacher/lecturer.

The literary achievements of others will provide models for writing and therefore those candidates who are also taking the Literary Study unit as part of the Access 3 programme will be exposed to a wide range of literature. For candidates who are studying this unit on a free-standing basis, there will be a need to create the content and context which provide resources for candidates' ideas.

Candidates should be encouraged to explore and experiment with a range of genres and styles. In this way they will develop interests and preferences leading to a sharpening of focus when it comes to making choices for writing. This allows experimentation in a number of forms, but teachers/lecturers should encourage candidates to recognise interests and strengths at a relatively early stage.

The genre specification is as follows:

- a piece of prose fiction (eg, a short story, episode from a novel)
- a poem or set of thematically linked poems
- a dramatic script (eg, scene, monologue, sketch).

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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A piece of prose fiction (for example, short story, episode from a novel)

Fiction is difficult to define, but some of the following characteristics are likely to feature:

- a plot, or narrative development, centred on identifiable characters and leading to some kind of denouement
- an opening, setting the scene, introducing the characters; a development, expanding knowledge of predicament or situation; a conclusion
- a shaping of content and theme
- a structure and form appropriate to the fiction
- an appropriate use of dialogue.

The writer of fiction may exploit topics and themes from an unlimited range. Candidates, however, may find the following suggestions helpful:

- a person, a place, an object
- an event, a situation, a relationship
- an argument, a conflict, a misunderstanding
- a discovery, a choice, a dilemma
- a prejudice, a delusion, an obsession
- a memory, an image, an insight
- an experience, an issue, an activity.

A poem or set of thematically linked poems

Because there is an endless variety of approaches and forms, it is unrealistic to prescribe what a poem should be. When writing poetry, candidates should bear in mind the following considerations:

- writing poetry involves much more than randomly chopping up prose into lines; poetry should be recognisably different from prose in, for example: its choice and arrangement of words, lines and verses/stanzas; the often surprising connections it makes between words; its often condensed and heightened use of language; its greater use of figurative language; its deployment of sound and rhythm; and its often unconventional syntax and patterning of ideas and images
- a poem should present its topic in a striking and original way
- whatever the range and variety of its references and detail, the theme of a poem should be focused and unified through its imagery and structural control
- the poem should contain a clear sense of the writer's imaginative/emotional/intellectual involvement with the topic
- a poem should aim to engage the reader's imaginative/emotional/intellectual responses as fully as possible.

The writer of poetry may exploit topics and themes from an unlimited range. Candidates, however, may find the following suggestions helpful:

- a person, a place, an object
- a condition, a situation, a relationship
- a mood, a memory, a feeling
- an image, an idea, an insight
- an experience, an issue, an activity.

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A dramatic script (for example, scene, monologue, sketch)

In creating a dramatic script, candidates should be able to demonstrate specific skills that illustrate their understanding of the nature of the genre. In particular, they should be encouraged to:

- create characters who are credible, interesting and capable of provoking in the reader an intellectual and/or emotional response
- make use of dialogue – and other modes of communication (including non-verbal modes such as gesture, body-language)
- establish a setting in which, and a situation out of which, the drama will arise
- develop and communicate a recognisable theme, a centre of interest that will give point to the script
- produce a particular effect, mood or atmosphere
- demonstrate some familiarity with the requirements of script layout and presentation.

The writer of drama may exploit topics and themes from an unlimited range. Candidates, however, may find the following suggestions helpful:

- an event, a situation, a relationship
- an argument, a conflict, a misunderstanding
- a discovery, a choice, a dilemma
- a prejudice, a delusion, an obsession
- a mood, a memory, a feeling
- an idea, an issue, an experience.

Stimulus material for this outcome will come from a variety of sources and may take many forms:

- work produced within the genre by writers of recognised quality
- work produced by candidate writers at a level similar to or more advanced than the candidate
- extracts from other arts – visual, audio-visual, performing, music.

Report

The topic, scope and purpose of the report will be agreed with the teacher/lecturer and is likely to emerge from the issue which is the focus of the group enquiry.

The evidence requirements for the report state that information will be derived from at least two sources. In practice, the two sources are likely to be covered by the list below. It is permissible for both to come from any one of the following categories:

- print sources including text books/reference books, journalism, feature articles, letters, memoranda, other accessible reports
- surveys by using questionnaires, interviews
- practical investigations, for example, observation of experiments, measurements
- non-print sources, including maps/graphs/diagrams
- audio-visual sources, including radio, television, video
- databases.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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It is important to note that, in the context of the report at Access 3, the nature of the information may be straightforward, without sophisticated analysis or evaluation. Where specialised vocabulary is used, it will be accessible to the candidate through prior knowledge or an interest in the subject. While the candidate will be free to use materials in his or her report which have been supplied by the teacher/lecturer in the group enquiry, the selection of material will be by the candidate.

The report should have a clear structure and information should be presented in a logical order. Where the convention of headings is used, there will be obvious separation of the constituent sets of information to match the headings or pointers.

Diagrams, tables, charts and graphs may be included if appropriate to the chosen form. Headings, appendices, bibliographies and a lettering or numbering system to separate the constituent sections may also be used.

The subject-matter of the report may relate to another curricular area. It is possible that part of the assessment evidence required by another subject may demonstrate coverage of the performance criteria for writing and the evidence requirement for the report. The report would have to be completed, however, in the controlled conditions described in this unit and the teacher/lecturer responsible for presentation would have to be satisfied that the degree of guidance which may have been legitimately offered in other disciplines does not go beyond specifying topic, scope and purpose.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

Close Reading

As assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching process, the candidate should be encouraged to read widely and to undertake a number of activities for formative purposes.

In summative assessment, care must be taken both in the selection of texts and in question design. Questions should be designed to create a framework within which the candidate has opportunity to demonstrate coverage of all of the performance criteria.

The texts chosen for assessment will be characterised by: content which communicates information and ideas at a basic level; vocabulary which is accessible; sentence structure which is simple; several key ideas or facts; straightforward layout; and vocabulary and degree of formality appropriate to the particular form of writing. The text may contain graphics, illustrations, photographs, charts, simple tables, etc. There may be a combination of factual information and personal opinion. The purpose and conventions of the text should be easily identifiable.

Magazines, local newspapers and several of the tabloids are likely to yield suitable material for summative purposes. It is also likely that some of the simpler articles from broadsheet newspapers will be appropriate.

As candidates pursue their enquiry into a topic or issue and read and respond to a variety of informational texts, they will develop a deeper understanding of that topic or issue and a familiarity with the specialised vocabulary used to examine different aspects of it. As a result, the teacher/lecturer will gradually introduce texts of increasing complexity, while ensuring that they are appropriate for study at this level.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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The summative assessment of this outcome must take place under controlled conditions in the presenting centre.

Writing

The candidate will produce **one** piece of writing for summative assessment drawn from the categories identified in Group A or Group B or Group C.

Group A: Expressive

- a personal reflective essay
- a persuasive essay
- an argumentative essay.

Group B: Creative

- a piece of prose fiction (eg short story, episode from novel)
- a poem or set of thematically linked poems
- a dramatic script (eg scene, monologue, sketch).

Group C: Report

- a report for a specified purpose.

As assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching process, the candidate should be encouraged to read widely, to write in a variety of forms for different purposes and audiences and to undertake a number of activities for formative purposes.

In summative assessment, care must be taken in question design. Writing tasks must be designed to create a framework within which the candidate has opportunity to demonstrate coverage of all of the performance criteria. Care must also be taken to ensure authenticity through a process of supervision which monitors candidate progress through the stages specified in evidence requirements. Although only the final version of the writing should be submitted for moderation (if required), teachers/lecturers should retain earlier drafts as evidence of authenticity.

SPECIAL NEEDS

This unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. Special needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering special alternative outcomes for units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Special Assessment Arrangements* (SQA, 2001).