

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT English: Language Study (Higher)

NUMBER D8VH 12

COURSE English (Higher)

SUMMARY

While each unit in the Higher course 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 complex texts whose purposes are informative, expressive and creative/imaginative. A high level of reading skill will be required as texts are studied and analysed for information, for meaning and as models of writing.

Language Study is a mandatory component unit of the Higher English course. It may also be used to form part of other unit groups created to fulfil particular purposes. The unit builds upon skills and experience gained in Standard Grade English or in Intermediate 2 English.

The content of the unit comprises:

- the skills and concepts required for informational, expressive and creative writing, including summary and report writing, writing which reflects, persuades or argues, and writing in literary genres
- the skills and concepts required for reading informational and literary texts of recognised quality and for gaining access to information technologies
- the skills and concepts required for individual talk, discussion and listening.

OUTCOMES

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

Administrative Information

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National Course Specification: general information (cont)

Unit English: Language Study (Higher)

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally be expected to have attained one of the following:

- Standard Grade English at Credit level
- Intermediate 2 English.

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Higher.

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 Higher.

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 (Higher)

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 complex information.

Performance criteria

Understanding

Responses demonstrate understanding of significant ideas/information and supporting details, provide full explanation of their relationships and summarise adequately the main concerns of the text (or part of the text).

Analysis

Responses explain accurately and in detail ways in which aspects of structure/style/language contribute to meaning/effect/impact.

Evaluation

An evaluation is made of the effectiveness of the text which takes into account the writer's purpose(s) and stance, makes appropriate use of critical terminology and is substantiated by detailed and relevant evidence from the text.

Evidence requirements

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

Responses must be unassisted and 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, ideas and meaning at a sophisticated level (often marked by the number and relationship of ideas, by the density of detail or by abstraction); consistent and varied use of paragraphs to support line of thought and structure; varied use of sentence structure; apposite choice and skilful use of words.

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

Content is relevant and appropriate for purpose and audience, reveals depth and complexity of thought and sustained development.

Structure

Structure is effective and appropriate for purpose, audience and genre; content is sequenced and organised in ways which assist impact.

Expression

Capable use of techniques relevant to the genre and effective choice of words and sentence structures sustain a style and tone which clearly communicate a point of view/stance consistent with purpose and audience.

Technical Accuracy

Spelling, grammar and punctuation are consistently accurate.

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 650 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.

The candidate 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 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 structure and technical accuracy, the creative writer should be allowed scope to depart from convention to achieve particular effects. Such departures must, however, be intentional.

In relation to tone, the creative writer's 'voice' need not be 'heard' in the same way as the expressive writer's. Often the tone of a creative piece will be evident in the ways in which mood and atmosphere are created.

The impact of writing is a key measurement of quality and is often dependent upon the clarity of the writing. In some creative forms, however, impact may be achieved through intentional and crafted obliqueness. Similarly, the point of view in a piece of creative writing may be representative (eg a character's or narrator's) or, in more subtle cases, multiple or even disguised.

Report

The report must contain relevant complex information selected from at least four sources. In order to meet the requirements of the performance criteria, material drawn from sources must be recast or paraphrased appropriately for purpose.

The report must fulfil a clearly expressed remit and be prefaced by a concise statement outlining purpose and describing procedures used to gather information.

The writer's point of view and the tone will depend on the nature of the remit: point of view is likely in many cases to be one of detached objective presentation of information or use of evidence to draw conclusions; and tone is likely to be impersonal and formal.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT English: Language Study (Higher)

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:

- reference texts, including print and electronic texts
- reports and extended factual articles from journalistic texts
- extended news articles and broadcast news items/reports
- documentary broadcasts and feature articles dealing with different points of view
- persuasive texts including advertisements
- biography and autobiography
- letters and memoirs
- formal essays
- literary texts from different genres.

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

- analysing and using different reading skills
- analysing and using different writing skills
- deploying different research techniques
- keeping records, identifying sources and creating banks of information
- evaluating sources/texts
- synthesising information and ideas
- identifying and manipulating points of view
- analysing and using persuasive techniques
- participating in creative writing workshops
- examining model texts and structures
- analysing and using literary and linguistic devices and techniques
- constructing and manipulating different forms
- analysing and using different questioning techniques
- engaging in individual and collaborative talk.

Outcomes

- 1 Understand, analyse and evaluate non-fiction print text which conveys complex 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 650 words in length (poetry excepted).

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT English: Language Study (Higher)

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 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, collections of letters and essays); 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 and where possible should be integrated with other areas of study, either within the course programme or within other subjects/topics which the candidate is studying.

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

Formative activities developing analytical and evaluative reading skills may be part of projects and practical activities drawn from this unit or from other social or vocational contexts.

Writing

The following notes are designed to assist teachers/lecturers and candidates to define genre specifications, identify different writing techniques and recognise qualities sought at this level.

Expressive

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

- be genuinely contemplative; its personal tone, for example, may be confidential, amused, concerned, indignant
- communicate to the reader a clear sense of the writer's personality
- not merely offer the product of reflection, but engage the reader in the writer's **process** of reflection through a distinct authorial voice or stance
- where more than one idea, insight or experience is involved, through the writer's treatment give unity to these.

The reflective essay at Higher is **not** simply an account of an experience.

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

- carry a clear sense of conviction or inducement; tone may range from encouragement, through cajoling to pressurising
- make effective use of a number of persuasive techniques, such as manipulating information, claiming necessity/exclusivity, flattering, employing technical jargon/rhetoric.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT English: Language Study (Higher)

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

- communicate a clear and balanced line of argument
- present two sides of an argument (or more, if applicable)
- distinguish between facts and opinions
- convey an argumentative tone which is measured, reasonable and yet carries personal conviction
- communicate to the reader a clear sense that the writer has weighed up different aspects of the argument before reaching conclusions
- make effective use of a number of argumentative techniques such as comparison, contrast, confirmation, refutation, counter-argument, proof, disproof.

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, newspaper special investigations and features
- 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, feminism, homelessness.

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, rhetorical devices (as necessary), personal involvement (as appropriate), the place of significant 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 a course or group of units 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 context and content which will 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. Some candidates will have particular needs and interests, and allowance should be made for those who wish to develop skills in one area and for those whose strengths enable them to achieve high standards in several different forms.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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The genre specification is as follows:

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

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 in work which has been shaped and crafted:

- a plot, or clear narrative development, centred on identifiable characters (or other agents) and leading to some kind of denouement
- an opening, setting the scene, introducing the characters/agents; a development, expanding our knowledge of predicament or situation; a conclusion, giving some kind of point to, or understanding of, characters and their development
- a significant selection of material and a significant shaping of content and theme
- a necessary connection between and among all the parts, so that none of the material appears irrelevant or contradictory
- a structure, form and style appropriate to the fiction
- creation of mood and atmosphere by skilful use of language
- an appropriate use of dialogue, imagery and symbolism
- a stance or tone, which, while often not intrusive or obvious, demonstrates the writer's command of the material.

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 crafting 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

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT English: Language Study (Higher)

- 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
- none of a poem's individual parts will seem unnecessary; its overall effect will be aesthetically pleasing.

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.

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

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

- create characters who are credible, interesting and capable of provoking in the reader an intellectual and/or emotional response
- make effective 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
- product a particular effect, mood or atmosphere
- demonstrate familiarity with the requirements of script layout and presentation
- convince the reader of the potential of the script for dramatic realisation in an appropriate medium, ensuring always that stage directions, technical effects and other production notes are directly linked to the action.

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 class or group members
- extracts from other arts: visual, audio-visual, performing, music.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT English: Language Study (Higher)

Candidates are encouraged to make use of a wide range of different language forms and, in particular, Scottish language forms should be used where appropriate.

Report

The topic, scope and remit of the report will be agreed by the candidate with the teacher/lecturer.

The remit may include the need for candidates to make recommendations based on the evaluation of information gathered. At this level the concise statement should include a justification for the structure and format of the report.

The evidence requirements for the report state that information will be derived from at least four sources. Possible categories of sources include:

- print sources including text books/reference books, journalism, research articles/essays, letters, memoranda, other reports
- surveys 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.

It is permissible for all four sources to come from any one of these categories.

It is important to note that, in the context of the report, complexity relates to the nature of the information to be conveyed and not necessarily to the manner chosen to express the information. Often, complex information may be appropriately conveyed in complex language, particularly if the specified audience/reader is familiar with the topic under discussion or possesses a general linguistic sophistication. Equally, there may be occasions when the nature of the audience requires candidates to express complex information in language which is intentionally simple.

The writing should have a logical structure. It is important that the structure used matches the one described in the concise statement. At this level, it is reasonable to expect that the chosen structure should clearly identify the constituent aspects of the report and how they are linked.

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 of study. 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 requirements for the report. The report would, however, have to be completed in the controlled conditions which pertain in this unit. The teacher/lecturer responsible for presentation would have to be satisfied that the degree of guidance which may have been offered in other disciplines does not go beyond the specifications of this outcome.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT English: Language Study (Higher)

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 must be sufficiently complex to allow the candidate to understand, analyse and evaluate to the standard required by the performance criteria and the evidence requirements. A quality newspaper is likely to yield suitable material for summative purposes. At this level the internal structure of the article should be noticeably complex. It is likely that the sentence length will be varied for effect and emphasis. It is also likely that journalistic writing suitable for summative purposes will be characterised by a stylistic richness. There may indeed be an intentional discrepancy between a chosen style and the ostensible purpose of the writing: the writer may choose, for instance, to insert colloquialisms into a formal context to highlight the point being made. Overall scrutiny of the text may well reveal a sustained but subtle attempt to manipulate the reader's response through irony, humour and other devices.

Certain types of newspaper or journal are likely to include appropriate articles which are concerned with the presentation, analysis and synthesis of information. The subject matter may well be of a technical rather than a statistical nature. The reader may be presented with a substantial volume of new information in connection with a comparatively specialised area of knowledge.

Some writing being used for this outcome may explore an issue from several perspectives. Biography, autobiography, memoirs and essays will provide valuable material for the investigation of both issues and points of view.

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 a novel)
- a poem or set of thematically linked poems
- a dramatic script (eg scene, monologue, sketch).

Group C: Report

- a report fulfilling an agreed remit.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT English: Language Study (Higher)

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 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).