

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT English: Specialist Study (Advanced Higher)

NUMBER D9GT 13

COURSE English (Advanced Higher)

SUMMARY

The English: Specialist Study unit is concerned principally with extending the critical and analytical skills of candidates through the independent study of approved aspects of language or literature or media or some combination of these.

The content of the unit comprises:

- the development of investigative and analytical skills in the fields of language, literature, media
- the development of the organisational and presentational skills required in the production of a dissertation.

OUTCOME

Make an independent study of and produce a dissertation on an aspect or aspects of language or literature or media or some combination of these.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

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

- a Higher course award in English.

Administrative Information

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

UNIT English: Specialist Study (Advanced Higher)

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Advanced Higher.

CORE SKILLS

There is no automatic certification of core skills or core skills components in this unit.

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: Specialist Study (Advanced Higher)

OUTCOME

Make an independent study of and produce a dissertation on an aspect or aspects of language or literature or media or some combination of these.

Performance criteria

Understanding

A relevant and thoughtful approach is taken to the stated topic and secure understanding is demonstrated of key elements, central concerns and significant details of the texts or of the linguistic or media field of study.

Analysis

Relevant and thoughtful critical/analytical comment is made and secure handling of literary, linguistic or media concepts, techniques, forms, usages is demonstrated.

Evaluation

Judgements made are relevant, thoughtful and securely based on detailed evidence drawn from primary and, where appropriate, secondary sources.

Expression

Structure, style and language, including the use of critical/analytical terminology, are consistently accurate and effective in developing a relevant argument.

Evidence requirements

The chosen topic and the materials on which it is based must be deemed by the centre to be suitable for independent study (of appropriate quality, personally selected by candidates, not the subject of teaching in this unit or of teaching or assessment in other units of this course or other courses).

Candidates must produce an extended piece of writing in the form of a dissertation on their chosen topic.

The dissertation must be between 3500 and 4500 words in length, including quotations but excluding mandatory footnotes and bibliography.

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

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

Draft materials must be retained as evidence of authenticity.

Candidates must meet all of the performance criteria in one dissertation.

National Unit Specification: support notes: summary

UNIT English: Specialist Study (Advanced 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.

Content

In response to a chosen topic, candidates will:

- select, study, analyse and respond to texts of their own choice drawn from literature or the media
- **or**
- identify, investigate and analyse an appropriate linguistic topic
- **or**
- research an area which combines some of the above fields of study.

Activities

Candidates will engage in a variety of activities such as those outlined for other Units, but with greater emphasis on independent study. Independent study in relation to this unit will demand a high degree of initiative and responsibility on the part of candidates:

- in selecting appropriate materials for study
- in formulating relevant tasks or topics
- in accessing and researching primary and secondary sources
- in managing time and meeting deadlines
- in developing a range of communication and production skills.

Outcome

Make an independent study of and produce a dissertation on an aspect or aspects of language or literature or media or some combination of these.

Assessment

Candidates will produce a dissertation on their chosen topic in accordance with the evidence requirements of the unit.

Note

Authors, texts and topics that are the subject of teaching, study or assessment in other units of the English course or in the units of other courses must not be used for assessment purposes in this unit.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT English: Specialist Study (Advanced Higher)

GUIDANCE ON CONTENT AND CONTEXT

The summary table gives indication of content and context. While the focus of the Specialist Study will be on extending critical and analytical skills in the study of language, literature, media, opportunities will arise for integrating related skills that will be developed in other units of the course.

Several broad fields of study are open to candidates, for example:

- literature
- local literature and folklore
- literature and language
- language studies
- media studies.

Candidates should select a topic that will enable them to offer a full exposition and discussion of a particular aspect of their chosen field of study. For example, a literary theme might be pursued through the works of a single author, or works of several authors, or over a historical period; a language topic might focus on language acquisition, the dialect of a specific locality, the language of specialist groups; a media topic might be related to the study of language or of literature.

Studies of the works of a single author or single works by two or more authors should avoid a serial treatment in which each work is left isolated from the other(s). Studies that involve the collection and analysis of data and information should be presented in discursive form.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT English: Specialist Study (Advanced Higher)

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES

The demands of this substantial study – a mandatory component of the course – require close attention. The candidate must demonstrate the ability to:

- select a suitable topic
- adopt a personal stance towards the topic
- devise, structure and sustain an argument
- select evidence from primary and secondary sources to support an argument
- employ the literary, linguistic or media concepts and terminology appropriate to the exposition of the topic.

The first stage in the process is the selection by the candidate of texts or topics for study and the formulation of a brief descriptive statement of what the candidate proposes to study. This proposal must be submitted to the teacher/lecturer for approval in order to ensure that the proposed materials are appropriate to an English course and worthy of study at this level, and that the study itself is manageable.

The study should explore a limited area and examine it in detail with appropriate supporting evidence.

In preparing the dissertation, candidates will engage in a range of activities that includes:

- negotiating a study programme
- meeting deadlines for the submission of work
- establishing regular opportunities for consultation
- studying the source materials to locate appropriate information
- comparing aspects of source materials
- applying a knowledge of appropriate critical and analytical approaches
- acquiring an awareness of contexts – literary, historical, cultural, ideological, for example
- deploying evidence from secondary source
- drafting, editing and redrafting
- presenting collated and revised material in an appropriate form.

While candidates should be encouraged to consult secondary sources, they should be warned against excessive derivativeness and of the dangers of plagiarism.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT English: Specialist Study (Advanced Higher)

GUIDANCE ON THE PRODUCTION OF THE DISSERTATION

Clearly, production of the dissertation will vary from candidate to candidate and from centre to centre.

The following is offered as an exemplar of good practice.

Teachers/lecturers should

- brief candidates on the nature of the task at the outset
- illustrate the wide range of texts and topics available
- discuss with candidates their individual and personal interests
- guide candidates towards consultation with librarians or other teachers/lecturers and towards use of databanks
- give practical help with final choice and location of texts and with the wording of topics and titles
- provide regular opportunities for consultation and support
- make clear to candidates the procedures that must apply in order to meet deadlines and evidence requirements
- record the progress of candidates at different stages in the production of the dissertation in order to assure themselves of the authenticity of the work.

Candidates should:

- write, type or word-process their dissertations on one side of A4 paper only
- use italics or underlining to indicate the titles of texts
- set in from the margin all quotations of more than one line so that they are clearly distinguishable from the text of the dissertation
- use footnotes and page references where appropriate to identify quotations from and references to primary sources
- use footnotes and page references at all times to identify and acknowledge quotations from, references to and information/ideas gleaned from secondary sources
- provide an accurate bibliography
- give footnote and bibliography references in the following form:
D. Gifford and D. McMillan, *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, EUP, 1997.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT English: Specialist Study (Advanced Higher)

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT

In order to achieve the unit outcome, the dissertation which candidates are required to produce **must** meet:

- all of the evidence requirements
- all of the performance criteria.

Selection of texts and topics

It should be noted that texts and topics:

- must be personally selected by candidates (under the guidance of teachers/lecturers)
- must be accepted by centres as suitable choices
- must not be the subject of teaching
- must not be the subject of teaching or assessment in other units of the Advanced Higher English course or in other units or courses.

LENGTH

The dissertation which candidates produce as evidence of attainment in the English: Specialist Study unit must be between 3500 and 4500 words in length, excluding footnotes and bibliography but including quotations. In order to achieve consistency in this area, teachers/lecturers and candidates should note that 4500 words (including quotations) is the maximum length permissible. Dissertations which exceed this will disqualify candidates from achieving the outcome and consequently the unit. Where the dissertation is submitted for external course assessment, candidates will be required to indicate the number of words used on the Dissertation Flyleaf.

AUTHENTICATION

Candidates will be required to sign a declaration that the dissertations they submit are their own work, and teachers/lecturers responsible for the supervision of candidates will also be required to indicate that, to the best of their knowledge, the dissertations submitted are the candidates' own work. Teachers/lecturers should retain evidence of submission at outline and draft stages to support authentication.

SPECIAL NEEDS

This course 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 alternative outcomes for units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Special Assessment Arrangements* (SQA, 2001).