

## National Unit Specification: general information

**UNIT** English: Creative Writing (Advanced Higher)

**NUMBER** D9GW 13

**COURSE** English (Advanced Higher)

### SUMMARY

The English: Creative Writing unit is concerned principally with extending the writing skills of candidates through the production of a range of imaginative writing in different genres. In the context of this unit, candidates will use language creatively for a variety of purposes and in a variety of forms to extend and refine their awareness of themselves and of the world around them.

The content of the unit comprises:

- knowledge of the various ways by which meaning is created
- the development of a range of skills necessary for the deployment of language to create effect.

What distinguishes English: Creative Writing at Advanced Higher from that at Higher is the requirement for a more sophisticated application of creative writing skills in a wider range of genres.

### OUTCOME

Write creatively in more than one genre.

### 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.

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### Administrative Information

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## **National Unit Specification: general information (cont)**

**UNIT** English: Creative Writing (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: Creative Writing (Advanced Higher)

### **OUTCOME**

Write creatively in more than one genre.

#### **Performance criteria**

##### *Content*

The central thematic concern emerges in a way that reveals thoughtfulness, insight, imagination.

##### *Structure*

The structure of the chosen form is exploited to achieve desired effects.

##### *Stance/tone/mood*

The stance adopted by the writer in relation to the reader and to the material is clear and appropriate; tone or mood is controlled and deliberate.

##### *Expression*

Style and language, including the use of techniques relevant to the genre, are deployed to achieve desired effects.

#### **Evidence requirements**

Candidates must produce two pieces of creative writing in two of the following genres:

- reflective essay
- prose fiction
- poetry
- drama.

Each piece of creative writing, poetry excepted, must be at least 1000 words in length. The length of a piece of poetry will depend on the chosen form, but should be sufficient to permit demonstration of all the performance criteria.

Each piece of writing 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 each piece of writing.

## National Unit Specification: support notes: summary

### UNIT English: Creative Writing (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**

While all language purposes may be covered in this unit, there will be particular focus on purposes related to the creative expression of feelings and ideas.

Candidates will study and respond to the main concerns and processes of creative writing in a variety of texts, genres, media.

#### **Activities**

Candidates will engage in a variety of activities such as:

- tutorial groups
- creative writing workshops
- group discussion
- collaborative writing
- discussion of drafts
- use of stimuli and literary models
- workshops with visiting authors
- genre transformation
- identification and manipulation of point of view
- constructing and manipulating different forms
- group and personal reading of texts
- analysing literary devices and effects
- experimenting with different forms of writing.

#### **Outcome**

Write creatively in more than one genre.

#### **Assessment**

Candidates must produce two pieces of creative writing in accordance with the evidence requirements of the unit.

## National Unit Specification: support notes

### UNIT English: Creative Writing (Advanced Higher)

#### GUIDANCE ON CONTENT AND CONTEXT

The summary table gives indication of content and context. Candidates, teachers and lecturers should keep in mind that, while the focus of study in this unit will be on the creative expression of ideas and feelings, opportunities will arise for integrating related skills – in literary appreciation and textual analysis, for example – that will be developed in other units.

The distinctive characteristics of the four specified forms of creative writing require close attention.

#### *Reflective Essay*

The reflective essay will:

- aim to interest or give pleasure, not, as a rule, information
- concern itself with, usually, a single idea, insight, experience
- be genuinely contemplative; its personal tone may be confidential, concerned, amused, 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 **process** of reflection.

Although the form of writing within this genre is restricted to the essay, there is scope for a range of topics and a variety of treatments.

The subject of reflection could, for example be:

- 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 issue, an activity, a theory, a belief.

Possible treatments could be:

- the impression of a mind exploring an idea
- an apparently random approach in the course of which insight is gained
- the development of an unobtrusive narrative framework as a convenient device through which issues and experiences are reflected upon.

Whatever the topic or the approach taken, the central feature of the reflective essay will be its **reflective** quality.

It follows from what has been said above that certain types of writing cannot be accepted as reflective essays, in particular:

- writing that is mainly transactional or argumentative in effect
- writing that is clearly in some other literary writing form, such as fiction
- writing that is merely an account of personal history.

## National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

### UNIT English: Creative Writing (Advanced Higher)

#### *Prose Fiction*

In prose fiction, the range of subject matter and themes open to the writer is limitless, and there is great scope here for different forms of writing. The candidate may choose to produce, for example:

- a short story
- an extract, such as the opening, the conclusion or a key episode from an imaginary novel
- a focused piece of characterisation
- a monologue or dialogue
- a detailed description of an imaginary setting
- a series of diary entries
- an exchange of letters.

Whatever the subject matter or form chosen, candidates should be advised that the writing of fiction requires skill and control of the following features:

- a plot or clear narrative framework, centred on identifiable characters and leading to some kind of denouement
- a structure which shapes content and theme
- dialogue, imagery and symbolism
- a stance or tone, which, while not intrusive or obvious, demonstrates the writer's command of the material.

The choice of subject matter may include:

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

Fiction is primarily a means of aesthetic expression. It should be borne in mind, however, that it can serve many other functions and purposes, for example:

- to entertain, amuse
- to raise awareness of an issue
- to satirise
- to comment on the human condition.

Fiction writing allows candidates to choose from a wide variety of possible treatments, including the innovative and the experimental. The chosen treatment will depend to a large extent on the candidate's distinctive aim and literary grasp of theme and topic.

## National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

### UNIT English: Creative Writing (Advanced Higher)

#### *Poetry*

Of all genres, poetry allows the greatest freedom of subject matter and approach. It should be stressed, however, that it also calls for the greatest discipline and control.

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
- its often unconventional syntax and patterning of ideas and images.

When writing poetry, candidates should bear in mind the following considerations:

- 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
- a 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
- a poem's overall effect will be aesthetically pleasing.

For the writer of poetry, the choice of topic is limitless. For example, a poem may deal with:

- 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.

Careful thought should be given to the appropriateness of stance and tone in the treatment of the topic: this will determine the entire structure of the poem.

Poetry offers great variety of layout and formal presentation. For example:

- a traditional metrical scheme
- a more modern rhythmic arrangement
- a regular verse/stanza form
- a recognised poetic form such as the sonnet
- a structured patterning that is determined by the poem's subject matter
- a visual shaping of text that is designed to be representative or symbolic as, for example, concrete poetry.

## National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

### UNIT English: Creative Writing (Advanced Higher)

#### *Drama*

For writers of drama there is an equally wide range of choices – of topic, approach and form. In creating a dramatic script, however, candidates should demonstrate 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
- produce 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.

A dramatic script may prove an effective vehicle for the treatment of a wide range of topics:

- 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.

Among the many possible approaches are:

- a dramatic monologue
- an opening scene of a play
- a complete one-act play
- a play for radio
- a television sit-com
- a storyboard, shooting script, a film script
- a documentary drama.

#### **GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES**

This unit offers clear extension of work which may have been undertaken in the English: Language Study unit at Higher. There are, however, significant differences – in terms of the requirements for two pieces of writing and in the increased demands made by the performance criteria in this unit.

Whatever the candidate's choice of topic, theme, genre or form, creative writing should be systematically taught. Such teaching should focus on the regular production and appraisal of pieces of writing throughout the unit. The aim of the unit should be to assist candidates to compose pieces which satisfy them as writers.

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

## **National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)**

**UNIT**                      English: Creative Writing (Advanced Higher)

### **GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT**

In order to achieve the unit outcome, each of the two pieces of writing which candidates are required to produce **must** meet:

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

As assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching process, candidates should undertake a number of activities for formative purposes.

Although only final versions are required for summative assessment, teachers and lecturers should retain earlier drafts as evidence of authenticity.

### **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).