

Advanced Higher English Draft Course/Unit Support Notes



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Please refer to the note of changes at the end of this document for details of changes from previous version (where applicable).

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Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance on approaches to delivering and assessing the Advanced Higher English Course. They are intended for teachers and lecturers who are delivering the Course and its Units. They should be read in conjunction with the *Course Specification*, the *Course Assessment Specification* and the *Unit Specifications* for the Units in the Course.

These support notes cover both the Advanced Higher Course and the Units in it.

Draft

General guidance on the Course/Units

Aims

As stated in the *Course Specification*, the Course aims to provide opportunities for learners to develop the ability to:

- ◆ analyse and evaluate complex language
- ◆ apply critical, analytical and evaluative skills across a wide range of complex literary texts
- ◆ apply sophisticated writing skills
- ◆ extend writing skills and analytical and evaluative skills in literary contexts
- ◆ critically respond to complex texts through extended writing
- ◆ critically analyse sophisticated concepts, using appropriate terminology
- ◆ apply higher-order thinking skills
- ◆ apply research and investigative skills for a range of purposes
- ◆ apply independent, individual interests to a chosen topic in literature

Learners will apply knowledge and understanding of complex language in a wide range of contexts and use creative and critical thinking to synthesise ideas and arguments. The Course also develops high levels of analytical thinking and understanding of the impact of language.

The Course enables learners to become more effective communicators and increasingly independent critical thinkers, to develop greater cultural awareness, and to be more confident in their creativity.

Progression

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, learners would normally be expected to have attained the skills, knowledge and understanding required by the following or equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

- ◆ Higher English Course

Learners who have achieved this Advanced Higher Course may progress to further study, employment and/or training.

Opportunities for progression include:

- ◆ further academic study in English or related areas
- ◆ degrees in higher education, such as those in education, humanities, law, journalism, drama, media, social sciences and business
- ◆ employment or training, for example in education, journalism, media, law, marketing, politics, commerce and industry

This Advanced Higher could be part of the Scottish Baccalaureate in Languages. The Scottish Baccalaureates in Expressive Arts, Languages, Science, and Social Sciences consist of coherent groups of subjects at Higher and Advanced Higher level. Each award consists of two Advanced Highers, one Higher and an Interdisciplinary Project which adds breadth and value and helps learners to develop generic skills, attitudes and confidence that will help them make the transition into higher education or employment.

Hierarchies

Hierarchy is the term used to describe Courses and Units which form a structured progression involving two or more SCQF levels.

This Advanced Higher Course is not in a hierarchy with the corresponding Higher Course or its Units.

Skills, knowledge and understanding covered in this Course

This section provides further advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding that could be included in the Course.

Teachers and lecturers should refer to the *Course Assessment Specification* for mandatory information about the skills, knowledge and understanding to be covered in this Course.

The development of subject-specific and generic skills is central to the Course. Learners should be made aware of the skills they are developing and of the transferability of them. It is this transferability that will help learners with further study, and enhance their personal effectiveness.

The skills, knowledge and understanding that will be developed in the Advanced Higher English Course are:

- ◆ knowledge and understanding of complex aspects of literature
- ◆ knowledge of literary forms and genres
- ◆ knowledge of literary techniques and devices
- ◆ skills of critical analysis and evaluation of previously studied literary texts
- ◆ skills of independent planning, research and presentation
- ◆ skills in the use of information from secondary sources, including interpretations from other readers
- ◆ skills of writing in different genres and for a range of purposes (persuasive, argumentative, personal/reflective, informative, creative) and audiences

Approaches to learning and teaching

Advanced Higher Courses place more demands on learners as there will be a higher proportion of independent study and less direct supervision. Some of the approaches to learning and teaching suggested for other levels (in particular, Higher) may also apply at Advanced Higher level but there will be a stronger emphasis on independent learning.

For Advanced Higher Courses, a significant amount of learning may be self-directed and require learners to demonstrate a more mature approach to learning and the ability to work on their own initiative. This can be very challenging for some learners, who may feel isolated at times, and teachers and lecturers should have strategies for addressing this. These could include, for example, planning time for regular feedback sessions/discussions on a one-to-one basis and on a group basis led by the teacher or lecturer (where appropriate).

Teachers and lecturers should encourage learners to use an enquiring, critical and problem-solving approach to their learning. Learners should also be given the opportunity to practise and develop research and investigation skills and higher-order evaluation and analytical skills. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) can make a significant contribution to the development of these higher-order skills as research and investigation activities become more sophisticated.

Learners will engage in a variety of learning activities, for example:

Listening and talking

- ◆ participating in group work with peers, and using collaborative learning opportunities to develop teamworking
- ◆ participating in informed debate and discussion with peers where they can demonstrate skills in constructing and sustaining lines of argument
- ◆ using sophisticated oral communication and presentation skills to present information

Reading and researching

- ◆ researching information for their subject rather than receiving information from their teacher or lecturer
- ◆ engaging in wide-ranging independent reading
- ◆ making use of the internet, as well as printed sources, to investigate relevant critical sources

Writing

- ◆ writing workshops, involving collaborative writing and discussion of drafts
- ◆ workshops with visiting authors
- ◆ genre transformation/identification and manipulation of point of view
- ◆ experimenting with different forms of writing

Learning about Scotland and Scottish culture will enrich the learners' experience and help them to develop the skills for learning, life and work they will need to prepare them for taking their place in a diverse, inclusive and participative Scotland and beyond. Where there are opportunities to contextualise approaches to learning and teaching to Scottish contexts, teachers and lecturers should consider this.

Approaches to literature

Learners should encounter a wide variety of literature and be encouraged to respond individually. Personalisation and choice should involve learners in exploring areas of interest and sharing these with their peers and assessor.

Learners can explore a range of genres through both critical and imaginative exercises that allow them to analyse, evaluate and demonstrate a grasp of relevant literary forms. Such textual analysis activities will prepare them for the close analysis of texts needed for their dissertation.

Learners may also work independently and collaboratively to create learning materials which involve reading and critical analysis of literary texts and enable further extended critical response.

They should take part in tutorial-type activities to prepare them for further education or employment.

Approaches to providing challenge and enjoyment, breadth and depth to learning

Teachers and lecturers should support learners by having regular discussions with them and giving regular feedback. Some learning and teaching activities may be carried out on a group basis and, where this applies, learners could also receive feedback from their peers.

Teachers and lecturers should, where possible, provide opportunities to personalise learning for learners, and to enable them to have choices in approaches to learning and teaching. The flexibility in Advanced Higher Courses and the independence with which learners carry out the work lend themselves to this. Teachers and lecturers should also create opportunities for, and use, inclusive approaches to learning and teaching. This can be achieved by encouraging the use of a variety of learning and teaching strategies which suit the needs of all learners. Innovative and creative ways of using technology can also be valuable in creating inclusive learning and teaching approaches. The submission of work through VLE/e-mail and the compilation of an e-portfolio should be encouraged. 'Syndicate' or conference arrangements with other centres can also be beneficial.

Any opportunities for the learners to meet professional writers should be taken.

Due to the nature of the subject a partially combined approach is recommended. This means that parts of the two Units may be delivered concurrently but some will not. This will enable learners to acquire skills, knowledge and understanding in a more meaningful way. Such an approach can help learners transfer newly developed skills to new contexts.

Developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

The following skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work should be developed in this Course.

1 Literacy

- 1.1 Reading
- 1.2 Writing
- 1.3 Listening and talking

5 Thinking skills

- 5.3 Applying
- 5.4 Analysing and evaluating
- 5.5 Creating

Teachers and lecturers should ensure that learners have opportunities to develop these skills as an integral part of their learning experience.

It is important that learners are aware of the skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work that they are developing in the Course and the activities they are involved in that provide realistic opportunities to practise and/or improve them.

At Advanced Higher level it is expected that learners will be using a range of higher-order thinking skills. They will also develop skills in independent and autonomous learning.

1.1 Reading

This may be usefully developed by activities that:

- ◆ involve a wide range of texts, some of them complex, including fiction and non-fiction
- ◆ use discussion to help learners engage with texts and identify the ideas and attitudes which are expressed and/or implied
- ◆ focus on the audience(s) and purpose(s) of texts, recognising that these may be multiple

1.2 Writing

Learners may be encouraged to plan their writing by:

- ◆ practice in a range of preparation strategies, such as creating mind maps
- ◆ peer discussion, where they consider the genre, audience(s) and purpose(s) for their writing

Learners' writing will benefit from:

- ◆ discussing structure and layout
- ◆ planning at paragraph and whole-text levels, using topic and concluding sentences
- ◆ consciously developing vocabulary
- ◆ specific focus on developing technical skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling

1.3 Listening and talking

Wherever appropriate, learners should be encouraged to develop language skills in real situations — such as those in the *Approaches to learning and teaching* section above.

Activities may involve learners in:

- ◆ asking and answering questions
- ◆ listening for and making comparisons/contrasts
- ◆ paraphrasing, summarising and clarifying the responses of others in order to develop their own thinking

5.3 Applying

Learners should be encouraged to apply the above skills in order to consolidate their knowledge and understanding of language and literature.

Strategies might include:

- ◆ the application of such literary terms as genre, form, structure, stance, tone, mood, voice, persona to a wide variety of texts
- ◆ practice in exploring the relationships between text and context using appropriate literary theory

5.4 Analysing and evaluating

Learners should be encouraged to make the skills of analysing and evaluating part of their everyday repertoire.

Activities might include:

- ◆ tutorial type discussion on the effectiveness of different types of writing
- ◆ comparative exercises on the development of their own writing

5.5 Creating

Learners should be encouraged to study the range of strategies used by writers to create meaning, and to aspire to this creativity in their own writing.

Approaches to assessment

Assessment in Advanced Higher Courses will generally reflect the investigative nature of Courses at this level, together with high-level problem-solving and critical thinking skills and skills of analysis and synthesis.

This emphasis on higher-order skills, together with the more independent learning approaches that learners will use, distinguishes the added value at Advanced Higher level from the added value at other levels.

There are different approaches to assessment, and teachers and lecturers should use their professional judgement, subject knowledge and experience, as well as understanding of their learners and their varying needs, to determine the most appropriate ones and, where necessary, to consider workable alternatives.

Assessments must be fit for purpose and should allow for consistent judgements to be made by all teachers and lecturers. They should also be conducted in a supervised manner to ensure that the evidence provided is valid and reliable.

Assessors should wait until the candidates are ready before they are assessed.

Unit assessment

Assessments must ensure that the evidence generated demonstrates, at the least, the minimum level of competence for each Unit. Teachers and lecturers preparing assessment methods should be clear about what that evidence will look like.

Sources of evidence likely to be suitable for Advanced Higher Units could include:

- ◆ meaningful contribution to group work and/or discussions (making use of log books, blogs, question and answer sessions to confirm individual learners have met the required standards)
- ◆ presentation of information to other groups and/or recorded oral evidence
- ◆ exemplification of concepts
- ◆ short written responses
- ◆ extended essay-type responses
- ◆ the use of appropriate literary terminology
- ◆ the use of individually-researched examples

Flexibility in the method of assessment provides opportunities for learners to demonstrate attainment in a variety of ways, and thus reduces barriers to attainment.

The structure of an assessment used by a centre can take a variety of forms, for example:

- ◆ individual pieces of work could be collected in a folio as evidence for Outcomes and Assessment Standards
- ◆ assessment of each complete Outcome
- ◆ assessment that combines the Outcomes of one or more Units
- ◆ assessment that requires more than the minimum competence, which would allow learners to prepare for the Course assessment

Teachers and lecturers should note that learners' day-to-day work may produce evidence which satisfies assessment requirements of a Unit, or Units, either in full or partially. Such naturally-occurring evidence may be used as a contribution towards Unit assessment. However, such naturally-occurring evidence must still be recorded and evidence such as written reports, recording forms, PowerPoint slides, drawings/graphs, video footage or observational checklists provided.

Combining assessment across Units

The Units, with the additional time for external assessment, constitute the Course. It is envisaged that usually the Course should be taught not as a sequence of Units but that Unit Outcomes should be addressed in an integrated programme of study.

Units will be assessed on a pass/fail basis. All Units are internally assessed against the requirements shown in the *Unit Specification*. Each Unit can be assessed on an individual Outcome-by-Outcome basis or via the use of combined assessment for some or all Outcomes.

A combined approach to assessment will enrich the assessment process for the learner, avoid duplication of tasks and allow more emphasis on learning and teaching. Evidence could be drawn from a range of activities for a combined assessment. Care must be taken to ensure that combined assessments provide appropriate evidence for all the Outcomes that they claim to assess.

Combining assessment will also give centres more time to manage the assessment process more efficiently. When combining assessments across Units, teachers/lecturers should use e-assessment wherever possible. Learners can easily update portfolios, electronic or written diaries and recording sheets.

For some Advanced Higher Courses, it may be that a strand of work which contributes to a Course assessment method is started when a Unit is being delivered and is completed in the Course assessment. In these cases, it is important that the evidence for the Unit assessment is clearly distinguishable from that required for the Course assessment.

Preparation for Course assessment

Each Course has additional time which may be used at the discretion of the teacher or lecturer to enable learners to prepare for Course assessment. This time may be used near the start of the Course and at various points throughout the Course for consolidation and support. It may also be used for preparation for Unit assessment, and, towards the end of the Course, for further integration, revision and preparation and/or gathering evidence for Course assessment.

For this Advanced Higher Course, the assessment methods for Course assessment are a portfolio and question paper. Learners should be given opportunities to practise these methods and prepare for them.

Examples of activities to include within this preparation time include:

- ◆ preparing for the components of Course assessment, for example:
 - preparing for non-question paper components: selecting topics, gathering and researching information, evaluating and analysing findings, developing and justifying conclusions, presenting the information (as appropriate)
 - practising question paper techniques
 - revising for the question paper

In relation to preparing for the portfolio, teachers and lecturers should explain requirements to learners and make clear the amount and nature of the support they can expect. However, at Advanced Higher level it is expected that learners will work with more independence and less supervision and support.

Authenticity

In terms of authenticity, there are a number of techniques and strategies to ensure that learners present work that is their own. Teachers and lecturers should put in place mechanisms to authenticate learners' evidence.

In Advanced Higher Courses, because learners will take greater responsibility for their own learning and work more independently, teachers and lecturers need to have measures in place to ensure that work produced is the learner's own work.

For example:

- ◆ regular checkpoint/progress meetings with learners
- ◆ short spot-check personal interviews
- ◆ checklists which record activity/progress
- ◆ films or audio records

Group work approaches are acceptable as part of the preparation for assessment and also for formal assessment. However, there must be clear evidence for each learner to show that they have met the Evidence Requirements.

For more information, please refer to SQA's [Guide to Assessment](#).

Added value

Advanced Higher Courses include assessment of added value which is assessed in the Course assessment.

Information given in the *Course Specification* and the *Course Assessment Specification* about the assessment of added value is mandatory.

In Advanced Higher Courses, added value involves the assessment of higher-order skills such as high-level and more sophisticated investigation and research skills, critical thinking skills and skills of analysis and synthesis. Learners may be required to analyse and reflect on their assessment activity by commenting on it and/or drawing conclusions with commentary/justification. These skills contribute to the uniqueness of Advanced Higher Courses and to the overall higher level of performance expected at this level.

In this Course, added value will be assessed by means of a question paper and a portfolio.

This Advanced Higher Course has a question paper as one of the assessment methods, used to assess whether the learner can retain and consolidate the knowledge and skills gained in individual Units. It assesses knowledge and understanding and the various different applications of knowledge such as reasoning, analysing, evaluating and solving problems.

This Advanced Higher Course also has a portfolio as one of the assessment methods, used to assess a wide range of high-order cognitive and practical skills and to integrate assessment. The portfolio brings together a number of higher-order skills, such as those relating to independent planning/research and writing in different genres. The learner will carry out a significant part of the work for the project independently with minimal supervision.

In this Advanced Higher Course, one part of the portfolio is a dissertation. This provides continuity with the Advanced Higher Course being replaced.

Equality and inclusion

It is recognised that centres have their own duties under equality and other legislation and policy initiatives. The guidance given in these *Course/Unit Support Notes* is designed to sit alongside these duties but is specific to the delivery and assessment of the Course.

It is important that centres are aware of and understand SQA's assessment arrangements for disabled learners, and those with additional support needs, when making requests for adjustments to published assessment arrangements. Centres will find more guidance on this in the series of publications on Assessment Arrangements on SQA's website: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/14977.html.

The greater flexibility and choice in Advanced Higher Courses provide opportunities to meet a range of learners' needs and may remove the need for learners to have assessment arrangements. However, where a disabled learner needs a reasonable adjustment/assessment arrangements to be made, you should refer to the guidance given in the above link.

Appendix 1: Reference documents

The following reference documents will provide useful information and background.

- ◆ Assessment Arrangements (for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs) — various publications are available on SQA's website at: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa//14977.html.
- ◆ Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work
- ◆ Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment
- ◆ [Course Specifications](#)
- ◆ [Design Principles for National Courses](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ [Overview of Qualification Reports](#)
- ◆ Principles and practice papers for curriculum areas
- ◆ [SCQF Handbook: User Guide](#) and [SCQF level descriptors](#)
- ◆ [SQA Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#)
- ◆ [Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work: Using the Curriculum Tool](#)
- ◆ [Coursework Authenticity: A Guide for Teachers and Lecturers](#)

Administrative information

Published: March 2013 (draft version 1.0)

History of changes to Advanced Higher draft Course/Unit Support Notes

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date

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