

# Candidate Guide – Higher English Writing Folio

## Some facts about the Folio

### Submission Date

The submission date is the end of April. Your school or college will arrange for your folio to be submitted to SQA. You cannot send it yourself.

### Content of the Folio

Your folio should have **two** pieces of writing in it: one creative and one discursive.

The creative piece can be any one of the following:

- ◆ a personal reflective essay
- ◆ 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)

The discursive piece can be any one of the following:

- ◆ a persuasive essay
- ◆ an argumentative essay
- ◆ a report

### Length/Word Limits

With the exception of poetry, the minimum length for each piece is **650 words** and the maximum is **1300 words**. You must state accurately the word count for each piece. The word count should exclude titles, footnotes, list of sources, etc, but must include any quotations.

If you go beyond the upper limit, you will lose marks; if you do not reach the lower limit you will automatically get less than half marks.

If you choose to submit a poem (or a set of thematically linked poems) there is no **minimum** number of words, but there should be enough substance to convince the marker of your ability in writing poetry. The **maximum** of 1300 words still applies.

### Marks

Each piece will be marked out of 25 and the total will contribute 20% of your final grading (A, B, C or D).

For a detailed explanation of the methods and Category descriptors used by SQA to award marks to your writing see the Specimen Marking Instructions (Higher).

### Authenticity

The work must be your own. You can get advice and guidance from your teacher or lecturer, but it is not acceptable for a teacher or lecturer (or any other person) to direct you to a topic, to provide key ideas, to provide a structure or plan, to suggest specific wording, or to correct errors in spelling and/or punctuation for you.

You must not copy material from print or electronic sources, and if you quote from someone else's work, you must make it clear that you are doing so.

For further advice, see the SQA guide [Your Coursework](#).

## **Acknowledgement of Sources**

You must acknowledge all the main sources you consulted for information/ideas in your discursive writing. These should be listed at the end of the piece of writing. Be specific, ie give exact details and dates of the publications or websites – don't just say "the internet" or "books in the library".

## **Presentation**

Each piece should be word-processed, typed, or neatly handwritten. If you use word-processing, the following standard layout is strongly recommended:

- ◆ a standard font eg Arial, Times New Roman
- ◆ suggested point size 12
- ◆ alignment: left or justified
- ◆ standard margin
- ◆ print colour: black (except possibly graphs, diagrams etc in a Report)

## **Arrangements**

Full details of the [Arrangements for Higher English](#) can be found on SQA's website.

## **Some General Advice**

### **Write a lot**

Although your final folio submission will have only two pieces, you should write a great deal more than that during your Higher English course. The more you write the more you can experiment with different types of writing and find out what you are really good at. You should be adventurous and be prepared to experiment with a number of different forms and ideas.

### **Length**

If you're an enthusiastic writer you might well find the upper word limit a bit restricting; you might have to edit an early draft to bring it within the limit, but this is an important skill in itself; 1300 words will be enough to let you demonstrate your abilities.

### **Drafting**

Most good writing goes through at least one draft and you should use the freedom that comes with a folio to improve and polish your work. Be careful, however, not to "over-draft", such that the original impact of your writing becomes weakened.

You cannot expect your teacher or lecturer to read and comment on draft after draft. He or she should see one draft and comment on that before you make your final submission.

### **Technical Accuracy**

Each piece of writing has to be "consistently accurate" in terms of spelling, grammar and punctuation before it can pass. This means there should be very few, if any, errors and you must check your work carefully before submitting your final version. Remember that your teacher or lecturer is not there to proof-read for you, so you can't expect errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation to be pointed out or corrected for you.

You are allowed to use a dictionary or spell-checker, but remember that a spell-checker does not do all the work for you, and it accepts any word in its memory, even if it's not the word you want. If you type "fro" instead of "for" or "nay" instead of "any", the spell-checker is quite happy.

## Work from other subjects

If you produce a piece of extended writing as part of your work for another subject, it might be suitable as one of your folio pieces for English. However, you would have to be careful that it meant all the requirements for an English folio piece, eg length, genre, level of teacher/lecturer input, acknowledgement of sources, and authenticity. Also, work done in collaboration with another student cannot be submitted in your folio.

## Further advice

The [Arrangements for Higher English](#) contain detailed Support Notes which you may find helpful.

## Some Specific Advice

### Creative Writing

The best creative writing challenges the reader, makes her/him do some work – in the same way as you do when you study a short story or a poem in class. You should do more than just “tell a story” – there should be some underlying theme and/or complex characterisation, or perhaps a strong sense of place.

Try to use some of the techniques you see in the literature you read yourself or study in class, for example subtle characterisation, creation of mood and atmosphere, specific narrative technique, effective sentence structures, etc.

Your creative writing should be capable of being studied as a “Textual Analysis” piece for a Higher English class! Try to imagine it being “picked apart” by a teacher and pupils – teasing out the “meaning”, praising your imagery, complimenting your sentence structures, puzzling over a “difficult” bit ...

### Personal Writing

While all personal writing has to be based on true personal experience(s), simply giving a blow by blow account of what happened is never going to produce an effective piece of writing.

Choose a memory or an incident which will allow some honest and interesting reflection. Aim to convince the reader that the incident genuinely means something to you, that you have learned something from it. It's your attempts to explore your thoughts, feelings and reactions that matter in this type of writing.

Try to use some of the techniques you see in the literature you read yourself or study in class, for example creation of mood and atmosphere, appropriate tone, effective word choice and sentence structures, etc. Also, if your reflections are going to sound mature, then the vocabulary and the language need to be fairly adult as well.

### Discursive Writing

Choose your topic carefully. It needs to be something with enough depth to allow you to construct a mature, sophisticated argument. The more you are genuinely interested in and engaged with the topic the better and more interesting your writing will be.

Some research and background reading is advisable but don't overdo it, because simply presenting a series of “facts” does not make for an effective piece of discursive writing. It's *your* ideas the marker wants to read, not others people's. Remember to keep a careful record of the sources you consult.

Try to use some of the techniques which you see (and answer questions on) in Close Reading passages, for example link sentences, clear paragraphing, effective word choice and sentence structures, rhetorical devices, etc.

See also: [Higher Close Reading – Candidate Guide](#)  
[Higher Critical Essay – Candidate Guide](#)