

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT	English: Personal Study (spoken response) (Higher)
NUMBER	D8VL 12
COURSE	English (Higher)

SUMMARY

The Personal Study unit focuses on studying texts or topics and responding critically to the material studied. Candidates will select texts or topics of particular personal interest and pursue independent study of their chosen material. It should be noted that the term “text” should be taken to have a wide meaning, encompassing not only printed text but also a variety of material in audio or video form, with subject matter which may be literary (fiction or non-fiction) or may relate to aspects of media or language. Personal Study (spoken response) requires the candidate to express and justify a critical point of view in an individual spoken presentation under controlled conditions, including interaction with an audience.

Personal Study (spoken response) is an optional component unit of the Higher English course. It may also be used to form part of other unit groupings created to fulfil particular purposes. The unit builds upon skills and experiences gained in Standard Grade English or in Intermediate 2 English.

The content of the unit comprises:

- the skills and concepts required for studying and responding to texts or topics
- the skills and concepts required for speaking critically about chosen texts or topics.

OUTCOME

Speak critically about chosen text(s) or topic(s).

Administrative Information

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

UNIT English: Personal Study (spoken response) (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 Oral 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: Personal Study (spoken response) (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

Speak critically about chosen text(s) or topic(s).

Performance criteria

Understanding

The spoken presentation demonstrates secure understanding of key elements, central concerns and significant details of the subject matter of the Personal Study.

Analysis

The spoken presentation explains accurately and in detail ways in which aspects of structure/style/language contribute to meaning/effect/impact.

Evaluation

The spoken presentation reveals clear engagement with the subject matter of the Personal Study, substantiated by detailed and relevant evidence.

Expression

Clear and audible delivery and effective use of verbal and non-verbal techniques communicate a developed, structured line of thought appropriate to purpose and audience.

Interaction with Audience

Audience requirements are fully taken into account, reactions are clearly acknowledged and questions are handled competently.

Evidence requirements

An individual spoken presentation, on an approach previously agreed by candidate and teacher/lecturer, in which the candidate speaks critically about chosen text(s) or topic(s) not taught in class.

The spoken presentation should last a minimum of 5 minutes and should be followed by in-depth questions from an audience of no fewer than three people.

The candidate must meet all of the performance criteria in one spoken presentation.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

UNIT English: Personal Study (spoken response) (Higher)

The candidate may refer to materials during the assessment. Such materials will include the candidate's chosen text(s) and may include an outline and preparatory notes (no more than the equivalent of two sides of A4 paper in total) which are the candidate's own work.

The candidate may not use the same material as used in the Literary Study unit.

A checklist and/or recording, with the notes used by the candidate, should be retained as evidence of performance.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT English: Personal Study (spoken response) (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 CONTENT AND CONTEXT

While all language purposes may be covered in this unit, there will be particular focus on investigating, analysing, reviewing and responding critically.

The candidate will study personally chosen text(s) or topic(s) from one or more than one of the following:

- literature (fiction or non-fiction)
- language
- mass media.

Note: “text” may be audio, video or film material as well as printed text.

The candidate will engage in a variety of activities such as:

- personal study of text(s) or topic(s)
- understanding and analysing literary, linguistic or other devices and effects
- discussing different approaches to and ideas about text(s) or topic(s) with teachers/lecturers and peers
- exploring the insights and judgements of others
- acquiring critical concepts and awareness of concepts through direct teaching
- deploying different research techniques
- synthesising information and ideas
- establishing a point of view
- understanding and analysing different approaches taken in material studied.

Outcome

Speak critically about chosen text(s) or topic(s).

The candidate will give a spoken presentation about the chosen text(s) or topic(s).

Opportunities for talking and listening activities will arise as candidates pursue study in this unit.

Scottish material may feature in the unit, if the candidate so chooses. The presentation may be in Scots.

The response will take the form of a spoken presentation on the subject of the material chosen for Personal Study.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT English: Personal Study (spoken response) (Higher)

The material for study must be the choice of the candidate, but guidance can and should be given. Ideally, candidates should be free to choose from a range of material for study. They should be encouraged to focus on material which they regard as stimulating and interesting. The material chosen, however, should allow the candidate full opportunity to achieve the criteria in a spoken presentation.

Candidates should be advised to aim for full exploration of an aspect or aspects of the text(s) or topic(s) chosen. The close evaluation of a specific area – such as the consideration of a specific theme in a novel, or of three poems exploring similar ideas, or of local variations of regional dialect – could be more successful than an approach which is too general or wide-ranging.

Suggested areas for study

The examples listed below are intended as indications of possible areas of study required for the Personal Study. They are not intended to be exhaustive: the examples may be extended to include other material. In the case of literature, texts should not be abridged or simplified. Works in translation may be studied.

- A novel.
- A play.
- A work or works of non-fiction, eg biography, memoir, travel writing, essay.
- A film or other media text.
- Comparison of a novel or other work with stage, film, television, radio versions.
- Works by the same or different authors, related or contrasted by theme or style, eg short stories, poems.
- The use of dialect, register, speech varieties.
- Specialist use of language in specific fields, eg advertising, journalism.
- Specialist use of language in vocational areas, eg medicine, care, sport.
- A topic, eg travel, homelessness, self-esteem, studied critically through a variety of material.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES

Study will vary from candidate to candidate and from centre to centre. The following points are offered in the interests of good practice.

- At the outset, all candidates should be briefed on the nature of the task and offered practical suggestions on how best they might choose a suitable area of study.
- Candidates should be made fully aware of the conditions under which their spoken presentation will be given at the end of the unit, and the criteria by which their spoken presentation will be assessed. Candidates should be reminded that vocabulary, register and sentence structures should be consistently appropriate to purpose and audience and be varied effectively; and that there should be conscious variation in tone, pace and modulation adjusted to audience needs, with appropriate eye contact, posture and gesture.
- Candidates should be encouraged to consult with the teacher/lecturer on a regular basis in order to establish how the study is proceeding; guidance should be offered which will allow each candidate to develop personal thinking on the chosen study, with a view to spoken presentation. The teacher/lecturer should, for example, ask searching questions, and the candidate should be encouraged to offer reasons for personal views on material studied.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT English: Personal Study (spoken response) (Higher)

- Candidates should be reminded that it is not acceptable to read aloud a previously written essay or script.
- Questions should be sufficiently detailed to allow candidates an opportunity to expand on points made during the presentation. At least three questions are likely to be needed.

Excessive support in any of the following ways is inadmissible:

- direction, as opposed to guidance, in the choice of text(s) or topic(s)
- class or group teaching, as opposed to individual study, of the text(s) or topic(s)
- identification and provision by the teacher/lecturer of approaches to the specific text(s) or topic(s) chosen by the candidate
- the provision of notes, detailed models, or analyses of text(s) or topic(s) by the teacher/lecturer, or from any other source.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT

The candidate will make a personal choice of material for study in consultation with the supervising teacher/lecturer, who will advise on the suitability of such material. Such negotiation will take place early in the unit. All materials to be studied for the Personal Study unit must be approved by the centre as suitable choices. The candidate is required to offer as the basis of the study material which has not been taught. The spoken presentation at the end of the unit must be the work of the candidate concerned, and must be given in a single time allocation of at least 5 minutes, followed by questions, with an audience of no fewer than three people. Candidates are permitted to refer to materials during the assessment.

Material studied in the Personal Study unit may form the basis of a critical essay answer in the external course examination.

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