

*Research and Information Services*

**MONITORING STANDARDS REPORT**

SCOTTISH  
QUALIFICATIONS  
AUTHORITY



# **Comparison of English CSYS 1992, 1998 and English Advanced Higher 2004**

# Summary

## 1 Main differences between the arrangements

Compared to previous years, the general approach has not changed. The CSYS syllabuses for 1992 and 1998 are virtually identical. The 2004 AH syllabus incorporates the distinctive features of CSYS, but articulates these to the principles and terms of assessment required by the National Qualifications framework. While the move from CSYS to AH was a significant change of title, the underlying approach to the development and assessment of English is very similar.

In 1992/98 the CSYS (Revised) Course requirements there were three components: the Dissertation (mandatory) and two options from: Literature (taken by 95%), Creative Writing, Practical Criticism, Media Studies (only possible in combination with Literature). In 2004 the AH Course requirements there were three components: the Specialist Study Dissertation (mandatory), Literary Study (mandatory) and one option from: Creative Writing or Language or Textual Analysis (aka Practical Criticism) or Reading the Media.

The continuation of the Dissertation as a common element has helped to ensure continuity from 1992/98 to 2004. While the Literary Study has now been made compulsory the reality is that in CSYS the Literature option was completed by 95% of candidates meaning that, de facto, it was close to being a compulsory element so this change has not had any significant effect on the comparability between one system and the other. While there have been some changes in option titles, there is a strong carry-over between the requirements of 1992/98 and 2004. While the option to answer a Language Study question analysing language has been introduced, as yet, few candidates are choosing it.

### 1.1 **Have these differences changed the level of demand?**

Our view is that the changes made have made the syllabus no more demanding in 2004 than it was in 1992/98. It is also our view that the depth and the breadth of the syllabus are directly comparable from 1992/98 to 2004.

## 2 **Differences in the question papers and marking guidelines**

From 1992 to 1998, apart from some changes of authors and texts, the system was the same.

From 1992/98 to 2004 is the change from CSYS to AH and therefore, as noted above, there are changes, but with common elements, approaches, question types and general approaches to assessment maintained.

For the Marking Guidelines there is great similarity between the 92/98 approach of CSYS and the 2004 approach of AH. The 2004 materials are very clearly based on the earlier materials and indeed could simply be seen as the most recent iteration of a common approach to assessment. While the numbers of marks allocated to the various elements have varied over the 92/98 and the 2004 arrangements, the category descriptions in 2004 clearly derive from the 92/98 materials.

## **2.1 Have these differences changed the level of demand?**

This commonality is viewed positively and is part of the attempt to maintain parity of standards over the years and between CSYS and AH.

The 2004 category descriptions are perhaps slightly sharper, more analytical, with a clearer focus on what a candidate should be producing. This should be helpful to markers but should not be detrimental to standards.

## **3.1 Borderline A/B scripts**

For the A grade we believe that there is a high degree of consistency, and that an A in CSYS in 1992 and 98 is comparable with an A grade at AH in 2004.

However, for B we are not quite so confident about the degree of comparability. We would probably have given a B grade to most of the B scripts sampled but one 2004 script, graded B on the A/B borderline, we thought probably merited an A. We therefore conclude that at this level the scripts are mainly comparable.

## **3.2 Borderline C/D scripts**

As we would have given a C grade to all the C scripts sampled, we believe that there is a fair degree of consistency across the three years at this level, but with some reservations. Some are very borderline indeed, and we are not entirely convinced that 1C and 2C 98 would have gained a C in 2004. Therefore we can only conclude that a C in SYS in 1992 and 98 is comparable with a C grade at AH in 2004.

As we would have given a D grade to all the D scripts sampled across the three years, we believe that there is a high degree of consistency at this level and that a D in CSYS in 1992 and 98 is comparable with a D grade at AH in 2004. However 1D and 3D in 2004 gained 45% which might have gained them a C with 1990 cut-off scores, though in our opinion they are both comparable with D grades in earlier year

# Findings

## 1 Syllabus

### 1.1 General approach

Compared to previous years, the *general approach within the subject* **has not** changed.

#### Comments

This study is founded mainly on a comparison of syllabuses, assessment instruments and candidate scripts for CSYS 1998 and AH 2004. The reason for this is that there were no significant changes in syllabuses or in assessment instruments between CSYS 1992 and CSYS 1998.

The CSYS syllabuses for 1992 and 1998 are virtually identical. Each represents an annual version of the CSYS Revised Arrangements introduced in 1990.

There are no changes in requirements for the Dissertation component (mandatory for all candidates).

There are no changes in requirements for the Creative Writing Folio (submitted by approximately 75% of candidates) or for the Practical Criticism paper (taken by approximately 23%).

In the Literature paper (taken by almost all candidates) and the Media Studies paper (taken by very few) there were only slight and customary changes designed to freshen up annual specifications.

The 1998 CSYS (Revised) syllabus represents the final stages of refinement made to the requirements of CSYS English. The 2004 AH syllabus incorporates the distinctive features of CSYS, but articulates these to the principles and terms of assessment required by the National Qualifications framework. While the move from CSYS to AH was a significant change of title, the underlying approach to the development and assessment of English is very similar. As can be seen from the following table, even the language used in such areas as the Rationale for 2004 clearly stems from the language used in 1998.

1992/98 CSYS (REVISED) SYLLABUS	2004 AH SYLLABUS
<b>Rationale</b> ‘The main aim of an English course is to extend and refine linguistic and literary competence; to develop language-handling skills, both receptive and productive, both oral	<b>Rationale</b> ‘A determining aim of teachers and lecturers of English is to enable candidates to develop skills of communicating and understanding. Learning and teaching take place

and written. Such skills must be supported by growing awareness of the literary and linguistic structures which govern the production and reception of various kinds of discourse.’	through the spoken and written word; to acquire and enjoy experience in language, candidates must develop language-handling skills, both receptive and productive, both oral and written...skills that allow them to interpret increasingly complex linguistic and literary forms and to produce increasingly sophisticated and subtle oral and written communications.’
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Both the 1992/98 CSYS (Revised) syllabus and the 2004 AH syllabus share a common rationale that respects the necessarily interactive nature of learning and teaching in English, the importance of balancing competence and growth, and the centrality of literary study and language awareness and development ‘within a framework that allows [candidates] to develop their interests and enthusiasms in ways that are appropriate to their personal and vocational needs’.

### 1.2.1 Elements *added* to the syllabus

The option to answer a Language Study question analysing language has been introduced. However, as yet, few candidates are choosing this option.

### 1.2.2 Elements *missing* in the more recent syllabus

The following table outlines the similarities between the two syllabuses and their main differences.

1992/98 CSYS (REVISED) Course requirements	2004 AH Course requirements
Three components: Dissertation (mandatory) Two options from: Literature (taken by 95%), Creative Writing, Practical Criticism, Media Studies (only possible in combination with Literature).	Three components: Specialist Study Dissertation (mandatory) Literary Study (mandatory) One option from: Creative Writing or Language or Textual Analysis (aka Practical Criticism) or Reading the Media.

The continuation of the Dissertation as a common element has helped to ensure continuity from 1992/98 to 2004. While the Literary Study has now been made compulsory the reality is that in CSYS the Literature option was completed by 95% of candidates meaning that, de facto, it was close to being a compulsory element so this change has not had an significant effect on the comparability between one system and the other. As will be noted below in the section on assessment, while there have been some changes in option titles, there is a strong carry-over between the requirements of 1992/98 and 2004.

### 1.2.3 Changes to parts of the syllabus

As noted above, the general approach to English at this level has remained the same. There have been changes of specified authors and texts but these changes should be viewed simply as ongoing refreshing of the syllabus with no real consequence for standards within the subject.

### 1.2.4 Effect on level of demand

Our view is that the changes made have made the syllabus **no more demanding** in 2004 than it was in 1992/98.

### 1.3.1 Depth of coverage of the syllabus

Our view is that the depth of the syllabus is directly **comparable** from 1992/98 to 2004. This view is supported by the information in the following table which indicates some of the similarities from 1992/98 materials and those used in 2004.

98 CSYS (REVISED) SYLLABUS	2004 AH SYLLABUS
<p>Key indicators of competence (adequacy of depth) recur not only within the syllabus but also in the stated criteria of assessment.</p> <p>Words and phrases that are characteristic of competence at this level include:</p> <p><i>in all components except Creative Writing:</i> commitment, relevance, knowledge, thoughtfulness, a recognisable argument;</p> <p><i>in Creative Writing:</i> a measure of insight, perception, imagination;</p>	<p>Key indicators of competence (adequacy of depth) recur not only within the syllabus but also in the stated criteria of assessment.</p> <p>Words and phrases that are characteristic of competence at this level include:</p> <p><i>in all components except Creative Writing:</i> relevant, thoughtful, secure, consistent, accurate, effective;</p> <p><i>in Creative Writing:</i> thoughtfulness, insight, imagination; clear, appropriate, controlled, deliberate.</p>

generally clear and appropriate to purpose; controlled, deliberate, fluent.	
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### 1.3.2 Breadth of coverage of the syllabus

Our view is that the breadth of the syllabus is directly **comparable** from 1992/98 to 2004. This view is supported by the information in the following table which indicates some of the similarities from 1992/98 materials and those used in 2004.

1992/98 CSYS (REVISED) SYLLABUS	2004 AH SYLLABUS
<p>Three components</p> <p>Dissertation: an independent personal study, approximately 4000 words in length, on a linguistic or literary topic approved by SQA.</p> <p>Literature: the study of (a recommended) three texts (two of which are specified) by each of three authors across at least two genres.</p> <p>Creative Writing Folio: four pieces across at least two genres.</p> <p>Practical Criticism: the study of and response to a range of texts in different genres.</p> <p>Media Studies: the study of three media topics across at least two media categories.</p>	<p>Three components</p> <p>Specialist Study Dissertation: an independent personal study, approximately 4000 words in length, on a linguistic or literary or media topic approved, not by SQA, but by the centre.</p> <p>Literary Study: the study of (at least) the two specified texts of (a recommended) two authors writing in different genres.</p> <p>Creative Writing Folio: two pieces, each in a different genre.</p> <p>Textual Analysis: the study of and response to a range of texts in different genres.</p> <p>Reading the Media or Language Study: the study of at least two media categories or language topics.</p>

The breadth of study required by the 1992/98 syllabus is evident in the range and scale of its associated external assessments: for the majority of candidates, a dissertation, four pieces of creative writing and a three-hour literature examination; for the remainder, a dissertation and one three-hour examination followed by another three (or three and a quarter) hour examination.

Similar breadth of study is perhaps not strictly required by the 2004 syllabus, but the combination of internal and external arrangements make similar breadth of study almost essential (and certainly highly desirable) if candidates are to be given the opportunity to make choices about the enthusiasms, preferences and relative strengths on which they wish to be summatively assessed and graded. Such breadth is of course good for their education but it is also good as it gives them options in their choices of areas in which to be assessed.

## **2 Assessment instrument**

### **2.1 Trends or gradual changes**

From 1992 to 1998, apart from some changes of authors and texts, the system was the same.

From 1992/98 to 2004 is the change from CSYS to the AH and therefore, as noted above, there are changes, but with common elements, approaches, question types and general approaches to assessment maintained.

92/98CSYS: three components all of equal value. The dissertation was compulsory + either two written papers (from Literature, Practical Criticism, Media Studies) or a Creative Writing Folio + one written paper.

2004 AH: Three components with values of 40, 30 and 30 marks. Dissertation (40) still compulsory + Literary Study (exam question worth 30 marks) also compulsory + either Creative Writing Folio (30) or one other written question from the exam (30), choice from Language Study, Textual Analysis, Reading the Media.

AH has fewer options than CSYS had. (A move by SQA to reduce the range of optionality within the qualification.) AH also has Unit Assessments that have to be passed during the course, simply judged pass/fail and to measure competence as candidates progress through the course.

### **2.2 Repetition of papers, sections, or tasks in question papers**

#### **Dissertation (compulsory)**

The dissertation is a common element from 92/98 and 2004. There has been a slight change in length but this is not considered to be significant.

However, in 92/98 there was central (ie SQA) approval of the proposed dissertation title while in 2004 this approval was devolved to the presenting centres. While this should have been a positive move it appears to have led to some looseness in titles, leading to less well focused responses from candidates.

### **Creative Writing Folio (optional)**

In 92/98 this consisted of four pieces, while in 2004 it had been reduced to two pieces. Almost exactly the same types of writing are specified: reflective essay; fiction (in 92/98 but prose fiction in 2004); poetry; drama. The purpose and the effect of this move need to be considered.

The rationale for the move from four to two pieces was not to lessen demand but rather to give an opportunity to candidates to gain greater depth in their work. It offered them the opportunity to specialise within a particular genre and to polish their work more fully. A possible negative consequence could be that they now have all their eggs in only two baskets. However, it seems that the effect on candidate performance has actually been minimal.

### **Literature/Literary Study**

In 92/98 Literature was optional while in 2004 Literary Study is compulsory. In 92/98 three questions had to be answered in three hours. Texts were available to the candidates. There were four sections from which to choose: drama, poetry, prose, Scottish texts and authors.

In 2004 candidates had to complete one question in one and a half hours. No texts were available to the candidates and again there were four categories from which to choose: drama, poetry, prose fiction and prose non-fiction.

Literary study is now a compulsory element. However, the move from three questions to one could again be seen as candidates putting all their eggs in one basket but more positively can be viewed as an opportunity to develop their answer more fully in the increased time of 1.5 hours. This also has to be balanced against the 2004 arrangements of candidates no longer having access during the exam to the relevant texts. The effect of this move is viewed negatively as it has led to candidates memorising quotations and then working their answer around their quotes rather than giving clear attention to the demands of the question and looking to the text for quotations to support the specifics of their response.

Our view is that serious consideration should be given to moving back to allowing candidates access to texts during this part of the exam.

### **Media Studies/Reading the Media**

In 92/98 Media Studies was a separate three hour paper with three questions from five sections: print, film, radio, television, general issues.

In 2004 Reading the Media is one question within one and a half hours with a choice also from five sections: film, television, radio, print journalism, advertising.

### **Practical Criticism/Textual Analysis**

In 92/98 Practical Criticism was a separate paper lasting three and a quarter hours during which two questions, one on poetry and one on prose.

In 2004 Textual Analysis is one question in one and a half hours. The choice is from prose fiction, prose non-fiction, poetry, drama.

### **Language Study**

As noted above in 1.2.1, this is a new development in AH, with a new syllabus and new assessment arrangements. It is one question of one and a half hours choosing from twelve possible topics, including for example language and social class, political communication, Scots in geographical areas.

However, as yet, very few candidates are choosing to do this option, with only two responses in 2004.

#### **2.2.1 Do candidates perform in the same way on these questions?**

This is an impossible question to answer due to the incomplete nature of the materials supplied by SQA for this comparison. However, as will be clarified in section three below, our view is that, for those areas where comparison can be made, there is a general similarity of performance across the years.

#### **2.3.1 Coverage of the syllabus by question papers**

Our view is coverage is comparable from the 92/98 scheme to the 2004 scheme.

#### **2.4.1 Level of demand of the *questions and marking scheme***

Our view is that the questions and marking scheme are comparable from the 92/98 scheme to the 2004 scheme.

### **Dissertation**

As noted above the dissertation remains the same apart from a very minor change in wordage.

In the other common areas, even when there may have been a change of nomenclature, there remains a clearly recognisable commonality of types of question and similar level of demand.

### **Literature/Literary Study**

Three types of questions can be identified, all of which are evident in 92/98 and 2004. There are:

- 1 Straightforward questions instructing candidates to do something, eg analyse the nature and function of the narrative techniques....

- 2 Questions beginning with a relevant quote, say from a critic, then the actual question,
- 3 Questions beginning with a quote from the extract of text provided then the question.

All three of these categories are available in similar proportions to candidates in 2004, just as they were in 92/98.

### **Practical Criticism**

Again there are similar questions and a similar level of demand.

### **Media Studies/Reading the Media**

There are similar questions and a similar level of demand. However, it is worth noting that extracts from texts were used in 2004 within the Print Journalism and Advertising questions. This is seen positively and would not significantly affect the level of difficulty of these questions.

### **Marking Schemes and Approaches to Assessment**

There is great similarity between the 92/98 approach of CSYS and the 2004 approach of AH. Indeed, in many places literally identical text is used and in others there are strong similarities. The 2004 materials are very clearly based on the earlier materials and indeed could simply be seen as the most recent iteration of a common approach to assessment.

For example, the following text appears in 92/98 and in 2004:

‘Categories are not grades... the six categories are designed primarily to assist with the placing of each candidate response at an appropriate point on a continuum of achievement. Assumptions about final grades or the association of final grades with particular categories should not be allowed to get in the way of objective assessment.’

This commonality is viewed positively and is part of the attempt to maintain parity of standards over the years and between CSYS and AH. The approach encapsulated in this quotation is also worthy of praise attempting as it does to have English markers be as objective as possible within a notoriously subjective subject area.

The numbers of marks allocated to the various elements have varied over the 92/98 and the 2004 arrangements. In 92/98 all areas were marked on a 1 - 15 range. In 2004 the elements were marked either on a 1 – 30 or a 1 – 40 range.

However, the category descriptions in 2004 clearly derive from the 92/98 materials. For example, the 2004 Dissertation performance criteria and indicators of excellence were: understanding, analysis, expression. These

clearly stem from the 92/98 terms of relevance, content, structure, expression. While the names may have varied the actual content of the descriptors use a common vocabulary and very similar phraseology. The same is true for the other areas of assessment.

The 2004 categories are perhaps slightly sharper, more analytical, with a clearer focus on what a candidate should be producing. This should be helpful to markers but should not be detrimental to standards.

While the Dissertation and the Literary Study are marked in the traditional manner (at home by individual markers) it is worth commenting on the move to have the optional elements marked centrally by the team of markers meeting together. Instead of having an extensive moderation process carried out on completed marking the central marking allows markers immediate moderation feedback on marking as the process develops with, it is contended, a clearer and better realised understanding of the appropriate standard to be used.

### 3 **Scripts**

As noted above the materials supplied from the three years were incomplete but from those supplied we would draw the following conclusions.

#### **Grade A scripts**

As we would have given an A grade to all the A scripts sampled across the three years, we believe that there is a high degree of consistency at this level and that **an A in SYS in 1992 and 98 is comparable with an A grade at AH in 2004.**

#### **Grade B scripts**

We are not quite so confident about the degree of comparability here. We would probably have given a B grade to most of the B scripts sampled, but 1B 92 (no Dissertation), 1B and 2B 98 are all very much borderline cases and we have doubts about 3B in 98. We are not sure they would all have been awarded a B in 2004 and in fact 2B 98 at 56% would not. At the other end of the scale, we would probably have awarded an A to 3B, 2004. We can only conclude that at this level the scripts are **mainly comparable.**

#### **Grade C scripts**

As we would have given a C grade to all the C scripts sampled, we believe that there is a fair degree of consistency across the three years at this level, but with some reservations. Some are very borderline indeed and we are not entirely convinced that 1C and 2C 98 would have gained a C in 2004 while we think some of the scores for the 2004 scripts appear a bit mean and at

least one might just have gained a B in earlier years due to the lower cut-off scores. Therefore we can only conclude that a C in SYS in 1992 and 98 is **comparable** with a C grade at AH in 2004.

### **Grade D scripts**

As we would have given a D grade to all the D scripts sampled across the three years, we believe that there is a high degree of consistency at this level and that a D in SYS in 1992 and 98 is comparable with a D grade at AH in 2004. However 1D and 3D in 2004 gained 45% which might have gained them a C with 1990 cut-off scores, though in our opinion they are both **comparable** with D grades in earlier years.

### **Literature Essays**

As we do not have Media essays for all three years we can only compare the quality of the literature answers. We think it is fair to say that an A answer in 92 and 98 looks **comparable** to an A in 2004 and that other grades also look fairly similar across the three years, in spite of the change from three essays to only one with AH.

We think a one essay exam can be a bit of a double-edged sword as far as candidates are concerned as it could work in their favour or against them. We can find little evidence of the poorer candidates coping any better with only one answer as they are all around the same standard as C / D grade essays in previous years. They are now given only one chance to show their ability whereas in the past they often produced one decent answer, but on the other hand the other answers often pulled their score down. Also the best A candidates in previous years produced at least two and sometimes three essays which are fairly similar in depth to the best in 2004, with no clear sign of increased depth at AH.

### **Dissertations**

It is more difficult to make a valid comparison here because there are no Dissertations available for 1992. If we look at the different grades awarded between 98 and 2004, the A grade Dissertations in 98 are in our opinion all clear A grades or very close to it, but only one of the 2004 Dissertations was awarded an A, the other two gaining only a C and a lower B, but other elements earned them an A overall. At B grade, none of the 98 samples gained a B pass in their Dissertation and in 2004, only one gained a B, while none of the C grades achieved a C in their Dissertation and at grade D only one gained a D grade Dissertation, but again the other elements earned them an overall B, C or D. There would therefore seem to be a consistent pattern here of students performing less well in the Dissertations than in other elements at least, on the basis of the 98-2004 comparison, but in our opinion **the Dissertation grades awarded in each case would have been awarded exactly the same in both years.**

### **Creative Writing**

While we sometimes disagreed with the mark awarded, we agreed in all cases with the grade awarded and can find no evidence that these grades would have been any different in other years. Therefore **the grades awarded seem consistent and comparable** with other years.

### **Practical Criticism /Textual Analysis**

We agreed in most cases with the mark awarded and in all cases with the grade awarded and can find no evidence that these marks would have been any different in other years. Therefore the scores awarded seem **consistent and comparable** with other years.

### **Comparison across elements**

As there are no Dissertations for 1992 we can only look at Literature, Creative Writing (or Practical Criticism etc) and Dissertation for 1998 and 2004. If we compare 1A 2004 with 1A 98, (Lit, Creative Writing and Dissertation) we find that the former is a solid A overall, but the latter gained an A overall because of the lower cut-off scores in 98 and would probably only have gained an upper B in 2004, though in our opinion it does deserve an A.

If we compare 1B 2004 with 2B 98 (Lit, Practical Crit / T.A. and Dissertation) we find that the former is a solid B, whereas 2B 98 only gains a B because of a very good Practical Crit score and would again only have gained a C in 2004, while 1B 98 (P.C, C.W. and Diss.) would only just make a B in 2004 (60%).

At C grade, a comparison for Literature, Creative Writing and Dissertation between 1C 2004 (50%) and 2C 98 (56%) shows two papers of very similar quality, both of which would have gained exactly the same grade in both years.

At D grade, a comparison across Literature, Creative Writing and Dissertation between 1D 2004 (45%) and 1D 98 (35%) shows one paper which isn't too far away from a C pass but the other one only just gains a D because of the 98 cut-off score and wouldn't have gained a D in 2004, though we would have given this paper an overall mark in the low forties, not so far away from the 2004 script. In our opinion they both deserve D grades and are of a roughly comparable quality.

**Overall we can only conclude that most scripts, for most parts of the paper, would have gained the same final grade in other years, with some reservations around the C/B borderline.**