



Advanced Higher English

Course code:	C824 77
Course assessment code:	X824 77
SCQF:	level 7 (32 SCQF credit points)
Valid from:	session 2024–25

This document provides detailed information about the course and course assessment to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It describes the structure of the course and the course assessment in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed.

This document is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information required to deliver the course.

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Course overview

This course consists of 32 SCQF credit points, which includes time for preparation for course assessment. The notional length of time for candidates to complete the course is 160 hours.

The course assessment has four components.

Component	Marks	Scaled mark	Duration
Question paper Literary Study	20	Not applicable	1 hour and 30 minutes
Question paper Textual Analysis	20	Not applicable	1 hour and 30 minutes
Portfolio–writing	15	30	see 'Course assessment' section
Project–dissertation	30	Not applicable	see 'Course assessment' section

Recommended entry	Progression
<p>Entry to this course is at the discretion of the centre.</p> <p>Candidates should have achieved the Higher English course or equivalent qualifications and/or experience prior to starting this course.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ other qualifications in English or related areas◆ further study, employment and/or training

Conditions of award

The grade awarded is based on the total marks achieved across all course assessment components.

Achievement of this course gives automatic certification of the following Core Skill:

- ◆ Communication at SCQF level 6

Course rationale

National Courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide time for learning, focus on skills and applying learning, and provide scope for personalisation and choice.

Every course provides opportunities for candidates to develop breadth, challenge and application. The focus and balance of assessment is tailored to each subject area.

This course focuses on the critical and creative study of complex and sophisticated literature and language. It gives candidates opportunities to add specialism, depth and independence to their English and study skills.

There is opportunity for personalisation and choice, and freedom within the course to plan according to the needs of candidates, taking account of their interests and motivations. Candidates extend prior learning, and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding in increasingly specialised contexts. In both guided and independent study, they develop their skills of literary analysis in order to analyse, evaluate and make connections between texts. Candidates develop the confidence to make informed critical responses to texts, from the literary genres of poetry, prose fiction, prose non-fiction and drama, and express these responses in a variety of forms. Candidates correspondingly develop their skills in both creative and critical writing.

The course encourages candidates to appreciate the ways in which complex and sophisticated literature promotes cultural and personal self-awareness and self-definition. It invites candidates to consider, for example, personal, moral, ethical, social and cultural concerns. It fosters lifelong learning, curiosity and cultural engagement, enabling candidates to access their own cultural heritage and history, as well as the culture and history of others.

Purpose and aims

The course provides candidates with the opportunity to develop the skills of reading, writing, talking and listening in the context of complex and sophisticated literature and language.

The main aims of the course are to enable candidates to develop the ability to:

- ◆ read, write, talk and listen in complex and sophisticated contexts, as appropriate to purpose and audience
- ◆ understand, analyse, evaluate, and make connections between complex and sophisticated literary texts
- ◆ create and produce written texts as appropriate to purpose, audience and context, through the application of knowledge and understanding of complex and sophisticated language

The broad structure of the course assessment allows candidates to demonstrate these skills in a balanced way, although the importance of reading is emphasised and candidates are encouraged to read widely.

Who is this course for?

This course is designed for those who are at the stage in their learning when they are ready to develop language skills at SCQF level 7. They are likely to have achieved the Higher English course.

It is suitable for candidates who wish to develop their critical and creative language skills through the reading, writing and discussion of complex and sophisticated texts. They should be able to work with growing independence and use their own initiative under minimal supervision.

It provides candidates with opportunities to develop important transferable skills. These include:

- ◆ skills of analysis and evaluation
- ◆ the ability to make evidence-based critical judgements
- ◆ independent learning
- ◆ the capacity for wide reading and intellectual growth
- ◆ the ability to produce a variety of written-response types
- ◆ planning, researching and writing an extensive critical assignment

The course provides a clear progressive pathway for candidates who wish to go on to study English literature, language or other disciplines in further and higher education. Through the acquisition of a set of advanced communication skills, the course offers a link to many vocational settings, for example writing, teaching, research, publishing, journalism, law, marketing, media, industry, commerce, public relations, cultural and public service industries.

Course content

The Advanced Higher English course enables and encourages candidates to develop their language skills, showing growth and progression from those demonstrated in prior learning and attainment, most likely in Higher English. Skills development concentrates primarily on reading and writing, but talking and listening have a prominent place in the form of critical debate facilitated by seminars, discussion groups, and/or presentations. By the end of the course, candidates will display evidence of growth and competence in all aspects of language use, but especially in reading and writing where wide reading and a variety of written-response types are required and assessed.

Literary texts across the genres of poetry, prose fiction, prose non-fiction, and drama are the prime focus of the course. There are no restrictions in the selection of texts for study, as long as the content, style and structure of the texts allow candidates to conduct an appropriate level of analysis and evaluation. Texts selected should promote an extension of the range and depth of candidates' reading. Candidates learn to connect one text to another in terms of shared contexts, themes and stylistic features.

Teaching and learning approaches, based on the needs of individuals or groups, can include whole-class teaching, group discussion, seminars, candidate-led tutorials, and individual learning. Candidates are encouraged to learn with independence in all areas of the course, but especially in the project–dissertation, which is a substantial piece of critical reading and writing.

Candidates are made aware of the need for depth of ideas, clarity, accuracy, and creativity in their use of language. The development of sustained critical lines of thought is essential in both writing and talking. This should include reasoned and evidenced analysis, rather than assertion. The course offers an introduction to academic research and guides candidates towards critical and contextual materials, where appropriate. This can include digital resources, access to university libraries (where practicable), and critical publications.

Skills, knowledge and understanding

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course

The following provides a broad overview of the subject skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the course:

- ◆ the development of advanced communication skills in reading, writing, talking and listening
- ◆ understanding, critical analysis and evaluation of complex and sophisticated literary texts
- ◆ the production of complex and sophisticated texts in a range of contexts
- ◆ knowledge and understanding of complex and sophisticated language

For the purposes of the course, the skills of reading, writing, talking and listening are further defined as:

Reading

- ◆ engaging with, considering and demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the central concerns of a text
- ◆ critically analysing and evaluating a writer's use of literary techniques and features of language
- ◆ taking an evaluative stance with respect to the overall effects and impact of a text
- ◆ conducting a critical comparison of texts

Writing

- ◆ communicating complex and sophisticated ideas
- ◆ communicating complex and sophisticated information
- ◆ exploring, reflecting on, and communicating personal experience in a thoughtful, insightful way
- ◆ writing creatively and imaginatively in a literary form
- ◆ demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the features and techniques of a literary form

Talking and listening

- ◆ discussing or presenting complex and sophisticated ideas and/or information
- ◆ exploring, through discussion, complex and sophisticated literary texts

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment

The following provides details of skills, knowledge and understanding sampled in the course assessment:

Read, understand and respond to texts

- ◆ textual analysis: one unseen text or extract from the genres of poetry, prose fiction, prose non-fiction, or drama
- ◆ literary study: literature studied as part of the course (making connections and/or comparisons between texts from the same genre)
- ◆ dissertation: literature selected and studied as part of the project–dissertation

Critically analyse and evaluate a writer's use of language

- ◆ textual analysis: one unseen text or extract from the genres of poetry, prose fiction, prose non-fiction, or drama
- ◆ literary study: literature studied as part of the course (making connections and/or comparisons between texts from the same genre)
- ◆ dissertation: literature selected and studied as part of the project–dissertation

Write, with consistent technical accuracy, in different forms

- ◆ portfolio: creatively or discursively from the following: persuasive, informative, argumentative, reflective, poetry, prose fiction, drama
- ◆ literary study and dissertation: critically

Skills, knowledge and understanding included in the course are appropriate to the SCQF level of the course. The [SCQF level descriptors](#) give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level.

Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

This course helps candidates to develop broad, generic skills. These skills are based on [SQA's Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#) and draw from the following main skills areas:

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 must build these skills into the course at an appropriate level, where there are suitable opportunities.

Course assessment

Course assessment is based on the information in this course specification.

The course assessment meets the purposes and aims of the course by addressing:

- ◆ breadth — drawing on knowledge and skills from across the course
- ◆ challenge — requiring greater depth or extension of knowledge and/or skills
- ◆ application — requiring application of knowledge and/or skills in practical or theoretical contexts as appropriate

This enables candidates to:

- ◆ understand, analyse and evaluate previously-studied complex and sophisticated literary texts. This is assessed by a question paper.
- ◆ understand, analyse and evaluate an unseen complex and sophisticated literary text. This is assessed by a question paper.
- ◆ apply language skills in the creation of an original text. This is assessed through the portfolio–writing.
- ◆ conduct independent reading, plan, research and write a piece of extended critical investigation on an aspect of literature. This is assessed through the project–dissertation.

Course assessment structure: question paper

Question paper: Literary Study

20 marks

This question paper assesses candidates' application of their critical reading skills and their knowledge and understanding of previously-studied literary texts.

The question paper has a total mark allocation of 20 marks. This is 20% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Candidates apply their understanding, analysis and evaluation skills to previously-studied texts from one of the following genres: poetry, prose fiction, prose non-fiction, or drama. This takes the form of one appropriately structured critical essay.

The following main command words are generally used in this question paper:

- ◆ discuss: a critically analytical discussion of an identified aspect of literary technique or thematic concern
- ◆ analyse: a critical exploration of writers' use of genre-specific techniques with relation to thematic concern
- ◆ to what extent do you agree?: a critical response to a statement of critical judgement or opinion
- ◆ compare and/or contrast: a critical exploration of an identified aspect of literary technique or thematic concern

This question paper requires candidates to make connections and/or comparisons across texts. The required number of texts is specified in each question:

- ◆ poetry: three poems
- ◆ prose fiction: two novels or three short stories
- ◆ prose non-fiction: at least two non-fiction texts
- ◆ drama: two plays

Candidates are free to select the same genre in each question paper.

Note: the texts and/or writers chosen for the Literary Study question paper must not be the same as those used in the project–dissertation.

Question paper: Textual Analysis

20 marks

This question paper assesses candidates' application of critical reading skills to an unseen literary text.

The question paper has a total mark allocation of 20 marks. This is 20% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Candidates apply their understanding, analysis and evaluation skills to one unseen text. Candidates select one text from the genres of poetry, prose fiction, prose non-fiction or drama and produce a critical analysis which is appropriately structured to meet the demands of the question.

The following command words are generally used in this question paper:

- ◆ discuss (for example the effectiveness, the features, the ways): a critically analytical discussion of writers' use of genre-specific techniques with relation to thematic concern
- ◆ make a detailed analysis: a critical analysis of writers' use of genre-specific techniques with relation to thematic concern
- ◆ write a detailed critical response: a critical exploration of writers' use of genre-specific techniques with relation to thematic concern

Candidates can select the same genre in each question paper.

Setting, conducting and marking the question papers

Literary Study question paper

SQA sets and marks this question paper. It is conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA.

Candidates have 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete this question paper.

Textual Analysis question paper

SQA sets and marks this question paper. It is conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA.

Candidates have 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete this question paper.

Specimen question papers for Advanced Higher courses are published on SQA's website. These illustrate the standard, structure and requirements of the question papers. The specimen papers also include marking instructions.

Course assessment structure: portfolio–writing

Portfolio–writing

30 marks

The portfolio–writing provides evidence of candidates' skills in writing in one genre.

The portfolio–writing has a total mark allocation of 30 marks. This is 30% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

15 marks are available for the piece of writing within the portfolio. The 30% weighting is achieved by doubling the mark for one piece.

Candidates produce one written text. They can choose this text from their writing done throughout the course.

Candidates must complete the first draft of the piece of writing in class under supervision.

Portfolio–writing overview

Candidates produce one written text for the portfolio.

The writing can be from any of the following genres:

- ◆ persuasive
- ◆ informative
- ◆ argumentative
- ◆ reflective
- ◆ poetry
- ◆ prose fiction
- ◆ drama

Setting, conducting and marking the portfolio–writing

This portfolio–writing is:

- ◆ set by centres within SQA guidelines
- ◆ conducted under some supervision and control, with the first draft completed in class

Some supervision and control means that:

- ◆ candidates do not need to be directly supervised at all times
- ◆ the use of resources, including the internet, is not tightly prescribed
- ◆ the work an individual candidate submits for assessment is their own
- ◆ teachers and lecturers can provide reasonable assistance

Evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking. SQA quality assures all marking.

Assessment conditions

Time

There is no time limit for the portfolio–writing. Candidates should start at an appropriate point in the course. That is, when their writing skills have reached the level of development required for Advanced Higher English. The piece of writing can be generated over a period of time. However, the first draft of the assessment piece must be done in class under supervision over a period of up to 4 hours. This may take place over several sessions, if required. Since there is no word-count for the task at this level, the first draft does not need to be produced in its entirety at this stage. For example it may be the first half of a short story, or several stanzas of a poem, or the main body of a discursive piece. There is no requirement for a formal timed write-up.

Supervision, control and authentication

The early stages of the writing process can be completed outwith the learning and teaching situation. When candidates are ready to complete the first draft of the assessment piece, this must be done in class under the supervision of a teacher or lecturer and with access to appropriate resources (for example notes, outline plan, research and/or ICT, as appropriate). Following teacher or lecturer feedback on the first draft, candidates then complete the final piece of writing under some supervision and control. Note: centres should only submit the final piece of writing for external marking.

Although candidates may complete part of the work outwith the learning and teaching situation (for example research, planning and re-drafting), teachers and lecturers must put in place processes for monitoring progress to ensure that the work is the candidate's own, and that plagiarism has not taken place.

All candidates should follow the process below.

Portfolio–writing process

- ◆ choose focus and genre (with support of teacher or lecturer)
- ◆ explore and develop initial idea (this can involve research and note-taking, as appropriate)
- ◆ plan the writing (outline and structure)
- ◆ complete the first draft in class under supervision (open book conditions, with notes, outline plan, research and/or ICT, as appropriate)
- ◆ reflect on teacher or lecturer feedback
- ◆ complete the final piece under some supervision and control

Teachers and lecturers must carefully monitor each candidate during the preparation and production stages of the piece of writing to ensure that it is entirely the candidate's own work.

If the candidate is likely to have contact with professionals outwith the centre, the teacher or lecturer must make it clear to the candidate that no one else can be involved in the production of the portfolio–writing.

Note: SQA's definition of plagiarism is: 'failure to acknowledge sources properly and/or the submission of work that is not the candidate's own (this could be another person's work or work taken from a generative artificial intelligence source)'.

When the candidate is at the stage of writing the first draft, they must complete this in class under teacher or lecturer supervision. Since there is no word-count for the task at this level, the first draft does not need to be produced in its entirety at this stage. For example it may be the first half of a short story, or several stanzas of a poem, or the main body of a discursive piece. Note: candidates must have completed the first draft in class to allow submission of their final piece.

The candidate must complete and sign the portfolio–writing declaration on the flyleaf to confirm that the writing is completely their own work.

The portfolio–writing is a final summative assessment and when a candidate begins the process of drafting their piece of writing this must be under the direct supervision of their teacher or lecturer. At this point, no other person can be involved in the discussion or review of the candidate's work.

Centres must not accept a piece of writing for portfolio submission where:

- ◆ there is doubt over the authenticity of a piece of writing
- ◆ the candidate has not completed the first draft in class under supervision

Mechanisms to authenticate candidate evidence could include:

- ◆ regular checkpoint and/or progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ checklists which record activity and/or progress
- ◆ using the first draft of writing as a point of comparison with the final piece
- ◆ asking candidates to provide an annotated bibliography (writing a sentence or two about the usefulness of a source, for example, can remind candidates of where their information and/or ideas came from)
- ◆ making sure that candidates know exactly what is required for the portfolio, and that they have read and understood the SQA booklet *Your Coursework*

Resources

There are no restrictions on the resources that candidates may access while producing their portfolio. Depending on the task, or purpose of the writing, it may be appropriate for candidates to conduct research online or by referring to print publications. Alternatively, candidates may produce work which is personal or imaginative in nature and relies on no external resources.

Candidates must be made aware of what constitutes plagiarism. Taking an essay from an internet site or submitting work that is not their own is plagiarism. The following are also examples of plagiarism:

- ◆ copying and pasting from the internet without citing the source
- ◆ copying directly from a textbook without citing the source
- ◆ omitting quotation marks from quotations
- ◆ using software such as generative artificial intelligence

Candidates must acknowledge all sources consulted. Any sources consulted for persuasive, informative, or argumentative writing must be acknowledged in footnotes or in a list at the end of the piece: details must be specific.

Reasonable assistance

Candidates take the initiative in planning, management and completion of the task. However, the teacher or lecturer may support candidates in the planning and preparation of the piece. Reasonable assistance may be given in general terms to a group or class (for example advice on research methods) or may be given to candidates on an individual basis.

The term 'reasonable assistance' is used in recognition of the need to support candidates through this task; however, care should be taken by teachers and lecturers to avoid too much intervention. If candidates need more than what is thought to be 'reasonable assistance' they may not be ready for assessment.

After initial teaching and learning input at the planning stages, most candidates will require (and should take responsibility for) the production of several rounds of draft material before the portfolio is complete and ready for submission.

The teacher or lecturer should read and provide feedback to candidates on the draft of writing they complete in class under supervision. It is not acceptable for a teacher or lecturer to provide feedback on more than one draft of writing. This feedback should consist of directional support offering guidance in summary form, rather than detailed commentary. After reflecting on this feedback, candidates should be given the opportunity to improve on their draft. Candidates then submit their final piece.

Once candidates have submitted their final piece, this must not be changed by either the teacher, lecturer or candidate.

It is acceptable for a teacher or lecturer to provide:

- ◆ an initial discussion with the candidate on the selection of a focus and genre, leading to an outline plan
- ◆ written or oral feedback on one draft of writing

It is not acceptable for a teacher or lecturer to provide:

- ◆ model answers which are specific to a candidate's task
- ◆ specific advice on how to rephrase wording

- ◆ key ideas, or a specific structure or plan
- ◆ corrections of errors in spelling and punctuation
- ◆ feedback on more than one draft of writing

Evidence to be gathered

The following candidate evidence is required for this assessment:

- ◆ one piece of writing from any genre

Volume

The length of the piece of writing should be appropriate to purpose and genre (poetry may be significantly shorter).

There is no word count.

Portfolio–writing marking instructions

In line with SQA’s normal practice, the following marking instructions for the Advanced Higher English portfolio–writing are addressed to the marker. They will also be helpful for those preparing candidates for course assessment.

Candidates’ evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking.

General marking principles

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates’ responses.

- Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- Assessment should be holistic. There are strengths and weaknesses in every piece of writing; assessment should focus as far as possible on the strengths, taking account of weaknesses only when they significantly detract from the overall performance. Writing does not have to be perfect to gain full marks.

Detailed marking instructions

As appropriate to genre, markers must assess the piece of writing in terms of content, structure, stance/tono/mood and expression.

The marker selects the band containing the descriptors that most closely describe the piece of writing.

Once that best fit is decided:

- ◆ where the evidence fully meets the standard described, award the highest available mark from that band range
- ◆ where the candidate's work just meets the standard described, award the lowest mark from that band range
- ◆ otherwise award the mark from the middle of that band range

Consistent technical accuracy is a requirement for the piece to meet the minimum requirements for the 9–7 band.

Consistent technical accuracy means that few errors are present: paragraphs, sentences and punctuation are accurate and organised so that the writing is clearly and readily understood; spelling errors are infrequent.

Markers are to use the following tables to help them arrive at a final mark.

Creative writing (reflective, poetry, prose fiction, drama)

	15–13	12–10	9–7	6–4	3–1	0
<p>Content The piece of writing demonstrates, as appropriate to genre:</p>	◆ treatment of central thematic concerns/ ideas/feelings/ experiences which reveals sustained thoughtfulness, insight and/or imagination throughout	◆ treatment of central thematic concerns/ ideas/feelings/ experiences which reveals thoughtfulness, insight and/or imagination throughout	◆ treatment of central thematic concerns/ ideas/feelings/ experiences which reveals some thoughtfulness, insight and/or imagination	◆ treatment of central thematic concerns/ ideas/feelings/ experiences which reveals limited thoughtfulness, insight and/or imagination	◆ treatment of central thematic concerns/ ideas/feelings/ experiences which reveals little thoughtfulness or insight and/or imagination	◆ no evidence of the skills required in terms of content, structure, tone and/or mood or expression
<p>Structure The piece of writing demonstrates, as appropriate to genre:</p>	◆ skilful shaping and sequencing which contributes significantly to impact	◆ consistent shaping and sequencing which contributes to impact	◆ shaping and sequencing with some impact	◆ shaping and/or sequencing with limited impact	◆ minimal shaping and/or sequencing with little impact	
<p>Tone and/or mood The piece of writing demonstrates, as appropriate to genre:</p>	◆ tone and/or mood which is skilfully created and rigorously sustained revealing a committed and clearly distinctive authorial voice	◆ tone and/or mood which is created and generally sustained, revealing a distinctive authorial voice	◆ tone and/or mood which is discernible at various points revealing an identifiable and appropriate authorial voice	◆ tone and/or mood which is unsustained revealing a limited authorial voice	◆ little control of tone and/or mood revealing little discernible authorial voice	
<p>Expression The piece of writing demonstrates, as appropriate to genre:</p>	◆ skilful use of style, technique and language, and a high degree of originality	◆ confident use of style, technique and language with a degree of originality	◆ consistently accurate use of style, technique and language with some originality	◆ use of style, technique and language with limited originality	◆ use of style, technique and language with little originality, and some errors	

Discursive writing (persuasive, informative, argumentative)

	15–13	12–10	9–7	6–4	3–1	0
<p>Content The piece of writing demonstrates, as appropriate to genre:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ treatment of central thematic concerns which reveals sustained thoughtfulness, and insight throughout ◆ judicious selection and use of source material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ treatment of central thematic concerns which reveals thoughtfulness and insight throughout ◆ judicious selection and use of source material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ treatment of central thematic concerns which reveals some thoughtfulness and insight ◆ appropriate selection and use of source material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ treatment of central thematic concerns which reveals limited thoughtfulness and insight ◆ limited selection and use of source material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ central thematic concerns that demonstrate little thoughtfulness or insight ◆ little selection and use of source material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ no evidence of the skills required in terms of content, structure, stance/tone/mood or expression
<p>Structure The piece of writing demonstrates, as appropriate to genre:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ skilful shaping and sequencing which contributes significantly to impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ consistent shaping and sequencing which contributes to impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ shaping and sequencing with some impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ shaping and sequencing with limited impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ shaping and sequencing of the line of argument is employed with little discernible impact 	
<p>Stance/tone/mood The piece of writing demonstrates, as appropriate to genre:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ committed and clear stance ◆ tone and/or mood which is skilfully created and rigorously sustained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ clearly identifiable stance ◆ tone and/or mood which is consistently sustained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ discernible and relevant stance ◆ tone and/or mood which is mostly sustained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ limited stance ◆ discernible tone and/or mood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ stance which is not always apparent ◆ little control of tone and/or mood 	
<p>Expression The piece of writing demonstrates, as appropriate to genre:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ skilful use of style, technique and language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ confident use of style, technique and language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ consistently accurate use of style and language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ use of structure, style and language to limited effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ use of structure, style and language to little effect 	

Course assessment structure: project–dissertation

Project–dissertation

30 marks

The project–dissertation assesses candidates' independent reading of complex and sophisticated literature. It provides evidence of candidates' skills in critical analysis, evaluation, investigation and writing.

The project–dissertation has a total mark allocation of 30 marks. This is 30% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Project–dissertation overview

The dissertation has three stages:

- ◆ planning: candidates should choose appropriate texts and formulate a precise and focused dissertation task on an aspect of literature
- ◆ research and development: candidates should investigate and research relevant materials and record all sources consulted
- ◆ writing: candidates should write their dissertations, reflecting, redrafting and proofreading before final submission

Candidates' chosen texts for the dissertation must be literary, and must be untaught. Writers or texts studied in the dissertation cannot be used in the Literary Study question paper.

The task

The teacher or lecturer will support candidates to choose appropriate texts and the focus of the dissertation task, which must be on an aspect or aspects of literature. Candidates' dissertations should explore a limited area of literary technique, applying complex critical analysis with appropriate supporting evidence. The formulation of a suitable task is of crucial importance, as it informs the line of argument adopted by candidates in their dissertation.

The teacher or lecturer should ensure that the proposed task and range of resources are appropriate, and that the dissertation is manageable.

Approach

Candidates should:

- ◆ select suitable literary text(s)
- ◆ select a suitable task which focuses an aspect of literary technique
- ◆ adopt a personal stance towards the topic
- ◆ devise, structure and sustain an argument
- ◆ select evidence from primary and, where appropriate, secondary sources to support an argument
- ◆ analyse a range of literary techniques and/or features appropriate to the task

Candidates might choose one of the following as the basis of a dissertation:

- ◆ two texts by the same novelist
- ◆ two texts written by different novelists
- ◆ a single, substantial text
- ◆ two texts by the same dramatist
- ◆ texts written by two or more dramatists
- ◆ a wide range (perhaps seven or more) of poems by one poet
- ◆ a narrow range (six or fewer) of poems by one poet
- ◆ texts written by two or more poets
- ◆ short stories (three or more)
- ◆ literary non-fiction

In producing the dissertation, candidates engage in a range of activities including:

- ◆ negotiating a study programme
- ◆ meeting deadlines for the submission of work
- ◆ studying the text(s) to locate appropriate selections for analysis
- ◆ comparing aspects of texts, where appropriate
- ◆ applying a knowledge of appropriate critical and analytical approaches and terminology
- ◆ deploying evidence from secondary sources, as appropriate
- ◆ drafting, editing and proofreading

Referencing

It is recommended practice to:

- ◆ use italics or underlining to indicate the titles of texts
- ◆ set in from the margin all quotations of more than one line so that they are clearly distinguishable from the text of the dissertation
- ◆ use footnotes and page references where appropriate to identify quotations from, and references to, primary sources
- ◆ use footnotes and page references at all times to identify and acknowledge quotations from, references to, and information/ideas from secondary sources
- ◆ provide an accurate bibliography
- ◆ give footnote and bibliography references in the following form:
D. Gifford and D. McMillan, *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, EUP, 1997.

Setting, conducting and marking the project–dissertation

This project–dissertation is:

- ◆ set by centres within SQA guidelines
- ◆ conducted under some supervision and control

Evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking. SQA quality assures all marking.

Assessment conditions

Time

There is no time limit for the project–dissertation. Candidates should start their dissertation when they have conducted sufficient independent reading and demonstrated skills of complex critical analysis.

Supervision, control and authentication

The writing stage must be conducted under some supervision and control. This means that, although candidates may complete much of the work outwith the learning and teaching situation, teachers or lecturers must put in place processes for monitoring progress to ensure that the work is the candidate's own, and that plagiarism has not taken place. However, this need not entail formal, timed, and closely supervised conditions, but at all stages of preparation and production of the piece, there must be careful monitoring to ensure that it is entirely the candidate's own work.

It is important that confidence in the authenticity of a candidate's work is established before the finished piece is handed in, as this may be more difficult at the point of hand-in. It is unrealistic to expect teachers or lecturers to be able to identify all potential instances of plagiarism, and this is why the final responsibility rests with the candidates to confirm that dissertations are genuinely their own work. Having the candidate present at the time of compilation is therefore a key step in the authentication process.

The project–dissertation is a final summative assessment and when a candidate begins the process of drafting the dissertation this must be under the direct supervision of their teacher or lecturer. At this point, no other person can be involved in the discussion or review of the candidate's work.

Where there is doubt over the authenticity of a dissertation, it must not be accepted for submission.

Ways to authenticate candidate evidence can include:

- ◆ regular checkpoint/progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ short spot-check personal interviews
- ◆ checklists which record activity and/or progress
- ◆ asking candidates to provide a preliminary annotated bibliography of all research sources cited (for example writing a sentence or two about the usefulness of a source can remind candidates where their information and/or ideas came from)
- ◆ making sure that candidates know exactly what is required for the dissertation, and that they have read and understood SQA's booklet *Your Coursework*

Group work approaches can be helpful as part of the preparation for assessment. However, group work is not appropriate once formal work on assessment has started.

Resources

There are no restrictions on the resources that candidates may access while producing their dissertation. Candidates may need guidance in terms of finding suitable texts and/or secondary critical sources.

Reasonable assistance

Candidates must carry out the assessment independently, and must take the initiative in planning, management and completion of the task. However, the teacher or lecturer may support candidates in the planning and preparation of the dissertation.

Reasonable assistance may be given in general terms to a group or class (for example advice on research methods) or may be given to candidates on an individual basis. Teacher or lecturer input on the selection of text(s), task, and an outline plan are appropriate before the candidate starts the dissertation.

The term 'reasonable assistance' is used to balance the need for support with the need to avoid giving too much intervention. If candidates need more than what is thought to be 'reasonable assistance', they may not be ready for assessment.

After initial teaching and learning input at the planning stages, most candidates will require (and should take responsibility for) the production of several rounds of draft material before the dissertation is complete and ready for submission.

The teacher or lecturer should read and provide feedback (written or spoken) to candidates on a dissertation which is at the draft stage. This feedback should consist of directional support offering guidance in summary form, rather than detailed commentary. After reflecting on this feedback, candidates should be given the opportunity to improve on their draft. Candidates then submit their final piece.

Once candidates have submitted their evidence, this must not be changed by either the teacher, lecturer or candidate.

It is acceptable for a teacher or lecturer to provide:

- ◆ discussion with the candidate on the selection of text(s); the nature, scope and suitability of a task; and an outline plan
- ◆ written or oral feedback on one dissertation draft

It is not acceptable for a teacher or lecturer to provide:

- ◆ model answers which are specific to candidate tasks
- ◆ specific advice on how to rephrase wording
- ◆ key ideas, or a specific structure or plan
- ◆ corrections of errors in spelling and punctuation
- ◆ feedback on more than one dissertation draft

Evidence to be gathered

The following candidate evidence is required for this assessment:

- ◆ a dissertation of between 2,500 and 3,500 words on an aspect or aspects of literature

Volume

The dissertation must be between 2,500 and 3,500 words, including quotations but excluding footnotes and bibliography. Candidates must include the word count with the submitted dissertation.

The word length is appropriate to the complexity of the task, allowing candidates to conduct an in-depth study of their chosen text(s).

If the word count exceeds the maximum by more than 10%, a penalty is applied.

Project–dissertation marking instructions

In line with SQA’s normal practice, the following marking instructions for the Advanced Higher English project–dissertation are addressed to the marker. They will also be helpful for those preparing candidates for course assessment.

Candidates’ evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking.

General marking principles

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates’ responses.

- a Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- b If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- c The candidate’s dissertation is marked in terms of knowledge, understanding, analysis, evaluation and expression.
- d Assessment should be holistic. There are strengths and weaknesses in every dissertation; assessment should focus as far as possible on the strengths, taking account of weaknesses only when they significantly detract from the overall performance. The dissertation does not have to be perfect to gain full marks.

Detailed marking instructions

Markers must assess the dissertation in terms of knowledge, understanding, analysis, evaluation and expression.

The marker selects the band containing the descriptors that most closely describe the dissertation.

Once that best fit has been decided:

- ◆ where the evidence fully meets the standard described, award the highest available mark from that band range
- ◆ where the candidate’s work just meets the standard described, award the lowest mark from that band range
- ◆ otherwise award the mark from the middle of that band range
- ◆ where the number of marks in the band selected is four, use professional judgement to decide allocation of the mark. For example 14–11, reconsider the candidate’s abilities in the four main characteristics. If the candidate just misses a 14, award 13. If the candidate is slightly above a 10, award 11
- ◆ award 0 marks where the candidate provides no evidence of the ability to plan, research and present the findings of an independent dissertation on an aspect of literature

Markers are to use the following tables to help them arrive at a final mark.

Dissertation

	30–27	26–23	22–19	18–15	14–11	10–6	5–1
<p>Knowledge and understanding The dissertation demonstrates:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the text(s) as a whole which demonstrates sustained insight into the issues explored ◆ full and relevant exploration which demonstrates sustained consideration of the implications of the task ◆ extensive textual evidence which is clearly focused on the demands of the task through broad but judicious selection of references 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ secure knowledge and understanding of the text(s) as a whole which demonstrates some insight into the issues explored ◆ relevant exploration which demonstrates secure consideration of the implications of the task ◆ extensive textual evidence to support the demands of the task, demonstrating selection from across the breadth of the text(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ broad knowledge and understanding of the text(s) as a whole ◆ relevant approach to the task which demonstrates broad consideration of the implications of the task ◆ relevant textual evidence to support the demands of the task which demonstrates selection from across the breadth of the text(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ appropriate knowledge and understanding of the key elements and/or central concerns and/or significant details of the text(s) ◆ relevant approach to the task ◆ textual evidence which supports the demands of the task but with some limitations in breadth of selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ knowledge and understanding of the key elements and/or central concerns and/or significant details of the text(s) but with some insecurities ◆ appropriate approach to the task but with some weakness in relevance ◆ some textual evidence to support the demands of the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ knowledge and understanding of the key elements and/or central concerns and/or significant details of the text(s) but with some inaccuracies ◆ appropriate approach to the task but with many weaknesses in relevance ◆ limited textual evidence to support the demands of the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ little knowledge and understanding of the key elements and/or central concerns and/or significant details of the text(s) ◆ inconsistent approach to the task which demonstrates little relevance ◆ little textual evidence to support the focus of the task

	30–27	26–23	22–19	18–15	14–11	10–6	5–1
Analysis The dissertation demonstrates:	◆ relevant analysis of a task-appropriate range of literary techniques and/or features of language which skilfully strengthen the line of argument	◆ relevant analysis of a task-appropriate range of literary techniques and/or features of language which strengthen the line of argument	◆ relevant analysis of a range of literary techniques and/or features of language, as appropriate, which support the line of argument	◆ relevant analysis of a range of literary techniques and/or features of language, as appropriate to the task	◆ some attempt to analyse literary techniques or features of language but with weakness in the depth and/or relevance of the analysis	◆ some attempt to analyse a limited range of literary techniques or features of language but with weakness in the depth and/or relevance of the analysis	◆ attempt to analyse literary techniques or features of language which lacks range and/or depth and/or relevance to the task
Evaluation The dissertation demonstrates:	◆ committed, clear stance with respect to the text(s) and the task and skilfully based on precise evidence presented within the dissertation	◆ clearly identifiable evaluative stance with respect to the text(s) and the task and securely based on evidence presented within the dissertation	◆ relevant evaluative stance with respect to the text(s) and task and based on evidence presented within the dissertation	◆ discernible evaluative stance with respect to the text(s) and the task and based on evidence presented within the dissertation	◆ implied evaluative stance with respect to the text(s) and the task	◆ implied evaluative stance with respect to the text(s) and the task but which has some weakness in relevance	◆ no discernible evaluative stance with respect to the text(s) and the task
Expression The dissertation demonstrates:	◆ skilful and considered use of structure, style and language, including appropriate critical/analytical terminology, to develop an argument with a sustained and precise focus on the task	◆ skilful use of structure, style and language, including appropriate critical/analytical terminology, to develop an argument with a sustained focus on the task	◆ consistently accurate use of structure, style and language, including appropriate critical/analytical terminology, to develop an argument focused on the task	◆ consistently accurate use of structure, style and language, including appropriate critical/analytical terminology, to develop an argument relevant to the task	◆ some weakness in accuracy or use of structure, style and language, including appropriate critical/analytical terminology which affects the strength of the argument but does not impede understanding	◆ some weakness in accuracy or use of structure, style and language, including appropriate critical/analytical terminology which affects the strength of the argument and occasionally impedes understanding	◆ significant errors in structure, style and/or language, including incorrect or inappropriate use of critical/analytical terminology, which impede understanding

Grading

Candidates' overall grades are determined by their performance across the course assessment. The course assessment is graded A–D on the basis of the total mark for all course assessment components.

Grade description for C

For the award of grade C, candidates will typically have demonstrated successful performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Grade description for A

For the award of grade A, candidates will typically have demonstrated a consistently high level of performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Equality and inclusion

This course is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs is available on the assessment arrangements web page:

www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Further information

- ◆ [Advanced Higher English subject page](#)
- ◆ [Assessment arrangements web page](#)
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 3–5](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ [Guidance on conditions of assessment for coursework](#)
- ◆ [Educational Research Reports](#)
- ◆ [SCQF website: framework, level descriptors and SCQF Handbook](#)

Appendix: course support notes

Introduction

These support notes are not mandatory. They provide advice and guidance to teachers and lecturers on approaches to delivering the course. Please read these course support notes in conjunction with the course specification and the specimen question paper(s) and coursework.

Developing skills, knowledge and understanding

This section provides advice and guidance about skills, knowledge and understanding that can be included in the course. Teachers and lecturers have considerable flexibility to select contexts that stimulate and challenge candidates, offering both breadth and depth.

The following provides a broad overview of the subject skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the course:

- ◆ development of advanced communication skills in reading, writing, talking and listening
- ◆ understanding, critical analysis, and evaluation of complex and sophisticated literary texts
- ◆ production of complex and sophisticated texts in a range of contexts
- ◆ knowledge and understanding of complex and sophisticated language

Advanced communication skills

The course provides candidates with opportunities for intellectual growth and development of self-expression. Candidates' engagement with complex and sophisticated literature, which is the primary focus of the course, contributes to the development of their advanced communication skills.

Candidates have many opportunities to respond to literature. The likelihood is that this will initially be through a personal response to reading, moving on to talking and listening in discussion and/or presentations. Written responses will follow, and candidates will develop their critical essay writing skills in preparation for the Literary Study question paper and the project–dissertation.

Literary analysis is the focus and starting point, but there will be a crossover of skills, for example close critical analysis for one particular genre for the Literary Study question paper could inform writing done for the portfolio–writing. Similarly, specialist critical study in one genre can help candidates to approach the Textual Analysis question paper with confidence, and the project–dissertation with independence.

Advanced communication skills, as demonstrated in the project–dissertation, are valuable and transferable. The skills required apply to the contexts of other Advanced Higher subjects, higher education, and vocational situations and/or employment. In many ways, the project–dissertation mirrors similar tasks in university degree courses.

Understanding, critical analysis and evaluation

The development of critical reading skills is a principal aim of the course. Candidates are encouraged to be serious readers: to read with thought and care, with engagement and commitment. Reading should be an active, not a passive, pursuit.

Candidates interrogate texts, often adopting a questioning approach, looking for similarities and differences across texts, and for a writer's literary style and central concerns. They are encouraged to do this with growing confidence and independence. Candidates carefully consider and reflect on the central concerns of texts, selecting and analysing the contribution of, for example, literary techniques or the impact of significant moments. They adopt an evaluative approach to their reading of literature, and their responses must be evidenced and analytical, aiming to avoid assertion.

Production of complex and sophisticated texts

Candidates submit one piece of writing, from any genre, for assessment. It is expected that personalisation and choice will be offered in terms of genre and purpose. Candidates could make several explorations across types and genres before selecting a piece for the portfolio-writing; however, a degree of specialism from the outset might equally be appropriate.

Candidates should develop the skills and techniques needed to produce critical essays: significantly, the creation of a reasoned argument which addresses and answers a specific question and is sustained across an extended piece of writing. The fullest demonstration of these skills is in the project-dissertation, where candidates work independently on a piece of focused literary investigation. This involves the selection of suitable texts, a programme of planning (for example research into context, secondary critical sources) before the writing process begins.

Knowledge and understanding of language

This involves candidates becoming better skilled and equipped in the use of language for the purposes of their own written and spoken expression. It also takes the form of an exploration of the language which is specific to the writers and literary genres they are studying. This includes, where appropriate, the language of literary criticism. When producing their own texts candidates should consider, select and apply knowledge and understanding of how writers use complex literary language across various genres and purposes.

Candidates need to have some knowledge of the main ways in which literary language works, for example:

poetry: form, structure, stanza pattern, poetic voice or persona, word choice, imagery, metaphor, rhyme, rhythm and meter, stress, sound, mood, tone

prose fiction: narrative voice, evocation of setting, mood, characterisation, use of metaphor, imagery, sentence structure, repetition, symbol, contrast, tone, structure

prose non-fiction: word choice, use of metaphor, comparison, sensory detail, imagery and analogy, sentence structure, repetition, symbol, contrast, tone, structure/pattern, balance

drama: mood and tone, contrast, characterisation, stereotype, parody, monologue, dialogue, pathos, timing/pauses/rhythm, stage directions, word choice, imagery, use of metaphor, structure, narrator/chorus, stylised elements, significance of props, music and song, cliché, humour, irony

Approaches to learning and teaching

In terms of course planning, teachers and lecturers should decide on teaching and learning approaches which best suit candidates. Advanced Higher places more demands on candidates, as there is 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, but there must be a stronger emphasis on independent learning. Much of this learning involves programmes of reading, but research projects and writing activities also feature.

Independent learning

For Advanced Higher, much learning may be self-directed and require candidates to work under their own initiative. For many candidates this move to a more independent model of learning is unfamiliar, and initial support should be offered. This might take the form of candidates:

- ◆ collaborating with other candidates and/or with a teacher or lecturer for seminars or tutorials
- ◆ presenting findings from their own learning to a tutorial or discussion group

An important aspect of independent learning is the skill of self-editing: what to keep or reject in pieces of writing and in research findings. Allied to this is the further development of candidates' skills in proofreading their own work, maintaining high standards of expression and technical accuracy.

Candidates should be set, set themselves, or negotiate clear deadlines for stages in their learning. This allows teachers and lecturers to monitor progress and to put in place support mechanisms, where required. Teachers and lecturers should explain the value of independent learning to candidates, and that self-motivation and resilience are key requirements for study at this level and in further and higher education and employment.

Teachers and lecturers could encourage candidates to attend local events, for example writers' visits to schools, libraries or book festival events. They could take part in online interactive events, or attend creative writing events, or book groups. In Edinburgh for example, the Scottish Poetry Library runs regular sessions where poets read from their own work, and it hosts writing groups (including one for young people). If planning and circumstances allow, visiting book festivals gives candidates exposure to prominent writers on the international stage.

Reading is central to all English courses, and the reading of literary texts is the prime focus of Advanced Higher English. Regular reading provides opportunities to broaden candidates' intellectual, emotional and social horizons. The use of self-selection of texts as well as peer and teacher or lecturer recommendations is to be encouraged, especially in preparation for the project–dissertation.

Texts

For all aspects of this course, there is free choice in the selection of texts. Teachers and lecturers should consider a wide range of literature. While it is accepted that certain writers are popular for this level, it is not the intention that there should be 'Advanced Higher' texts per se. When considering the selection of texts, teachers and lecturers should weigh up the scope for developing and demonstrating skills of complex and sophisticated analysis, and consider the personal, social, emotional, and developmental needs of candidates.

An important function of literature is its ability to widen the reader's intellectual and emotional experiences. Teachers and lecturers should choose texts with this in mind, together with preparation for potential progression to further and higher education.

Text selection has an important part to play in our work towards a diverse and inclusive curriculum where all candidates feel they have a voice and a sense of belonging. The texts they study help them to understand their own worlds and the worlds of others. Text selection, therefore, has significance for all candidates. Where possible, teachers and lecturers should have a discussion with candidates about the texts they want to read (within the confines of available resources). This could be a focus for departmental or faculty planning and discussion.

Candidates should experience a range of texts to show that reading offers them choice and is an interactive and enjoyable activity. In the senior phase of the curriculum, reading should still be for pleasure. A narrow focus limits choice and opportunities for candidates to find connections with the texts they are studying.

The texts they read should cultivate intellectual and emotional curiosity, helping candidates to find their own voice and expression. In order to do so they must find other voices that they can relate to, either in direct representation or indirectly through imaginative or empathetic response. An appropriate reference here is the metaphor devised by Rudine Sims Bishop, 'Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors' (The Ohio State University, 1990). Within this metaphor, texts can be:

- ◆ mirrors: readers see themselves directly reflected in the text
- ◆ windows: the text offers readers a new view of their world, or a view of an imaginative world
- ◆ sliding glass doors: the text seems to allow readers imaginative entry into the world of the text

If candidates do not feel included by the texts studied, they may feel excluded by the experience of reading critically. Equally, if they see only direct representations of themselves in these texts, they might be encouraged towards a limited and narrow view of the world and its diversity. In summary, candidates should feel both included and challenged by the texts they read.

Teachers and lecturers should consider the following reflective questions when selecting texts to study for the critical essay:

- ◆ Does the text provide suitable challenge for the development of candidates' skills, knowledge and understanding at Advanced Higher level?
- ◆ Have candidates had a say in what they want to read?
- ◆ Does the text meet the needs of a diverse and multicultural candidate population?
- ◆ Does the text accommodate multiple perspectives, for example linguistic, religious, faith, ethnic, cultural, racial, gender, sex, sexual orientation, family, age, neurodiversity, disability?
- ◆ How would you address the ways in which the text might promote a certain cultural way of thinking, or view of the world?

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to:

- ◆ think critically about, and develop a critical stance towards, the texts they are reading. Taking a wider view, candidates increasingly need to be able to think critically in order to be able to judge information and content online
- ◆ have opportunities to respond to texts through discussion and examine texts from different perspectives or through different lenses. The exchange of responses, perspectives and ideas helps to refine understanding and develop critical skills
- ◆ develop conceptual skills (to deal with ideas) in addition to functional skills of analysis. It is important that the texts they study allow them to do this

As a mediator of the texts studied, the teacher or lecturer has a key role guiding discussion in a careful and sensitive way. This may be especially true in the case of problematic or challenging content or language.

As candidates read, or following reading, the teacher or lecturer could ask them to consider critical questions, for example:

- ◆ Whose point of view or voice is heard in the text? Why do you think the writer made this choice?
- ◆ Whose point of view might be missing? How would it change the text if their voice was heard?
- ◆ How does your personal experience and identity affect how you engage with the text?
- ◆ Do you think the text is trying to influence or change the way you think? If so, how?
- ◆ What do you think the writer wants you to believe or feel? How has the writer made you feel this way?

Some useful websites include:

Critical reading

[National Literacy Trust](#)

Professional practice

[Building racial literacy](#)

[Breaking the mould: principles for an anti-racist curriculum](#)

[Promoting race equality and anti-racist education: a curriculum which reflects diversity](#)

[Promoting race equality and anti-racist education: Literacy and English](#)

Text suggestions

[Scottish Book Trust: book lists](#)

[Penguin: Lit in Colour](#)

[Glasgow Women's Library](#)

Preparing for course assessment

Question paper: Literary Study

Candidates write one critical essay in response to one question selected from a range of optional questions on the genres of poetry, prose fiction, prose non-fiction and drama. A wide range of questions in each genre section of the question paper allows candidates to specialise in their study of texts and/or writers. The texts and/or writers chosen for the Literary Study question paper must not be the same as those used in the project–dissertation.

Candidates should explore the techniques of writing, in particular the genre-specific techniques used by the writers and texts studied as part of the course. Teachers and lecturers should encourage an awareness of a writer's style and voice. This allows candidates not only to conduct analysis of the techniques of writers studied, but also nurtures the growth and application of their own writing skills as required for the portfolio–writing. Candidates should explore the complexities of narrative, structure, and language, how writers use these to deepen meaning and effect, and how they relate to thematic concerns.

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to look for connections between texts studied. Candidates could ask themselves questions, for example:

- ◆ Are there common central concerns in a series of poems, or across two novels or plays?
- ◆ Are there common or differing aspects of style?
- ◆ Are characters treated, or drawn, in similar ways in two novels or two plays?
- ◆ Is symbolism a common feature? Or irony?
- ◆ Is the method of narration the same, or different?
- ◆ Does a poet adopt or use a persona? Why?

When writing a critical essay, candidates should plan their response, considering structure while determining a clear line of thought or argument. Within the essay, analysis should predominate: the candidate's argument should consist of a discussion of the key terms of the question, and contain a thread of relevant critical analysis. It should not be a series of unconnected opinions on the texts. In order to do this successfully, planning is required.

The first stage of planning might be jotting down thoughts in reaction to the demands of the question. Then notes might be made towards selection of appropriate evidence from texts (for example, key moments of conflict or tension, characterisation, key images or symbols), and how these relate to central concerns.

Essay structure	Candidates should:
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ address (and possibly explain) the key terms of the question, explaining relevance to the texts selected ◆ make connections with central concerns or themes ◆ outline the content or indication of the proposed argument or line of thought
Body of the essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ identify and explore the points or aspects raised in the introduction, most likely in separate paragraphs ◆ make sure all paragraphs are relevant to the line of thought and consist of relevant critical analysis ◆ draw direct evidence from the texts and analyse it in a way that is relevant to the argument ◆ avoid statements of unsupported asserted opinion, and establish links between paragraphs
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ make a suitable conclusion, which brings together the various aspects of the argument or line of thought, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — reference to the terms of the question — reflection or further considerations or scope for discussion

Question paper: Textual Analysis

The Textual Analysis question paper is essentially a test of reading. It is an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their skills of critical analysis on an unseen text from the genres of poetry, prose fiction, prose non-fiction or drama. Candidates are free to select the same genre in each question paper.

In preparation for this question paper, teachers and lecturers should give candidates opportunities to read widely across different genres, styles and periods. Teachers and lecturers can do this in a regular, informal way by introducing candidates to texts in extract form. Candidates could respond to these in group discussion, or in short, time-limited written responses. Examples for use might include:

- ◆ sections 1 and 2 from *The Man with the Blue Guitar* by Wallace Stevens
- ◆ the opening page from *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens
- ◆ extract from *Equiano's Travels* by Ouladah Equiano
- ◆ 'Not Waving but Drowning' by Stevie Smith
- ◆ *Oh what is That Sound* by WH Auden
- ◆ 'Screengrabs', from *Intimations: six essays* by Zadie Smith
- ◆ the opening of 'The Good and Faithful Servant' by Joe Orton
- ◆ 'The Two Drovers' by Walter Scott
- ◆ 'The Sick Rose' by William Blake
- ◆ 'Thinkability' from *Einstein's Monsters* by Martin Amis

After initial teacher-led activities, candidates could source and suggest their own extracts for discussion and analysis.

Candidates should try to engage fully with the text chosen, approaching it in a spirit of curiosity, armed with the critical thinking skills and critical vocabulary necessary to analyse what they have noticed. Direct annotation (for example underlining, highlighting, or circling) of the extract printed in the question paper is recommended. This helps with making selections from the text for analysis. A set of common analytical questions, or prompts, as a starting point might be useful to candidates as they begin to engage with the text, for example:

Poetry

- ◆ What is the form of the poem? Is there a recognisable shape or pattern? Is rhythm linked to this?
- ◆ Is there a speaker or persona? What is the poetic voice?
- ◆ Is there a clear tone, or does this shift and change? If so, where, and why?
- ◆ Is sound a prominent feature?
- ◆ Is imagery used? Is there a central image that runs through the poem, and is this image changed or developed?
- ◆ What are the keywords of the poem? Which words are given emphasis?
- ◆ What are the central concerns or ideas explored in the text?

Prose fiction

- ◆ What is the narrative structure? Is there an omniscient voice? Does the narrative voice come from a character in the fiction?
- ◆ How do the characters come across? How are they described and portrayed? Are you sympathetic towards them? Or not?
- ◆ What seems significant in the opening and the ending of the extract?
- ◆ Is there a particular moment of tension or conflict? Could this be described as a turning point?
- ◆ Is there any interesting use of language, for example imagery, word choice, sentence structure, or punctuation?
- ◆ What are the central concerns or ideas explored in the text?

Prose non-fiction

- ◆ What is the situation? What is being described or discussed?
- ◆ When is this taking place?
- ◆ Who is the narrator? Is it the writer or a persona? Is the point of view first person?
- ◆ What tone is used? Does this change at all? Why?
- ◆ Are there any interesting points of structure? Does it follow time sequence? Are flashbacks used?
- ◆ Does the writer use a particular style? Is imagery used, or particular word choice? Is there anything interesting about the sentence structure?
- ◆ Is the writer trying to put across a clear argument or point of view?

Drama

- ◆ How do the characters come across? How are they described and portrayed? Are you sympathetic towards them? Or not?
- ◆ What do you learn from the areas of dialogue or monologue or stage directions?
- ◆ How is the setting established (in place and time)?
- ◆ Are there moments of tension or conflict?
- ◆ Could there be a turning point?
- ◆ Is there use of dramatic irony?
- ◆ What are the central concerns or ideas explored in the text?

For the assessment, candidates' analysis should be selective and evidence-based, showing an awareness of how the writer actively and deliberately uses techniques to maximise impact, and to communicate central concerns. Candidates should use the key focus of the questions as an aid for what to look for, and for the content of a relevant line of response. Candidates should address the question, and aim to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of a range of literary techniques. For example, a response on poetry should offer more than a discussion of just word choice and imagery.

In their response, candidates should take an evaluative stance (pointing out the significance and effectiveness of techniques or aspects) and make confident use of critical vocabulary. Candidates should answer in coherent, continuous prose, either in essay form or in extended bullet points. Responses should be genuine analytical explorations of a text, discussing, for example, a range of potential meanings or questions posed by a writer. There is a possibility that candidates may try to narrow meaning down to a single statement; however, meaning may often consist of complex layers, and candidates should feel comfortable acknowledging a range of possible meanings.

Portfolio-writing

The portfolio-writing assesses candidates' ability in writing. Candidates should look for opportunities to practise the skills of writing and attempt to apply and link the skills they have learned from their studies of specific writers, and literary genres, in their own writing.

The teaching and learning of writing skills can be integrated into the work of other aspects of the course. Some genre specialism can help candidates here, as knowledge of genre features and techniques should be apparent in the portfolio piece. For example, if candidates intend to write poetry for the portfolio, they should be studying poetry in other areas of the course, such as textual analysis or literary study. Candidates could work towards the discovery of their own written 'voice' by attempts to imitate the style of a writer they have read closely. This might work best with writers who have very distinctive styles, for example Dylan Thomas, Ernest Hemmingway, and Harold Pinter.

All writing must show an awareness of shape, form and structure. In its most simple form this involves an opening, main body, and conclusion. It is worth considering the second part of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's well-known reflection on poetry, that it is 'the best words in the best order'. It would be a mistake for candidates to dwell too much on the first half of the statement. Shape, form and structure are, and should be, important aspects of the process of constructing a written text, and their effects can be significant.

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to extend their range of written expression. Experimentation in terms of purposes, genres, and contexts is desirable in order that candidates begin to discover types of writing best suited to their interests, development and self-expression. The ability to work independently is crucial here as candidates review and evaluate drafts of writing, eventually producing a crafted piece of work. However, introducing group work during the teaching and learning stage can allow and encourage candidates to review their work after input from their peers.

In broadly creative writing, candidates should be encouraged to make use of their imaginations, both for imaginative writing, and in their exploration of their own life experience. When writing about their personal experience, candidates should show signs of having engaged with, and reflected on, the experience. Reflection should be clearly apparent: the writing should not just be an account of events.

For non-fiction, it is essential that candidates become familiar with published literary non-fiction writing. The *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters* of George Orwell might be a good starting point, but candidates should be introduced to current quality literary non-fiction in periodicals such as *London Review of Books*, *The New Yorker*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, and *The New York Review of Books*. In non-fiction writing, candidates can explore issues of local, national or international importance, or issues which have personal resonance.

As with critical writing in the Literary Study question paper and the project–dissertation, a line of thought or argument is again important, and research may be a significant consideration. Research involves the careful sifting of evidence to find material which best fits the candidate’s line of thought. There may be some ‘blurring’ between the specified sub-genres: informative, argumentative and persuasive. For example, a piece of writing which has an essentially informative purpose might include argumentative or persuasive elements; personal reflection might also be appropriate. This is often true of feature writing, which tends to have an individual slant or style: here the candidate might vary the register, tone and voice in order to communicate nuances of meaning.

Critically reflecting on writing

Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to look critically at their own writing, and redraft or rework parts of their writing. Evaluative responses to complex and sophisticated literature for the Literary Study and Textual Analysis question papers, and the project–dissertation, help candidates to form considered critical judgements on their own writing. The following examples of reflective questions might be helpful to candidates:

- ◆ Is there a clear shape, form, structure?
- ◆ Does the language reflect central concerns?
- ◆ Is language used effectively?
- ◆ Is the choice of language interesting and engaging for the reader? Is cliché avoided, for example?
- ◆ Does the opening sufficiently capture the reader’s interest and attention?
- ◆ Is technical accuracy sustained throughout the piece?

Advice on authenticity and plagiarism

Most candidates will know that taking (or purchasing) an essay from an internet site or submitting work that is not their own is plagiarism. It is also worth emphasising that the following are also examples of plagiarism:

- copying and pasting from the internet without citing the source
- copying directly from a textbook without citing the source
- ◆ omitting quotation marks from quotations
- ◆ using software such as generative artificial intelligence

Candidates' portfolio-writing must be written in their own words unless they are quoting from a referenced source. If candidates are asked to explain what they mean by a certain expression or sentence, they should be able to do so.

It is important that candidates understand that, when they sign the authentication statement on the flyleaf, they are confirming that the work is their own, they did not use generative artificial intelligence and that any ideas or language belonging to someone else are properly acknowledged.

The most effective way to help candidates avoid plagiarism is to spend time discussing the issue (including the risks and pitfalls), and by teaching basic research skills along with the teaching and learning of writing. A good starting point might be with the definition of plagiarism used by SQA: 'failure to acknowledge sources properly and/or the submission of work that is not the candidate's own (this could be another person's work or work taken from a generative artificial intelligence source)'.

Project-dissertation

This is a large-scale project, which candidates are unlikely to have encountered before. It involves a significant amount of independent reading, followed by reflection and research, and then a substantial writing project. Candidates are likely to require support, especially in the early stages.

Choice of texts

Choosing texts for the project-dissertation is challenging for most candidates, as their own reading may not have been wide enough to allow for appropriate selection. This is where recommendations are invaluable: from the school or local librarian, teachers and lecturers, or parents and friends. Teachers and lecturers should encourage candidates to browse the school's English department book-store, the school or local library, or good quality local bookshops (where available).

Candidates can put forward initial selections for group discussion in class, or candidates could prepare presentations on their shortlists of possible texts. In addition to recommendations of individual writers, candidates might try to identify writers who deal with a theme or area of concern that they are interested in, or who write in a specific genre or period of interest.

It is important to remember that texts studied for dissertation must be untaught. Candidates cannot use the writers or texts they study in their dissertation in the Literary Study question paper. There are, however, no genre restrictions: candidates can use texts from the same genre as those selected for the Literary Study and/or Textual Analysis question papers.

Suitable texts

There is often uncertainty from candidates as to the suitability of texts chosen. There are no rules here, but texts and/or writers might be unsuitable simply because they do not support the level of complex and sophisticated literary analysis that the task requires. This is really the only stipulation, or barrier to selection. Due to the scale of the project, it is important that candidates follow their interests, enthusiasms and tastes when choosing texts. Candidates may need supportive guidance here from teachers and lecturers.

Dissertations are usually on more than one text. These texts should have a considerable amount in common to allow for genuine comparison and contrast, where appropriate.

Care should be taken over dissertations which deal with mixed-genre texts (for example prose and poetry), as pinning down an analytical approach that works across two genres can be challenging for candidates.

Note: it is no longer permissible to select media or language texts. All dissertations must deal with an aspect, or aspects of literature.

Below is a list of suggested authors. This list is by no means exhaustive and is intended only as a starting point for candidates.

Drama	Poetry	Prose non-fiction
Ayad Akhtar	Simon Armitage	Maya Angelou
Edward Albee	W H Auden	Hannah Arendt
Alan Ayckbourn	John Betjeman	Vera Brittain
Joanna Baillie	William Blake	Rachel Carson
Samuel Beckett	G Mackay Brown	Richard Dawkins
Alan Bennett	Elizabeth Barrett Browning	Joan Didion
Robert Bolt	Robert Browning	Richard Feynman
Bertolt Brecht	Robert Burns	Antonia Fraser
James Bridie	Lord (George G) Byron	Thomas Friedman
John Byrne	Geoffrey Chaucer	Adam Gopnik
Anton Chekhov	John Clare	Stephen Jay Gould
Caryl Churchill	Samuel Taylor Coleridge	Seymour Hersh
Brian Friel	Robert Crawford	Christopher Hitchens
Sue Glover	E E Cummings	Kathleen Jamie
David Greig	Imtiaz Dharker	Owen Jones
David Hare	Emily Dickinson	Naomi Klein
Henrik Ibsen	John Donne	Michael Lewis
Ben Jonson	William Dunbar	Louis Menand
Sarah Kane	Douglas Dunn	Jan Morris
Sir David Lindsay	T S Eliot	Willa Muir
Liz Lochhead	Robert Fergusson	George Orwell
John McGrath	Ian Hamilton Finlay	Jon Ronson
David Mamet	Robert Frost	Christopher Rush
Christopher Marlowe	Jen Hadfield	Eric Schlosser
Arthur Miller	Tony Harrison	Muriel Spark
Rona Munro	Seamus Heaney	David Foster Wallace
Sean O'Casey	Robert Henryson	Naomi Wolf
Eugene O'Neill	George Herbert	
John Osborne	Robert Herrick	
Harold Pinter	Gerard Manley Hopkins	
Lucy Prebble	Ted Hughes	
William Shakespeare	John Keats	
George Bernard Shaw	Rudyard Kipling	
R B Sheridan	Philip Larkin	
Tom Stoppard	Audre Lorde	
J M Synge	Amy Lowell	
John Webster	Norman MacCaig	
Arnold Wesker	Hugh MacDiarmid	
Oscar Wilde	Louis MacNeice	
Tennessee Williams	Andrew Marvell	
	John Milton	
	Edwin Morgan	
	Edwin Muir	
	Don Paterson	

Drama	Poetry	Prose non-fiction
	Sylvia Plath Isaac Rosenberg Christina Rossetti Siegfried Sassoon Jo Shapcott Percy Bysshe Shelley Sir Philip Sidney Iain Crichton Smith Edmund Spenser Kae Tempest Lord Alfred Tennyson Dylan Thomas R S Thomas Henry Vaughan Derek Walcott William Wordsworth William Butler Yeats	

Prose fiction		
Chinua Achebe Naomi Alderman Isabel Allende Martin Amis Maya Angelou Margaret Atwood Jane Austen Paul Auster James Baldwin Pat Barker Julian Barnes Saul Bellow John Berger André Brink Brontë sisters Charles Bukowski Anthony Burgess William Burroughs Octavia E Butler A S Byatt Albert Camus Truman Capote Peter Carey Lewis Carroll Raymond Carver Willa Cather Raymond Chandler	F Scott Fitzgerald Richard Ford E M Forster Michael Frayn Janice Galloway John Galt Elizabeth Gaskell Amitav Ghosh Lewis Grassic Gibbon William Golding Nadine Gordimer Alasdair Gray Graham Greene Andrew Greig Neil Gunn Thomas Hardy Nathaniel Hawthorne Ernest Hemingway James Hogg Alan Hollingsworth Aldous Huxley Kazuo Ishiguro Henry James Robin Jenkins James Joyce Miranda July Han Kang	Herman Melville Toni Morrison Alice Munro Vladimir Nabokov V S Naipaul Caleb Azumah Nelson Edna O'Brien Flannery O'Connor Michael Ondaatje George Orwell Edgar Allan Poe Richard Powers Thomas Pynchon Jean Rhys Samuel Richardson James Robertson Philip Roth Arundhati Roy Salman Rushdie J D Salinger Jean Paul Sartre Sir Walter Scott Will Self Mary Shelley Ali Smith Zadie Smith John Steinbeck

Prose fiction		
John Cheever	James Kelman	Laurence Sterne
Kate Chopin	Thomas Keneally	Robert Louis Stevenson
J M Coetzee	A L Kennedy	Bram Stoker
Wilkie Collins	Jack Kerouac	Douglas Stuart
Joseph Conrad	Jessie Kesson	Jonathan Swift
James F Cooper	Jamaica Kincaid	Amy Tan
Daniel Defoe	Hanif Kureishi	Donna Tartt
Kiran Desai	D H Lawrence	William Thackeray
Philip K Dick	Raven Leilani	William Trevor
Charles Dickens	Doris Lessing	Anthony Trollope
E L Doctorow	Deborah Levy	Mark Twain
Arthur Conan Doyle	C S Lewis	John Updike
George Eliot	Sinclair Lewis	Kurt Vonnegut
Tan Twan Eng	Eric Linklater	Alice Walker
Bernadine Evaristo	Bernard MacLaverly	Evelyn Waugh
Jenni Fagan	Cormac McCarthy	H G Wells
William Faulkner	Ian McEwan	Irvine Welsh
Sebastian Faulks	William McIlvanney	Edith Wharton
Elena Ferrante	Norman Mailer	Jeanette Winterson
Henry Fielding	Bernard Malamud	Tom Wolfe
	Hilary Mantel	Virginia Woolf
		Hanya Yanagihara
		Banana Yoshimoto

The task

No element of a dissertation is more crucial than the line of argument, or task. The task determines what the dissertation will involve. The degree to which the chosen task is successfully completed is a measure of the success of the dissertation as a whole. Candidates should choose tasks which specify aspects that they are genuinely interested in.

The primary purpose of the dissertation is to analyse and evaluate literary technique. Teachers and lecturers must remind candidates to avoid long passages of narrative with minimal analysis. The choice of task is vital in ensuring that candidates carry out analysis. The main thing is to proceed with a tightly analytical literary focus, and to take care that the scope of the task is manageable. Central concerns, characterisation, or literary techniques are good starting points when constructing a task. Tasks should not allow in material which is too sociological, historical, or biographical.

A precise defining of the scope of the dissertation is the aim here, and care should be taken not to make tasks too vague or imprecise, for example 'An examination of the theme of human relationships in X and Y'.

Below are some sample dissertation tasks, with commentary:

An analysis of the theme of transience and permanence in *The Odes of John Keats*.

A clear and succinct task.

I wish to analyse and evaluate the way in which two authors use the technique of twin or multiple narratives in order to convey theme: *The Collector* by John Fowles; *Talking it Over* by Julian Barnes.

This is a reasonable task. The dissimilar nature of the chosen texts is overcome by the focus being on the technique, rather than 'the stories'. In addition, the task demands that the candidate engage in analysis.

The erring female in late nineteenth-century fiction: authorial sympathy but the inevitability of retribution: *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert and *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy.

A clear line of argument is apparent here.

Themes of omniscience and control in two early novels of John Fowles: *The Collector* and *The Magus*.

Both texts clearly deal with different aspects of 'omniscience and control'; therefore, there is scope for relevant analysis.

The fiction of post-apocalypse. An analysis of the literary techniques involved in conveying the reality of life after the collapse of society as we know it, with particular reference to language and myth: *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy; *Riddley Walker* by Russell Hoban.

The dissimilarities between the texts, the demands made on the reader by the latter text, and the candidate's chosen focus of attention, make this a demanding dissertation topic but with great potential.

How John Webster depicts the role of women in Jacobean society in *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*.

This task is acceptable, however the candidate should be careful to restrict the scope of the dissertation to literary analysis.

Further examples are available on SQA's [Understanding Standards website](#).

Approach

It is important that teachers and lecturers offer candidates clear parameters within which to conduct the project–dissertation. After choosing and reading their texts and defining the task, candidates must narrow their responses to, and ideas about, the texts in order to suit the tight focus of the task. This might require some support and guidance from the teacher or lecturer. Ideally, candidates should do this as early in the course as possible. Then follows a process of evidence gathering. Where possible, direct annotation of the text or using sticky notes might help candidates here, especially with the navigation of large texts. Once candidates have found sufficient evidence, and drawn up a plan, the writing project can begin.

Candidates should allow sufficient time before submission for reflecting on feedback on a draft, redrafting and proofreading. Below is an example of a staged process.

Project–dissertation process	Suggested timeline
Choosing text(s)	Pre-summer holiday
Reading text(s)	Summer holiday
Choosing the task	August
Selecting evidence and compiling detailed notes	September to October
Planning the dissertation (for example structure, outline)	October onwards
Writing the dissertation	October onwards
Reviewing and reflecting on feedback	February
Proofreading and checking references and bibliography	March

Secondary sources

Secondary sources, in the form of critical books or journals, can be useful in helping candidates to develop a considered critical commentary on their task and texts. Experience in this area is also worthwhile preparation for future study in further or higher education. Teachers and lecturers should emphasise to candidates that their ideas and a genuine response are required. Candidates should be discouraged from thinking that critics have custody of the ‘right answers’.

Any reference to critical works should have clear reference to the candidate’s task, and candidates must not present secondary source material without commentary. Candidates need to engage with the secondary material and integrate it into a line of thought.

The following are useful places to look for secondary sources:

Libraries

Candidates could start looking for appropriate secondary sources in the school library, and a librarian is able to provide expert guidance. When and where possible, candidates can use university libraries, which often welcome visits from Advanced Higher candidates and provide access to a wide range of academic publications. The literary criticism section in a local library should also provide suitable materials.

The [National Library of Scotland](#) has a copy of most books published in the UK. It does not allow book borrowing, but it is free to join and members can request books for reading in the library building. Membership also gives access to many digital resources, which are available to download.

Norton Anthologies

The various Norton Anthologies contain excellent critical introductions to writers and literary periods. Literary extracts are accompanied with full critical commentary.

Online

There is a wealth of secondary sources available online. Teachers and lecturers should guide candidates and help them to distinguish between study guides and works of literary criticism, as appropriate.

There is often very useful material (particularly on newer texts) in the culture sections of the online versions of newspapers such as *The Herald* and *The Guardian*, or more academic publications such as the *London Review of Books* and the *Times Literary Supplement* (TLS).

[Google Scholar](#) is an online search facility that is free to use. A keyword search provides many suggestions of books and articles.

Use of secondary sources

To illustrate the use of secondary sources, teachers and lecturers could use an example of a hypothetical dissertation with the task of 'The literary treatment of suffering in two plays by Shakespeare: *Measure for Measure* and *King Lear*.'

A possible secondary source for this topic could be Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language*, Penguin Books, 2001. The following passage (p184) might be appropriate to the line of argument:

'...the subjects of *King Lear* reflect a much more general, indeed a universal tragedy. In *King Lear*, we are no longer concerned with an ethical problem that, however agonising, can be reduced to an issue of law or equity and discussed forensically. For *King Lear* is about suffering represented as a condition of the world as we inherit it or make it for ourselves. Suffering is the consequence of a human tendency to evil, as inflicted on the good by the bad; it can reduce humanity to a bestial condition, under an apparently indifferent heaven. It falls, insistently and without apparent regard for the justice they so often ask for, so often say they believe in, on the innocent; but nobody escapes. At the end the punishment or relief of death is indiscriminate. The few survivors, chastened by this knowledge, face a desolate future.'

The candidate could choose to use the information and ideas from this secondary source in one of two ways. Firstly, the candidate might use direct quotation as below:

'Although much of *King Lear*'s suffering can be attributed to his own actions, it cannot be denied that much is inflicted on him directly by Goneril and Regan. Should we conclude from this that Shakespeare wants us to view the characters Goneril and Regan as evil? As Frank Kermode observed:

*"Suffering is the consequence of a human tendency to evil, as inflicted on the good by the bad"*¹

¹F. Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language*, Penguin Books, 2001, p184

Alternatively, a candidate could decide to integrate ideas suggested by Kermode into the text of the dissertation in the form of paraphrase. For example:

'King Lear is a play in which characters are not divided along the lines of villains and victims. Frank Kermode, in *Shakespeare's Language*, suggested that the suffering in this play extends to all characters, and that there is no avoiding this painfully destructive force.'¹

¹F. Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language*, Penguin Books, 2001, p184

In this second example, clear acknowledgement of the source of the idea removes any possible doubts over authenticity or plagiarism.

A third, and highly desirable, approach is for candidates to take things a stage further and enter into critical discussion with the views of the critic cited. The secondary source then acts to strengthen the candidate's argument. For example:

'Unlike *Measure for Measure*, *King Lear* is a play in which suffering extends to almost all characters. In *Shakespeare's Language*, Frank Kermode suggested that suffering extends to all characters in the play, and that there is no avoiding the painfully destructive force. While this is generally true, there is no denying that there are some characters who suffer more than others, and who arguably deserve to suffer less: Gloucester being a notable example.'¹

¹F. Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language*, Penguin Books, 2001, p184

For all approaches, candidates must reference material taken from the secondary source.

Referencing

It is recommended practice to:

- ◆ use italics or underlining to indicate the titles of texts
- ◆ set in from the margin all quotations of more than one line so that they are clearly distinguishable from the text of the dissertation
- ◆ use footnotes and page references where appropriate to identify quotations from and references to primary sources
- ◆ use footnotes and page references at all times to identify and acknowledge quotations from, references to, and information or ideas gleaned from secondary sources
- ◆ provide an accurate bibliography
- ◆ give footnote and bibliography references in the following form:
D. Gifford and D. McMillan, *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, EUP, 1997.

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

Teachers and lecturers should identify opportunities throughout the course for candidates to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

Candidates should be aware of the skills they are developing, and you can provide advice on opportunities to practise and improve them.

SQA does not formally assess skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

There may also be opportunities to develop additional skills depending on the approach centres use to deliver the course. This is for individual teachers and lecturers to manage.

Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work	Approaches for learning and teaching
<p>1 Literacy</p>	<p>1.1 Reading</p> <p>Develop this skill through activities that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ involve a wide range of texts, including fiction and non-fiction ◆ use discussion to help candidates engage with texts, identify the ideas and attitudes which are expressed and/or implied, and develop an appreciation of the literary techniques employed by writers ◆ focus on the audience(s) and purpose(s) of texts, recognising that these may be multiple <p>1.2 Writing</p> <p>Encourage candidates to plan and to reflect on their writing by using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ a range of preparation strategies ◆ peer discussion, where they consider the genre, audience(s) and purpose(s) for their writing, and the effectiveness of their writing <p>To improve their writing, candidates should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ discuss structure and layout ◆ plan at paragraph and whole-text levels, using topic and concluding sentences ◆ consciously develop complex and sophisticated vocabulary, and a growing awareness of literary techniques ◆ focus on developing technical skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling

Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work	Approaches for learning and teaching
	<p>1.3 Listening and talking</p> <p>Wherever appropriate, encourage candidates to develop spoken language skills. Activities may involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ discussing the central concerns of a text ◆ presenting a line of thought in response personal reading ◆ paraphrasing, summarising and clarifying the responses of others in order to develop their own thinking
<p>5 Thinking skills</p>	<p>5.3 Applying</p> <p>Encourage candidates to apply the above skills in order to consolidate their knowledge and understanding of language and literature.</p> <p>Strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 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 <p>5.4 Analysing and evaluating</p> <p>Encourage candidates to make the skills of analysing and evaluating part of their everyday activities.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ tutorial-type discussion on the effectiveness of different types of writing ◆ comparative exercises on the development of their own writing <p>5.5 Creating</p> <p>Encourage candidates to study the range of strategies used by writers to create meaning, and to aspire to this creativity in their own writing.</p>

Useful websites

The below list may provide resources suitable for the Advanced Higher English course.

[SQA Advanced Higher English past papers](#)
[SQA Understanding Standards](#)
[SQA Advanced Higher English course reports](#)
[SQA English common questions](#)
[National e-Learning Offer](#)
[Scottish Poetry Library](#)
[The Association for Scottish Literature](#)
[Google Scholar](#)

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	Course support notes added as appendix.	May 2019
3.0	Updated to reflect portfolio–writing requirement reduced to one piece of writing.	May 2023
4.0	In the course support notes, guidance on text selection added to the ‘Approaches to learning and teaching’ section, and amendments made to list of suggested writers for the project–dissertation in the ‘Preparing for course assessment’ section.	September 2023
5.0	Updated to reflect changes to conditions of assessment for the portfolio–writing.	May 2024

Note: please check SQA’s website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.