



Common questions about National 3, National 4, National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher English

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Arrangements for session 2020–21

The questions in this section are on the course modifications relating to session 2020–21. This section should be read first as the content temporarily supersedes some information in the rest of the document.

What are the changes to National 3 and National 4 English for session 2020–21?

In National 3, there is no requirement to assess talking in the Producing Language and Literacy component units.

In National 4, there is no requirement to assess talking in the Creation and Production and Literacy component units. There is also a modification to the added value unit, as follows:

- ◆ assessment standard 1.4 ‘responding to oral questions relevant to the topic’ does not need formally assessed and will not be subject to external verification.

Why have these changes been made?

The modifications have been made in recognition of the potential loss of learning and teaching time in centres this session because of COVID-19. They are intended to support teachers, lecturers and candidates by reducing some of the class time needed for the assessment of these areas.

How will the change help teachers, lecturers and candidates?

Depending on the approach teachers and lecturers take to the added value unit, a significant amount of class time can be spent on the assessment of candidate responses to oral questions in assessment standard 1.4.

The decision not to assess talking this session, in alignment with the decision regarding spoken language, was taken to maximise available learning and teaching time, and take into account the constraints caused by public health guidance.

How will National 5 English be assessed and awarded in session 2020–21?

Following the Deputy First Minister’s announcement on awarding in 2020–21, there will be no external assessment of National 5 courses this year — either by an exam or by coursework.

National 5 courses will now be assessed using an alternative certification approach. This will be based on teacher and lecturer judgement supported by assessment resources and quality assurance. SQA has published broad guidance on evidence gathering and estimation in [National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates](#).

For further information please refer to the [National 5 English guidance on gathering key evidence for producing estimates in session 2020–21](#).

How many pieces of evidence are required to inform estimate judgements for National 5 English?

A holistic review of a candidate's performance in National 5 English should have as its focus **four** key pieces of evidence. One from each of the following:

- ◆ Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation
- ◆ Scottish text
- ◆ Critical essay
- ◆ Writing

Supplementary, naturally occurring evidence can also contribute to a holistic judgement.

Do you have to compile a portfolio–writing and assess spoken language for National 5 in 2020–21?

Although spoken language and writing skills are central to all English courses, there is no requirement to assess spoken language, or compile a portfolio–writing for National 5 English in session 2020–21. However, writing skills should be part of a holistic review of a candidate's performance in order to inform an estimate decision. This can be done from one piece of writing.

What assessment resources will SQA provide to support teachers and lecturers for session 2020–21?

SQA will provide question papers (Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation, and Critical Reading) for session 2020–21, which you can use when gathering evidence to support your estimates. Question papers will be published on SQA's secure website.

Where can I find National 5 English exemplification to support my review of a candidate's performance?

National standards are exemplified through examples of candidates' responses and assessment commentaries on [SQA Understanding Standards English National 5 web page](#).

In SQA Understanding standards website, you can access English portfolio submissions and question paper responses across a range of different marks, which you can use to benchmark against and to help understand how marks are awarded.

What are the changes to Higher English for session 2020–21?

The following modifications apply to Higher English for session 2020–21:

- ◆ The portfolio–writing will contain one piece of writing (either broadly creative or broadly discursive). The portfolio piece will be marked out of 15, but the 30% weighting for this component will remain. The word count remains the same, at no more than 1,300 words.
- ◆ Assessment of the performance–spoken language will not be mandatory. Entries and results will not be required for course certification and evidence does not need to be gathered for the purposes of internal moderation and/or verification.

There are no changes to the question papers.

Why have these changes been made?

The changes have been made in recognition of the potential loss of learning and teaching time this session because of COVID-19. They are intended to support teachers, lecturers and candidates by reducing some of the class time needed for the assessment of spoken language and in the production of a second portfolio piece.

What impact will these changes have on Higher English?

Talking and listening skills are fundamental to Higher English courses and, although spoken language will not be formally assessed in session 2020–21, centres are encouraged to continue to develop these skills where there are opportunities to do so. Discussion can be an effective contributor to learning, and its integration into all areas of the course is encouraged, where appropriate.

Writing skills will still be developed and assessed through the portfolio. Only one piece is required for final submission this session. This can be either broadly creative or broadly discursive, and it is important that personalisation and choice is offered to candidates here.

Centres are reminded that the conditions of assessment remain unchanged in terms of the level of support and reasonable assistance that can be offered in the planning and preparation of the portfolio piece. This is detailed in the 'Reasonable assistance' section in the Higher English course specification on the [Higher English subject page](#).

Which template should we use for the portfolio–writing this session?

The template (Word or Google Docs) is unchanged and can be found in the 'Coursework' tab on the [Higher English subject page](#). Please read the accompanying document *Instructions for the submission of Higher English coursework 2020–21*.

What are the changes to Advanced Higher for session 2020–21?

The portfolio–writing will contain only **one** piece (from any genre). The portfolio piece will be marked out of 15, but the 30% weighting for this component will remain. The advice on the length of the piece of writing remains the same, with no specified word count, but it should be appropriate to purpose and genre.

Why has this change been made?

The Advanced Higher course encourages independent learning and has an emphasis on self-directed study. This was acknowledged in the technical consultation, but for reasons of equity across National Courses and to address concerns about lost learning and teaching time, the modification to the portfolio was made in line with similar changes at other levels. The change is intended to support teachers, lecturers and candidates by reducing the amount of coursework required at this level.

Are there changes to any other units?

In session 2020–21, there is no requirement to assess talking skills in the following English and Literacy freestanding units:

- ◆ Literacy SCQF levels 5
- ◆ Creation and Production SCQF levels 5 and 6

Why has this change been made?

This change is in line with the removal of the requirement to assess spoken language in National 5 and Higher English courses. Talking skills are fundamental to English and Literacy courses. Talking does not need to be formally assessed in session 2020–21; however, centres are encouraged to continue to develop these skills where there are opportunities to do so. Discussion can be an effective contributor to learning, and we encourage integrating this into all areas of the course, where appropriate.

Course assessment

Important notice about session 2020–21

All references to external assessment of National 5 in this section do not relate to session 2020–21, and do not take account of modifications to National Courses in English. Please ensure that you've read the above section 'Arrangements for session 2020–21' first.

What advice is given about preparing candidates for the final question in the National 5 and Higher Scottish texts section in the Critical Reading question papers?

You can find advice in the National 5 and Higher English course specifications, and in the course support notes in the appendix of the course specifications. There is also clear exemplification, together with marking commentaries, on [SQA Understanding Standards website](#).

Below is an extract from the Higher English course support notes:

When candidates are studying the texts of their chosen Scottish writer or Scottish text, they should be on the lookout for connections between short stories and poems, or between parts of a longer text. These connections may take the form of central concerns or themes, or may be aspects of a writer's techniques, for example characterisation, setting, word choice or imagery.

While preparing for the final question in this section, candidates must be aware that they must make a connection between the printed extract or poem, and at least one other poem or short story or part of a larger work. They must show how this connection operates in the printed extract, and elsewhere. To do this effectively, candidates have to make detailed references, and conduct precise analysis on these references.

Are candidates required to provide quotations in their answers to the final question of the Scottish texts section?

Direct quotations and references to text are both appropriate and acceptable here. The following advice is in the [Higher English Course Specification](#) in the course support notes:

In candidates' responses for the Critical Reading question paper, they are required to make reference to the texts which they have studied. A reference does not have to take the form of a quotation. A reference might be:

- ◆ a summary of what a character in a play, novel or short story has said
- ◆ a summary of a significant event or a moment
- ◆ an aspect of conflict
- ◆ a description of aspects of setting, or comments on characterisation, for example a character's mental state or feelings

Where can I find exemplars and commentaries?

Candidate exemplars for all levels and course assessment components are available on [SQA Understanding Standards website](#).

If we decide to study poetry, and choose Norman MacCaig, do we have to study all of the set poems?

Each author on the set text list of Scottish writers at National 5 and Higher has to be read in its entire specification. If you choose Norman MacCaig then you must study all six poems. Candidates will not know which poem or extract will be the focus of the question (nor which others might be relevant to the subject of the final question), so could only meet this requirement by knowing all of the texts.

Must candidates only refer to poems or short stories from the current list when responding to the final question of the Scottish Set texts section?

Yes, candidates must construct their responses to the final question of the Scottish texts section using the current list. Centres should prepare candidates using the current set text list.

In January 2017, SQA published the refreshed Scottish set text list for National 5 and Higher English, for use in session 2018–19 onwards. Publication of the refreshed list followed a period of consultation with teachers, lecturers, and other relevant bodies. A copy of the refreshed list is available on the [English subject page](#).

The list is reviewed and refreshed periodically to ensure it remains relevant and to allow new texts to be introduced. There are no plans to begin a period of consultation at present, the position on this will be reviewed in 2021.

Teachers and lecturers still have freedom to select texts for the critical essay section, meaning candidates study a range of literature at National 5 and Higher English.

Are candidates permitted to refer to the remainder of an extracted poem or short story for the final question of the Scottish texts section?

Essentially, the final questions of the Scottish texts section in both National 5 and Higher assess candidates' skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to the area of Scottish literature that they have studied (be it a play, novel, or series of short stories or poems). Here is an example from National 5 (2018), of a final question on Donovan:

'By referring to this extract and to at least one other story by Donovan, show how important relationships are explored.'

The question asks candidates to refer to and to consider the printed extract, and then to apply their knowledge of the other Donovan stories. Short stories operate in the same way as poems in the final question — candidates deal with the printed extract, and with at least one of the other poems or short stories.

Once candidates have dealt with the extract, they should be looking to at least one of the other three short stories, not to the remainder of the story from which an extract is taken.

How many poems or short stories have to be compared for the National 5 or Higher Scottish texts section final question?

The requirement is to refer to at least one other poem or short story — so it can be one or two, or more.

I am using an old edition of the play *Tally's Blood* for National 5 English. The new edition is slightly different. Does this matter?

No. There is a new edition of the play that is different in that act 2, scene 5 was removed from the text in the Hodder Gibson publication. This was at the request of the author. In light of this, SQA does not use the original act 2, scene 5 as an extract for the purposes of the question paper. It is, of course, perfectly acceptable for a candidate to make reference to this scene as part of an answer to the final question in the textual analysis if they have studied an earlier edition.

There are variations in some of the published editions of works from the Scottish set text list. Does SQA recommend certain editions?

SQA is aware of these variations. In an acknowledgement that English departments may possess a number of different editions, SQA does not recommend specific editions. However, SQA takes extracts from the most up-to-date versions of the text, where possible. This allows for cases (such as the one above) where a writer decides to revise a text. Marking will not disadvantage candidates who have studied a different edition from that printed in the question paper.

For Higher English, can a candidate answer on a prose set text (for example Jekyll and Hyde) and then choose a critical essay question from the prose non-fiction section?

No. A candidate who answers on a text in the prose section of Scottish texts section cannot then choose an essay question from either the prose or prose non-fiction sections. This is made clear in the question paper where it states for each prose text: *'If you choose this text you may not attempt a question on prose (fiction or non-fiction) in section 2.'*

Can a candidate submit more than one poem, if they are submitting poetry for the portfolio?

Candidates should submit one piece of writing from any given genre. A series of poems on a related topic or theme would be acceptable, but is marked as one piece. The length should be appropriate to purpose; however, brevity is expected given the concentration of language that is characteristic of poetry.

Can a candidate submit the same portfolio as the previous year for external assessment?

A previous folio submission could be used as a starting point or stimulus, but candidates are strongly advised to revisit their work and make improvements. It is also important to note that there are distinct differences in terms of challenge, difficulty and marking criteria between SCQF levels. A candidate's coursework must meet the requirements for the SCQF level that they are being presented for.

Where can I find the templates for the National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher portfolio-writing, and the Advanced Higher project-dissertation?

You can find the templates and submission instructions on the [English subject pages](#) for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher under the 'Coursework' tab.

Which genres of writing should be covered in the Advanced Higher portfolio-writing?

For the Advanced Higher portfolio-writing, candidates have to produce two pieces of writing from the following genres: persuasive, informative, argumentative, reflective, poetry, prose fiction, or drama. There is no requirement to write both a broadly creative piece and a broadly discursive piece but each piece of writing must be from a different genre. For example, it is perfectly acceptable for a candidate to write a reflective piece and a poem, or a persuasive piece and an informative piece.

What is the word count for the project-dissertation?

From session 2019–20, the word count for the dissertation must be between 2,500 and 3,500 words.

How many texts should be covered for the Advanced Higher project–dissertation and Literary Study question paper?

For the Literary Study question paper, the course specification gives the following advice.

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

For literary study, please also refer to [published past papers](#).

For the project–dissertation, the course specification offers these suggestions:

- ◆ 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

Can candidates study a text for the project–dissertation by a writer they have studied in class for the Literary Study question paper?

No. Candidates cannot use writers or texts studied in their project–dissertation in the Literary Study question paper. Due to the focus on independent learning in Advanced Higher courses, and the coursework tasks in particular, writers and/or texts studied for the project–dissertation cannot be taught.

Are there any genre restrictions in the Advanced Higher English course?

Advanced Higher is an opportunity for candidates to specialise and, as a result, there are no genre restrictions. For example, it is possible for a candidate to answer a question from the poetry section in both the Literary Study and Textual Analysis question papers as well as submitting a dissertation on a group of poems.

Can candidates use media or language texts for the project–dissertation?

No, candidates cannot use media or language texts for their dissertations. The focus of Advanced Higher English is on literary texts.

National 5 and Higher English: performance–spoken language

Is it a compulsory requirement that all candidates complete the performance–spoken language?

Yes. The performance–spoken language is a mandatory part of the National 5 and Higher English courses. All candidates must successfully complete this component to achieve the course award at either National 5 or Higher.

Where do I find details about the performance–spoken language component?

Please refer to both the course specification, which has detailed marking instructions, and the coursework assessment task, which includes the assessment checklist. You can download these documents from the National 5 and Higher English subject pages.

Is there any exemplification of the standards required?

Yes. Video footage of candidates undertaking both individual presentations and group discussions, with accompanying checklists and commentaries at National 5 and Higher are available on [SQA Understanding Standards website](#). Your SQA co-ordinator can provide login details to view these materials.

Is evidence gathered for the performance–spoken language subject to verification?

Yes. Verification is carried out on a sample basis, as is the case for all internally assessed course components. Given that standards for talking and listening at SCQF levels 5 and 6 are already well established, it is likely that verification activity will be relatively light touch.

What evidence do I need to gather and/or retain?

A detailed checklist and/or a video recording of candidate performance is required. A video recording may be useful for internal moderation and/or staff development, and would also be acceptable for the purposes of verification as an alternative to, or in addition to, a detailed checklist.

How much detail should the performance–spoken language checklist contain?

The checklist must contain comments on all four aspects of a candidate's performance. It should include some examples of the candidate's spoken language, and indicate how the assessor has arrived at the assessment judgements.

Examples of appropriately detailed checklists are available on our [Understanding Standards website](#). Your SQA co-ordinator can provide login details to view these materials.

Do we have to use SQA's performance–spoken language checklist?

No. SQA has produced a checklist which covers all mandatory aspects of assessment for the performance–spoken language. If you wish to create your own checklist you must ensure that it covers all four aspects of assessment.

Would evidence gathered for the performance–spoken language also meet the requirements for the National 5 Literacy freestanding unit?

It is highly likely that evidence gathered for the performance–spoken language will also meet the assessment standards for outcome 4 (talking) within the freestanding Literacy unit at SCQF level 5. However, assessment of listening in Literacy is analysis-based and would have to be treated separately.

Is there a minimum amount of time that candidates' presentations or group discussions should last for?

There is no specified time requirement. Teachers and lecturers should give candidates sufficient scope to produce detailed spoken language and to achieve all four aspects of assessment.

Do candidates need to achieve all four aspects of the performance–spoken language at one time?

No, assessment can be holistic and evidence can be gathered naturally over several occasions. Assessment should take place at an appropriate time when candidates have acquired all of the necessary skills.

Do all candidates have to deliver a presentation?

You have the freedom to decide which approach to assessment best suits your candidates. Presentations and discussions are equally acceptable.

Is there a minimum number of participants required for group discussion?

Group composition may vary to suit the needs of all candidates. It may be appropriate to vary group numbers according to need. A group discussion is defined as a discussion involving the candidate and at least one other person; the other person could be the teacher or lecturer.

Can the performance–spoken language be approached in a cross-curricular way?

Content for the performance–spoken language (presentations or discussions) can be generated from any curricular area to suit the interests and needs of candidates.

Can we assess a candidate's listening skills by the questions they ask as an audience member during a presentation?

Yes. As long as the questions are relevant to key points from the presentation, then this approach is valid.

What assessment arrangements are available for the performance–spoken language?

For advice on assessment arrangements, please contact SQA's dedicated assessment arrangements team by emailing: aarequests@sqa.org.uk. Information on assessment arrangements is also available from our [Assessment arrangement web page](#).

Do I need to enter my candidates separately for the performance–spoken language component?

Yes, the performance–spoken language requires a separate entry. The appropriate code is found on the front page of the National 5 or Higher English course specification. Please contact your SQA co-ordinator for further information.

Is the result of the performance–spoken language banked?

Yes, when the component is achieved, the result is banked on the SQA system and will not have to be repeated or re-entered.

Does the performance–spoken language assessment need to take place in the same year as assessment of the other external components?

Not necessarily, if a centre has evidence of successful achievement from the previous year (in the case of a two-year course), this can be used as evidence of attainment in the year of presentation.

Can candidates do the performance–spoken language but not the rest of the exam?

No. Candidates can only be certificated for this component when they achieve the National 5 or Higher English course.

Unit assessment

If we want to use a unit assessment support pack but change the text would this have to go through prior verification?

Changing the topic does not change the assessment — the assessment standards are what matter. If you keep the same types of question and apply the same assessment standards, you do not need prior verification.

Are there time limits for completing unit assessments, and should candidates complete these under exam conditions?

No. Candidates do not complete unit assessments in formal timed conditions. The teacher or lecturer must exercise professional responsibility to ensure the evidence is the candidates' own work and procedures should be in place to check this.

Are there word counts for the writing assessments?

There are no word counts for these assessments. The priority is to ensure the assessment standards are met.

The only area of unit assessment where the number of words is taken into account is the Literacy units. For Literacy, minimum word counts apply:

- ◆ National 3: at least 80 words
- ◆ National 4: at least 300 words
- ◆ National 5: at least 500 words

Can candidates use dictionaries for assessments?

Yes, candidates can use dictionaries for all English and Literacy unit assessments.

Are candidates required to handwrite assessable work?

Candidates can type or handwrite their work in English and Literacy.

Can candidates be assessed in groups for talking?

Yes, there is no requirement for candidates to do individual presentations for the talking assessment. A group approach is perfectly valid. For assessment purposes, the definition of a group is two or more people. When assessing candidates in a group situation, teachers and lecturers must assess each candidate individually, and keep individual records.

How do I avoid over-assessment?

The best way to avoid over-assessment is to try to integrate unit assessments into teaching and learning programmes. Make sure your assessment questions (for example in reading and listening) give candidates opportunities to achieve the assessment standards. Pieces of writing, prepared for other purposes, can be assessed against the relevant assessment standards.

Units assess minimum competence at any given level, and candidates have to meet each assessment standard only once.

If candidates do not pass an assessment, do they have to repeat the entire assessment?

Only assessment standards that candidates do not achieve need to be re-assessed. Re-assessment could be asking a candidate to expand on an initially thin answer, or candidates could expand or extend an answer to a question by giving a spoken response, where appropriate. If you accept a spoken response, make a short, written note of the response for your records.

If candidates do not achieve any of the assessment standards, you have to make a judgement on whether they were ready for assessment at that level. Candidates would require further learning and teaching.

How do I know that my assessment judgements are valid?

Teachers and lecturers make assessment judgements all the time. They can ensure that they are on the right lines by comparing their own standards to published assessment exemplars, and by conducting internal verification. An accumulation of teaching, learning and assessment experience contributes greatly to this. SQA external verification provides supportive confirmation of a centre's assessment judgements. SQA also publishes exemplification of national standards through its Understanding Standards service on SQA's secure website.

The best support in this is discussion with colleagues, for example asking a colleague to have a look at a piece of writing, or a set of responses to reading or listening. Internal verification is a very important aspect of confirming the validity of your assessments.

If I didn't use unit assessment support packs exactly as published, should I be concerned about verification?

When submitting evidence for verification, make sure that you annotate clearly where and why you have made your assessment judgements. Verifiers do not expect the exclusive use of published unit assessment support packs. The main thing for verifiers is that you apply the assessment standards correctly. Sound internal verification procedures help to ensure that everyone has the confidence to make appropriate assessment judgements.

If you are in any doubt about the assessment that you have devised, or if your approach is radically different from the published unit assessment support packs, SQA provides a free prior verification service that gives feedback on your assessment materials. Please see the [National Qualifications Internal Verification Toolkit web page](#) for further information.

Where does literature feature in the National 4 English course?

English can be delivered within the contexts of literature, language and media. It is perfectly acceptable to teach literature for National 4 English. You can assess reading at National 4, and sometimes listening, through literature.

However, if you are assessing reading for Literacy at the same time as you are assessing it for English, the expectation is that you would use a non-fiction text for this combined purpose. You could, of course, select a non-fiction text that suited a themed study of literature.

If National 4 candidates are intending to progress to National 5, it is recommended that they study literature.

What are the main things to remember when conducting the added value assessment for National 4 English?

The added value unit acts as a 'bringing together' of the skills candidates learn in the course. In a way, it takes the place of an exam in courses where there is no exam.

It is an assignment where candidates investigate a chosen topic. There is personalisation here, but candidates should agree a topic and an aspect (a focus) with the teacher or lecturer. The context of the assignment is literature or media or language, or a combination of these.

Candidates have to choose two straightforward texts (one must be a written text) and then agree an aspect for reading and evaluation. The aspect could be, for example a theme, message or stylistic feature.

Candidates then produce a piece of writing, or a spoken presentation, communicating what they found out from their chosen texts: straightforward information plus some evaluation of how well their chosen aspect is covered and presented in the two texts. Candidates have to answer oral questions on what they found out about their chosen topic.

This must be done under some supervision and control, and teachers or lecturers should set deadlines and monitor progress to help candidates plan and carry out the task.

The outcome and assessment standards are:

- 1 Apply language skills to investigate a chosen topic by:
 - 1.1 Understanding and evaluating straightforward texts
 - 1.2 Selecting relevant information from the texts
 - 1.3 Presenting findings on the topic
 - 1.4 Responding to oral questions relevant to the topic

General guidance:

- ◆ texts chosen can be, for example, fiction, literature, non-fiction, videos, adverts
- ◆ a piece of writing can be, for example, informative, argumentative, a critical essay or report
- ◆ a piece of writing should be 700–800 words
- ◆ candidates can do spoken presentations rather than a piece of writing, but they must answer a set of questions on their topic
- ◆ teachers and lecturers must make reasonably detailed notes of candidates' responses to oral questions. These questions can come at any point in the process (you need to provide this for verification purposes)
- ◆ the defining language indicator for National 4 is 'straightforward'
- ◆ examples of assessed added value units are available on SQA's secure site via your SQA co-ordinator

When should I do the added value unit with my S4 National 4 candidates?

The intention is that added value comes after minimum competence. It is a demonstration of a candidate going beyond the acquisition of the course's basic skills. It is a sign for candidates that they have made significant progress, and therefore it is best to do this in the second half of the course. This can give candidates a sense of moving towards the natural completion of the course. Verification for added value is Round 2 and takes place in May.

How do I make it clear that I have carried out internal verification?

As part of the external verification process, there is an expectation that evidence of internal verification is visible. This could take the form of annotated 'double marking', or 'cross

marking', where a second assessor notes and comments on where assessment standards have been achieved. The common practice of using different colours of pen is useful here.

Comments, rather than just a series of ticks, make it very clear that a second assessor has reviewed an assessment. If you have had meetings where you have moderated standards, it would be helpful to include a brief note of the meeting along with your sample of assessment materials for external verification.

Literacy units

Do candidates need to pass the Literacy unit in order to gain the National 3 or National 4 English course?

Yes, it is part of the course specification. The Literacy units are mandatory within the National 3 and National 4 English qualifications.

How can Literacy be delivered alongside the National 5 English course, or the SCQF level 5 English freestanding units?

A separate entry is required for the National 5 Literacy unit if it is being delivered on its own, or as part of a package alongside the National 5 English course or the SCQF level 5 English freestanding units. Advice on how to do this, and how to generate appropriate evidence, is contained in the Literacy package 4 bridging pack, which can be found on SQA's secure website via your SQA co-ordinator.

The bridging pack refers to naturally occurring evidence for reading, writing and speaking for Literacy, which candidates could produce within the National 5 English course through classroom work, coursework and/or prelims. You need to map this evidence against the Literacy assessment standards, and it is worth highlighting the following:

- ◆ Listening: the National 5 English performance–spoken language does not cover outcome 2 (listening) in the National 5 Literacy unit. The listening element of the performance–spoken language is about responding to spoken language, rather than analysing it. You would need to generate evidence for listening separately if candidates are also doing the Literacy unit.
- ◆ National 5 Literacy outcome 1 (reading) asks candidates to comment on the effectiveness of a piece of reading (assessment standard 1.3). Candidates must make a personal response to the text and support this by making reference to the text.
- ◆ National 5 Literacy outcome 2 (listening) asks candidates to comment on the effectiveness of a listening text (assessment standard 2.3). Candidates make a personal response to the material and support this by making reference to the text.

You could meet assessment standards 1.3 and 2.3 above by inserting a question into your assessments for reading and listening. You could also take, and record, spoken responses from candidates. The bridging pack contains further detail.

National 5 Literacy is worth 6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 5. Achievement of National 5 Literacy guarantees automatic certification of the Core Skill of Communication at SCQF level 5. An A–D award in National 5 English will contribute to the Literacy measure on Insight.

Achievement of the Literacy unit at SCQF level 5 also contributes to the Literacy measure on Insight. Note: if a candidate achieves both the National 5 English course (A–D) and the SCQF level 5 Literacy unit they will only be recognised once on the Insight measure for Literacy.

Is it possible to combine the assessment of the Literacy unit with the assessment of the SCQF level 5 English freestanding units?

Combined assessment of Literacy and English is possible and is exemplified in the combined approach unit assessment support packs. However, this may not be possible where special assessment arrangements are required for candidates with additional support needs. Further information can be found on the [National Literacy units web page](#).

What are the implications for assessment arrangements for the Literacy units?

As described by [Specification 3](#), for National Literacy units:

- ◆ candidates will not be permitted to be exempted from any of the four assessed skills of reading, writing, listening or talking
- ◆ candidates will not be permitted to use a human reader or a human scribe for the reading and writing skills being explicitly assessed

You may use a wide range of other support methods. Please refer to the [Supportive practices for National Literacy Units](#) section of SQA's website for further information.

National Qualification questions and answers can be found on the [frequently asked questions section](#) of SQA's website.