



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

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## Arrangements from session 2023–24

The questions in this section refer to the changes made to course and unit assessment requirements from session 2023–24 onwards.

### What are the changes to National 3 and National 4 English for session 2023–24 onwards?

The National 3 English course returns to full assessment requirements from session 2023–24.

The National 4 English course returns to full assessment requirements from session 2023–24. This includes the requirement for candidates to complete the added value unit.

### What are the changes to National 5 and Higher English for session 2023–24 onwards?

We are keeping the following modification to assessment in the National 5 and Higher English courses from session 2023–24:

- ◆ portfolio: candidates produce one piece of writing that is either broadly creative or broadly discursive. We will continue to double candidates' marks out of 15, so that the portfolio continues to make up 30% of the course assessment

The option to produce either a broadly creative or broadly discursive piece of writing for course assessment encourages the exploration of different types of writing and allows for personalisation and choice. The conditions of assessment remain unchanged in terms of the level of support and reasonable assistance that centres can offer in the planning and preparation of the portfolio piece. This is detailed in the 'Reasonable assistance' section in the course specifications.

Note: the performance–spoken language assessment is required for all National 5 and Higher candidates for session 2023–24 onwards. For advice on assessment arrangements, please contact SQA's dedicated assessment arrangements team by emailing: [aarequests@sqa.org.uk](mailto:aarequests@sqa.org.uk). Information on assessment arrangements is also available from our [Assessment arrangements web page](#).

There are no changes to the question papers.

### What are the changes to Advanced Higher for session 2023–24 onwards?

We are keeping the following modification to assessment in the Advanced Higher English course from session 2023–24:

- ◆ portfolio: candidates produce one piece of writing from any genre. We will continue to double candidates' marks out of 15, so that the portfolio continues to make up 30% of the course assessment

The portfolio–writing contains only one piece (from any genre). The portfolio piece will be marked out of 15. The 30% weighting is retained by doubling the mark for one piece. 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.

## **Are there changes to any other units (SCQF levels 5 and 6) for session 2023-24 onwards?**

We are reinstating the requirement to assess talking in the following freestanding units from session 2023–24:

- ◆ Literacy SCQF level 5
- ◆ English: Creation and Production SCQF level 5
- ◆ English: Creation and Production SCQF level 6

## **Communication (NC) and Literature 1 units**

An alternative assessment approach was put in place for the units: Communication (NC) at SCQF level 6 (FA1W 12) and Literature 1 at SCQF level 6 (FA58 12) to help centres with the impact of COVID-19, and support the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment.

Assessment arrangement from session 2023-24 onwards have been published and are available on the [Higher English webpage](#).

### **Communication NC (SCQF level 6) FA1W 12**

We have permanently reduced the number of formal assessment points from two to one for each learning outcome (reading, writing, listening and talking).

### **Literature 1 (SCQF level 6) FA58 12**

We have returned to the full evidence requirements for this unit specification.

The changes relate to evidence requirements only and are intended to reduce the number of assessment points. The outcomes and range of skills assessed remain unchanged.

We have updated the unit specification for Communication NC and the combined Communication NC and Literature 1 assessment support pack to reflect this change.

We have recently published a quick guide to support the delivery of these units. This is available on the [Higher English webpage](#).

# Course assessment

## What is SQA's position on the use of Artificial Intelligence?

Further to our [message of 22 June 2023](#) regarding the use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in SQA assessments, we can confirm our position for 2023–24.

We must ensure equity and fairness for all candidates studying our qualifications.

For session 2023–24, candidates are not permitted to use generative AI tools to create outputs, for example text, prose, formulae, code, images, video or audio that they then submit as their own work for assessment tasks contributing towards an SQA qualification. These tasks include exams, unit assessments, coursework and portfolios. Doing so would constitute plagiarism and could result in awards being cancelled.

To support centres in ensuring candidates' work is their own, we have produced a [guide to authenticating learners' work](#).

Additionally, candidates must not include outputs from generative AI tools that are referenced as a source for assessment tasks contributing towards an SQA qualification. There are currently some significant issues regarding the reliability and validity of these outputs that mean referencing the tools could be inappropriate or disadvantageous to candidates.

We understand the need to embrace the opportunities that new technology offers and will continue to keep our position under review. Any changes to assessment practice will be based on evidence (including the views of centres and candidates).

The following sections provide further information on the reasoning behind our current position on the use of generative AI tools.

### Referencing

There is evidence, acknowledged by the creators of generative AI tools, that outputs from these tools can be biased, incorrect, and can fabricate information. Outputs can be inconsistent, even when using the same prompts, making it difficult for assessors to authenticate the sources. For these reasons, outputs from generative AI tools are not currently considered valid or reliable. Candidates studying towards SQA qualifications should use valid, reliable and authoritative sources of reference to support their work.

Using outputs from generative AI tools as sources may not meet the referencing requirements of specific courses and could impact the number of marks a candidate can achieve. For example, some SQA qualifications require sources to be recent and text output from generative AI tools can be difficult, or impossible, to date.

### Age restrictions

An important factor that could impact equity and fairness for candidates is the age restriction that the creators of generative AI tools have placed on their products. For example, users must be over 18 years old to use Google Bard. To use ChatGPT users must be over 13 years old, but if under 18, written consent from a parent or carer must be provided to Open AI (the creators of ChatGPT).

## Looking to the future

We understand that as technology advances, the barriers to using technology and the current flaws within a technology can be overcome. We acknowledge that in the future, generative AI will have a much greater impact on all our lives, including education and assessment. SQA welcomes the recommendations for AI use in the recently published [Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment](#) and we look forward to working with others in the education sector. Together we must explore opportunities while balancing the need to mitigate risks to the integrity of SQA qualifications and assessments, as well as ensuring equity and fairness for all candidates.

SQA will continue our work on the use of generative AI tools in the assessment context and look forward to their continued evolution. We will engage with centres and candidates around AI and publish further guidance where appropriate.

## 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. In their responses, candidates should answer with clear relevance, addressing all aspects included in the question.

## **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

## **What support materials are available?**

SQA's Understanding Standards website has candidate evidence and accompanying commentaries for all English components at all levels.

The [Understanding Standards English homepage](#) includes a summary of recently posted material. A good place to start are the overview documents for each level, which provide summary guidance on the materials available. Within the website, you can access English coursework 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.

Past papers and associated marking instructions are freely available from SQA's [past papers website](#). An additional resource, in the form of SQA question papers from 2020–21, is available on SQA's English homepage, and can be used by centres in the same way as past papers.

## **If we decide to study poetry, 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 to study poetry, 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](#).

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.'*

## **Does SQA offer advice about text selection for critical essay?**

Yes, SQA has added new advice and guidance on text selection to the course support notes section of the course specifications for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher English. This includes advice on addressing issues of diversity.

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

## **Can a candidate submit more than one poem, if they are submitting poetry for the portfolio (National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher)?**

For poetry, a single poem is treated in exactly the same way as any other piece of writing: one piece is required. It is acceptable to submit a group of related short poems, but these will be treated as one piece and will be marked as such. It is not necessary or desirable to provide any introductory explanation to the poem or poems submitted. 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 candidate could use a previous folio submission as a starting point or stimulus but they must rework it. It is not possible to submit the exact same coursework. This is the same policy for all subjects with coursework. 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 will be assessed against the marking instructions for the 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 genre of writing should be covered in the Advanced Higher portfolio–writing?**

For the Advanced Higher portfolio–writing, candidates have to produce one piece of writing from the following genres: persuasive, informative, argumentative, reflective, poetry, prose fiction, or drama.

## **What is the word count for the project–dissertation?**

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.

### **Can candidates use dictionaries during the National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher English exams?**

No, candidates cannot use dictionaries during any of the English exams.

## **National 5 and Higher English: performance–spoken language**

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

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](#).

To access material for the performance–spoken language, go to the [Understanding Standards homepage](#).

Click the ‘Login’ link at the top right of the page, and log in using the details which have been shared with SQA co-ordinators.

If successful, it will have ‘You are logged in as: [english]’ in the top right-hand corner of the web page.

Then navigate to the English National 5 or Higher page where you will find the performance–spoken language menu.

## **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](mailto:aarequests@sqa.org.uk). Information on assessment arrangements is also available from our [Assessment arrangements 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 SQA's 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.

## **Are the SCQF level 6 Communication (NC) and Literature 1 units the equivalent of a Higher English course award?**

The Communication (NC) and Literature 1 units are not, by definition, a group award but they can be delivered as an alternative to Higher English, as part of a centre-devised course. Some further and higher education institutions will accept the combination of both of these qualifications as an alternative to a Higher English course award. Please check entry requirements with individual education institutions.

Before deciding to deliver these units, we would always recommend that centres ensure they will fully meet the needs of their candidates. Where a candidate wishes to progress onto

further study at college or university, the centre or candidate should also check that the prospective college or university will accept these units as an alternative to Higher English. We have recently published a quick guide to support the delivery of these units. This is available on the [Higher English webpage](#).

### **Are there similar units to the level 6 Communication (NC) and Literature 1 units available at level 5?**

Yes. There is a one credit Communication unit (J4E4 45) and a one credit Introduction to Literature unit (J4G8 45). The specifications and a quick guide are available on the [Freestanding English units page](#). The units are further supported by assessment support packs, which are available on SQA's secure site.

We have recently published a quick guide to support the delivery of these units. This is available on the [Higher English webpage](#) as well as the freestanding unit's webpage.

### **Are the level 5 Communication and Introduction to Literature units equivalent to National 5 English?**

These units are each worth 6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 5. Achievement of the Communication unit gives automatic certification of the Core Skill of Communication at SCQF level 5.

These units hold no equivalency to a National 5 English course and do not qualify for the Insight literacy measure.

## 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.

## **Do candidates need to do the National 5 Literacy unit in order to be credited with level 5 Literacy on Insight?**

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.

You will find general questions and answers about National Qualifications on our website at [www.sqa.org.uk/faq](http://www.sqa.org.uk/faq).