



Higher English

Course code:	C824 76
Course assessment code:	X824 76
Spoken language code:	J00T 76
SCQF:	level 6 (24 SCQF credit points)
Valid from:	session 2018–19

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 you need to deliver the course.

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Course overview

The course consists of 24 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	Duration
Component 1: question paper Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation	30	1 hour and 30 minutes
Component 2: question paper Critical Reading	40	1 hour and 30 minutes
Component 3: Portfolio–writing	30	see 'Course assessment' section
Component 4: Performance–spoken language	Achieved/ not achieved	see 'Course assessment' section

Recommended entry	Progression
Entry to this course is at the discretion of the centre. Candidates should have achieved the National 5 English course or equivalent qualifications and/or experience prior to starting this course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Advanced Higher English, 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 along with achievement of the spoken language component.

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.

Language is at the heart of the Higher English course. Higher English is representative of a set of highly valued, and highly valuable, language skills giving candidates the opportunity to contribute to and to flourish within a communications-driven society.

The growth of language skills, and the acquisition of further language competence associated with Higher English, provides a gateway to further study in English literature and language and in many other disciplines. Increased confidence in reading critically, responding to, talking about, and writing detailed and complex texts ensures that candidates are ready for the demands of further and higher education, and equips them with many of the skills required for the modern workplace.

The course offers candidates further development of their abilities to communicate effectively, to think critically, and to be thoughtful and creative.

Literature is a strong focus of the course: it is a rich source of powerful examples of language in effective use. The study of detailed and complex literature offers candidates opportunities for personal, social, emotional, cultural, and economic growth and development. Engaging with a wide variety of literature, language and media texts exposes candidates to a diversity of people, places, events, thoughts and ideas, many of which are outside their own immediate experience.

Through the study of Scottish texts, candidates develop an awareness of Scotland's rich social and cultural heritage.

Purpose and aims

The course provides candidates with the opportunity to develop the skills of reading, writing, talking and listening in order to understand and to use language which is detailed and complex in nature.

The course offers candidates opportunities to develop and extend a wide range of skills with growing independence. The main aims of the course are to enable candidates to develop the ability to:

- ◆ read, write, talk and listen in detailed and complex contexts, as appropriate to purpose and audience
- ◆ understand, analyse and evaluate detailed and complex texts, including Scottish texts, in the contexts of literature, language and the media
- ◆ create and produce written texts and spoken language, as appropriate to purpose, audience and context, through the application of knowledge and understanding of detailed and complex language

The broad structure of the course assessment allows these skills to be demonstrated in a balanced way.

Candidates develop complex language skills allowing them to engage with and to process detailed and complex ideas, opinions, information, language forms and use, and to increase their ability to learn with independence.

Who is this course for?

The course is designed for those who are at the stage in their learning when they are ready to develop language and communication skills at SCQF level 6. They are likely to have gained an award in National 5 English.

The course provides a clear progressive pathway for candidates aiming to go on to study Advanced Higher English. It also provides preparation for future learning in other subjects, further and higher education, vocational training, employment, life and learning beyond the classroom.

The course is for those who wish to develop their language and communication skills through the exploration and creation of detailed and complex language, literature and media texts. It provides candidates with opportunities to develop aspects of learning which are transferable across many disciplines. These aspects include creative and critical thinking, spoken and written communication skills, interpersonal and team-working skills, and independent learning. The course promotes cultural and intellectual engagement and curiosity, and encourages lifelong learning.

The course is designed to be accessible and inclusive.

Course content

The 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 National 5 English. Progression routes cover all four areas of language skills: reading, writing, talking and listening, and throughout the course candidates apply these skills in different contexts. By the end of the course, candidates will display evidence of growth and competence in all aspects of language use.

With the exception of the Scottish text list, which offers a range of prescribed texts across the genres of drama, prose fiction and poetry, there are no restrictions in the selection of texts for study. Texts can be chosen from literature, language or the media, where the content, style and structure allows candidates to conduct detailed and complex analysis, and evaluation. In addition, texts should promote an extension of candidates' imaginative, emotional and intellectual reach.

Teaching and learning approaches allow for the acquisition of, and continued growth of competence in, key language concepts and skills. Candidates engage with language in use, and interpret some of its more complex manifestations.

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. Decisions as to teaching and learning approaches, based on the needs of individuals or groups, can include whole-class teaching, group discussion, seminars, and individual learning. Candidates are encouraged to learn with increasing independence: the portfolio-writing, for example, offers clear opportunities for individual learning.

Candidates are made aware of the need for depth of thought, clarity and accuracy in their own use of language, and for reasoned and detailed analysis, rather than assertion. Good study habits are to be encouraged in terms of research, using detailed and complex materials. This can include internet sources, where appropriate, and candidates must know the importance of acknowledging all research sources consulted.

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:

- ◆ development of key communication and literacy skills in reading, writing, talking and listening
- ◆ understanding, analysis and evaluation of detailed and complex texts in the contexts of literature, language and media, including Scottish literature
- ◆ production of detailed and complex texts in a range of contexts
- ◆ knowledge and understanding of language

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

Reading

- ◆ engaging with, considering, and selecting the main ideas of a text
- ◆ identifying and selecting detailed and complex information from a text
- ◆ analysing and evaluating a writer's choice and use of language
- ◆ evaluating the overall effects and impact of a text

Writing

- ◆ communicating detailed and complex ideas
- ◆ communicating detailed and complex information
- ◆ exploring, reflecting on, and communicating personal experience
- ◆ writing creatively and imaginatively in a literary form (prose fiction, poetry, drama, etc)

Talking and listening

- ◆ discussing and communicating detailed and complex ideas and/or personal experience
- ◆ communicating detailed and complex information
- ◆ using aspects of non-verbal communication
- ◆ demonstrating listening by responding to detailed and complex spoken language

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment

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

Reading, understanding, and responding to texts:

- ◆ two unseen passages of non-fiction writing
 - making comparisons between two unseen passages of non-fiction writing
- ◆ one text or extract from a specified and previously-studied Scottish text
 - making comparisons between texts or within a longer text from specified and previously-studied Scottish text(s)
- ◆ other literature, media or language studied as part of the course

Analyse and evaluate a writer's use of language:

- ◆ two unseen passages of non-fiction writing
- ◆ one text or extract from a specified and previously-studied Scottish text
 - making comparisons between texts or within a longer text from specified and previously-studied Scottish text(s)
- ◆ other literature, media or language studied as part of the course

Write, with consistent technical accuracy, in two forms:

- ◆ broadly creative
- ◆ broadly discursive

Demonstrate skills in talking and listening:

- ◆ participating actively in spoken language activities, for example group discussions or presentations

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, and can be found on the SCQF website.

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

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 provided in this document.

The course assessment meets the key 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 demonstrate the ability to:

- ◆ understand, analyse and evaluate two unseen detailed and complex written texts. This is assessed by a question paper
- ◆ understand, analyse and evaluate detailed and complex texts in the contexts of literature, language and/or media. This is assessed by a question paper
- ◆ apply language skills in the creation of texts. This is assessed through the portfolio–writing
- ◆ produce detailed and complex spoken language through the demonstration of talking and listening skills. This is assessed through the performance–spoken language

Course assessment structure: question paper

Question paper: Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation 30 marks

This question paper assesses candidates' application of their reading skills in the challenging context of unseen material and a limited time.

This question paper has a total mark allocation of 30 marks. This is 30% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

Marks are awarded for applying reading skills in understanding, analysis and evaluation to questions on two unseen passages.

This question paper has one section.

Candidates read and demonstrate understanding of two unseen non-fiction texts connected by theme. A series of questions based on the first passage focuses on their understanding, analysis and evaluation skills. A further question requires candidates to summarise and infer the main ideas of both texts.

This question paper gives candidates the opportunity to demonstrate:

- ◆ understanding of the writer's ideas and/or views by recasting content from the passage in their own words
- ◆ understanding of vocabulary in context
- ◆ analysis of language (word choice, figurative language, sentence structure, tone, punctuation, etc)
- ◆ understanding of text structure (opening, conclusion, development of argument, linkage, etc)
- ◆ evaluation of the writer's techniques or the overall impact of the text
- ◆ inferring meaning
- ◆ summarising: understanding of the writer's ideas through identifying and isolating key points or main ideas in one passage, and, through comparison, in both passages

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

- ◆ identify/explain: used to assess understanding and inference of a writer's ideas and/or views (accompanied by 'use your own words')
- ◆ analyse (how): used to assess the skills of analysis
- ◆ explain (the function of): used to assess understanding of a writer's use of structure
- ◆ identify (three key areas): used to assess the skills of summarising and inference (identifying the main ideas with accompanying evidence across two passages)

Setting, conducting and marking the question paper

This question paper is set and marked by SQA, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA.

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

Question paper: Critical Reading

40 marks

This question paper assesses the application of candidates' critical reading skills and their knowledge and understanding of previously-studied literary, media or language texts, including at least one Scottish text from the prescribed list.

This question paper has a total mark allocation of 40 marks. This is 40% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

This question paper has two sections. In each section, candidates must cover a different genre and cannot use the same text twice.

20 marks are available for each section.

Section 1 Scottish texts (20 marks)

Candidates apply their skills of understanding, analysis and evaluation to previously-studied Scottish texts from the prescribed list. This list is available on SQA's website on the English subject page. These texts are contemporary, 20th century and pre-20th century, and cover the genres of drama, prose and poetry. SQA refreshes the list as required. An extract from each writer is provided (with poetry this is the whole poem, where possible). Candidates select an appropriate extract or poem, and answer questions.

This section of the question paper gives candidates the opportunity to demonstrate:

- ◆ analysis of language (word choice, figurative language, sentence structure, tone, punctuation, sound, etc)
- ◆ analysis of characterisation
- ◆ understanding/analysis of theme
- ◆ analysis of how a writer achieves a particular effect or mood or atmosphere, etc
- ◆ analysis of overall text structure
- ◆ inferring meaning from what is implied by the writer
- ◆ evaluation of the writer's techniques or overall impact of the extract
- ◆ understanding and analysis of the remainder of the text or other texts

The following command words are generally used in section 1 of this question paper:

- ◆ analyse (how): candidates are required to demonstrate understanding of, for example characterisation, narrative, symbolism, theme or to analyse a writer's use of language (word choice, figurative language, sentence structure, tone, punctuation, sound, etc)
- ◆ explain (how): candidates are required to demonstrate understanding of key aspects, for example characterisation
- ◆ evaluate: candidates are required to demonstrate understanding of the effectiveness of text structure
- ◆ discuss: candidates are asked to show how the writer explores a given topic/theme, or uses a literary or linguistic technique, across more than one poem/short story, or a longer text in its entirety

Section 2 Critical essay (20 marks)

Candidates apply their understanding, analysis and evaluation skills to a previously-studied text from the following contexts: drama, prose fiction, prose non-fiction, poetry, film and TV drama, and language, by writing a critical essay in response to one question from a choice of three. Candidates must choose a different genre from the one selected for section 1.

Note: prose fiction and prose non-fiction are subsets of the same genre: prose.

Marks are awarded for their knowledge and understanding of the text, their skills in analysis and evaluation, and their construction of a critical line of thought. The essay must be relevant to the question throughout, and achieve minimum requirements for technical accuracy: few errors in spelling, grammar, sentence construction, punctuation and paragraphing and the ability to be understood at first reading.

The following main command words are generally used in section 2 of this question paper, and are always accompanied by an instruction to refer to appropriate techniques:

- ◆ discuss how
- ◆ explain how

These command words invite candidates to demonstrate their skills of understanding, analysis and evaluation. The expression ‘with reference to appropriate techniques’ serves as a reminder for candidates of the need to demonstrate skills of analysis.

The language questions ask candidates to identify and refer to ‘specific examples’ of language from their studies in this genre.

Setting, conducting and marking the question paper

This question paper is set and marked by SQA, and 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 Higher courses are published on SQA’s website. These illustrate the standard, structure and requirements of the question papers candidates sit. 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 for two different purposes: broadly creative, and broadly discursive.

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 each piece of writing within the portfolio.

Candidates produce two different texts: one text is broadly creative; one text is broadly discursive.

Candidates produce the portfolio independently, but the teacher or lecturer supports them to choose the focus, theme and genre of the pieces of writing.

Portfolio–writing overview

Candidates produce two written texts for the portfolio drawn from the genres identified in group A and group B.

One is drawn from group A and one from group B.

Group A — broadly creative, eg:

- ◆ a personal essay/reflective essay
- ◆ a piece of prose fiction (eg short story, episode from a novel)
- ◆ a poem or set of thematically linked poems
- ◆ a dramatic script (eg scene, monologue, sketch)

Group B — broadly discursive, eg:

- ◆ an argumentative essay
- ◆ a persuasive essay
- ◆ a report
- ◆ a piece of transactional or informative writing

Setting, conducting and marking the portfolio–writing

This portfolio–writing is:

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

Evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking. All marking is quality assured by SQA.

Assessment conditions

Time

Candidates are given the opportunity to demonstrate their writing skills at the most appropriate time in the course. That is, when their writing skills have reached the level of development and maturity required for Higher English. There is no time limit for this coursework, and the two pieces of writing can be gathered from across a period of time.

Supervision, control and authentication

The final writing of both pieces must be conducted under some supervision and control. This means that, although candidates may complete part 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 for 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 the pieces are genuinely their own work. Having the candidate present at the time of compilation is therefore a key step in the authentication process.

The portfolio-writing is a final summative assessment and when a candidate begins the process of drafting their pieces 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.

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

Ways to authenticate candidate evidence can include:

- ◆ regular checkpoint/progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ checklists which record activity/progress
- ◆ 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/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 to which candidates may have access. 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 acknowledge all sources consulted. Any sources consulted for discursive 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 planning and preparation of the pieces. Reasonable assistance may be given in general terms to a group or class (for example advice on how to find information), 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 is to be taken by teachers and lecturers to avoid too much intervention. If candidates require more than what is thought to be 'reasonable assistance' they may not be ready for assessment, or they may have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

The teacher or lecturer should read and provide feedback on one draft of a piece of writing before submission. Candidates are to be given the opportunity to improve on a first draft following consideration of this feedback. Candidates then submit their final piece.

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

It is acceptable for a teacher or lecturer to provide:

- ◆ an initial discussion with the candidate on the selection of a topic, theme, 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 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 draft of writing

Evidence to be gathered

The following candidate evidence is required for this assessment:

- ◆ one piece of writing which is broadly creative
- ◆ one piece of writing which is broadly discursive

Volume

The written texts produced by the candidates must be of no more than 1,300 words each, but full marks can be achieved in a shorter piece, if appropriate to purpose (for example poetry). There is no minimum word count.

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

Portfolio–writing marking instructions

In line with SQA's normal practice, the following marking instructions for the 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.

- 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 Candidates' writing is marked in terms of content and style.
- d 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

Markers must assess the piece in terms of content and style and arrive at a final mark.

For each of the texts, 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 almost matches the level above, the highest available mark from that band range should be awarded
- ◆ where the candidate's work just meets the standard described, the lowest mark from that band range should be awarded
- ◆ otherwise the mark from the middle of that band range should be awarded

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 mostly accurate and organised so that the writing is clearly and readily understood; spelling errors (particularly of high frequency words) are infrequent.

Markers are to use the following tables for each genre of writing in order to help them arrive at a mark. The band descriptors in the tables refer to the middle of each band range.

Writing which is broadly creative

	15–13	12–10	9–7	6–4	3–1	0
Creative: content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ strong attention to purpose and audience As appropriate to genre: ◆ strong creative qualities ◆ skilful command of the genre ◆ thematic concerns which are skilfully introduced and developed ◆ ideas/feelings/ experiences which are explored with a strong degree of mature reflection/ self-awareness/ involvement/ insight/sensitivity ◆ strong sense of the writer's personality and individuality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ clear attention to purpose and audience As appropriate to genre: ◆ clear creative qualities ◆ clear grasp of the genre ◆ thematic concerns which are clearly introduced and developed ◆ ideas/feelings/ experiences are explored with a clear sense of reflection/ self-awareness/ involvement/ insight/sensitivity ◆ clear sense of the writer's personality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ adequate attention to purpose and audience As appropriate to genre: ◆ adequate creative qualities ◆ understanding of the genre ◆ thematic concerns which are adequately introduced ◆ ideas/feelings/ experiences which are explored with an adequate sense of reflection and involvement ◆ adequate sense of the writer's personality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ limited attention to purpose and audience As appropriate to genre: ◆ limited creative qualities ◆ limited use of conventions of genre ◆ limited thematic concerns ◆ limited ideas/ feelings/ experiences explored ◆ limited sense of the writer's personality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ very little attention to purpose and audience As appropriate to genre: ◆ very few creative qualities ◆ very little use of conventions of genre ◆ very few thematic concerns ◆ very little evidence of exploration of ideas or feelings ◆ very little sense of the writer's personality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ no evidence of the skills required in terms of content, style and accuracy
Creative: style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ linguistic features of the chosen genre used skilfully to create strong impact ◆ confident and varied expression ◆ effective structure which enhances the purpose/meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ linguistic features of the chosen genre used to create impact ◆ clear expression ◆ clear structure which enhances the purpose/ meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ linguistic features of the chosen genre used adequately ◆ adequate expression ◆ adequate structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ limited use of features of the chosen genre ◆ limited expression ◆ limited use of structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ very little attempt at using language effectively ◆ very little use of structure 	

Writing which is broadly discursive

	15–13	12–10	9–7	6–4	3–1	0
Discursive: content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ strong attention to purpose and audience ◆ strong understanding and engagement ◆ evidence of skilful research and selection ◆ strong and sustained line of thought/ convincing stance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ clear attention to purpose and audience ◆ clear understanding and engagement ◆ evidence of careful research and selection ◆ clear line of thought/ engaged stance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ adequate attention to purpose and audience ◆ adequate understanding ◆ adequate evidence of research and selection ◆ adequate line of thought/stance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ limited attention to purpose and audience ◆ limited understanding ◆ limited evidence of research ◆ unclear line of thought 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ very little attention to purpose and audience ◆ very little understanding ◆ very little evidence of research ◆ confused line of thought 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ no evidence of the skills required in terms of content, style and accuracy
Discursive: style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ linguistic features of the chosen genre used skilfully to inform/argue/ discuss/persuade and to convey depth and complexity of thought/ objectivity/insight/ persuasive force ◆ confident and varied expression ◆ effective structure which skilfully enhances the purpose/meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ linguistic features of the chosen genre used clearly to inform/argue/ discuss/persuade and to convey thought/ objectivity/insight/ persuasive force ◆ clear expression ◆ clear structure which enhances the purpose/ meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ linguistic features of the chosen genre used adequately to inform/argue/ discuss/ persuade and to convey thought/ objectivity/ insight/ persuasive force ◆ adequate expression ◆ adequate structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ linguistic features of the chosen genre used in a limited way to inform/argue/ discuss/ persuade and to convey thought/ objectivity/ insight/ persuasive force ◆ limited expression ◆ limited use of structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ very little attempt at using language effectively ◆ very little use of structure 	

Course assessment structure: performance–spoken language

The performance–spoken language provides evidence of candidates' skills in talking and listening. This performance, which is part of course assessment, is assessed on an achieved/not achieved basis. It is a compulsory requirement for a course award in Higher English.

The spoken language performance comprises the skills of talking and listening. There are four aspects to the spoken language performance, and candidates must achieve them all. These are:

- ◆ employs relevant detailed and complex ideas and/or information using a structure appropriate to purpose and audience
- ◆ communicates meaning effectively through the selection and use of detailed and complex spoken language
- ◆ uses aspects of non-verbal communication
- ◆ demonstrates listening skills by responding to detailed and complex spoken language

In this assessment candidates have to do at least one of the following spoken language activities:

- ◆ Take part in a group discussion, or discussion-based activity, to which they contribute relevant ideas, opinions, or information, using detailed and complex language. Candidates must take account of the contributions of others and stay focused on the topic or task.
- ◆ Prepare and present a presentation. The presentation must be detailed and complex in content, and must be structured in a clear and relevant way. Candidates must answer questions from the audience at some point in the presentation.

Setting, conducting and marking the performance–spoken language

The performance–spoken language is:

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

Evidence is internally assessed by teachers or lecturers in each centre in line with SQA marking instructions and is externally verified by SQA. Separate information is given on arrangements for submission of evidence for external verification purposes.

Assessment conditions

Time

Candidates are to be given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in talking and listening at the most appropriate time in the course. That is, when their skills have reached the level of development and maturity required for Higher English. Please note that 'performance' is not to be taken as necessarily implying just one assessment occasion. A holistic judgement can be made on candidate performance based on a series of spoken language activities. There is no time limit for this coursework.

Supervision, control and authentication

The assessment is conducted under some supervision and control. It is important that the assessment environment suits the purpose and nature of the spoken language, as well as the needs of each candidate.

Resources

There are no restrictions on the resources to which candidates may have access. Candidates may produce a presentation or visual aids and may refer to notes or prompts, as appropriate to purpose and audience.

Reasonable assistance

The teacher or lecturer may support the candidate in topic selection, planning and management of the task. Reasonable assistance may be given in general terms to a group or class (for example choice of topic, advice on finding information, choice of stimulus texts), or may be given to candidates on an individual basis.

The term 'reasonable assistance' is used to try to balance the need for support with the need to avoid giving too much assistance. If candidates require more than what is thought to be 'reasonable assistance', they may not be ready for assessment, or they may have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

It is acceptable for a teacher or lecturer to provide:

- ◆ an initial discussion with the candidate on the selection of a topic, theme, texts, materials, etc leading to notes or preparation for a discussion or presentation
- ◆ some prompting during a discussion or presentation
- ◆ questioning during a discussion or presentation in order to elicit evidence of listening skills

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

- ◆ suggested responses which are specific to a candidate's task
- ◆ key ideas, or a specific structure or plan
- ◆ excessive prompting during a presentation or discussion

Evidence to be gathered

The following candidate evidence is required for this assessment:

- ◆ a detailed checklist which should be retained by centres for verification purposes

and/or

- ◆ a video recording of candidate performance. This 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

Volume

There is no stipulation as to the length of the spoken language performance.

Performance–spoken language marking instructions

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.

- Assess candidates' performance in terms of the following aspects of performance: deployment of relevant detailed and complex ideas/information, selection and use of detailed and complex spoken language, use of non-verbal communication, responses to detailed and complex spoken language.
- Using the detailed marking instructions for each candidate, the teacher or lecturer selects the description of performance which most closely describes the evidence.
- Assessment should be holistic. There are strengths and weaknesses in every performance; assessment should focus as far as possible on the strengths, taking account of weaknesses only when they significantly detract from the overall performance.
- On any one occasion, candidates may display ability across both 'Achieved' and 'Not achieved' descriptors. It is important for teachers or lecturers to remember that a holistic judgement can be made on a candidate's performance based on a series of spoken language activities.

The four aspects of performance

- 1 *Employs relevant detailed and complex ideas and/or information using a structure appropriate to purpose and audience.*

This could be broken down into three essential elements, all of which should be achieved by the candidate:

- ◆ The content can include ideas, opinions, reactions, information or reflection on personal experience and must be detailed and complex.
- ◆ Structure will vary depending on the type of performance (presentation or group discussion), and on audience and purpose. A presentation should have a clear introductory section, a sequenced body of content, and a suitable conclusion. In group discussion, structure might involve taking turns, acknowledging the chair (where appropriate), summarising, challenging, developing the views of others, etc. Content should be structured to enhance impact.
- ◆ Relevance to task, topic, purpose and audience should be maintained throughout.

- 2 *Communicates meaning effectively through the selection and use of detailed and complex spoken language.*

This could be broken down into two essential elements, both of which should be achieved by the candidate:

- ◆ Choice and use of vocabulary, register, tone, etc will be appropriate to the purpose and audience, and will allow for the effective communication of meaning.
- ◆ Clarity and accuracy (in terms of the use of language structures) will be sufficient to ensure that effective communication takes place.

- 3 *Uses aspects of non-verbal communication.*

- ◆ Non-verbal communication will be used by the candidate to assist communication and/or meaning, for example for emphasis, to indicate agreement.

Please note that teachers and lecturers should accept a wide and inclusive definition of what constitutes non-verbal communication.

- 4 *Demonstrates listening skills by responding to detailed and complex spoken language.*

- ◆ Here, listening is the focus. Teachers and lecturers should judge a candidate's performance in listening from the relevance/appropriateness of the candidate's responses to a group discussion, or from the relevance/appropriateness of the candidate's responses to questioning in, for example a presentation. Again, a holistic approach should be taken when making an assessment judgement.

Detailed marking instructions

All aspects of performance, as stated in the left-hand column, must be met by candidates if they are to achieve the Higher English performance—spoken language. Acceptable performance is described in more detail in the ‘Achieved’ column.

Please note that group discussion is defined as a discussion involving the candidate and at least one other person. The other person can be the teacher or lecturer.

Aspect of performance	Achieved	Not achieved
<p>Employs relevant detailed and complex ideas and/or information using a structure appropriate to purpose and audience</p>	<p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ can contribute a range of relevant detailed and complex ideas/views/opinions/information — contributions could be made through a presentation, a group discussion, or a series of discussion-based activities <p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ spoken language is structured effectively to enhance impact, and where appropriate, takes account of the contributions of others <p>Relevance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ attention to task, purpose and audience is sustained throughout the presentation, group discussion or a series of discussion-based activities 	<p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ ideas/views/opinions/information lack relevance, detail and/or complexity <p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ structure is not effective, and, where appropriate, does not take account of the contribution of others <p>Relevance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ attention to task, purpose and audience is not sustained
<p>Communicates meaning effectively through the selection and use of detailed and complex spoken language</p>	<p>Choice and use of language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ can select and use detailed and complex spoken language that is appropriate to purpose and audience <p>Clarity and accuracy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ can employ appropriate spoken language with sufficient clarity and accuracy to ensure that effective communication is achieved 	<p>Choice and use of language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ spoken language selected and used is not detailed and complex and/or is not appropriate to purpose and audience <p>Clarity and accuracy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ spoken language employed is unclear and/or is not sufficiently accurate to ensure that communication is achieved

Aspect of performance	Achieved	Not achieved
Uses aspects of non-verbal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ can employ appropriate non-verbal features to assist communication, meaning and/or engagement. These might include, eg facial expression, emphasis, gesture, eye contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ non-verbal communication is not employed
Demonstrates listening skills by responding to detailed and complex spoken language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ can give relevant responses to the contributions of others in group discussions or in a series of discussion-based activities <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ can respond relevantly to questions which follow, for example a presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ does not respond relevantly to others in group discussions <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ does not respond relevantly to questions which follow a presentation

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.

For guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs, please follow the link to the assessment arrangements web page: www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Further information

The following reference documents provide useful information and background.

- ◆ [Higher English subject page](#)
- ◆ [Assessment arrangements web page](#)
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 3–5](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ [Guidance on conditions of assessment for coursework](#)
- ◆ [SQA Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#)
- ◆ [Coursework Authenticity: A Guide for Teachers and Lecturers](#)
- ◆ [Educational Research Reports](#)
- ◆ [SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools](#)
- ◆ [SQA e-assessment web page](#)

The SCQF framework, level descriptors and handbook are available on the SCQF website.

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

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

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