

English Higher

Why take this course?

Higher English is a necessary qualification for many university courses, and a lot of employers will look for it as well. It offers the chance to study great works of literature – modern and ‘classics’ – as well as teaching a sophisticated appreciation of language, and the ability to use it effectively.

To succeed in this course ...

This is a very demanding course, which expects deep and subtle understanding and analysis of texts, as well as an ability to create sophisticated and stylish pieces of writing – some of them under considerable time pressure. The workload is heavy; an ability to work in a self-motivated way outwith lesson time and a willingness to engage in independent personal reading is essential to achieve success at Higher. Candidates most likely to succeed at Higher are those who read regularly for pleasure, including literary adult fiction and quality journalism (eg: *The Scotsman*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Herald*, *The Times*...)

Course Structure and Assessment

During your course, you will study at least two substantial texts in different genres to fulfil the requirements of section 2 of paper 2, which requires you to write a critical essay in response to an unseen question. The essay is expected to be analytical, detailed, and insightful. Typical texts used for this paper might include plays by Shakespeare, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, or Dylan Thomas; novels by Robert Louis Stevenson, Ernest Hemingway, Charles Dickens, Lewis Grassic Gibbon; poets such as Carol Ann Duffy, Norman MacCaig, Ted Hughes, George Mackay Brown, Sylvia Plath, Wilfred Owen.

In addition to these two texts, you will study a Scottish text from a list approved by the SQA, to fulfil the requirements of section 1 of paper 2, in which you have to answer questions on an extract from the text you have studied, and make comparisons with other works in response to an identified theme or focus.

In addition, you spend time during the course preparing a folio of work, demonstrating your ability to apply language skills in the production of texts in the creative and transactional genres, to be submitted for external assessment by the SQA.

Course Assessment

You will sit an examination paper, demonstrating your ability to apply understanding, analysis and evaluation skills in responding to questions on two, previously unseen, related, non-fiction texts, totalling about 1,500 words (Paper 1). This is assessed externally.

You will sit a second examination paper, demonstrating your skills in critical reading, and knowledge & understanding of texts such as the ones listed above, through answering questions and writing an essay (Paper 2).

To achieve the English Higher, you must pass all three external assessment elements. ie: the two papers detailed above, and the folio component.

Where might this course take me?

It might take you to university, where the communication skills you have learned will be useful for any area of study, from Engineering to Fine Art. It will put you at an advantage when applying for jobs, because it clearly shows prospective employers that you are comfortable with written and spoken language – a key skill in almost any job. It might also lead you to the specialist studies of Advanced Higher English.