

CONDITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for English Literature (2021)

November 2020

ofqual

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Introduction

About this document

This document is part of a suite of documents which sets out the regulatory requirements for awarding organisations offering GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in 2021.

We have developed these requirements with the intention that GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) should fulfil the following purposes:

- to provide evidence of students' achievements against demanding and fulfilling content;
- to provide a strong foundation for further academic and vocational study and for employment; and
- to provide (if required) a basis for schools and colleges to be held accountable for the performance of all of their students.

Requirements set out in this document

This document sets out the GCSE Subject Level Conditions for English Literature. These conditions will come into effect at 09:30 on 5 November 2020 for all GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in English Literature for Learners completing the qualification in 2021, except where the GQCov Framework applies.

It also sets our requirements in relation to the interpretation of the subject content and assessment objectives for GCSE English Literature. Awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition GCSE (English Literature) 1.1(c).

Appendix 1 reproduces the requirements in relation to [subject content and assessment objectives for GCSE English Literature](#), as published by the Department for Education. Awarding organisations must comply with these requirements under Condition GCSE (English Literature) 1.1.

With respect to GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in English Literature in 2021, awarding organisations must also comply with:

- our [General Conditions of Recognition](#), which apply to all awarding organisations and qualifications; and
- our [GCSE Qualification Level Conditions](#); and
- all [relevant Regulatory Documents](#).

With respect to GCSE qualifications in English Literature taken by Learners completing the qualification in 2022 and after, an awarding organisation must continue to comply with the [GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for English Literature \(July 2015\)](#).

Subject Level Conditions

GCSE Subject Level Conditions for English Literature

Condition GCSE (English Literature) 1: Compliance with content requirements

GCSE (English Literature)1.1

In respect of each GCSE Qualification in English Literature which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must -

- (a) comply with the requirements relating to that qualification set out in the document published by the Secretary of State entitled '[GCSE English literature: subject content and assessment objectives](#)', document reference DFE-00231- 2013,
- (b) have regard to any recommendations or guidelines relating to that qualification set out in that document, and
- (c) interpret that document in accordance with any requirements, and having regard to any guidance, which may be published by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

Condition GCSE (English Literature) 2: Provision of Stimulus Materials

GCSE (English Literature) 2.1

In respect of an assessment for a GCSE English Literature qualification which it makes available an awarding organisation must ensure that any Stimulus Materials are provided to Learners at the time of the assessment.

Condition GCSE (English Literature) 3: Texts used in National Reference Tests

GCSE (English Literature) 3.1

In respect of each GCSE Qualification in English Literature which it makes available, or proposes to make available, an awarding organisation must ensure that the assessments for that qualification do not include questions or tasks which use texts or extracts from texts contained in any list specified by Ofqual and revised from time to time.

GCSE (English Literature) 3.2

An awarding organisation must agree to Ofqual's reasonable terms and conditions as to -

- (a) the maintenance of confidentiality in the list of texts and extracts from texts specified by Ofqual under Condition GCSE (English Literature)3.1, and
- (b) the awarding organisation's liability should it fail to maintain such confidentiality.

Interpretation of subject content and assessment objectives

Requirements in relation to subject content for GCSE Qualifications in English Literature

The subject content for GCSE Qualifications (graded 9 to 1) in English Literature is set out in the Department for Education's publication GCSE English literature: subject content and assessment objectives (the 'Content Document').

Condition GCSE (English Literature)1.1(c) requires awarding organisations to interpret the Content Document in line with any requirements published by Ofqual.

We set out our requirements for the purposes of Condition GCSE (English Literature)1.1(c) below.

Breadth of assessment

An awarding organisation must interpret the Content Document as if a Learner must be assessed on three elements comprised of -

- (a) a play by Shakespeare,
- (b) one of the following, as chosen by the Centre -
 - (i) at least one 19th century novel,
 - (ii) a selection of poetry since 1789, including representative Romantic poetry,
 - (iii) fiction or drama from the British Isles from 1914 onwards, and
- (c) an additional element from (i) to (iii) above which may either be specified by the awarding organisation or chosen by the Centre.

An awarding organisation must ensure that, for all Learners, 5% of the total marks available for the qualification are for AO4.

Unseen texts

For the purposes of interpreting the Content Document, the following definition shall apply and all related expressions must be interpreted accordingly.

'Unseen text' - a text which has not been named for study in the subject specification. It may, however, be by an author whose other works have been named for study in the subject specification. An unseen text can include an extract from a novel, a play, an anthology or a poem. Unseen texts do not have to meet the requirements for whole texts outlined in the Content Document.

An awarding organisation must interpret the Content Document as if the requirements in the Content Document in relation to unseen texts are not required to be met where the choice of options made in an assessment means that it is not possible to do so.

Comparison of texts

The Content Document states:

'comparing texts: comparing and contrasting texts studied, referring where relevant to theme, characterisation, context (where known), style and literary quality; comparing two texts critically with respect to the above'.

A footnote to the above quotation states that 'in the examination, these texts must be unseen'.

In addition, in relation to the assessment objectives, the Content Document states:

'In each specification as a whole, 20-25% of the marks should require candidates to show the abilities described in AO1, AO2 and AO3 through tasks which require them to make comparisons across texts.'

Taken together the above statements from the Content Document mean the following.

- In designing and setting the Assessments by Examination for a GCSE Qualification in English Literature, an awarding organisation must ensure that those assessments include questions or tasks in which Learners are required to perform at least one comparison across texts ('Comparison Questions or Tasks').
- Those assessments may include Comparison Questions and Tasks in which Learners are required to perform more than one comparison across texts, so long as the total number of marks available for all such questions and tasks is not more than 25% of the total marks available for the qualification.
- Comparison Questions and Tasks must relate to at least two unseen texts. Learners may be required to:
 - (a) compare those unseen texts with each other,
 - (b) compare each of those unseen texts with one or more whole texts named for study in the subject specification, and/or
 - (c) compare those unseen texts with each other and compare one of those unseen texts with one or more whole texts named for study in the subject specification.
- In addition, Comparison Questions and Tasks may require the comparison of two or more whole texts named for study in the subject specification.

An awarding organisation must interpret the Content Document as if the requirements in the Content Document in relation to comparison of texts are not required to be met where the choice of options made in an assessment means that it is not possible to do so.

Appendix 1 – Subject content and assessment objectives (published by Department for Education)



Department
for Education

English literature

**GCSE subject content and assessment
objectives**

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Introduction

GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in a given subject. They provide the framework within which awarding organisations create the detail of their specifications, so ensuring progression from key stage 3 national curriculum requirements and the possibilities for progression to A level.

Subject aims and learning outcomes

This content sets out the learning outcomes and content coverage required for GCSE specifications in English literature. In subjects such as English literature, where topics are taught in progressively greater depth over the course of key stage 3 and key stage 4, GCSE outcomes may reflect or build upon subject content which is typically taught at key stage 3. There is no expectation that teaching of such content should be repeated during the GCSE course where it has already been covered at an earlier stage.

GCSE specifications in English literature should develop knowledge and skills in reading, writing and critical thinking. Through literature, students have a chance to develop culturally and acquire knowledge of the best that has been thought and written. Studying GCSE English literature should encourage students to read widely for pleasure, and as a preparation for studying literature at a higher level.

GCSE specifications in English literature should enable students to:

- read a wide range of classic literature fluently and with good understanding, and make connections across their reading
- read in depth, critically and evaluatively, so that they are able to discuss and explain their understanding and ideas
- develop the habit of reading widely and often
- appreciate the depth and power of the English literary heritage
- write accurately, effectively and analytically about their reading, using Standard English
- acquire and use a wide vocabulary, including the grammatical terminology¹ and other literary and linguistic terms they need to criticise and analyse what they read.

¹ See also the [glossary of grammatical terms](#) that supports the national curriculum programmes of study for English.

Subject content

This document sets out the full range of content for GCSE specifications in English literature. Awarding organisations may, however, use any flexibility to increase depth, breadth or context within the specified topics or to consolidate teaching of the subject content.

Study of high quality English literature should be the principal focus for this GCSE. GCSE specifications in English literature should be designed on the basis that students' reading should include whole texts.

In addition to the content in the 'Detailed study', the examination must include questions on texts that students have not read previously ('unseen' texts).

Scope of study

GCSE specifications in English literature should require students to study the following content:

Detailed study

Students should study a range of high quality, intellectually challenging, and substantial whole texts in detail. These must include:

- at least one play by Shakespeare
- at least one 19th century novel ²
- a selection³ of poetry since 1789, including representative Romantic poetry
- fiction or drama from the British Isles from 1914 onwards.

All works should have been originally written in English.

Within the range of texts above, the emphasis should be on deepening students' understanding. The texts should be chosen with the key aim of providing students with knowledge to support both current and future study.

To broaden their knowledge of literature, and enhance their critical and comparative understanding, students should read widely within the range above to prepare them for 'unseen' texts in the examination. These unseen texts may or may not be by authors whose works students have studied as set texts.

² Short stories should not form part of this category.

³ Any selection published by awarding organisations should comprise no fewer than 15 poems by at least five different poets, and a minimum of 300 lines of poetry.

Reading comprehension and reading critically

- *literal and inferential comprehension*: understanding a word, phrase or sentence in context; exploring aspects of plot, characterisation, events and settings; distinguishing between what is stated explicitly and what is implied; explaining motivation, sequence of events, and the relationship between actions or events
- *critical reading*: identifying the theme and distinguishing between themes; supporting a point of view by referring to evidence in the text; recognising the possibility of and evaluating different responses to a text; using understanding of writers' social, historical and cultural contexts to inform evaluation; making an informed personal response that derives from analysis and evaluation of the text
- *evaluation of a writer's choice of vocabulary, grammatical and structural features*: analysing and evaluating how language (including figurative language), structure, form and presentation contribute to quality and impact; using linguistic and literary terminology for such evaluation (such as, but not restricted to, phrase, metaphor, meter, irony and persona, synecdoche, pathetic fallacy)
- *comparing texts*: comparing and contrasting texts studied, referring where relevant to theme, characterisation, context (where known), style and literary quality; comparing two texts critically with respect to the above.⁴

Writing

- *producing clear and coherent text*: writing effectively about literature for a range of purposes such as: to describe, explain, summarise, argue, analyse and evaluate; discussing and maintaining a point of view; selecting and emphasising key points; using relevant quotation and using detailed textual references
- *accurate Standard English*: accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

⁴ In the examination, these texts must be unseen.

Assessment objectives

AO1	Read, understand and respond to texts Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response.▪ use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations.	35-40%
AO2	Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate	40-45%
AO3	Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written	15-20%
AO4	Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation	5%
<i>In each specification as a whole, 20-25% of the marks should require candidates to show the abilities described in AO1, AO2 and AO3 through tasks which require them to make comparisons across texts.</i>		



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