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Guidance

GCSE subject-level conditions and requirements for English literature (2022)

Published 11 November 2021

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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 2022.

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

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

Requirements set out in this document

This document sets out the GCSE Subject Level Conditions for English Literature (2022). These conditions will come into effect at 09:30 on 12 November 2021 for all GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in English Literature for Learners completing the qualification in 2022, except where the General Qualifications Alternative Awarding 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).

With respect to GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in English Literature in 2022, awarding organisations must also comply with:

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

With respect to GCSE qualifications in English Literature taken by Learners completing the qualification in 2023 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.

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