

# **GCSE Subject Level Guidance for English Literature**

May 2014

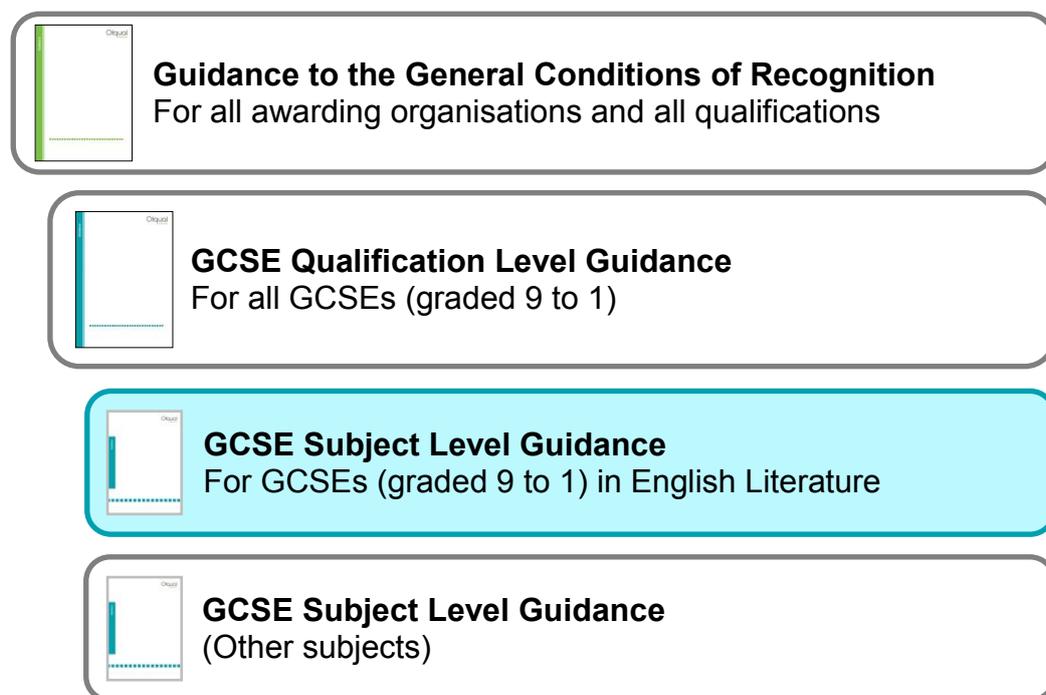
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## Introduction

### About this document

This document (highlighted in the figure below) is part of a suite of documents which outlines our guidance for awarding organisations offering GCSE Qualifications (graded 9 to 1).



This document sets out guidance which applies to all GCSE Qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in English Literature. It supports both:

- the GCSE Qualification Level Conditions and associated requirements;<sup>1</sup> and
- the GCSE Subject Level Conditions and associated requirements for English Literature.<sup>2</sup>

This document constitutes guidance for the purposes of section 153 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (the '2009 Act') and Condition GCSE(English Literature)1.1(c).

An awarding organisation has a legal obligation under the 2009 Act to have regard to this guidance in relation to each GCSE Qualification in English Literature that it

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ofqual.gov.uk/documents/gcse-9-1-qualification-level-conditions/](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/documents/gcse-9-1-qualification-level-conditions/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.ofqual.gov.uk/documents/gcse-9-1-subject-level-conditions-english-literature/](http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/documents/gcse-9-1-subject-level-conditions-english-literature/)

makes available or proposes to make available. Condition GCSE(English Literature)1.1(c) imposes the same obligation in respect of the guidance below which is issued under that Condition.

An awarding organisation should use this guidance to help it understand how to comply with the GCSE Qualification Level Conditions as they apply specifically to GCSE Qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in English Literature, together with the GCSE Subject Level Conditions and associated requirements for such qualifications.

## **Guidance set out in this document**

<p>This document provides guidance on minimum assessment time, the provision of whole texts as stimulus materials, subject content and assessment objectives for GCSE Qualifications (graded 9 to 1) in English Literature</p>
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## **Guidance on minimum assessment time for GCSE Qualifications in English Literature**

Condition GCSE4.1 states that all assessments for a GCSE Qualification in English Literature shall be Assessments by Examination.

We expect that an awarding organisation will design and set such assessments on the basis that the total amount of time spent by each Learner in taking those assessments should be no less than four hours.

## Guidance in relation to the provision of whole texts as Stimulus Materials

In relation to each assessment for a GCSE Qualification in English Literature, Condition GCSE(English Literature)2.1 states that an awarding organisation must provide any Stimulus Materials to Learners at the same time as the assessment.

The Department for Education's publication *GCSE English literature: subject content and assessment objectives*<sup>3</sup> (the 'Content Document') makes reference to the study of 'whole texts'.

We do not expect an awarding organisation to provide a whole text as Stimulus Materials for an assessment for a GCSE Qualification in English Literature.

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<sup>3</sup> Department for Education (November 2013) *GCSE English literature: subject content and assessment objectives*, DFE-00231-2013, [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-english-language-and-gcse-english-literature-new-content](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-english-language-and-gcse-english-literature-new-content)

## Guidance 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 Content Document.

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

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

### Whole texts

The Content Document states that 'students should study a range of high quality, intellectually challenging, and substantial whole texts in detail'.

We expect an awarding organisation to reflect this focus on the study of whole texts in the assessments it designs and sets for a GCSE Qualification in English Literature.

In doing so, an awarding organisation may, for example, set one or more questions and tasks focused on part of a whole text and then a related question or task focusing on that text as a whole.

An anthology of poetry which comprises no fewer than 15 poems by at least five different poets, and a minimum of 300 lines of poetry, constitutes a whole text for the purposes of the Content Document.

### Weighting of marks in relation to texts

In designing and setting the assessments for a GCSE Qualification in English Literature, we expect an awarding organisation to provide a reasonable balance in the weighting of marks available for questions and tasks which relate to whole texts named for study in the subject specification.

The weighting of marks available for questions and tasks relating to an unseen text may be slightly lower than that for questions and tasks relating to a whole text named for study in the subject specification.

### Expectations of comparisons

'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.'

The requirement to make comparisons across texts does not form the basis for a discrete assessment objective. It is instead assessed in questions or tasks which target other assessment objectives, and in which Learners are required to perform at least one comparison across texts ('Comparison Questions or Tasks'). In an integrated, compensatory mark scheme, marks may be awarded that reflect both the comparison and the assessment objectives (in terms of the abilities targeted).

A Comparison Question or Task which permits credit at the lowest level of attainment may be answered by a discrete response which includes little direct comparison or linking between the texts. A Comparison Question or Task which permits credit at higher levels may require Learners to provide a sustained, detailed and integrated comparison of texts.

We do not expect each single Comparison Question or Task to address all of the abilities described in AO1, AO2 and AO3. However, we expect that, taken together, the Comparison Questions and Tasks in a GCSE Qualification in English Literature to demonstrate coverage of these three assessment objectives.

Comparison across texts will usually mean comparison across separate published texts. However, where a published text (such as an anthology of poetry or short stories) comprises several distinct texts, comparison may be required across distinct texts within that single published text. For example, a single poem or short story within an anthology may therefore be compared with another poem or short story within the same anthology.

## Guidance on assessment objectives for GCSE Qualifications in English Literature

The subject content and assessment objectives for GCSE Qualifications (graded 9 to 1) in English Literature are set out in the Content Document. The assessment objectives set out in this document are reproduced in the table below.

<b>AO1</b>	Read, understand and respond to texts Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response</li> <li>■ use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations</li> </ul>	35–40%
<b>AO2</b>	Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate	40–45%
<b>AO3</b>	Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written	15–20%
<b>AO4</b>	Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation	5%
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.		

Condition GCSE(English Literature)1.1(c) requires awarding organisations to interpret the assessment objectives in the Content Document having regard to any guidance published by Ofqual.

We set out below our guidance for the purposes of Condition GCSE(English Literature)1.1(c). This guidance explains how we expect awarding organisations to interpret these assessment objectives in terms of:

- the different ‘strands’ within each of the assessment objectives;
- the further discrete ‘elements’ within each assessment objective and its strands that questions and tasks could target and/or seek to credit – our expectation is that each and every question/task should target or seek to credit at least one of these elements, and may target or seek to credit multiple elements across one or more assessment objectives;

- the coverage expectations, such as in relation to the different strands and elements within each assessment objective and how those strands and elements should be sampled over time; and
- the key areas of emphasis in each assessment objective and the particular meaning for the subject of any key terms and phrases used; defined terms are shown in bold text, followed by their definitions.

In line with the obligations set out in Condition GCSE(English Literature)1.1(c), we expect awarding organisations to be able to demonstrate how they have had regard to this guidance. For example, an awarding organisation could map how it has regard to the guidance as it:

- develops its sample assessment materials;
- delivers the qualification;
- develops and applies its approach to sampling the elements into which the assessment objectives are divided; and
- monitors the qualification to make sure it addresses all elements appropriately.

AO1: Read, understand and respond to texts [...] to:			35–40%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response</li> <li>■ use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations</li> </ul>			
Strands	Elements	Coverage	Agreements and definitions
<b>1 – Maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response</b>	1a – Maintain a critical style	Each set of assessments (but not every assessment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ There should be a slightly higher weighting for the first strand than for the second strand, and a balance of weighting between the two elements within the first strand.</li> <li>■ Elements 1a and 1b may be targeted in combination. Where only one of them is targeted, this would usually be 1b rather than 1a.</li> <li>■ <b>Critical style</b> in 1a means: ‘the candidate writing as a critic, which may be in the first or the third person’.</li> <li>■ It may be possible to assess element 1b through re-creative tasks.</li> <li>■ The number of references/quotes used is relevant for strand 2, but the key point is that such use must be fitting as opposed to unrelated and/or manipulated.</li> <li>■ 1a: Key considerations are: the extent to which the response is sustained; the degree of focus on the specific task; the register used and the coherence of the response; the complexity of the task addressed.</li> <li>■ 1b: Key considerations are: the extent of understanding of the text; the extent of engagement with the text; the degree of focus on the text; how far the response is supported and justified.</li> <li>■ 2: Key considerations are: the extent of understanding of the text; the appropriateness of the references/quotes used.</li> </ul>
	1b – Develop an informed personal response	Each set of assessments (but not every assessment)	
<b>2 – Use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations</b>	The strand is a single element	Each set of assessments (but not every assessment)	

AO2: Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate		40–45%	
Strands	Elements	Coverage	Agreements and definitions
n/a	This AO is a single element	Each set of assessments (but not every assessment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All questions targeting AO2 must require responses to include the analysis of language, form and structure. The balance of these that is most relevant is likely to vary depending on the text and the task.</li> <li>■ Although language, form and structure will not always be evident together – and in equal measure – Learners should be given the opportunity to show awareness of all three and their synthesis to an extent in line with their level of ability.</li> <li>■ The meanings and effects referred to are closely interrelated: the emphasis in any case should be on Learners' ability to analyse how these have been created through language, form and/or structure as appropriate. The skill of analysis here operates on a continuum, which ranges from straightforward narrative to detailed synthesis of the factors involved.</li> <li>■ Subject terminology must form part of the response.</li> </ul>

AO3: Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written		15–20%	
Strands	Elements	Coverage	Agreements and definitions
n/a	This AO is a single element	Each set of assessments (but not every assessment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The range of contexts and relationships that are most relevant as part of AO3 will depend on the text, the author and the task.</li> <li>■ The focus in AO3 is not the relationships between texts, but those between ‘texts and the contexts in which they were written’. As such it is distinct from the requirements for comparisons between texts specified in the Content Document stipulated above, which focus on the texts themselves and would be shown through the abilities described in AO1, AO2 and AO3.</li> <li>■ It is unlikely that tasks would target AO3 in isolation.</li> <li>■ <b>Context</b> should be interpreted flexibly and targeted in a range of ways that are suitable to the text, the author and the task.</li> <li>■ AO3 permits tasks to focus on the place and time in which the author was writing and the author's individual situation, as well as on how these might have affected different aspects of the author's work. Other relevant contexts, particularly since many texts are set at a remove from the period in which they were written, relate to those in which texts are set – for instance, those relating to historical period, location, social and cultural structures and so on. Also pertinent are the literary contexts around texts, such as genres, as well as the contexts in which texts are engaged with by different audiences.</li> </ul>

AO4: Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation			5%
Strands	Elements	Coverage	Agreements and definitions
n/a	<i>This AO is a single element</i>	Each set of assessments (but not every assessment)	<p>Awarding organisations should use a generic mark scheme for assessing AO4, which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ uses the following performance descriptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <b>threshold performance</b> – in the context of the Level of Demand of the question, Learners spell and punctuate with reasonable accuracy, and use a reasonable range of vocabulary and sentence structures; any errors do not hinder meaning in the response;</li> <li>□ <b>intermediate performance</b> – in the context of the Level of Demand of the question, Learners spell and punctuate with considerable accuracy, and use a considerable range of vocabulary and sentence structures to achieve general control of meaning;</li> <li>□ <b>high performance</b> – in the context of the Level of Demand of the question, Learners spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy, and consistently use vocabulary and sentence structures to achieve effective control of meaning.</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ allocates marks for AO4 to individual questions and identifies these marks to Learners in Assessments by Examination;</li> <li>■ only allocates marks for AO4 to questions which allow a sufficient opportunity for extended writing to enable accurate application of the performance descriptors set out above; and</li> <li>■ where marks for AO4 are allocated to a particular question, allocates no fewer than three marks for AO4 to that question.</li> </ul>

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