

# GCSE English Language and Literature Qualification Outline (Single Award and Double Award) – Consultation Version



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## Introduction

This document provides a high-level overview of the proposed WJEC GCSE English Language and Literature qualification.

It is based on Qualifications Wales's Approval Criteria (key sections are included in Appendix 1). Our qualification **must** meet these requirements.

The qualification outline will provide a guide for the development of the Specification and Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs).

## Qualification Overview

The GCSE English Language and Literature qualification will support the Curriculum for Wales by:

- Supporting the statements of what matters<sup>1</sup>, giving learners the opportunity to:
  - develop their understanding, empathy and their ability to respond and to mediate effectively
  - interact, explore ideas, express viewpoints, knowledge and understanding and build relationships
  - experience and respond to a variety of diverse literature that gives them insight into the culture, people and history of Wales as well as the wider world
  - spark their imagination and creativity.
  
- Supporting the principles of progression<sup>2</sup> by giving learners the opportunity to:
  - build on their linguistic skills
  - grow holistically in their understanding and purposeful use of languages, literacy and communication
  - apply their understanding of linguistic concepts
  - adapt and manipulate language to communicate effectively to a range of different audiences
  - develop receptive, interpretive and expressive language skills
  - transfer existing knowledge and skills into new contexts including the social and cultural aspects of language.
  
- Supporting the key considerations for language development and selecting literature<sup>3</sup> by giving learners the opportunity to:
  - experience relevant, engaging, authentic and challenging stimuli to inspire purposeful speaking and writing
  - experience a wealth of literature.

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<sup>1</sup> [Languages, Literacy and Communication: Statements of what matters - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Languages, Literacy and Communication: Principles of progression - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Languages, Literacy and Communication: Designing your curriculum - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)

## Proposed Qualification Structure

The proposal is for four units of study for Single Award and six units for Double Award. Three of the units (Units 1,2 and 3) will be common in terms of content but will be weighted differently.

### GCSE English Language and Literature (Single Award)

The common units are highlighted with an \*.

**Unit 1: Influence and power**

Written examination\*

30% of the qualification (15% of the double)

Marked by WJEC

**Unit 2: Context and meaning**

Non-examination assessment\*

20% of the qualification (10% of the double)

Marked by the centre, moderated by WJEC

**Unit 3: Belonging**

Non-examination assessment\*

20% of the qualification (10% of the double)

Marked by the centre, moderated by WJEC

**Unit 4: Motivations**

Written examination

30% of the qualification

Marked by WJEC

This will be a unitised qualification.

## GCSE English Language and Literature (Double Award)

The common units are highlighted with an \*.

### **Unit 1: Influence and power**

Written examination\*

15% of the qualification (30% of the single)

Marked by WJEC

### **Unit 2: Context and meaning**

Non-examination assessment\*

10% of the qualification (20% of the single)

Marked by the centre, moderated by WJEC

### **Unit 3: Belonging**

Non-examination assessment\*

10% of the qualification (20% of the single)

Marked by the centre, moderated by WJEC

### **Unit 4: Motivations**

Written examination

22.5 % of the qualification

Marked by WJEC

### **Unit 5: Continuity and change**

Non-examination assessment

20% of the qualification

Marked by the centre, moderated by WJEC

### **Unit 6: Connection(s)**

Written examination

22.5% of the qualification

Marked by WJEC

This will be a unitised qualification.

There is no hierarchy in the order in which the units are presented. The order does not imply the teaching order of the units.

It will be possible to sit the common units within the single award and the double award from the 2026 summer series onwards.

Units which are discrete to single/double award will be available from 2027.

## Unit Information

References to Assessment Objectives (AOs) within each Unit are given as an indication of focus. Decisions around exact weightings and which strands of an AO are targeted will be made during the detailed development.

### Unit 1 (single and double award)

**The purpose of this unit is to:**

- understand and respond critically to a range of written texts
- write with clarity, adapting for purpose and effect, and using appropriate linguistic features and techniques.

This unit will be based on the following concepts and possible content: **Influence and power**, with a focus on the writer's craft, strategies for influence and persuasion, power dynamics, bias and interpretation and manipulation.

The unit will be assessed via a written examination available from the 2026 summer series. It will include a selection of tasks that will target AO1 and AO2 and may include comprehension and analysis tasks based on texts from an anthology that includes fiction, non-fiction and poetry, plus a non-literary writing task.

This unit will be worth 30% of the single award and 15% of the double award. The duration of the examination is likely to be 2 hours. There will be no optionality in this unit.

### Unit 2 (single and double award)

**The purpose of this unit is to:**

- develop oracy skills
- show understanding of and respond to texts in spoken language
- express own views using appropriate language.

This unit will be based on the following concepts and possible content: **Context and meaning**, with a focus on oracy.

The unit will take the form of non-examination assessment available during the first year of study. It will include a mix of tasks, which may include oral response to poetry via group discussion and an individual oracy task. We propose that a selection of poems that could form part of the study for this unit be included in an anthology, but that centres also be afforded the flexibility of free choice of additional poems for study, ensuring that they are appropriate to the guidance within the Approval Criteria regarding range of period and form.

The unit will target AO1 and AO2, with greater emphasis on Communication and expression. It will be worth 20% of the single award and 10% of the double award. This unit **must** be submitted digitally.

### Unit 3 (single and double award)

**The purpose of this unit is to:**

- **compile a portfolio of writing in different forms, including creative writing**
- **conduct research towards a piece of non-fiction writing**
- **show evidence of planning and organising own work.**

This unit will be based on the following concepts and possible content: **Belonging**, with a focus on cynefin, community, citizenship; global and local perspectives; planning and drafting work; creative writing.

The unit will be assessed via non-examination assessment available during the first year of study and will require students to compile a portfolio evidencing a range of tasks, to include tasks stimulated by a narrative fictional prose text – these could include analysis tasks, writing which examines literary elements or themes, research-based writing and creative writing. Evidence of planning and redrafting will be assessed as part of this unit – this may take the form of a commentary on own writing. We propose that the choice of narrative fictional prose text should be from a comprehensive longlist of suggested texts that fit the requirements of the Approval Criteria, section 13. This will allow centres an element of choice and flexibility to select a text that is appropriate to their context, in line with section 14 of the Approval Criteria, whilst also ensuring that the selected texts meet the defined criteria for the writing to be studied.

The unit will focus on AO1 and AO2. It will be worth 20% of the single award and 10% of the double award. This unit **must** be submitted digitally.

### Unit 4 (single award only)

**The purpose of this unit is to:**

- **consider the (re)presentation of characters, relationships and communities through drama**
- **understand written texts in their social, cultural and historical contexts and how these may inform different viewpoints and perspectives.**

This unit will be based on the following concept and possible content: **Motivations**, with a focus on how language is used for context, perspective and representation, writer's craft, pragmatics.

The unit will be assessed via a written examination available from the 2027 summer series onwards. It will include a mix of tasks that will target AO1 and AO2 and may include textual analysis and a literary essay. The focus of the unit will be a drama text that centres will select from a list of texts prescribed by WJEC.

The unit will be worth 30% of the overall award.

## Unit 4 (double award only)

### The purpose of this unit is to:

- consider the (re)presentation of characters, relationships and communities
- understand written texts in their social, cultural and historical contexts and how these may inform different viewpoints and perspectives.

This unit will be based on the following concept and possible content: **Motivations**, with a focus on how language is used for context, perspective and representation, writer's craft, pragmatics. There will be optionality in this unit, with centres given the flexibility to select a text that is either drama or narrative fictional prose for this unit. Centres will select the text for study for this unit from a list of texts prescribed by WJEC.

The unit will be assessed via a written examination available from the 2027 summer series onwards. It will include a mix of tasks that will target AO1 and AO2 and may include textual analysis and a literary essay.

The unit will be worth 22.5% of the overall award.

## Unit 5 (double award only)

### The purpose of this unit is to:

- consider language use in Shakespearean drama and how it has influenced language over time
- consider themes, characters and plot through the lens of their relevance to contemporary life.

This unit will be based on the following concepts and possible content: **Continuity and change**, with a focus on language use and change over time, character and plot development.

The unit will be assessed by non-examination assessment, which will assess equally AO1 and AO2, via speaking and listening, and reading and writing. This will comprise a mix of tasks, that will include an oral response to, and a piece of literary writing based on, a Shakespeare play. With regard to the selection of a Shakespeare play for study in this unit, centres will be afforded a free choice from any of his plays. An additional reading and responding task based on a pair of poems (one taken from the period 1600-1900, and one from the 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> century) will also feature in this unit.

The unit will be worth 20% of the overall award. This unit **must** be submitted digitally.

## Unit 6 (double award only)

### The purpose of this unit is to:

- make connections between pieces of writing
- make connections relating to time, place, space, setting, language, relationships.

This unit will be based on the following concepts and possible content: **Connection(s)**, with a focus on the skills of synthesis and summary, comparison and evaluation of sources, character relationships in literary texts and connections between structure, meaning and purpose of texts.

The unit will be assessed via an examination available within the 2027 summer series, with a selection of tasks that will target AO1 and AO2 and may include comprehension and analysis tasks based on one fiction or non-fiction text from an anthology and one unseen text, plus a non-literary writing task.

This unit will be worth 22.5% of the overall award. The duration of the examination is likely to be 2 hours. There will be no optionality in this unit.

## Consideration of manageability, engagement, validity and reliability

In developing this proposed qualification outline, we have considered manageability, engagement, reliability and validity, and how to balance these considerations in the context of the requirements of the Approval Criteria.

The Approval Criteria require 40% of the qualification to be assessed by non-examination assessment that is set by WJEC, marked by the centre and moderated by WJEC.

We recognise the potential manageability challenges of this, and we propose to minimise this in several ways. With the qualification being unitised, we propose to allow centres to spread the workload and assessment by making the common non-examination assessment units available for assessment during the first year of the qualification. Centres will be able to choose when to take these non-examination units, with the possibility of completing one or both of them in the first year of the qualification. Further, we propose to vary the levels of control for non-examination assessment tasks so that centres have more flexibility in terms of the demands of supervision for aspects of each non-examination assessments. In the common speaking and listening non-examination assessment, for example, we are proposing a low level of control for the task itself, and to give learners the flexibility to present their tasks in a variety of digital formats. We believe that whereas previously the demands of non-examination assessment may have been considered disruptive to teaching and learning, this approach will be less so. In the common reading and writing non-examination assessment, we are proposing a portfolio approach, whereby learners complete smaller sized tasks at relevant points of the teaching and learning process. Whilst these tasks will be set by WJEC, they will feature varying levels of control. Tasks must be submitted digitally, however there will be some flexibility of format for individual tasks. In the detailed development we will continue to consider the manageability of non-examination assessment and to ensure that tasks are naturally aligned to teaching and learning.

The remaining 60% of the qualification will be assessed by examination. The duration of each examination is likely to be 2 hours, which we believe is manageable for students at GCSE level. This length of examination would enable us to develop a valid assessment that ensures sufficient content can be covered. By having the examination for the common unit (Unit 1) available each summer series from 2026 onwards, centres will be able to schedule teaching of this unit at any point during the first year of the course, and also allow for learners to resit this unit. The discrete units will be available during the second year of study; we are proposing as a means to aid centres who teach mixed-award groups to delay diversifying pathways, and to give centres and learners the opportunity to delay the single/double award decision until at least the end of the first year of study.

We believe that our proposed qualification should provide opportunities for centres to develop an engaging programme of study for its learners, in line with the expectations of the Curriculum for Wales. We are also committed to reflecting the elements of flexibility and choice recommended in the Approval Criteria, so that centres can select texts for study that are appropriate to the context and cohort. In the common non-examination assessment units, centres will be afforded the flexibility to choose poetry and narrative fictional prose that meet the defined requirements set out in the Approval Criteria regarding era, genre, origin. WJEC will support centres by including appropriate poetry choices in an anthology, and by publishing a 'long list' of suitable prose texts. For the double award, the Unit 5 NEA will afford centres a free choice of Shakespeare play.

In the examined units, we propose to offer a prescribed list of diverse texts from which centres can make a selection of text for study. This will aid comparability and reliability between exam seasons. We will also support centres with a range of writing that is suitable for study, both fiction and non-fiction, in an anthology.

To ensure the reliability of the non-examination assessment, we will ensure each unit will target the same assessment objective weightings over time, marking criteria will be developed and teachers will be provided with a package of support to ensure consistent application of the marking criteria across centres and over time. We will moderate a sample of centre work to provide further assurance of reliability.

We believe that the purpose and content of the reading and writing units (common unit 1, unit 4 of single award and units 4 and 6 of double award) can be validly assessed by examination, and a mix of question types can help us maximise validity. When we develop assessments, we will ensure that all tasks target the relevant construct, and that there is alignment between assessment items and learning outcomes. Where appropriate we will use data available to us on how an assessment has functioned. To ensure reliability, we will make sure that the examined units target the same assessment objective weightings and have a consistent level of demand each series, marking criteria will be developed and assessors will be trained on how to apply them consistently.

We will continue to consider the balance of manageability, engagement, reliability and validity, at each stage of qualification development.

## Appendix 1

### Key information from Approval Criteria

The following information has come directly from Qualifications Wales's [GCSE English Language and Literature - Approval Criteria](#) - our qualification must meet these requirements.

#### Purpose

1. **GCSE English Language and Literature** must:
  - 1.1. be designed primarily for Learners between the ages of 14 and 16
  - 1.2. build on the conceptual understanding Learners have developed through their learning from ages 3-14
  - 1.3. support teaching and learning by providing appropriately broad, demanding, relevant and engaging content and assessment that relates to and supports the Curriculum for Wales, including its [four purposes](#)
  - 1.4. allow Learners to develop a strong foundation of knowledge, skills and understanding which supports progression to post-16 study and prepares them for life, learning and work
  - 1.5. provide meaningful, fair and accurate information on Learner achievement within a subject that highlights what Learners know, understand and can do

#### Aims

2. **GCSE English Language and Literature** must:
  - 2.1 allow Learners to explore a range of knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to English language and literature
  - 2.2 provide opportunities for Learners to be assessed in a variety of relevant and meaningful contexts
  - 2.3 enable Learners to explore the cross-cutting theme of human rights and diversity, including Black, Asian and minority ethnic perspectives, identity, culture and contributions
3. The **GCSE English Language and Literature** qualification must support Learners to:
  - 3.1. appreciate how language connects us to the world around us through engagement with the spoken word and written texts from a range of times, places and cultures
  - 3.2. read and listen to a range of spoken and written texts, considering how language, register and style convey meaning
  - 3.3. understand the significance of purpose, audience, medium and context when communicating, expressing, understanding and responding to language
  - 3.4. express themselves in speaking and writing through clear, accurate, fluent and creative use of English
  - 3.5. develop and apply knowledge and understanding of the vocabulary, grammar and uses of the English language

#### Subject Content

The **GCSE English Language and Literature** qualification must be available as a single and double award qualification.

## GCSE English Language and Literature (Single Award)

- The **GCSE English Language and Literature (Single Award)** must include:
  - 11.1. a minimum of two whole texts, including both narrative fictional prose and drama
  - 11.2. a range of poems from different periods in a variety of forms
  - 11.3. a range of non-fiction texts in a variety of forms and for a variety of purposes
    - 11.3.1. these should include both continuous and non-continuous texts
    - 11.3.2. all texts must reflect real-life contexts and address themes that are relevant to Learners

## GCSE English Language and Literature (Double Award)

- The **GCSE English Language and Literature (Double Award)** must include:
  - 12.1. a minimum of three whole texts, including both narrative fictional prose and drama. One of the three texts must be a play by Shakespeare
  - 12.2. a broad range of poems from different periods in a variety of forms
  - 12.3. a broad range of non-fiction texts written in a variety of forms and for a variety of purposes
    - 12.3.1. these should include both continuous and non-continuous texts
    - 12.3.2. all texts must reflect real-life contexts and address themes that are relevant to Learners

The writing studied in the **GCSE English Language and Literature (Single Award)** and **GCSE English Language and Literature (Double Award)** must be rich and substantial and include a range of:

- 13.1. writing from the Welsh, English, Scottish or Irish literary heritage
- 13.2. pre-20th century writing
- 13.3. writing by living authors
- 13.4. writing exploring themes of Wales and Welshness, reflecting the diverse nature of Welsh citizenship and its cultures
- 13.5. writing by authors representing a global perspective, including those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities

The awarding body must offer an element of choice and flexibility for Centres to choose writing that is most appropriate to their own Centre's curriculum.

## Assessment Objectives

- The assessment of the knowledge, understanding and skills required in the qualification must target the following assessment objectives in line with the indicated weightings:

<b>AO1</b>	<b>Understanding and response</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Understand and respond critically to a range of written texts and speech, selecting and evaluating relevant points to illustrate and support interpretations and develop ideas.</li><li>ii. Make comparisons and explain links within and between both written texts and spoken communication,</li></ol>	50%
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	<p>synthesising and summarising information, ideas and themes as appropriate.</p> <p>iii. Explain how language, structure and form contribute to the presentation of information, ideas and themes in written texts and speech and how these have an impact on the reader/viewer/listener.</p> <p>iv. Understand written texts and speech in their social, cultural and historical contexts and how these may inform different viewpoints and perspectives.</p>	
<b>AO2</b>	<p><b>Communication and expression</b></p> <p>i. Communicate clearly, effectively, and imaginatively, using forms, vocabulary, and techniques to engage the reader/viewer/listener.</p> <p>ii. Adapt communication by selecting register, vocabulary and techniques appropriate to different contexts and audiences.</p> <p>iii. Organise communication using a variety of linguistic and structural features to support cohesion and overall coherence.</p> <p>iv. Use a range of sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with appropriate grammar and, in written communication, accurate punctuation and spelling.</p>	50%

## Scheme of assessment

- The **GCSE English Language and Literature** qualification will not be tiered.
- The **GCSE English Language and Literature** qualification must be unitised.
- The **GCSE English Language and Literature** specification must include the following assessment arrangements:

21.1. a total of 40% of the qualification must be assessed through non-examination assessment(s) which are set by the awarding body, marked by the Centre, and moderated by the awarding body

21.2. non-examination assessment using speaking and listening methods must assess both understanding and response skills and communication and expression skills

21.2.1. It must contribute towards 20% of the overall qualification

21.2.2. This must include individual and group tasks

21.3. non-examination assessment using reading and writing methods must assess both understanding and response skills and communication and expression skills

21.3.1. It must contribute towards 20% of the overall qualification

21.4. a total of 60% of the qualification must be assessed through external examination(s) using reading and writing methods.

21.4.1. These examination(s) must be set and marked by the awarding body

21.4.2. External examinations must include both studied and unseen writing (literary and non-literary)

21.5. the studied writing outlined must be assessed using one of the following three methods: non-examination assessment (speaking and listening), non-examination assessment (reading and writing) or external examination. Each of these methods must assess at least one studied writing

21.6. both single and double award must provide the same level of challenge, though the double award must require greater breadth of content, including through assessment of studied and unseen writing

21.7. the double award and single award must have some common units. These units must make up between 30% and 35% of the double award, and between 60% and 70% of the single award

21.8. the terminal rule must be a minimum of 30% and must include examination