

WJEC GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (SINGLE AND DOUBLE AWARD)

For Year 10 cohort starting
September 2026 onwards
First award 2028

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Version 5

Qualification Amendments

Q: Can a learner who started the GCSE English Language and Literature qualification in Y10 (Sept 2025) submit NEAs under the amended NEA structure?

A: No. These learners must submit NEAs linked to the original assessments as stipulated in the specification. This is to ensure that all learners who are receiving a qualification grade in 2027 have completed the same NEA tasks and are treated equally.

Q: How have the requirements for recording the oracy tasks changed?

A: Centres now have the option to record the oracy task as audio recordings or audio-visual recordings. This change was made due to feedback from centres about the manageability of audio-visual recordings. Any notes/annotated texts used in the oracy tasks must be submitted to WJEC as part of the moderation process. Teachers are required to submit the page of notes/annotated texts used by learners to authenticate the work and ensure learners are not reading. Such notes or annotated texts should be retained securely by the centre.

Q: How have the controls for the research and planning stage changed for the assessment?

A: The research and planning controls have been removed. The previously stipulated duration of the research and planning stage has also been removed. Teachers must ensure in preparing learners for the assessment that all opportunities for malpractice are mitigated in order for work to be authenticated.

Unit 2

Q: How has the assessment changed for Unit 2?

A: Unit 2 now consists of one task – the essay on the prose text. The mark scheme for assessing this task has not changed. This task now equates to 10% of the qualification.

Q: What are the controls for the task taking stage of the assessment?

A: There are no changes to the controls for the assessment for Unit 2. Learners have 2 hours to complete the task. They must be directly supervised and work independently. They must have no access to the internet if producing the work digitally.

Q: What can learners take into the assessment?

A: Learners can only take a clean, unannotated text into the assessment. This must be checked for annotations, notes and/or essay plans to prevent incidents of malpractice. They must not take any notes into the assessment with them.

Q: When must the Unit 2 NEA be submitted?

A: The Unit 2 NEA must be submitted by 24 March each year.

Unit 3

Q: How has the assessment changed for Unit 3?

A: Unit 3 now consists of one task – the group discussion on a theme from the non-fiction anthology. The mark scheme for assessing this task has not changed. This task now equates to 10% of the qualification.

Q: What can learners take into the assessment?

A: Learners are allowed to take into the assessment either copies of the text that they have annotated or one side of an A4 page short bullet points (size 11 font or above) that they have prepared in advance to inform their discussion. Annotations or bullet may focus on, for example, statistics, facts, examples or relevant quotations. The annotations or notes must be submitted with the recording of the assessment task. Learners must not use scripted notes for this assessment. Learners should be reminded that reading from notes will affect the mark they receive.

Q: When must the Unit 3 NEA be submitted?

A: The Unit 3 NEA must now be submitted by May 5 each year. This is in response to teacher feedback.

Unit 5 (Double Award only)

Q: How has the assessment changed for Unit 5?

A: Task A in Unit 5, the essay on the Shakespeare play, remains the same. The mark scheme for assessing this task has not changed. Task B has changed to an individually researched presentation. Learners have free choice of the theme or issue for their talk. Learners following the amended qualification, that is those starting the qualification in 2026, no longer need to be taught or be assessed on 1600-1900 poetry.

Q: What can learners take into the assessment?

A: For Task A, learners can only take a clean, unannotated text into the assessment. They must not take any notes into the assessment. For Task B, the Individual Research Presentation, learners are allowed to take into the assessment up to one side of an A4 page containing short bullet points (size 11 font or above) or the equivalent in cue cards prepared in advance. Short bullet points include, for example, statistics, facts, examples or relevant quotations. The notes must be submitted with the recording of the assessment task as part of the moderation process. Learners must not use scripted notes for this assessment. Learners should be reminded that reading from notes will affect the mark they receive.

Q: What are the controls for the task taking assessment?

A: For Task A, there are no changes to the controls for the task taking. Learners have 3 hours to complete the task. They must be directly supervised and work independently. They must have no access to the internet if producing the work digitally. For Task B, the learners have 4-6 minutes to complete their presentation. Teachers must ensure in preparing learners for the assessment that all opportunities for malpractice are mitigated in order for work to be authenticated.

Q: When must the Unit 5 NEA be submitted?

A: The Unit 5 NEA must now be submitted by 24 March each year.

General Qualification Questions

Q: What are the purposes of the Single and Double Awards?

A: The Double Award has been introduced to provide the most appropriate qualification for most learners and should be offered by all schools. The Single Award provides an alternative route for the small proportion of learners who would benefit from a smaller qualification, given their circumstances. Given that the difference between the qualifications is breadth – the volume of work required – the SA may be more appropriate for a learner who, for example, has had a long-term absence from school and could not cover the amount of content required for the DA. Both qualifications are primarily designed to be completed over two years.

Q: How can we access the texts for study across all units?

A: The Poetry Anthology for Units 1 and 5, the Non-Fiction Anthology for Units 3 and 6, and the list of prose texts for Unit 2 are available digitally on the WJEC GCSE English Language and Literature webpage. The anthologies will be reviewed every three years. The choice of texts for Units 4a and 4b are indicated within the specification.

Q: Do we need to teach all the anthology texts?

Yes. Just because a text has been included in an examination doesn't mean that it won't be set again. When the Non-Fiction Anthology is updated with new texts, these will be the texts that will be used in the Unit 6 examination. For the Unit 3 Group Discussion, teachers may wish to use a text that has been 'retired' from the anthology along with the prescribed text, providing that it is purposeful to the discussion.

Q: What is the terminal rule?

For both Single and Double Award, the terminal rule is 30% and must include one examination unit in the series when cashing in.

Q: Will we be provided with a list of writing types that we need to teach?

A: There will not be prescribed lists of text types to cover; text purpose is more important than text type.

Q: What is meant by "literary and linguistic approaches"?

A: Integrated linguistic and literary approaches encourage learners to select and apply their knowledge of terminology from both linguistic and literary disciplines in meaningful ways. This should be the basis for all their analysis, making their arguments focused and purposeful. An integrated approach is not about being able to label words or written features, and learners will not get credit for observing techniques without commenting on the meaning and the effects created. Feature spotting is a limiting approach because it shows no evidence of interpretation – and learners should always read for meaning.

Q: Will we be given guidance on the terminology that we will need to cover from linguistic and literary perspectives?

A: The Guidance for Teaching features a glossary that defines terminology that could be expected at this level. This is not a prescribed list, but it is an indicative of the kind of terms learners could utilise effectively in their analysis.

Q: Do the sample questions about word class and similes (the restricted questions) encourage technique spotting?

A: The low tariff questions test learners' knowledge of linguistic and literary terminology. This is different from the 'linguistic and literary approaches' needed for the extended analytical responses where feature spotting will gain little credit. Learners should know terms to successfully answer the low tariff restricted questions and ensure that they use terminology from both disciplines to explore how meaning is created when offering analysis.

Q: Will exams only be available in the summer series?

A: No, externally examined units are also offered in the November series. From November 2027, Unit 1, Unit 4a/b and Unit 6 will be available.

Q: Will exams be closed text?

A: Yes. Any text that candidates need to closely reference will be printed in the assessment materials. "Textual references" does not necessarily mean "quotations."

Q: How often can units be re-sat?

A: Candidates may re-sit an individual unit once only. The better uniform mark score from the two attempts will be used in calculating the final overall grade subject to the terminal rule being satisfied first i.e. that candidates must complete 30% of the assessment (which must include an examination unit) for a qualification in the series in which they are cashing in. If any unit has been attempted twice and a candidate wishes to enter the unit for the third time, the candidate will have to re-enter all the units and the appropriate cash-in. This is referred to as a 'fresh start'. When re-taking a qualification (fresh start), a candidate may have up to two attempts at each unit. However, no results from examination units taken prior to the fresh start can be used in aggregating the new grade(s).

Q: What do the Blended Learning Resources cover and will they be available in a downloadable format?

A: The [Blended Learning Resources](#) provide lessons on all the examination texts for Units 1, 4a, 4b and 6. In addition, there are resources for teaching non-fiction and creative literary writing effectively. These resources are available in a downloadable and editable format.

Q: Is there a teaching order for these units?

A: Units can be taught in any order, but centres may wish to build delivery around the availability of assessment opportunities as outlined in the specification. Please note that NEA briefs will be published on [WJEC Portal](#) in April every two years.

Q: How will these qualifications work for post-16 learners?

A: There will be a range of option available to post-16 learners, including resitting the GCSE English Language and Literature qualification, or taking the separate GCSE English qualification designed specifically for post-16 learners. Qualifications Wales has published information about these options: [A flexible range of qualifications in English and Cymraeg for post-16 learners | Qualifications Wales](#)

NEA General Queries

Q: Are the strands in the assessment grids weighted?

A: There is no weighting within the strands of an individual assessment objective (AO). Assessors should use the best fit model in judging learners' work as the mark schemes are holistic.

Q: Are learners expected to develop their own NEA task titles?

A: No. Centres can develop their own questions, potentially offering learners the choice from a selection of tasks. Alternatively, for some tasks such as the IRP, the learner could work with their teacher to develop their own title that reflects their interests.

Q: Can centres provide learners with extracts for the essay tasks?

A: Extracts from the texts are not permitted in the Task Taking stage. Learners can have access to full, unannotated copies of the texts they have studied. They may annotate them during the Task Taking stage, but centres will need to retain these securely along with the learner's work between assessment sessions.

Q: Are learners penalised for going either under or over the suggested word lengths for the written tasks?

A: No, but learners will just run the risk of self-penalising if answers lack adequate development or exploration of key ideas and sustained consideration. Similarly, learners who exceed the word count may run the same risk by not leaving time for checking accuracy, refinements, edits or for not being sufficiently concise and pithy. Hopefully learners will have many interesting things to say, but critical to success in the assessments is the ability to select key ideas.

Q: Do all learners in a class or school need to use the same NEA titles or study the same texts?

A: No, but centres must ensure that they follow the instructions in the live briefs as some tasks are prescribed or have limited opportunity for modification.

Q: What is meant by 'linguistic and structural features' assessed in AO2?

A: This is recognising these features used within the learners' own writing, e.g. paragraphs, topic sentences, connectives, and so on.

Q: Should we class phrases such as 'like' as a filler rather than a grammatical slip in oracy tasks?

A: 'Like' would be viewed as a filler in a more informal task, such as the group discussion. Providing fillers, repairs or false starts do not impede clarity or meaning, there is nothing in the task requirements or mark scheme that would mean these spoken language features would be penalised. For more formal tasks such as the IRP, fillers etc. would be more inappropriate and would possibly impact on the efficacy of the response.

Q: To what extent can NEA writing time be divided up?

A: Centres can chunk up Task Taking time into smaller sessions, but they cannot move back and forth between the different stages. Any research, planning and preparation must be completed before the Task Taking begins.

Q: Should written NEA responses be handwritten or word processed?

A: Either is fine, but learners who produce their work digitally must not have access to the internet or emails, and spell and grammar checks must be disabled.

Q: When and where can exemplar material be found?

Exemplar and commentaries from the Preparing to Assess events are available on Portal. Exemplar from the Summer Series will be available on Portal from October 2026.

Q: How much teacher annotation is needed on written work?

A: From [JCQ: Instructions for NEA](#):

- Provide evidence to support the marks.
- Identify the assessment criteria that have been met.
- Be clear and unambiguous.
- Use key phrases from the criteria. For example, awareness of values, uses a variety of techniques, selects appropriate data.
- Insert annotations at the appropriate point in the work – in the margin or in the text – or write comments on the cover sheet to show clearly how credit has been awarded.

https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/gcse-english-language-and-literature-double-and-single-award-teaching-from-2025/#tab_keydocuments<https://portal.wjec.co.uk/>

Q: When will we receive the NEA briefs?

A: The live NEA briefs will be released in the April before the first assessment. These briefs are published on [WJEC Portal](#).

Q: May NEAs be submitted in year 10?

A: Yes. Centres are reminded to ensure that they are using the NEA brief for the year of entry, i.e. when that **unit** is being entered, not necessarily when the qualification is being cashed in. A cash-in can only be applied when all units that make up the qualification have been sat and entered.

Q: When will centres be required to submit samples and marks for NEA?

A: Submission dates for Unit 2 and Unit 5 NEAs will be the 24 March, and for Unit 3 will be the 5^h May. More information can be found in the Internal Assessment: A Guide for Centres document.

Q: How will NEA work be submitted for moderation?

A: The NEA sample will be submitted digitally for moderation on IAMIS, WJEC's mark input system.

Q: Where can we find Scribe Deduction Information and the JCQ Scribe Cover Sheet?

A: The JCQ Scribe Cover Sheet is available [here](#) and the Scribe Deduction information is available under the NEA tab on the Subject Page.

Unit 1

Q: In Unit 1, how many supplementary poems need to be selected for study in addition to the 10 anthology poems?

A: As many as would adequately prepare learners for the unseen poetry questions they will have in Unit 1. The specification clarifies that the supplementary poems should be from the 19th and 20th centuries and cover different forms. These must include sonnet, elegy, ballad and blank verse. In the exam, learners will be assessed on one poem from the anthology and one unseen poem.

Q: In Unit 1, what is meant by the contexts of poems?

A: The specification offers the following as examples: socio-historical contexts; cultural influences; authorial context; literary context; period; status/power. Alongside these, learners could also consider their own context and its influence on how they interpret and respond to what they read or hear.

Q: How should learners address context when engaging with an unseen poem?

A: Contextual information will be printed in the exam paper for the poems. Learners may use the context provided to help inform their understanding of the text, or they can use their own context to explore their own responses to the texts. They can also use context to interpret the anthology poem they have studied, while using other approaches to compare it to the unseen poem.

Q: In Unit 1 Section B, will there always be one fiction task and one non-fiction task?

A: Yes. Learners will have a choice as to which one task they complete.

Q: Is there an expectation to teach the text types identified in the specification?

A: Learners should be equipped to adapt their writing to audience and purpose for a wide range of tasks, including those outlined in the specification; this is not an exhaustive list. The focus of assessment of the writing tasks will be on the learners' ability to adapt their writing to audience and purpose, rather than on aspects of formatting for text types.

Unit 2

Q: What is meant by ‘self-belonging’?

A: Self-belonging refers to how a learner might experience aspects of their own identity: what gives them a sense of belonging? How are they aware of their own identity, and how does this shape the ways they respond? How do they relate to the way characters in the texts experience their own sense of belonging?

Q: For the Unit 2 essay task, should learners examine one character, or can they look at more than one character in their essay?

A: For some learners, exploring one character in detail will be sustained in a well-focused and well-argued analysis. Other learners may struggle to sustain the length of response expected by focusing on just one character and may be better served by exploring two characters, albeit more superficially. Teachers will know best what approach suits the learner in front of them.

Q: The Unit 2 SAMS state that the NEA “may include re-drafting if required.” What is meant by this?

A: As part of their own writing process, learners may benefit from re-drafting parts of their answer, self-assessing to ensure their response is as strong as possible. If a learner wishes to do this, it must be completed within the Task Taking time.

Unit 3

Q: For the group discussion, the mark scheme for AO1 refers to exploring language, structure and form. How should learners address this?

A: Learners could comment on why a text (spoken or written) has had an impact on them and their views. This unit is about influence and power so here learners have the opportunity to comment on aspects of language, structure or form that have persuaded them – such as the presentation of an argument (emotive language, shocking statistics, etc.), or a text conforming to or flouting genre conventions or expectations, etc, but this does not mean that learners are asked to provide extended analysis.

Q: How many learners should there be in a group for the discussion in Task A?

A: Three or four, but three is ideal and recommended by the Principal. Centres need some flexibility as this will depend on the learners in front of you due to absence and personal dynamics. A non-assessed member, for example a teacher, teaching assistant or learner who has already been assessed, can be included as a member of group discussions in cases of absenteeism/special requirements.

Q: Do all learners have to focus on the same chosen texts for the group discussion?

A: Yes. Deciding which texts to focus on is part of the planning process for this task and will enable learners to prepare for the best possible discussion.

Q: How strict should teachers be on the timings for the group task?

A: Every recording must be between 6 and 10 minutes. If learners are struggling to reach 6 minutes, teachers should prompt further discussion. Teachers may give learners a warning as the end of the assessment approaches, but teachers must intervene to stop the assessment once 10 minutes has passed.

Unit 4a/4b

Q: Will there always be a choice between a character question and a theme question?

A: No, there is not a set pattern for questions. A consideration of character, relationships and themes will stand learners in good stead for the kind of essay questions they will be presented with in the examination.

Q: Will candidates be expected to focus on a single aspect of context?

A: No. Learners will not be expected to focus on a single aspect of context. The specification gives examples of the contexts learners could engage with.

Unit 5

Q: To what extent can the Unit 5 Task A titles be adapted to suit the needs of learners?

A: There will be a choice of two questions which last for two years. The topic or theme in the chosen question stem will need to be adhered to but this can be adapted to the specific Shakespeare play studied.

Q: For Unit 5 Task A, should learners compare?

A: This unit concept is Continuity and Change. It is difficult to explore this concept meaningfully without some discussion of how things have changed or how they have stayed the same. Although there is not an explicit "Compare" in the title, in the bullet points of the generic tasks one addresses comparison as a focus to help learners develop their exploration of the play in a way that is relevant to the task.

Q: How does the essay task connect to the unit concept of Continuity and Change?

A: The questions will require learners to consider aspects of continuity and change either within the given text or over time. They will also need to make comparisons, either comparing how attitudes and ideas have changed or stayed the same over time or comparing how characters, attitudes or relationships etc. have changed over the course of the play, depending on the question set.

Q: How will learners be rewarded for their use of context?

A: Responses rooted in the studied text will be rewarded. Context should be used when it enables learners to interpret texts and explore meanings. Irrelevant contextual detail will not be rewarded. There are references to context in AO1 of the Assessment Criteria for this unit and these will form the basis of how context will be assessed.

Q: For Unit 5 Task B, how should learners tackle the validity of their sources in the IRP?

A: For some learners for whom research and synthesising ideas is a challenge, this may simply be a reference to the fact that one source from a reputable media outlet informed the learner's position on X/Y/Z, e.g. BBC World Service. For others, it may be an underpinning of ideas within the IRP challenging misinformation with views and ideas informed by reliable sources. Sources and comments on validity / reliability should not drive the task. AO1 is worth a maximum of 8 marks for this task with two skills strands being best fit balanced in awarding the overall AO1 mark. Learners should be able to recognise what makes a source valid and/or reliable rather than explaining why it is valid and/or reliable. Commenting on validity should come through implicitly as part of the learner's understanding of the topic, their chosen sources and the different points under consideration. This could be a comment of the political leanings of national newspapers in their reporting which would affect how they are presenting coverage and how the learner reached their own conclusions on the topic being addressed; it could be less nuanced, for example, a discussion on climate change could reference different public comments on this issue. In determining which view is more influential, the learner would have to recognise – implicitly or explicitly – aspects of reliability.

Q: For Unit 5 Task B, how should learners research and prepare for their IRP?

A: There is an expectation that learners will research – this is an individual researched project – but this does not simply mean using the internet. In the preparation for this task, learners may explore a range of relevant texts and use these as a springboard into wider research before the assessment begins.

Q: For Unit 5 Task B, should learners analyse the sources they have researched?

A: The presentation should not be an analysis of sources and/or literary texts.

Q: For Unit 5 Task B, will learners be required to answer questions at the end of their presentations?

A: No, this is not a requirement of this task. Learners should be encouraged to fill the task time with their talk and only be prompted when necessary. Prompting should be used to facilitate further talk, rather than 'questioning' which is scaffolding.

Q: Are learners required to present to the class?

A: No. Centres may choose to assess their learners in this way although it is not a requirement. There is no requirement for learners to respond to questions as part of their presentation.

Unit 6

Q: Will the exam assess the full range of reading skills each year?

A: Every aspect of AO1 and AO2 will be assessed across the exam. While the question types may not be identical, all the core skills will be assessed.

Q: How does the exam reflect the unit concept of Connections?

A: Learners are asked to consider how different writers and speakers connect with their audiences in a range of texts. One of the higher tariff questions also requires learners to make comparisons between different texts.

Q: Can bullet points be used to answer summary questions?

A: Yes, where appropriate.

Q: Will the chosen anthology texts always be from the same theme?

Each exam will always be focused on two anthology texts from the same theme, and one unseen text that will also be relevant to the theme.

Q: Will an indication of theme be provided before the examination?

A: No.