# 2018 English Literary Studies Subject Assessment Advice

## Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the previous year’s assessment cycle, gives an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

# School Assessment

## Assessment Type 1: Responding to Texts

The more successful responses commonly:

* showed a strong analytical approach and established the development of an argument in terms of how authors position readers to develop ideas and viewpoints. Therefore, those students who could expand their analysis beyond how techniques shape an understanding of theme and character to how ideas, values and perspectives are developed achieved more highly against the performance standards
* demonstrated clear evidence in terms of connections between texts in comparative writing tasks, rather than writing paragraphs with ‘blocked’ discussion of texts
* showed a range of text forms — including essays, considered paragraphs, annotated scenes, and if suitable, comparative writing.
* conveyed insight into the range of ways in which authors of different text types use such conventions and stylistic features to influence readers
* used evidence appropriately and fluently to support observations
* communicated in a register that was clear, cogent and convincing.

The less successful responses commonly:

* created formulaic texts that only included character analyses or theme discussions which limited students’ ability to discuss their knowledge and understanding of how authors position readers to contend with issues within texts
* approached the critical perspective task as if the perspective in question was a device to only explore aspects of characterisation rather than a ‘lens’ through which to interrogate ideas, perspectives, and values
* attempted to answer questions that were limiting rather than challenging; for example, writing on a general theme without any requirement to analyse and develop a clear point of view
* included ‘blocked’ quotations rather than embedding ‘pithy’ quotations
* examined only one perspective or two very similar ‘lenses’ in the critical perspectives task (e.g. moral and philosophical, or feminist and gender)
* created texts that often seemed ‘formulaic’ and were in essence only slight variations of the same response, with students following the same argument, discussion points and conclusions
* attempted comparison that was either arbitrary in nature or too ‘blocked’ and without appropriate analysis of similarities and differences

produced texts that were still required basic editing and formatting.

Assessment Type 2: Creating Texts

In this assessment type, students create one transformative text linked to another text, with a writer’s statement (1500 words, or 9 minutes, or equivalent in multimodal form). The text chosen as the basis for this task may or may not come from the texts in the shared studies, and the accompanying writer’s statement should outline the choices the student has made in terms of the text type, audience, and purpose. Additionally, students create one written, oral, or multimodal text (1000 words, or 6 minutes, or equivalent in multimodal form) and demonstrate understanding and mastery of the features of the chosen text type.

The more successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated an in-depth awareness of the text type (its stylistic features and conventions), audience, and purpose
* demonstrated an understanding and analysis of devices in both texts within the transformational task
* showed breadth and creativity in the development of different text types across the assessment type
* conveyed skill in creating a persona and in identifying a target audience in oral text productions
* ensured there was the provision of evidence. Teacher grades and comments were supported, where possible, by videos, audio recordings, cue cards, transcripts, photographs, and other relevant artefacts
* conveyed an understanding of audience and purpose relevant to each text type
* showed thought to the ‘weighting’ of each section of the transformation task to enable sophisticated insights into the similarities and differences between the source text and transformation
* created transformation tasks where the text was clearly converted or reimagined from the source text but still explored a similar concept or idea.

The less successful responses commonly:

* read notes in oral presentations without due consideration of the audience and purpose elements of a speech or presentation or the relevant text type
* repeated text types, for example, two persuasive texts, etc. This can limit achievement in Ap1, KU2 and KU3.
* created recounts where little thought was given to the development of ‘voice’ or the skill of indirect observation
* were not clear in the particular conventions of the text type they were creating
* resorted to a ‘retelling’ of the text types rather than comparative analysis in the transformational task
* included two lengthy writers’ statements for each creating text task, shifting the emphasis to analysis
* used source texts in the transformational task that had questionable literary merit; for example, artwork such as paintings and photographs, or very popular songs, where the emphasis is more on musical effects and production values rather than lyrics with sophisticated and perceptive quality
* created transformational tasks where the source text was too similar in text type and style to the transformed text
* created straightforward informational texts that contained little literary or aesthetic merit, thus limiting the opportunity to draw on their knowledge and experience of genre and literary devices
* wrote only brief and cursory comments in the writer’s statement as consideration was not given to the ‘weighting’ of each part of this task.

Student samples submitted for moderation should include all pieces of work for all tasks in an assessment type.

# External Assessment

## Assessment Type 3: Text Study

### Part A: Comparative Text Study (15%)

This task involves the choice of one text that has been shared by the class paired with an independently selected text, and results in an essay comparing both texts of up to 1500 words. The teacher may specify which shared text is to be used, or may provide opportunity for students to select from the range of text types studied: drama, prose, poetry or film. When students select poetry as the focus of the essay it is advisable to narrow the study to the work of one poet.

The more successful responses commonly:

* involved the selection an independent text with literary merit that provided ample scope for detailed analysis
* involved a focus on a manageable concept that was able to be explored within the limit of 1500 words
* were the result of well-developed questions that included a comparative element, a sense of the role of the author, and an element of tension that led to a well-considered answer
* involved an argument that was clearly comparative and involved an exploration of the similarities and differences between texts
* involved a line of reasoning within and between paragraphs so that each unit of thought was logically structured and the whole essay involved a carefully organised argument
* involved an appropriate introduction that foregrounded the central thesis and argument of the essay
* involved well-considered paragraphs that started with clear topic sentences and were structured cohesively with logical transitions
* involved final paragraphs that avoided repetition and instead took a ‘big picture’ approach to the question, finalised the argument, and drew convincing conclusions that supported the overall thesis of the essay
* involved fluently incorporated references to a range of stylistic features and conventions
* involved the exploration of the features of the text types being analysed and drew attention to the contrast between stylistic features when the text types differed
* congruently connected the stylistic features that were identified with appropriate evidence and a valid effect (positioning the reader/viewer or presenting an idea)
* involved evidence that was fluently embedded into the line of reasoning so that quotations, for example, were naturally incorporated into sentences
* were polished responses in which students had: checked spelling, particularly of key words such as authors’ names and terms central to the metalanguage being used; appropriately used punctuation, particularly of problematic elements such as apostrophes, colons and semi-colons and the delineation of titles; applied the correct techniques of quoting from texts; had carefully checked the accuracy of word choices, particularly in ensuring the correct use of verbs; had been careful in the use of synonyms, realising that words have particular nuances and choosing an uncommon or unfamiliar word might inadvertently result in using it out of context.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not involve a structured argument and were, instead, a collection of observations about texts
* involved a sequential, non-comparative exploration of texts
* involved only a few very lengthy paragraphs in which a logical structure was not sustained
* involved large slabs of quotation that were not integrated into the line of reasoning
* were a recount of events, or descriptions of characters, rather than an analysis of thematic concerns and stylistic features
* involved the labelling of stylistic features, but the provision of examples that were not clearly connected to that device or explanations about the effect of the feature that were illogical.

### Part B Critical Reading (15%)

The English Literary Studies examination was the first electronic exam developed in Australia and its implementation was smooth, its reception by all stakeholders positive and the quality of student responses was very pleasing. Students clearly felt comfortable working and communicating in the medium with which they are most familiar – an electronic one – and teachers had obviously prepared their classes for the task. Examining in such a form is obviously appropriate, progressive and broadly welcomed. In further developing the possibilities of the medium it is worth noting the following:

* Students who planned and organised their responses developed more successful answers than those who may have written a lot of material but allowed responses to become unstructured and repetitive. It is important that students understand that quality, not quantity, attracts better marks.
* While there is some facility to copy and paste sections of text within the electronic platform, students who integrated quotes and examples into the line of reasoning fared better than those who used the cut-and-paste function to insert material without wisely incorporating it.
* While markers were instructed not to penalise typing errors, students do need to take care with spelling. Practicing electronic responses to tasks during the year with spell and grammar checks switched off is highly recommended as this provides opportunities for teachers and students to identify areas that need work.

The more successful responses students commonly:

* addressed the question, ensuring that all material was relevant to the answer provided
* answered the question immediately rather than beginning with generic observations that were largely irrelevant
* avoided the repetition of material
* used sophisticated metalanguage and appropriate examples when discussing conventions and stylistic features, and clearly connected these with an effect (in positioning the reader and emphasising ideas)
* provided detailed evidence from the texts to support points and ensured that these references supported the idea being explored
* chose succinct quotations that were integrated into the line of reasoning and avoided copying large slabs of text
* understood the conventions of the text types represented in the examination: a poem, playscript and prose text. Since these forms are central to the English Literary Studies course it was expected that students would be able to identify both those stylistic features that are more generic to a range of text types (title, structure, characterisation, etc.) and those particular to each (see notes below for examples)
* appropriately divided their time, paying heed to the recommendations of length as an indication of the relative ‘weight’ of the question
* selected key stylistic features of the texts about which to write, rather than following a formula that led to the exploration of peripheral techniques
* avoided slipping into recount by centring the answer on the question and ensuring – when appropriate – that a particular stylistic feature was at the forefront of the analysis.
* ensured that the stylistic feature being explored clearly connected, in a logical and clearly demonstrated way, to an idea or ideas
* wrote with accuracy, precision and an appropriate application of terminology

### Specific comments about each question

Question One

* Most students understood the requirements of this question: to observe the way in which the differences in the playscript and prose text contribute to the understanding of the poem. More successful answers involved a reflection on what the poem contained, with a well-structured exploration of the aspects expounded upon in the other two texts. In less successful responses students recounted what each text presented without considering the texts in relationship with one another.

Question Two

* More successful responses to this question involved an understanding of the techniques particular to the text type that were employed by the authors to create characters. Responses in which students ensured that the comparison of the these techniques were the driving focus achieved particularly well. Less successful responses involved separate, non-integrated descriptions of characters in the texts selected without reference to the authorial choices in constructing them.

Question Three

* The challenge for students in this question was to clearly identify ideas in the selected text and then carefully choose stylistic features that were used to present those ideas. The key to a good answer here , therefore, was the initial identification of a clear concept. For some it was ‘ideas about the characters and/or the competition’ and this was acceptable if managed appropriately with the evidence. For others, and these tended to present a better answer, it was ‘bigger picture’ concepts such as the treatment of the outsider in a community (exploring the cake competition as microcosm of social concerns) or the conventional vs the unconventional, or the influence of small town thinking, or the role of gender and cultural divides in society, etc. These kinds of ideas often led to the more astute naming of the stylistic features that supported them in whichever text it was.

The following notes were provided to markers for the process of assessing the critical reading. As general principles markers were instructed that:

* The critical reading was to be marked as a whole. Material relevant to particular questions may have appeared in the response to other questions and markers were instructed to credit this material.
* It was not required that students address each of the aspects covered in these notes. These are only a guide to the possible responses students may have provided. Equally, students may have written about additional aspects not covered in these notes.
* The suggestions of length were guidelines only (students may have written more or may have written less; it was the quality of the answer that was to be assessed).

1. Each author of the three texts presents different aspects of the same event. In what ways does the content of the playscript (Text 2) and the prose text (Text 3) add to that provided by the poem (Text 1)? (one or two paragraphs)

Some students may have chosen to narrow the focus for this question and only explore one or two elements that are expounded in the prose and playscript texts and have done so in a lot of detail. Other students may have taken a broad view and covered a range of elements in an approach, and therefore only covered each as a summary. Either approach is acceptable. Similarly some students may have separated the exploration of the texts, explaining what is covered in the poem, and then how the playscript adds to this information, and then how the prose text adds to it; other students may have integrated the discussion of how the playscript and the prose text add to the poem, covering all simultaneously; other students may have selected a range of concepts – the setting; what is understood about the characters in each text; etc. – and divided up the response in the exploration of each of these. Again – any approach is acceptable.

In response to this question students may have explored some of the following:

* How the playscript and prose add to the information about the characters and enhance the reader’s understanding of the characterisation.
* How the playscript and prose text affect the sympathy that the reader has for the minor characters and enhances the antipathy that the reader has towards Mrs Bishop.
* How the playscript adds to the understanding of the attitudes that motivate Mrs Bishop.
* How the playscript symbolically represents the setting and adds to the concept of Mrs Bishop’s authoritarian nature.
* How the prose text provides backstories to three of the characters.
* How the prose text provides information about events outside of the bake-off itself: the preparation undertaken, the motivation for being involved, the consequences of things ‘said and done’ at the competition itself.
* How the combination of the texts provides an understanding of the varying points-of-view of the different participants.
* How some ‘subtextual’ information (e.g. Mrs Frith’s weaknesses; Mrs Pikoulos’ longing for home; etc.) that is hinted at in the poem is expounded upon in the other two texts.
* Some students may reflect on the way that the differences in the text types affect the type of information provided – for example, the playscript allows a much more in-depth presentation of the actions of characters and of the interactions between characters; the prose texts allows a much more complex exploration of the inner life of characters – however, such an observation is not essential to achieving the highest possible marks (for it is not required by the question) but should be sufficiently rewarded if included.

1. Choose two of the texts. Compare the ways in which the authors have used the conventions of the text type to develop a character or characters. (three paragraphs)

The intent of this question is that students show an analytical understanding of the way in which authors use the stylistic features that are particular to the text type to develop characterisation. It is appropriate for students to explore the role of techniques that are more generic (the title, structure, symbolism, etc.) but there should be an acknowledgement in the response to those features that are more particular to the various types of text (stage directions, costume, lighting, props, etc. in a playscript; imagery, stanza structure, metaphor and simile, etc. in a poem; narrative point of view, juxtaposition of voices, etc., in a prose text).

Students may choose a range of acceptable ways of answering this question:

* some may select one character and explore that one in detail
* some may choose a variety of characters
* some may not compare the same characters but actually divide the response up by comparing techniques of characterisation (e.g. exploring the way that authors provide expository detail to influence the reader’s sympathetic response towards a character using the playwright’s presentation of Eileen Miller and the prose writer’s presentation of Lily Stephens, etc.)
* some may use a combination of these approaches.

There must be a comparative element to the response, whether in the comparison of how a particular character or characters is presented or a comparison of how a particular technique is used. It is not expected that the paragraphs will involve a continual movement back-and-forth between texts/authors, but there must be some discussion of the similarities and differences in the way in which authors of varying text types use techniques of characterisation.

In response to this question students may have explored some of the following:

* Poem: imagery that creates a severity to Mrs Bishop (adjectives, similes, metaphors); the use of verbs that reinforce Mrs Bishop’s dismissive nature; the symbolic/imagistic reflection of the character in the baked good each has made; the structure of the stanzas (each introduces a different character, but Mrs Bishop is over-arching in all…provides the sense of each being judged as much as the baked good itself); the judgmental tone; etc.
* Playscript: visual symbolism; the use of the set (authoritative positioning of Mrs Bishop; subordinate position of the contestants); the dialogue (aggressive and accusing for Mrs Bishop; simple and childlike for Lily; defensive for Mrs Frith; often silent for Mrs Pikoulos, etc.); the music that reinforces the effect that Mrs Bishop has on the other characters; costuming that suggests an authoritarian status to Mrs Bishop; the use of stage directions to indicate the motivation of the characters and therefore make some of the subtext clear; the title (it refers to the winning of the competition, but also the idea that Mrs Bishop considers herself to be ‘in first place’); the lighting that reflects the gaze of Mrs Bishop; Mrs Bishop’s condescending nomenclature of the contestants; etc.
* Prose text: narrative point of view (third person limited for Lily; first person for Alistair and Mrs Pikoulos) that provides access to the inner life of the characters; imagery of the innocence of Lily and the focus on the idea of her growing up; irony in the second vignette (Alistair is unaffected by a win or loss); the expository details provided in the second and third vignettes that create a backstory for the two adults; the varying voices/language register of the texts (particularly obvious in the more sophisticated imagery of the second vignette and the broken English of the third); etc.

1. Using the text you did not select for Question 2, explore the ways in which the author uses stylistic features to present ideas.

Students are required to focus on one text (the one leftover from question 2!) and explore the way in which ideas are made apparent through stylistic features. These ideas may be simple (creates sympathy in the reader towards a character, presents the competitive nature of people, etc.) or more complex (the references to bigotry in the playscript, or the reflection on different stages of life in the prose text, etc.) or may be connected to the effect on the reader (the tone created, the stirring of an emotional response, etc.). However, there must be some connection between the stylistic feature being explored and an idea that is presented through it; simply observing that a stylistic feature exists in a text without exploring its effect (presenting an idea) only demonstrates Knowledge & Understanding and not Analysis.

It is appropriate for students to also explore the role of characterisation in this single text (as well as having taken this approach in question 2). That a character represents certain human attributes or attitudes is an idea and may be implied in such an analysis.

In response to this question students may have explored some of the following:

* Poem: any of the points listed in question 2; structure; the way in which Mrs Bishop assumes a central position (the intensity of her actions, the icing on her cake); issues of power and condescension (the characterisation of Mrs Bishop as compared to the contestants); the way in which competition divides people (reflected in the stanza structure); the way in which people can be caricatured and the way in which communities are made up of a range of people (reflected in the imagery, the association of individuals with the goods they have baked), etc.
* Playscript: any of the points listed in question 2; the bigotry of Mrs Bishop (the way in which she judges on the basis of age, ethnicity, gender etc.) evident in her condescending and instructional dialogue and in the nomenclature she uses of the contestants; the assumption of power by an individual (reinforced in the set, costume, lighting, sound); the notion of being in first place (the title, the closing line of the playscript); insight into the range of motivations that affect people made evident in the use of stage directions; etc.
* Prose text: any of the points listed in question 2; growing up and coming-of-age in the first vignette, making essential life changes in the second, the suffering produced through isolation in the third text (ideas that are reinforced through the narrative perspectives, the contrasting voices, the structural use of three vignettes); the way in which a single event in which people are involved can be a complex combination of varying life experiences; the division of the text into three time periods ‘before’, ‘during’ and ‘after’ that reveal the way in which an event is affected by people’s experiences and may, in turn, have an impact upon others (cause and effect); etc.