



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board



**CAMBRIDGE**  
International Education

**Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education  
Advanced Level Higher 3 (2027)**

# **Literature in English (Syllabus 9805)**

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## INTRODUCTION

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H3 Literature is intended for students who display an exceptional ability and interest in the study of Literature, and are willing to pursue their studies to a greater depth and with greater specialisation.

## AIMS

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To develop in students:

1. detailed knowledge and understanding of a well defined literary subject
2. understanding of different methods of literary analysis
3. confidence in forming independent judgements
4. skills in literary research
5. skills in the formal academic presentation of a wide range of information and complex ideas.

## ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

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Candidates in their essay and accompanying evaluative commentary will demonstrate the ability to:

1. analyse and evaluate literary texts in the context of literary history, and/or movements, and/or theory; evaluate and compare different critical views
2. construct a well-founded argument in support of an independent critical judgement
3. carry out independent research involving the selection and citation of a range of appropriate secondary sources
4. discuss the process of research and analysis in an evaluative commentary.

## ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

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Candidates submit an essay of 3000–3500 words, together with an evaluative commentary of 800–1200 words.

### Content of Research Essay

- Candidates must base their essay on at least **3** primary texts, and make reference to other relevant texts (e.g. by the same author or in the same genre) as appropriate.
- Candidates must not base their essay on texts studied for H1 and H2.
- Texts studied must be originally written in English.
- In the case of poetry, a text should consist of a particular published selection, or an equally substantial selection made by the candidate.
- Headings, footnotes and appendices will not count towards the 3000–3500 word limit.
- The essay must be typewritten on A4 size paper; with double-spacing and in Arial font, size 12.

- A complete bibliography of all resources used/referred to must be attached to the work.
- Candidates may include appendices which comprise materials that may assist the examiner in assessing the essay. They may include secondary materials not likely to be easily available in the UK for the examiner's reference. In the interest of keeping the bulk of submissions low, Coursework Supervisors and candidates are encouraged to exercise discretion in what is included here.

## Selecting the research topic

### Initial Research and Literature Review

The process of selecting the research topic will begin with the proposal of several possible areas of research by candidates. The Coursework Supervisor will assist candidates in refining, narrowing, and selecting at least **3** initial areas of potential research, based on their assessment of the viability and rigour of the topics (see 'Guidelines for the Research Essay'). Candidates will then conduct an initial literature review for these topics. The purpose of the literature review is to enable the Coursework Supervisor to monitor the extensiveness of the candidates' research, and to enable candidates to ascertain whether there are enough primary and secondary sources available to support their research topic. Based on this, the Coursework Supervisor and the candidates will select one research topic.

### Guidelines for the Research Essay

Coursework Supervisors assisting candidates in the selection of their research topics should follow these guidelines:

- The research essay should be a serious and rigorous academic exercise.
- The research topic should be on an area of legitimate study that will allow for enough scope of study such that the candidate reads widely in the course of the research process.
- The research topic should also allow for depth and rigour of literary analysis.
- The research essay should display some degree of sophistication and insight, and extend the candidates' exposure and appreciation of literature beyond that of the areas already covered in the H2 syllabus. As such, candidates cannot choose any of the specific texts they have studied for H2 as the main focus of the extended essay (although they may be referred to as secondary material).
- As candidates of H3 Literature will be expected to demonstrate greater depth and rigour in their research, they will examine a minimum of **3** primary sources in their research essay.
- Secondary sources should be consulted, to ensure that there is enough breadth of reading and research.

Primary sources here refer to the original literary texts being studied and exclude by definition, translated or abridged texts. Secondary sources refer to works of criticism or commentary, and include adaptations of literary texts, in both print and non-print forms, such as film.

## Examples of types of tasks

The following provide examples of the types of tasks that could be undertaken for the research essay.

- An exploration of an author's development as a writer, using a range of texts written over the span of the author's career as exemplification.
- A written reflection and evaluation of a group of texts, commenting on them in view of their literary context (e.g. metaphysical poetry, or modernist novels).
- An exploration of how a particular critical theory or approach to the reading of a group of texts guides and informs the process of reading and/or interpretation.
- An examination of a particular mode of writing (e.g. satirical writing) as exemplified in several texts, and an application of selected critical approaches or ideas in evaluating the mode of writing.
- An exploration and comparative analysis of how a particular theme (e.g. love) is approached in a group of texts.

## Evaluative commentary

Candidates prepare a commentary of 800–1200 words on the essay. The commentary should reflect on the process of planning, researching and writing the essay, and include, where appropriate, consideration of:

- the original aims of the essay and how these developed or changed
- the methodology
- the primary and the secondary sources used - in the case of primary sources, reasons for the use of a particular edition should be given if relevant
- how those sources were used as a stimulus or point of departure for the candidate's own arguments
- how differing critical views have informed the essay
- the drafting process
- ways in which the investigation developed and other possible methods or ideas that could have been used
- how final conclusions were reached.

## The approval process for the proposal

- Candidates must submit to SEAB the soft copy of their **Research Essay Proposal Form** (provided by SEAB) by a specified date in Term 1 of the second year of study. **Deadlines for submissions will be specified by SEAB in a circular to schools.**
- The Proposal must include the following details:
  - the research topic
  - the working title of the essay
  - a brief summary (150–250 words) of the aims and scope of the essay
  - details of the texts (a minimum of **3** primary sources and some secondary sources)
- The hard copy of the proposal must be dated and signed by both the candidate and the Coursework Supervisor. The hard copy should be retained by the school and submitted with the completed essay by the date specified by SEAB.
- Proposal submissions will be sent electronically to Cambridge for approval by the examiner.
- If a proposal is acceptable as it stands, the examiner may approve it without further feedback.
- If the examiner rejects a proposal, or indicates that a proposal needs to be revised before it can be approved, s/he will send feedback accordingly. This feedback must be retained and submitted with the completed essay, along with the hard copy of the original research proposal.
- If a candidate has been advised by the examiner that s/he must make a resubmission of the amended proposal for approval, or submit a second proposal, the candidate must do so by the date specified by SEAB, the hard copy of which must be submitted with the completed essay.

## Notes for guidance on the research essay

The essay and evaluative commentary submitted for assessment must be candidates' own work and should represent their ability to work **independently**. Nevertheless, all candidates will need support from their Centres in the form of monitoring the work in progress and giving some degree of guidance. The extent of guidance by the Coursework Supervisor is outlined below.

### At the Proposal Stage

Before candidates embark on the writing of their paper, at the Proposal Stage of the essay, Coursework Supervisors are expected to:

- guide candidates on the selection of an appropriate research topic
- guide candidates in the formulation of their research proposal. This guidance includes discussion with the candidate of any feedback given by the examiner on the proposal, as well as the formulation of a second proposal, should it prove necessary.
- advise candidates on work schedule
- advise candidates on research ethics
- guide candidates on research skills and techniques
- advise candidates on the suitability of resources/references selected
- explain to candidates what they will be assessed on and how their performance will be assessed
- draw candidates' attention to the importance of the declaration they will be required to make in the ***Research Essay Declaration and Submission Form*** (provided by SEAB).

### During Writing

- At the Writing stage, the Coursework Supervisor should continually monitor the progress of the candidate to ensure that the candidate's work is on schedule.
- The Coursework Supervisor may provide feedback on the Research Essay only during the scheduled conference sessions. The Coursework Supervisor must ensure that the candidate does his/her own independent thinking and is fully responsible for developing the arguments and essay structures, and sourcing of information.
- The Coursework Supervisor may have up to 3 conferences with the candidate. The first and second conferences are compulsory while the third conference is optional.
  - (a) **First conference (compulsory)** – this must be conducted as soon as the candidate is ready with the first draft, at the latest by mid-May. The Coursework Supervisor will not be required to complete the *Record of Guidance* (provided by SEAB).
  - (b) **Second conference (compulsory)** – this must be conducted at the latest by mid-July. The Coursework Supervisor will be required to complete the *Record of Guidance* (provided by SEAB), giving details of key points of guidance provided during the conference. This will aid examiners in evaluating the candidate's work.

- (c) **Third conference (optional)** – this, if needed, must be conducted latest by mid-August. The Coursework Supervisor will be required to complete the *Record of Guidance* (provided by SEAB), giving details of key points of guidance provided during the conference. The Coursework Supervisor should make it known to the candidate that the nature and extent of additional guidance given at the third conference will be recorded and may be taken into consideration by the examiner during the marking of the candidate's work.

The third conference can be conducted:

1. at the request of a candidate, or
  2. should the Coursework Supervisor feel that a candidate is not progressing well and would benefit from a third conference, s/he may suggest it to the candidate. However, it should be the candidate's decision whether or not to take up the suggestion.
- The length of time required for each conference session will depend on each candidate's needs. However, each conference session should take place over one sitting, i.e. over a single session within one day.
  - The Coursework Supervisor may accept a draft of a candidate's work in advance of the conferences, for discussion during the sessions, but the Coursework Supervisor should not give any written feedback on the work submitted.
  - The Coursework Supervisor should encourage the candidate to take notes during the conferences, so that s/he can refer to these notes subsequently, when working independently.
  - All completed *Record of Guidance* forms must carry the Coursework Supervisor's signature and date. The candidate should be given the opportunity to see what has been noted down on the forms and should sign his/her acknowledgement of the guidance given.
  - All completed *Record of Guidance* forms must be attached to the front of the completed work submitted for assessment, behind the *Declaration and Submission Form*.

#### Acknowledgement of External Sources of Information

- Candidates are permitted to seek advice or information from people outside of the school environment who have expertise that is relevant to their research. However, as part of their guidance on the ethics of carrying out independent research, Coursework Supervisors should advise candidates that it is not acceptable for them to either seek or accept help from any outside agency, including family and friends, in the actual writing of their essay. The responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also permitted. Content produced by AI such as ChatGPT is not considered as candidates' own work, and therefore candidates are required to acknowledge sources used in their work.
- Candidates must acknowledge guidance or information provided by people or generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) other than their Literature in English Coursework Supervisors. They may do this through the use of in-text citations, footnotes, or endnotes, or in their bibliography.

#### Submission of Work and Suspicion of Plagiarism

- When candidates submit their essay and evaluative commentary for assessment, Coursework Supervisors are expected to ensure that candidates have completed the *Research Essay Declaration and Submission* form and attached it to the front of the work.
- Coursework Supervisors should also submit the hard copy of the proposal(s), along with any feedback given by the examiner, as well as the *Record of Guidance*.
- While Coursework Supervisors do not need to assess the work that is submitted, or check that requirements for the essay and evaluative commentary have been fulfilled, they will need to read the work in order to satisfy themselves that it is authentic.
- If the Coursework Supervisor is satisfied that, **to the best of her/his knowledge** of the candidate and the progress of the essay and evaluative commentary, the work is authentic, s/he should sign and date the declaration of authenticity on the *Declaration and Submission Form*. It is understood that the declaration is

made in good faith by the Coursework Supervisor and that ultimately, the authenticity of the work is the candidate's responsibility.

- If the Coursework Supervisor has cause for suspicion of plagiarism in the work submitted s/he should circle 'reason' [*to believe that the candidate has plagiarised work in this Research Essay*] in the *Declaration and Submission Form* and give details in an Irregularity Report (to be issued by SEAB). The report should be submitted to SEAB, together with the work in question, and the candidate's approved proposal.
- All documentation regarding cases of suspected plagiarism, proven or otherwise must be submitted to SEAB. The examining authority will take disciplinary action against any candidate found to have committed or aided the offence of plagiarism.
- If there are no Irregular Cases, a 'nil return' must be submitted by the school.

## LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

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### Level 1

*Work at this level will be outstanding, demonstrating a combination of creativity and organisation in defining and expounding insightful, mature and at times original ideas, with economy and fluidity.*

Analyses and evaluates literary texts, related to appropriate literary, historical, theoretical contexts, with skill and flair; evaluates different critical views, showing a sophisticated understanding of different possible approaches.

Argues lucidly, in a tightly organised but apparently seamless structure, on a strong foundation of reference, in support of an independent critical judgement.

Shows evidence of thorough and independent research involving the judicious selection and citation of secondary sources; shows ability to develop argument from the research rather than fitting facts to theories.

In the evaluative commentary, demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the process of literary research and analysis, and an ability to evaluate the essay with insight and flair.

### Level 2

*Work at this level will range from very good to excellent, demonstrating clear focus and control in defining and presenting an insightful argument.*

Analyses and evaluates literary texts in literary, historical, theoretical contexts, with skill; evaluates different critical views, showing understanding that different approaches are possible.

Constructs a focused, well-founded argument in support of an independent critical judgement.

Shows evidence of appropriate, thorough and independent research, involving the judicious selection and citation of secondary sources.

In the evaluative commentary, demonstrates a thorough understanding of the process of literary research and analysis and an ability to evaluate the essay with critical insight.

### Level 3

*At this level the candidate will have produced a competent and possibly very full body of work, but may rely more on amassing evidence than on skilful argument; alternatively the work will be thoughtful but not fully developed. Presentation must be satisfactory and follow conventions.*

Analyses and evaluates literary texts with knowledge and understanding of the key issues raised by the title, making some meaningful connections with appropriate literary, historical, theoretical contexts; shows awareness of different critical views, with some evaluation.



Constructs an argument in support of a critical judgement, and structures the essay around the argument.

Shows evidence of independent research, involving the selection and citation of secondary sources, though not fully sufficient to the demands of the title, or with insufficient selectivity.

In the evaluative commentary, demonstrates an understanding, which may be partial, of the process of literary research and analysis, and some ability to evaluate the essay.

#### **Level 4**

*At this level candidates will have amassed a body of work without sufficient development, or will have shown insufficient breadth of reading and reference.*

Analyses and evaluates literary texts with some reference to the context of literary history, and/or movements, and/or theory; shows some awareness that critical views may differ from the candidate's own view and from one another.

Constructs an argument, perhaps with lacunae, or with insufficient supporting reference.

Shows some evidence of research which may be limited, or derivative.

In the evaluative commentary, shows some limited understanding of the process of literary research and analysis, and comments on the essay with limited insight.

#### **Note:**

Examiners will not be required to read beyond the word limit of both the research essay and the evaluative commentary