

Q&A on NSS Curriculum and Assessment Framework
Literature in English

1. We're concerned about the level of difficulty of the literature course. Will the selection of set texts cater to a wide range of student abilities and interests?

Careful consideration will be given to the selection of texts for the literature curriculum to ensure that it is attractive and manageable for students, and at the same time sufficiently challenging for meaningful tasks to be set for students to demonstrate their literary skills and knowledge.

The set texts would aim at offering a balance of classical and contemporary works, male and female writers, mainstream British/American writers as well as works in English by writers from other parts of the world.

Works or writers that are on the current CE, ASL and AL syllabuses would also be included to ensure continuity between the existing and the new curricula. The suggested lists of texts will be sent round to schools to consult teachers' views before they are finalised.

2. Would it be possible to provide choice for each genre within each set of texts for study?

Two sets of texts would be provided for school selection, but there would not be choices for each genre within each set as that would complicate the public examination where multiple options of questions for each set of texts would need to be provided.

3. Regarding film study, it seems that a lot of emphasis is placed on the teaching of technical aspects such as lighting, panning, etc. Is this going to be the focus in the study of the genre?

Teachers are encouraged to aim for a balanced focus on theme, content and technique. While students may have to deal with the technical aspect in the study of film, they would not be expected to demonstrate a high level of understanding of technical details. This point has been made clear in the Literature in English Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4-6) (CDC and HKEAA, 2007) (see <http://cd.gov.hk/eng>).

4. Will there be international recognition of the NSS Literature in English Curriculum and the HKDSE?

In designing the NSS Literature in English Curriculum, reference was made to the

requirements and standards of the literature curricula in other countries. The NSS Literature in English Curriculum has also been benchmarked by curriculum and assessment agencies in different countries, such as the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). It has been found to be comparable to the senior secondary literature curricula of such countries.

Standards in the HKDSE will be benchmarked against key overseas examinations in the same way that currently applies to the HKCEE and HKALE. The HKEAA has commenced discussions with overseas universities to ensure continuity of international recognition following the introduction of the HKDSE, and all universities consulted thus far anticipate no problems. The HKEAA is also working with assessment bodies in the UK, Australia, Canada, mainland China and the USA to seek recognition of the HKDSE Literature in English exam.

5. When will the details of the HKDSE Literature in English examination be available?

The HKEAA conducted briefing sessions for teachers in December 2008 on Standards-referenced Reporting (SRR), Portfolio/School-based Assessment (SBA) and the set texts for HKDSE Literature in English. According to the HKEAA, the SRR level descriptors and annotated examples as well as draft sample papers will be available on the HKEAA website (<http://hkeaa.edu.hk>) by late December 2008, and the set texts will be circulated around schools in early 2009. The SRR booklet and the SBA handbook with assessment criteria and guidelines for teachers in conducting SBA will be disseminated to schools by May 2009.

6. For SBA, will external moderation be used to ensure reliability and fairness?

While statistical moderation may not be appropriate for a subject with a small candidature such as Literature in English, external moderation involving the checking of a sample of portfolio work will be considered.

7. Apart from the professional development programmes (PDPs) in support of the NSS Literature in English Curriculum currently on offer, will there be PDPs to support subject teachers in preparing students for the public assessment?

PDPs to enhance teachers' capacity to prepare students for portfolio work as well as the other components of the HKDSE Literature in English examination will be conducted by the HKEAA. Details of the programmes will be disseminated to schools in due course.

8. Will the implementation of the new senior secondary academic system adversely affect the future of Literature in English as a subject?

To attract student interest, the literature curriculum has been refined to make it even more accessible and appealing. Further, professional development programmes have been conducted since 2005/06 to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills in the learning and teaching of the subject, as well as to heighten their awareness of the need to publicise the benefit of the subject and to cultivate students' interest through promoting language arts at junior secondary level.

Students will be made aware of the fact that admission to a good number of university faculties or departments does not require any specific elective subjects as pre-requisites. They need to understand that one elective subject is just as good as the other and should therefore feel free to opt for Literature in English should they be interested in the subject.

Schools are also encouraged to explore ways to offer the subject to their students, such as by making use of the Diversity Learning Grant (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/UtilityManager/circular/upload/EDBCM/EDBCM08146E.pdf>) and collaborating with other schools to offer networked classes for the subject.