

Supporting Independent Study in English Literature



Session Aims



Part 1: Student View: Challenges

- Comparison of the A-Level and HE English curriculum
- Issues within the typical working week in HE English at Level 1
- Retention and results

Part 2: Teaching View: Strategies

- Essay writing skills and ways of bridging the gap
- Widening experiences
- Developing UCAS statements
- Emphasising the value of English

Opening Question



? What qualities do you think your students need to succeed at HE level English Literature?

What Qualities Do Students Need to Succeed at HE Level English?



Sixth form teachers say

- love of reading
- independence of thought
- intellectual curiosity
- analytical skills
- strong written abilities
- ability to work independently
- excitement and enthusiasm
- an open mind
- confidence
- organisational abilities
- willingness to experiment
- wide general and literary knowledge
- research skills
- application and discipline
- metacognitive abilities

HE lecturers say

- application
- organisation
- intellectual curiosity
- an open mind
- advanced reading and writing skills
- sensitivity in interpretation
- enthusiasm and enjoyment
- commitment in reading and willingness to read widely
- note-taking skills
- critical thinking
- research skills
- a grasp of key theoretical approaches
- imagination

Source: 'Four Perspectives on Transition: English Literature from Sixth Form to University', *English Subject Centre* (2005)
<<http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/archive/publications/reports/transition.pdf>>

Follow-Up Question



? What do you think might prevent students from meeting these expectations as they transition from A-Level to HE Level?

Part One

The Student View



**WHAT ARE THE TYPICAL EXPERIENCES AND
TEACHING SCENARIOS A STUDENT MIGHT
ENCOUNTER?**

WHAT CHALLENGES MAY STUDENTS FACE?

The Student Experience



Our Level 1 curriculum

Study Patterns



Lectures



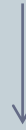
Tutorials



Essays



**Essay
feedback**



Exam

The Level 1 Curriculum



- Introduces major genres
- Introduces theoretical approaches
- Wide historical coverage



For all module details, see

https://www.dur.ac.uk/faculty.handbook/module_search/?year=2015&search_dept=ENGL&search_level=-1

Introduction to Drama



- To introduce students to the work of, and critical debate about, a wide historical range of drama and dramatists writing in English, typically covering work from all or most of the following areas: the medieval, early modern, Restoration and Augustan, Romantic, Victorian, and twentieth- and twenty-first century: post-medieval dramatists to be covered might include, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Behn, Gay, Shelley, Wilde, Shaw, O'Neill, Miller, Beckett, and Kushner.

Introduction to the Novel



- To introduce students to ways of reading English novels and various contexts for studying them.
- To familiarise students with strategies for engaging with fictional texts formally as well as historically, by situating the novels studied in their distinctive cultural environments while also allowing students to understand ways in which novelistic form and technique have changed over time.
- To provide students with critical tools for investigating how the novel translates into media other than print, including film adaptations and graphic novels.
- Specific texts to be studied will vary from year to year; a typical selection might be *Moll Flanders*, *Sense and Sensibility* (Austen's original text plus recent film and TV mini-series adaptations), *Jane Eyre*, *Bleak House*, *Heart of Darkness*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and *V Is for Vendetta*.

Introduction to Poetry



- To introduce students, through study of a wide range of poems by poets writing in English from the early modern to the contemporary periods, and including some American poetry, to some of this poetic tradition's major verse forms, modes of organization, and genres (e.g. blank verse, the couplet, the stanza, lyric, elegy, sonnet, epic, pastoral, ode, open form).
- To introduce students to the often shifting relationship between genre and theme (e.g. elegy and death).
- To introduce students to the close and attentive reading of poetry, including analysis of tone, diction, syntax, imagery, and rhythm.
- Specific texts to be studied may vary from year to year. A typical selection might include a representative sample of poems from *The Making of a Poem: An Anthology of Poetic Forms*, ed. Mark Strand and Eavan Boland, by poets such as Marlowe, Shakespeare, Wroth, Donne, Marvell, Milton, Herbert, Johnson, Gray, Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Emily Brontë, T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, Sylvia Plath, Seamus Heaney, Paula Meehan, Sharon Olds. The anthology would be supplemented by other works as appropriate, normally including as a central text on the module Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and also such works as Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*.

English: Language, Use and Theory



- To introduce students to the history of the English language, including its origins and the development from Old English through Middle English to modern English.
- To introduce notions of grammar, vocabulary and syntax.
- To explore vocabulary and semantic change.
- To introduce notions of standard language and dialect, and the development of ideas of correctness and prescription.
- To consider reasons for language change (e.g. socio-political).
- To explore different attitudes to and theories of language (e.g. 17th and 18th-century attitudes).
- To introduce questions of language usage (e.g. linguistic register, gender issues).
- To introduce appropriate linguistic terms with which to describe language change.
- To explore contemporary critical perspectives on language and its history.

Classical and Biblical Backgrounds to English Literature



- To provide a common foundation for students (including those with little or no previous knowledge of the Graeco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian traditions) by introducing them to some of the seminal texts (and formative ideas) of Western Culture.
- By virtue of such a foundation, to facilitate and enhance students' appreciation of English Literature throughout their undergraduate careers.
- Content
- Syllabus may vary from year to year, but is likely to be drawn from the following texts and topics: Classical Literature: Epic (Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, Vergil's Aeneid), Tragedy (Aeschylus' Oresteia, Sophocles' Oedipus the King, Seneca's Thyestes), Comedy (Plautus' Menaechmi), Pastoral (Theocritus' Idylls, Vergil's Eclogues), Satire (Juvenal), Love Poetry (Catullus, Propertius, Horace, Ovid), Philosophy (Plato and Platonism), Literary Criticism (Aristotle's Poetics, Horace's Ars Poetica), Mythology (Ovid's Metamorphoses), Ancient Novel (Petronius' Satyricon, Apuleius' The Golden Ass), Classical influences on English Literature.
- The Bible (Authorized Version): examples of myth, history, wisdom literature, prophecy, gospels, epistles, and apocalyptic writing (Genesis, Exodus, 1&2 Samuel, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, St Paul's Epistles, Revelation).

Myth and Epic of the North



- To introduce students to the literature and culture of the earlier medieval period; although the original works may be Old English, Latin, Old Norse or Old French, all are studied primarily in modern English translations.
- To enable students to gain a basic understanding of the forms of Old English, Old Norse and Old French poetry.
- To study a selection of examples of some major literary genres of the period, especially epic, lay, elegy and saga, and examples of heathen and Christian mythological and religious literature.
- To enable students to place these works in their historical and cultural contexts.
- To consider the nature of oral and written composition and transmission of texts within the period covered.
- To enable students to gain insight into some of the ways in which the medieval literature studied on the module has been used in modern books, stage works or film.

Romance and the Literature of Chivalry



- To introduce students to the literature and thought of the later medieval period (e.g. the works of Chrétien de Troyes, Marie de France, Chaucer, the Gawain-poet, Malory).
- To introduce students to the cultural, socio-political, moral and philosophical ideas of the medieval period, in particular, the notions of chivalry, knighthood and courtliness.
- To explore the development of courtly literature associated with chivalry, in particular the development of the romance genre, and the conventions and modes of representation associated with it.
- To explore contemporary critical perspectives on the medieval period.
- To explore the influence of the romance genre and chivalric literature on post-medieval literature and culture.
- Texts to be studied normally include: Chrétien de Troyes: *The Story of the Grail* (Perceval), Malory: *Le Morte Darthur* (esp. last 3 books), Chaucer: 'The Knight's Tale' and 'The Franklin's Tale', *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Laxdaela Saga*.

Comparison with A-Level



- ? What continuities and differences do you perceive between the A-Level and this HE curriculum?
- ? What challenges might the HE curriculum pose to your students?

A-Level Curriculum 2015 (AQA)



Paper 1: Love through the ages

Study of three texts: one poetry and one prose text, of which one must be written pre-1900, and one Shakespeare play. Examination will include two unseen poems

Assessed

- written exam: 3 hours
- open book in Section C only
- 75 marks
- 40% of A-level

Questions

Section A: Shakespeare: one passage-based question with linked e (25 marks)

Section B: Unseen poetry: compulsory essay question on two unsee poems (25 marks)

Section C: Comparing texts: one essay question linking two texts (2 marks)

Paper 2: Texts in shared contexts

Choice of two options:

Option 2A: WW1 and its aftermath

Option 2B: Modern times: literature from 1945 to the present day

Study of three texts: one prose, one poetry, and one drama, of which one must be written post-2000

Examination will include an unseen extract

Assessed

- written exam: 2 hours 30 minutes
- open book
- 75 marks
- 40% of A-level

Questions

Section A: Set texts. One essay question on set text (25 marks)

Section B: Contextual linking

- one compulsory question on an unseen extract (25 marks)
- one essay question linking two texts (25 marks)

Non-exam assessment: Independent critical study: texts across time

Comparative critical study of two texts, at least one of which must have been written pre-1900

One extended essay (2500 words) and a bibliography

Assessed

- 50 marks
- 20% of A-level
- assessed by teachers
- moderated by AQA

A-Level v HE Curriculum



A-Level

- Divided into genres
- Pre- and post-1900 division
- Themes permit connections across curriculum and periods
- Key critical (close reading) skills

HE

- Divided into genres
- Broad coverage across literary history
- More modular, emphasis on distinct periods
- Increased stress on texts in contexts

HE Teachers' Views



- They're not used to having to read a novel a week - we don't expect them to know that text as thoroughly as at A Level.
- The one thing that is quite important is to let students know that they aren't here to be taught.
- Some A Level students are very teacher-dependent.
- You have to reorient them away from those expectations [of close or text-centric reading].
- They arrive with a very tunnel vision approach to what they are doing.
- What they want is more time to work on more focused texts.

Source: 'In at the Deep End? The First Year in Undergraduate English Literature', *English Subject Centre* (2008)

<<http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/archive/publications/reports/firstyear.pdf>>

Typical Module Study Pattern



Activity	Number	Frequency	Duration	Total/Hours	
Lectures	21	Weekly	1 hour	21	
Tutorials	7		1 hour	7	■
Essay Handback Sessions	2		15 minutes	0.5	■
Preparation and Reading				171.5	
Total				200	

Lectures



- Typically one hour per week, per module
- Large groups (c. 150+)

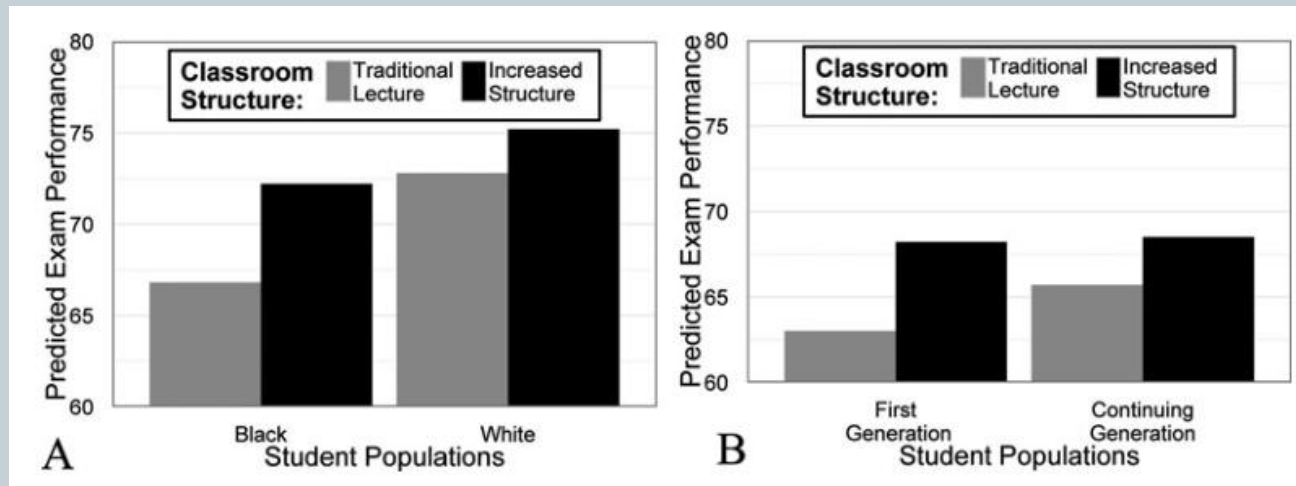
Lectures for Learning



- ? Reflect on your own experience of lectures. In what ways is the classroom environment different to the lecture environment?
- ? Why might some students find the lecture experience difficult?

Are Lectures Discriminatory?

- There is some evidence that students from underrepresented racial, ethnic, or income backgrounds perform proportionately better in courses with more active learning and less passive lecturing.



Source: 'Getting Under the Hood: How and for Whom Does Increasing Course Structure Work?' *Life Sciences Education* (2015)
<<http://www.lifescied.org/content/13/3/453.full>>.

What Lectures Ask of Students



- In the humanities, a lecture “places a premium on the connections between individual facts. It is not a recitation of facts, but the building of an argument” (Monessa Cummings, Chair in Classics, Grinnell College)
 - 1 hour attention; mindfulness
 - Analyse, synthesise, organise while listening
 - Lecture structure places expectations on students to work outside class, independently, but without follow-up or checking they have done so

Building Independent Learners



- ? To what extent are you able to allow students to study in an unstructured way (e.g. without regular 'homework' and checking that they have done homework)?
- ? How might students be enabled to feel more confident in a passive, lecture-type environment?

Small Group Tutorials



- 1 hour
- Groups of 8 students plus tutor
- In first year:
 - 3 tutorials in term 1
 - 3 in term 2
 - 1 in term 3
- Tutor will agree topics (usually one or two texts or extracts) with group
- Emphasis on student rather than teacher contributions; highly discursive

Classes and Tutorials



? To what extent might your classroom teaching prepare students for a small-group tutorial environment?

Classes v Tutorials



“Ensuring students are active rather than passive in class is widely held to be a key aspect of their transition to undergraduate study. The shift from absorbing material that has been presented to students as the answer to a more discursive pattern of teaching in workshops and seminars where experimentation and risk-taking were possible was a prominent concern during my research. **If the first-year curriculum is considered to be preparatory, then it should carry an element of preparing students for this active approach, particularly if one wishes to avoid the often reported issue of ‘the same voices contributing in each class.’**”

Source: ‘In at the Deep End? The First Year in Undergraduate English Literature’, *English Subject Centre* (2008)

<<http://www.english.heacademy.ac.uk/archive/publications/reports/firstyear.pdf>>

Independent Working



- ? What challenges might your students face in adapting to the limited contact hours at HE level?
- ? In what ways do your students already work independently? How (if at all) might this be further encouraged?

Essays



- Typically one 1500-word essay per module per term (i.e. typically 12 x 1500 word essays per year)
- Essays are typically formative rather than summative (i.e. they do not contribute directly to a student's overall grade, which is determined by exam)

Essay Handback Sessions



- 15 minutes
- One-to-one with tutor
- Reflect on module essays and agree pathways for future development
- Raise expectations

Examination



- Typically modules are pass/fail solely on basis of examination
- Three hour exams
- Exams usually ask for a combination of close textual analysis and broader thematic topics

School Type of Entrants



Faculty	Department	Campus		Comp/Sec School	Further Education	Grammar School	Higher Education	Independent School	VI Form	Other	Unknown	Total
Arts & Humanities	Classics & Ancient History	Durham	Number	42.5	2.5	31.0	9.5	132.0	17.0	0.0	1.5	236.0
			%	18.01%	1.06%	13.14%	4.03%	55.93%	7.20%	0.00%	0.64%	100.00%
	Combined Arts	Durham	Number	78.0	8.0	28.0	30.0	163.0	24.0	5.0	11.0	347.0
			%	22.48%	2.31%	8.07%	8.65%	46.97%	6.92%	1.44%	3.17%	100.00%
	English Studies	Durham	Number	135.5	5.5	43.5	30.0	164.0	36.0	2.0	5.5	422.0
			%	32.11%	1.30%	10.31%	7.11%	38.86%	8.53%	0.47%	1.30%	100.00%
	History	Durham	Number	134.5	12.0	58.5	33.0	230.5	40.5	4.0	9.5	522.5
			%	25.74%	2.30%	11.20%	6.32%	44.11%	7.75%	0.77%	1.82%	100.00%
Modern Languages & Cultures	Durham	Number	206.5	5.0	83.5	20.0	397.5	74.0	4.0	4.0	794.5	
		%	25.99%	0.63%	10.51%	2.52%	50.03%	9.31%	0.50%	0.50%	100.00%	
Music	Durham	Number	45.0	5.0	12.0	6.0	59.0	16.0	0.0	1.0	144.0	
		%	31.25%	3.47%	8.33%	4.17%	40.97%	11.11%	0.00%	0.69%	100.00%	
Philosophy	Durham	Number	55.5	3.8	15.5	18.5	85.9	18.8	1.0	5.7	204.8	
		%	27.11%	1.87%	7.58%	9.04%	41.93%	9.20%	0.49%	2.77%	100.00%	
Theology and Religion	Durham	Number	57.0	2.0	16.0	9.5	108.5	19.0	1.0	2.0	215.0	
		%	26.51%	0.93%	7.44%	4.42%	50.47%	8.84%	0.47%	0.93%	100.00%	
Arts & Humanities Number				754.5	43.8	288.0	156.5	1340.4	245.3	17.0	40.2	2885.8
Arts & Humanities %				26.15%	1.52%	9.98%	5.42%	46.45%	8.50%	0.59%	1.39%	100.00%

UK average independent educated: 6.5%

Durham English independent educated: 38.86%

Source: Durham Student Registry, *Undergraduate Statistics* (2015)

<<https://www.dur.ac.uk/student.registry/statistics/undergraduate/>>

Student Withdrawals



Faculty	Department	Campus	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Arts & Humanities	Classics & Ancient History	Durham	0.5	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.5
	Classics & Ancient History Total		0.5	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.5
	Combined Arts	Durham	3.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	5.0
	Combined Arts Total		3.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	5.0
	English Studies	Durham	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0
	English Studies Total		4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0
	History	Durham	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5
	History Total		2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5
	Modern Languages & Cultures	Durham	8.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	9.0
	Modern Languages & Cultures Total		8.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	9.0
	Music	Durham	3.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	4.0
	Music Total		3.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	4.0
	Philosophy	Durham	1.8	0.5	0.0	0.0	2.3
	Philosophy Total		1.8	0.5	0.0	0.0	2.3
	Theology and Religion	Durham	3.5	1.5	0.0	0.0	5.0
Theology and Religion Total		3.5	1.5	0.0	0.0	5.0	
Arts & Humanities Total			26.3	6.0	0.0	1.0	33.3

Degree Results



1st	2:1	2:2	3rd	Pass- Ordinary	Fail
50.0	59.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
45.45%	53.64%	0.91%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Part Two

Teaching View



**IN WHAT WAYS CAN STUDENTS BE HELPED TO
OVERCOME PERCEIVED BARRIERS?**

**HOW CAN WE HELP TO DEVELOP STUDENTS,
ESPECIALLY IN THEIR ESSAY WRITING SKILLS?**

To Push or to Pull?



Sutton Trust

- National students attend a Summer School designed to give them a sense of university life and to raise aspiration
- Sessions are quasi-academic with emphasis on enjoyment, engagement
- Students receive a standard, guaranteed offer (typically A*AA)
- How can we help those students who have raised expectations, but don't meet an offer?

Supported Progression

- Local students attend a short Easter Academy and longer Summer School
- Sessions are academic, with an assessed project at the end
- Students receive a lower, guaranteed offer (possibly
- How can we help those students who meet the lower entry criteria, but struggle when at university?

AS to A-Level



- ? We notice some students slip between AS-Level (on which applications are based) and A-Level. Why do you think this might be?
- ? How can this be overcome?

A-Level to HE Level



? How can students with lower A-Level grades be enabled to achieve a high quality of work at HE level?

HE Level: Marking Example 1



? Using our marking guidelines how would you grade this essay?

HE Level: Marking Example 2



? Using our marking guidelines how would you grade this essay?

A-Level: Marking Example 1



? This is clearly an excellent A-Level essay. What feedback would you give to this student to take his/her work to the next level?

Differences in Transition



- At HE level, increased emphasis on:
 - Scholarly conventions (bibliographies, referencing, presentation of titles)
 - Competence in forming sentences and paragraphs; grammatical accuracy; structure
 - Meaningful use of supporting quotations
 - Confident assertion of argument from introduction through to conclusion
 - Additional research
- Institutions with higher entry criteria may be less prepared to remediate core skills; presumption of learning and improving through doing

Bridging the Essay Gap



? How might A-Level students be encouraged to write essays that improve these qualities while still satisfying A-Level criteria?

Writing Opportunities



- Writing competitions (prose, poetry, fiction)
- Writing workshops (e.g. New Writing North)
- Blogging, reviewing
- Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs), Open Learning Resources (OLR)
- Grammar exercises (e.g. Bristol Grammar Skills website)

Reading



? The breadth and volume of texts on the university curriculum is a marked difference from A-level. How can students be encouraged to ‘read around’ in preparation?

Events



- Public lectures (e.g. Durham Institute of Advanced Study, Durham English Studies, Newcastle Insights, Café Culture, Free Thinking Festival)
 - Book festivals
 - Reading and writing groups (e.g. Cuckoo Young Writers, New Writing North)
- 📖 Follow our blog at <http://readdurhamenglish.wordpress.com> for events, podcasts and more.

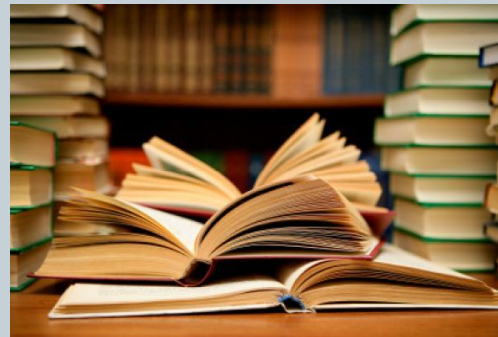
Supported Progression



Supported Progression: Texts and Contexts



Inspiration



Mediation



Supported Progression: Aims



Understanding

- To explore how literature reflects historical and social contexts (especially those contexts relating to science)
- To reflect on why the study of literature is valuable

Skills

- To contribute as part of a group, and to share your ideas with others
- To develop your own essay on a new topic



Supported Progression: Key Questions



- ? In what ways have scientific ideas influenced writers throughout history?
- ? What are the differences between literature and science? Is literature just about feeling and science just about fact?
- ? How does literature anticipate the future, and help us to reflect on our own world in the present?

Supported Progression: Day 1



Monday 27th

10.00 – 10.30	Alistair Brown	Welcome	PLC 053
10.30 – 12.00	Jamie McKinstry	Blood, Leeches, and Words: Literature and Medieval Medicine	PLC 053
14.00 – 15.30	Siobhan Harper	Medicine and the Body in Nineteenth-Century Literature	PLC 053
15.30 – 16.00	Alistair Brown	Review of day; takeaway activity	PLC 053

Supported Progression: Day 2



Tuesday 28th

10.00 – 12.00	Alistair Brown	Science and the Value of Literature	PLC 053
14.00 – 15.30	Alistair Brown	Science Fiction: Imagining a Future Yet to Come	PLC 053
15.30 – 16.00	Alistair Brown	Writing your essay	PLC 053

Supported Progression: Days 3 and 4



Wednesday 29th

10.00 – 12.00	Individual work	Essay Writing	Library E-den
14.00 – 16.00	Individual work	Essay Writing	Library E-den

Thursday 30th

10.00 – 12.00	Individual work	Essay Writing	Library E-den
14.00 – 16.00	Individual work	Essay Writing	Library E-den

Supported Progression: Day 5



Friday 31st			
10.00 – 10.30	Alistair Brown	Reflective activity	PLC 053
10.30 – 11.30	Alistair Brown	UCAS / personal statements	PLC 053
11.30 – 12.00	Alistair Brown	Close	PLC 053

Supported Progression: Essay Questions



1. Choose at least one text that we have studied this week, or something that you have read separately (but not studied for A-Level). How does your chosen text(s) reflect scientific ideas of the time?

Supported Progression: Essay Questions



2. “For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning” (C.S. Lewis). How does literature help us to make sense of the world in a way that is different to the understanding offered by science? Support your answer by looking closely at texts we have studied this week, or those you have read separately.

Supported Progression: Essay Questions



3. “Modern science fiction is the only form of literature that consistently considers the nature of the changes that face us.” (Isaac Asimov) Examine the ways in which science fiction deals with the theme of “change”. Support your answer by looking closely at texts we have studied this week, or those you have read separately.

Sutton Trust



Sutton Trust Summer School: Outcomes



- A sense of what it is like to study literature at university, using methods such as:
 - Critical analysis
 - Research
 - Group presentations
 - Creative writing
- Collaborate as a team to support each other's learning
- Reflect on the value of studying English Literature at university

Sutton Trust Summer School: Expectations



- **Talk**
 - Communicate with each other, in teams, and in the whole class
- **Teamwork**
 - Allow for each others' opinions and ideas
- **Tremendous Enthusiasm**
 - The more you put in, the more you will get out



Sutton Trust Summer School: Monday



- Lecture on the value of 'literature'
- A short history of detective fiction
- Making mystery: Studying chapter 2 of *Hound of the Baskervilles*
- Creative writing exercise



Sutton Trust Summer School: Tuesday



- Guest lecture on an old detective fiction, *Gisla Saga*
- Setting *Hound of the Baskervilles*
- Inside the archives: novels through time
- Creative writing: serialisation today



Sutton Trust Summer School: Wednesday



- Reading and researching contexts
- Following the clues in the University Library
- Group presentations on what you've found



Sutton Trust Summer School: Thursday



- Adaptations: Sherlock for our times
- Pitch your own adaptation
- Reflection on the week, UCAS



UCAS Personal Statements



WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

UCAS Advice



- “Course tutors read personal statements to compare different applicants – so this is where you should describe your ambitions, skills and experience that will make you suitable for the course.”
 1. Why you are applying – your ambitions and what interests you about the subject, course providers and higher education.
 2. What makes you suitable – any relevant skills, experience or achievements gained from education, work or other activities.
- <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/when-apply/writing-personal-statement>

Durham Advice



- **Why this subject?**
 - This section could start with a short sentence and needs to capture the reason why you are interested in studying on the programme you are applying for.
- **Why you?**
 - [Y]ou need to demonstrate why you would be a good student. In this section you are trying to convey your inclination and ability to study on the programme.
- **Are you interesting and unique?**
 - [Y]ou should write about what makes you an interesting and unique person; all those extra things you have done or experienced which will bring something extra to the community of the University you want to join.
- <https://www.dur.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/personalstatement/>

Department of English Advice



- **What should I aim for in my personal statement?**
 - The department prefers that the largest part of the statement should be given over to literary and reading interests, rather than extra-curricular activity. We are not looking for you to list every book that you have read, but rather we are looking for you to explain and reflect upon what you have found worthy of admiration and the kinds of qualities associated with your enjoyment of particular books. We prefer to hear about books you have read recently, rather than childhood favourites. We expect clarity and accuracy in your style and use of English and an ability to write engagingly and with insight. We regret that, because of the high numbers of applications that we receive, we cannot offer individual advice about the style and content of personal statements.
- <https://www.dur.ac.uk/english.studies/undergrad/apply/entry/>

UCAS Personal Statements



- “Remember it’s the same personal statement for all the courses you apply to, so avoid mentioning unis and colleges by name. Most students choose similar subjects, but if you’ve chosen a variety, just write about common themes – like problem solving or creativity.”

BUT

- Visit University websites to find out what modules are offered, in order to pick out common themes. For example:
 - https://www.dur.ac.uk/faculty.handbook/module_search/?year=2015&search_dept=ENGL&search_level=1

Why Study English?



Who Studies English?



Source: 'Rich Kids Study English,' *The Atlantic* (2015)

<<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/07/college-major-rich-families-liberal-arts/397439/>>

English in Decline: UCAS Applications



	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
English	54,225	49,455	57,200	60,390	57,450	52,565	52,155	51,595
Total	2,355,070	2,195,635	2,387,415	2,720,500	2,847,010	2,636,250	2,711,870	2,824,540

Career Destinations



English – The top ten occupations for English graduates in employment in the UK included sales and retail assistants, marketing associate professionals, teaching assistants and authors, writers and translators. Further study was the destination for almost a fifth (19.6%) of English graduates, with almost half studying a Masters in English or related subject areas including journalism, publishing and film studies.

Source: ‘What Do Graduates Do?’ *Higher Education Career Services Unit* (2015) <http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/current_projects_what_do_graduates_do.htm>

ARTS, CREATIVE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

ENGLISH GRADUATES FROM 2013

SURVEY RESPONSE: 77.9% | FEMALE: 6,985 | MALE: 2,420 | TOTAL RESPONSES: 9,410 | ALL GRADUATES: 12,085

OUTCOMES SIX MONTHS AFTER GRADUATION

Working full-time in the UK	40.9%
In further study, training or research	19.6%
Working part-time in the UK	15.7%
Working and studying	7.5%
Unemployed, including those due to start work	7.4%
Other	6.1%
Working overseas	2.7%



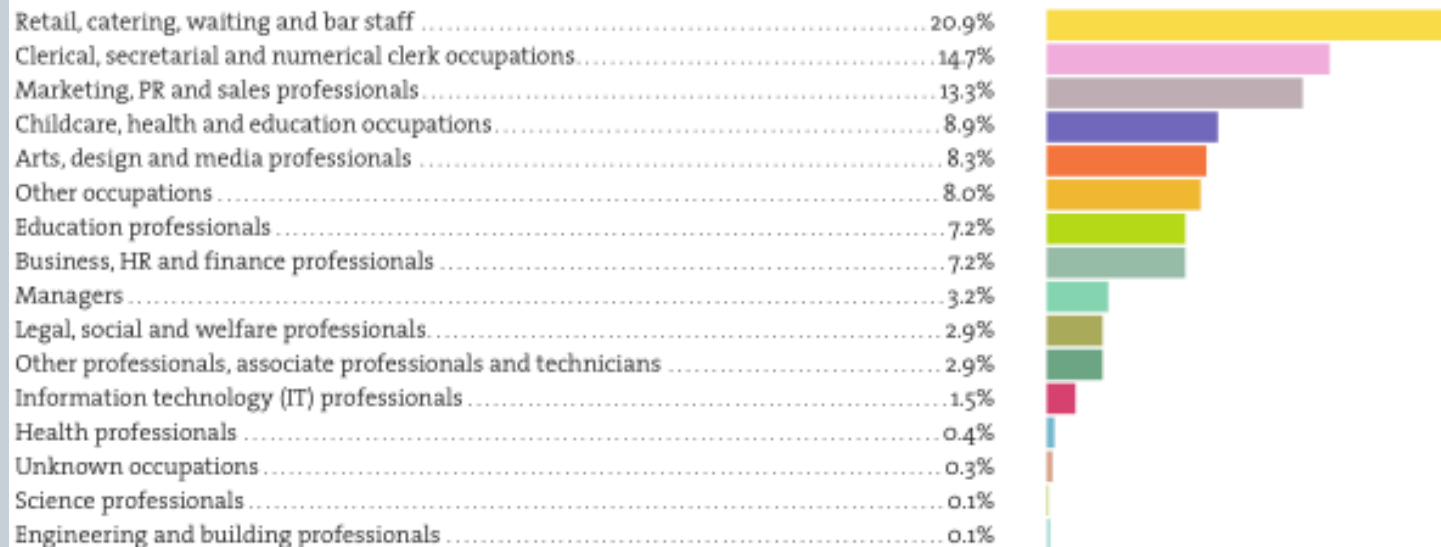
Career Destinations



TYPE OF WORK FOR THOSE IN EMPLOYMENT

Graduates who were in employment either full-time, part-time or working and studying in the UK

FEMALE: 4,580 | **MALE: 1,440** | **TOTAL IN EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK: 6,020**



Source: 'What Do Graduates Do?' *Higher Education Career Services Unit* (2015)

<http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/current_projects_what_do_graduates_do.htm>

Why Study English?



? What reasons would you give to your students? Why should they study English?

English Skills



- **1.4 The broad aims of an English degree are to:**
 - inspire enthusiasm for the subject and an appreciation of its past and continuing social, cultural, political and economic importance
 - provide an intellectually stimulating experience of learning and studying
 - promote the understanding of verbal creativity and aesthetic features of literary and non-literary texts
 - help students to recognise and utilise the expressive resources of language
 - encourage students to reflect critically upon the acts of reading and writing and on the history of textual production and reception
 - foster wide and varied reading through a broad and diverse curriculum
 - provide a basis for further study in English or related subjects and for the teaching of English at all levels
 - develop a range of subject-specific and generic skills of value in graduate employment, including high-order critical, analytic and research skills, and advanced competence in oral and written communication.

Source: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-English-15.pdf>

English Skills



- **3.2 Graduates who have studied English are able to:**
 - read closely and critically
 - analyse texts and discourses, and respond to the affective power of language, using appropriate approaches and terminology
 - develop independent and imaginative interpretations of literary, critical, linguistic or creative material
 - articulate a critical understanding of complex texts and ideas (and of their historical relations where appropriate)
 - write clearly, accurately and effectively
 - apply scholarly bibliographic skills appropriate to the subject

Source: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-English-15.pdf>