



# STAGE 5

# Course Performance Descriptors

## English

### **School Certificate grading**

Schools are responsible for awarding each student studying English a grade (A, B, C, D, or E) to summarise the student's achievement in any 100 hour or 200 hour course completed in Stage 5. The grade awarded is reported on the student's School Certificate record of achievement.

From 2006, teachers will use these Stage 5 course performance descriptors to determine School Certificate grades for English. The descriptors have been developed from the Board's general performance descriptors, and provide a more complete description of typical performance in this course at each grade level.

### **Determining School Certificate grades**

Teachers should follow their school's procedures for the allocation of School Certificate grades.

During the course teachers collect information on the achievement of each student. To allocate a grade to a student at the end of the course, teachers make a judgement as to which grade descriptor best describes the achievement of that student.

Values and attitudes are an integral part of learning. However, information on students' values and attitudes is not to be used in determining grades.

### **Assessment activities**

In developing and selecting assessment activities for the purpose of determining School Certificate grades, teachers will use a range of different assessment activities or tasks. The assessment activities should reflect the relative emphasis the school's programs place on the various aspects of the course.

Where activities or tasks are scheduled throughout a course, greater weight for grading purposes would generally be given to those activities or tasks undertaken towards the end of the course. There are different ways of organising the teaching/learning program for a course.

The scheduling of assessment activities and the weightings applied should reflect the school's organisation of the course. Students should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their maximum level of achievement relative to the course performance descriptors.

### **Applying the course performance descriptors**

Teachers should use their professional judgement in applying the course performance descriptors. It is not intended that the course performance descriptors represent a checklist, or provide a comprehensive description of student performance at each grade level. The descriptor that provides the best overall description of the student's achievement will determine the grade awarded.

Teachers should interpret the course performance descriptors in terms of standards that can be achieved by School Certificate students within the bounds of the course.

The samples of student work that are provided on the Assessment Resource Centre website clarify the standards described in the course performance descriptors. They illustrate the quality of work typically produced by students who receive each grade.

### **Assessment for learning**

Assessment for learning is described in detail in the assessment section of the English syllabus. It involves using assessment activities or tasks as a regular part of the teaching and learning process to clarify students' understanding of concepts, to remedy their misconceptions, and to support their further learning and the development of deeper understanding.

All assessment activities can be used to support learning, and to provide feedback to students that enables them to actively monitor and evaluate their own learning.

## Stage 5 Course Performance Descriptors – English

### Areas for Assessment

**Reading, listening, viewing**  
**Writing, speaking, representing**  
**Communicating and context**  
**Analysing language**  
**Interpretive, imaginative and critical thinking**  
**Expressing views**

Grade E	Grade D	Grade C	Grade B	Grade A
<p><i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrates some evidence of the ability to respond to a limited range of texts.</li> <li>• with teacher support, discusses the context and perspective of texts and the relationships between and among them.</li> <li>• with teacher support, discusses texts by selecting, identifying and explaining some language forms and features and structures of those texts.</li> <li>• responds in a rudimentary way to verbal and visual imagery.</li> <li>• with teacher support, composes written, oral and visual texts using various technologies for a limited range of purposes, audiences and contexts.</li> <li>• is able to generalise at times from engaging with texts to present a limited view of the world.</li> </ul>	<p><i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrates some ability to respond to a range of texts.</li> <li>• discusses the context and perspective of texts and the relationships between and among them.</li> <li>• discusses texts by selecting, identifying and explaining some language forms and features and structures of those texts.</li> <li>• responds to verbal and visual imagery.</li> <li>• composes written, oral and visual texts using various technologies for different purposes, audiences and contexts.</li> <li>• is able to generalise at times from engaging with texts to present some differing views of the world.</li> </ul>	<p><i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• through close and wide study, responds to a range of imaginative, factual and critical texts.</li> <li>• investigates the context and perspective of texts and the relationships between and among them.</li> <li>• analyses and discusses texts by selecting, identifying and explaining appropriate language forms and features and structures of those texts.</li> <li>• responds imaginatively to verbal and visual imagery.</li> <li>• displays a developing personal style, composes written, oral and visual texts using various technologies for a variety of purposes, audiences and contexts.</li> <li>• is able to generalise from engaging with texts to present differing views of the world.</li> </ul>	<p><i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• through close and wide study, responds to demanding, imaginative, factual and critical texts.</li> <li>• investigates with some insight the context and perspective of texts and the relationships between and among them.</li> <li>• closely and critically analyses and evaluates texts of increasing complexity by selecting, describing and explaining appropriate language forms and features and structures of those texts.</li> <li>• responds imaginatively and critically in an effective way to verbal and visual imagery.</li> <li>• displays a developing personal style, composes with confidence written, oral and visual texts using various technologies for a variety of purposes, audiences and contexts.</li> <li>• is able to generalise from engaging with texts to present a range of views of the world.</li> </ul>	<p><i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• through close and wide study, responds to a comprehensive range of demanding, imaginative, factual and critical texts.</li> <li>• perceptively investigates the context and perspective of texts and the relationships between and among them.</li> <li>• constructively and critically analyses and evaluates complex texts by selecting, describing and explaining significant language forms and features and structures of those texts.</li> <li>• responds imaginatively and critically in a highly effective way to verbal and visual imagery.</li> <li>• displays a distinct personal style, composes with confidence written, oral and visual texts, using various technologies for a wide variety of purposes, audiences and contexts.</li> <li>• is able to generalise confidently from engaging with texts to present a wide variety of views of the world.</li> </ul>

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<b>Grade E</b>	<b>Grade D</b>	<b>Grade C</b>	<b>Grade B</b>	<b>Grade A</b>
<i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i>	<i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i>	<i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i>	<i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i>	<i>A student performing at this grade typically:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>with teacher support, is developing an understanding of the processes of composition, as they are able to interpret ideas and apply these to new contexts.</li> <li>is able to identify some obvious expectations of an audience.</li> <li>with teacher support, is able to reflect on some aspects of their individual and collaborative skills for learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>with guidance, is developing a personal style and an understanding of the processes of composition as they are able to make some obvious inferences and interpretations, extend their imaginations in making meaning and apply ideas to new contexts.</li> <li>is able to identify and discuss some obvious preconceptions and expectations of an audience.</li> <li>with guidance, is able to reflect on their individual and collaborative skills for learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrates an understanding of the processes of composition as they are able to make some inferences and interpretations, extend their imaginations in composing texts and adapt ideas into new and different contexts.</li> <li>conforms to or challenges an audience's preconceptions and expectations.</li> <li>with increasing independence, reflects on and uses, assesses and adapts their individual and collaborative skills for learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clearly demonstrates an understanding of the processes of composition, as they are able to make some inferences and interpretations, extend their imaginations in composing texts and adapt ideas into new and different contexts.</li> <li>with increasing confidence, is able to conform to, or challenge, an audience's preconceptions and expectations.</li> <li>independently reflects on and uses, assesses and adapts their individual and collaborative skills for learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consistently demonstrates an understanding of the processes of composition, as they are able to infer logically, interpret clearly, extend their imaginations in composing texts and adapt ideas into new and different contexts.</li> <li>with confidence, is able to conform to, or challenge, an audience's preconceptions and expectations.</li> <li>independently reflects on and confidently uses, assesses and adapts their individual and collaborative skills for learning.</li> </ul>

## General performance descriptors

The general performance descriptors describe performance at each of five grade levels:

- A** The student has an extensive knowledge and understanding of the content and can readily apply this knowledge. In addition, the student has achieved a very high level of competence in the processes and skills and can apply these skills to new situations.
- B** The student has a thorough knowledge and understanding of the content and a high level of competence in the processes and skills. In addition, the student is able to apply this knowledge and these skills to most situations.
- C** The student has a sound knowledge and understanding of the main areas of content and has achieved an adequate level of competence in the processes and skills.
- D** The student has a basic knowledge and understanding of the content and has achieved a limited level of competence in the processes and skills.
- E** The student has an elementary knowledge and understanding in few areas of the content and has achieved very limited competence in some of the processes and skills.

## Areas for assessment

The areas for assessment for English provide a framework for structuring an assessment program, and may be used for reporting student achievement. They are derived from the course objectives, and are linked to the course outcomes. They can be used as organisers for assessment of student achievement.

Good assessment practice involves designing quality assessment activities that enable students to demonstrate their achievements. Teachers can use the areas for assessment when designing an assessment

activity, to ensure it is assessing performance in relation to a grouping of outcomes.

In designing the assessment schedule for a course, teachers may find it useful to map each planned assessment activity to one or more of the areas for assessment. This allows teachers to ensure that assessment can occur across the year in a manageable way. The table below gives an example of how this planning could be done.

Sample Areas for Assessment	Sample Assessment Activities (with weightings)			
	Document Study* 10%	Oral Report* 20%	Common Test* 35%	Research Project* 35%
Knowledge and understanding*	✓	✓	✓	
Investigating and researching*	✓			✓
Communicating*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Interpreting data*		✓	✓	✓
Problem solving*		✓	✓	

\* These sample areas for assessment and activities are provided for illustrative purposes only.

## Resources and further information

The *Assessment Resource Centre* is a section of the Board of Studies' website that contains resources that have been developed by the Board to support teachers in the awarding of grades for the School Certificate from 2006. For most Stage 5 courses, there are assessment activities, and work samples that illustrate the standard of work associated with each grade.

The *English Years 7–10 Syllabus* (2003) contains information on assessment (page 72) – including the principles of assessment for learning – and provides a detailed list of assessment strategies (page 75) that are suitable for English. It is available on the Board's website at [www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus\\_sc/index.html](http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_sc/index.html)

The *Assessment for Learning in a Standards-referenced Framework – English* CD-ROM contains a variety of material, including assessment activities for English with annotated work samples. Copies of this CD-ROM were provided to all schools, and are available from Shop Online (<http://shop.bos.nsw.edu.au>).

Inquiries about the use of these course performance descriptors should be directed to the Assessment and Reporting branch at the Office of the Board of Studies on (02) 9367 8371, or by email to [CustomerLiaison@boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au](mailto:CustomerLiaison@boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au)