

# English Language

*A Level*

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**Exam Board:** AQA



## **What is the course about?**

English Language involves studying a range of authentic texts and transcripts taken from everyday sources and a variety of contexts. It considers how texts are designed for particular audiences and purposes, and the ways that men and women interact. It also involves studying how the dimensions of power, technology, history and age can have significant influences in the ways individuals, social groups and institutions communicate.

## **At AS level:**

You will study a unit for examination called Categorising Texts. The first section on 'Text Varieties' focuses on your ability to compare six or more short texts or extracts taken from a mixture of spoken and written sources. You will learn a linguistic vocabulary of concepts that will enable you to make meaningful distinctions between these examples of communication. The second section on 'Language and Social Contexts' gives you an option to focus your attention on one of three possible topics: gender, power, or technology. You will consider such issues such as the attitudes, expectations, and stereotypes at work behind constructions of women and men, the influence of unequal power on spoken interaction in a range of settings, and the marked impact that new technology has had on genres of discourse such as emails, msn, and answer-machine messages.

The second unit called Creating Texts shifts attention away from analysis to the production of texts. You will write a minimum of four creative writing tasks that are tailored for different audiences and purposes, including persuasive, advisory, instructional, and entertaining texts. The best two pieces are selected to create a coursework portfolio which also includes a writer's commentary that charts the growth, development and re-drafting of the pieces.

## **At A2 level:**

You will extend your knowledge of the ways texts are related to contexts by the examination unit called Developing Language. The first element evaluates the ways in which young children first learn to speak and write, building from their first vocal noises to their first words, utterances and conversations. Another aspect of development is considered in the study of the ways that communication has changed significantly over time since 1700 to the present day in a variety of genres, from advertisements to cooking recipes and children's stories.

For your coursework Investigating Language you will devise, design and conduct an original piece of extended research on a language topic of your own choice that you would like to study in depth. Your study could link to any one or perhaps combination of topics studied throughout the course, and there is room for new topics such as accents and dialects.

### **How is the course assessed?**

AS unit 1, examination, 60% of total AS marks. AS unit 2, coursework, 40% of total AS marks.

A2 unit 3, examination, 60% of total A2 marks. A2 unit 4 coursework, 40% of total A2 marks

### **What skills will I develop in this course?**

You will develop the abilities of critical analysis of a variety of language forms, data-collection and reflection, discussion and annotation skills. You will be able to read and produce professional transcripts of real speech. You will be able to adapt your use of language forms for different audiences and purposes and be able to pinpoint the elements that make professional writing successful in a given context. You will be able to design language projects for a given aim and outcome, evaluating your progress during the process.

### **What courses might combine with this subject?**

English Language is a highly valued subject and combines well with a wide range of other subjects. It should only be combined with English Literature unless you are taking four full A levels, as it can be seen by some universities as limiting your range of intellectual experience.

### **What does this subject offer for higher education and future careers?**

This subject is considered a competitive one in terms of university entrance. It attracts a lot of applicants for university as it combines the academic, creative and analytical skills which are so valued in many careers. The skills are transferable to a range of disciplines and careers, including publishing, journalism and law.

### **What are the formal entry requirements for this course?**

Aside from the general entry criteria that the College requires, you will also need to achieve at least a Grade C in GCSE English Literature and English Language.

### **What extra support/enrichment is on offer?**

We have strong links with the Student Support department, which offers specific help when needed, perhaps with technical skills or planning essays or improving reading skills. We run courses in creative writing as an extension study and also at the end of the year during wider-skills week. Waterstone's come to the college twice a year and offer a lively interactive day recommending books and promoting them on site. Our students run their own Reading Club which meets every week. We have run visits to the theatre, the cinema, the British Library, art galleries and various cultural events that are relevant to our students. We have strong links with universities and other Sixth Form Colleges, and share our innovations and recommendations from our colleagues there.

### **What is the difference between English Language and English Literature?**

These subjects are radically different disciplines that involve practising very different skills. English Literature is about reading, analysing and evaluating 'heightened' texts such as poetry, drama and novels looking at the ways that writers use techniques to create aesthetic effects and a social critique. English Language is the study of spoken and written language taken from everyday sources and therefore falls under the disciplines of Applied Linguistics or Discourse Analysis. It focuses on how values, attitudes, and purposes are revealed through the mechanics of language and how these can vary according to gender, power, time and technology. This is very different from English Language at GCSE.



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