Evaluation of English Extension (Open trial) 2010 Senior Syllabus
Report submitted to the P–12 Curriculum Committee

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Executive summary

The number of schools offering English Extension in Year 12 has remained consistent since the syllabus was introduced in 2004. In 2009, 57 schools offered English Extension (Literature). In 2010, 54 schools offered the subject. In 2011, 44 schools offered the new English Extension (Open trial) Syllabus and 11 schools continued to offer the English Extension (Literature) 2003 syllabus.

The English Extension (Literature) syllabus was revised in 2009 and the Authority approved the English Extension Senior Syllabus 2010 for open trial with Year 12 students in 2011.

To ensure the high quality of the English Extension Senior Syllabus and its effectiveness in offering students the opportunity to specialise in the theorised study of literature, the QSA sought stakeholder feedback in the form of an evaluation.

The evaluation aimed to determine how clearly and effectively the English Extension (Open trial) Senior Syllabus 2010 communicates its intentions to teachers, the appropriateness of scope and depth of learning and assessment requirements, and the subject’s relevance to students.

This report provides an analysis of the feedback collated from a targeted sample of stakeholders that include students, parents, teachers, Heads of Department and review panel chairs. Further, it offers recommendations for the revision of the English Extension senior syllabus.

The overall response to the open trial of the English Extension syllabus is very positive. This is evident in the strong support for the subject expressed in comments from students and parents and in the satisfaction that trial schools have experienced in developing courses of study using the syllabus.

The evaluation led to five recommendations that reflect stakeholder feedback on the English Extension (Open trial) Senior Syllabus 2010.

A key recommendation of the evaluation is that the revised syllabus proceed to general implementation.

All five recommendations can be found in Section 5 on page 24 of this evaluation report.
1. Background

The revision of the English Extension (Literature) Senior Syllabus 2003 was linked to the revision of the parent syllabus, the English Senior Syllabus 2002. With the English Senior Syllabus 2008 in open trial in 2009 and 2010, the English Extension (Literature) Senior Syllabus was revised in 2009.

The convenor of the writing team was Professor Richard Fotheringham, University of Queensland. Other members of the writing team were practising teachers, including district and state review panel members.

The revision was informed by:

- the Literature strand of the English curriculum, described in Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English (National Curriculum Board, May 2009)
- the English (Open trial) Senior Syllabus 2008
- P–12 syllabus design principles
- Learning P–12
- P–12 Assessment policy
- Year 10 Guidelines
- Indigenous perspectives
- plain language.

The P–12 Curriculum Committee supported the draft revised rationale and general objectives at their meeting in June 2009.

The draft English Extension (Literature) Senior Syllabus 2010 was posted on the QSA website in January 2010 for feedback from schools and teachers. The feedback indicated that the syllabus be developed to reflect an approach to the study of literature that distinguishes it from that described in the Shape of the Australian Curriculum. To achieve this the syllabus focuses on studying literature in ways informed by theory.

In response, the title of the syllabus became English Extension in order to:

- clarify the focus of the subject
- create a difference between Queensland’s one-year English Extension Senior Syllabus and the proposed two-year Australian Curriculum Literature course.

The Authority approved the English Extension Senior Syllabus 2010 for open trial with Year 12 students in 2011. In 2011, 44 schools participated in the open trial.

The English Extension Senior Syllabus 2010 was evaluated during its open trial. The syllabus has been rewritten to reflect the findings of the evaluation. The resulting syllabus English Extension Senior Syllabus 2011 is developed to proceed to general implementation with Year 12 in 2012.
2. Methodology

2.1 Purpose of the study and timelines

The evaluation of the *English Extension Senior Syllabus 2010* open trial was conducted in September and October 2011.

The evaluation considered the following aspects of the trial syllabus:

- internal consistency of the components of the syllabus
- degree to which the syllabus communicates its intentions to teachers
- suitability of the scope and depth of the syllabus requirements
- relevance of the subject to students
- appropriateness of the assessment requirements of the syllabus
- the development of appropriate standards for student achievement
- resources found to be useful in trial schools.

In September 2011 ten trial schools were surveyed as a representative sample. The State review panel chair and District review panel chairs were also surveyed.

The timelines for completing the surveys coincided with the last two weeks of Term 3 for schools, the final day of term being Friday 16 September 2011.

2.2 Research strategies

2.2.1 Background

There was widespread consultation during the development of the syllabus and throughout the period of the trial. Groups consulted include:

- English Extension syllabus writing team — teachers drawn from state, independent and Catholic sectors, and state and district review panel chairs and panellists
- university personnel — including the syllabus writing team convenor, Professor Richard Fotheringham, University of Queensland, and the English Extension State Review Panel Chair in 2010, Dr Wendy Morgan, Queensland University of Technology
- teachers of the trial syllabus — the conferences provided opportunities to obtain informal feedback (Teacher Conference 1 in November 2010 and Teacher Conference 2 in March 2011)
- English Learning Area Reference Committee — teachers, university personnel, union and sector representatives provided advice on the progress of the trial and development of the syllabus.
2.2.2 Evaluation

Data for the evaluation was drawn from responses to survey questions aimed at determining each stakeholder groups’ views about the trial syllabus. The surveys include questions about:

- syllabus intent
  - positives
  - challenges
  - benefits
- assessment
  - instruments 1, 2 and 3
  - standards
- work programs
- resources.

The groups surveyed are described below (see Appendix 1).

2.2.3 School surveys

Ten trial schools were surveyed as a representative sample. The following groups were surveyed in each of the trial schools, and the surveys are included as appendixes to this report:

- students, to establish data such as assessment, workload and pathways (see Appendix 2)
- parents, to establish data such as workload and views of the syllabus (see Appendix 3)
- teachers, to establish data such as assessment, standards and resourcing (see Appendix 4)
- Heads of Department, to establish data such as work programs and resourcing (see Appendix 5).

The sample group of ten trial schools includes proportionate representation from the schooling sectors:

- Education Queensland (5 schools)
- Independent (3 schools)
- Catholic (2 schools)
- two schools in each of the QSA review districts for this subject:
  - Brisbane Central
  - Toowoomba / Brisbane–Ipswich
  - Sunshine Coast / Wide Bay / Rockhampton
  - Townsville / Mackay
  - Gold Coast.
2.2.4 Review panel chairs surveys

The English Extension review panel chairs were surveyed to seek feedback on their experiences of the trial syllabus through the moderation processes of work program approval and monitoring.

Monitoring is the process by which review panels consider a school’s implementation of a course of study and assessment decisions, approximately halfway through the course of study. Monitoring for this subject was undertaken in July 2011.

The following were asked to complete a survey, and those surveys included as appendixes to this report:

- State Review Panel Chair (SRPC) (see Appendix 6)
- District Review Panel Chairs (DRPC) (see Appendix 7) for:
  - Brisbane Central district
  - Brisbane–Ipswich / Toowoomba / Brisbane South combined districts
  - Sunshine Coast / Wide Bay / Rockhampton / Brisbane North combined districts
  - Townsville / Mackay / Cairns combined districts
  - Gold Coast district.
3. Data and analysis

The timelines for distribution and return of surveys coincided with the last two weeks of Term 3 for schools. Despite the challenges presented by the timelines, the return rate on the surveys was high (see Appendix 1 for responses gathered). The data analyses are presented below.

3.1 The syllabus

Students, parents, teachers and Heads of Department were asked to comment on the subject overall, in particular what they considered to be the positive and challenging aspects of the subject and its benefits for students. Teachers were also asked to comment on developing and teaching a course of study using the *English Extension (Open trial) Senior Syllabus 2010*.

3.1.1 Participants’ views about the positives of the syllabus

Participants identified a range of positive aspects of studying English Extension that included preparation for tertiary studies and improvements in performance in other Year 12 subjects.

Half of the students see themselves studying a tertiary course that involves English language and/or literature, and comments from students referred to the insights into what was required at tertiary level that the subject provided.

- 24 per cent of students enjoyed the challenges, e.g. in complexity, concepts, intensity, academic autonomy
- 24 per cent enjoyed the independent learning style required
- 24 per cent found the subject content interesting
- 17 per cent enjoyed the introduction of new literature.

Fifty-seven per cent of teachers indicated a positive reaction at their school to the extension to *English Senior Syllabus 2010* that the subject provides.

Comments include:

- it offers genuine extension to students who have a passion for literature by allowing development of critical analysis.
- the subject contributes to the valuation of English as a subject of excellence and academic rigour.

Eighty-three per cent of teachers felt that the course was going well with their students.

Comments include:

- It is going well for most students — if I have concerns of a student’s progress it is to do with their effort level not the course.
- The course is going well — no significant changes needed.

Comments parents made related to tertiary preparation include:

- the opportunity to study a subject at a higher level than would be possible in other subjects
- a university standard subject requiring a high level of critical analysis
• there are enormous benefits — particularly tertiary
• it could include “guest talks” with university lecturers to give students an insight into what is the next level after this course at high school, what are the opportunities in this field, i.e. further study and vocations.

Comments teachers made related to tertiary preparation include:
• English Extension has inspired many students to choose tertiary courses / career paths associated with literary theory
• I have had frequent verbal feedback from students regarding how this subject has helped students significantly for university subjects
• there are many students interested in taking the course — past students have loved it and have spread the word that it prepares them for tertiary education.

Comments students made related to improved performance in other subjects include: it benefitted other subjects — improved my academic skills, e.g. mainstream English.

Comments parents made related to improved performance in other subjects include:
• The subject appears to push students to achieve results through better research techniques and appreciation to be concise in their writing. This was reflected in an improvement in my child’s writing in all her subjects.
• It is just a fabulous course — my child chose mainly science and maths subjects and English Extension in Year 12. It has broadened her education, as science and maths are very fact-based subjects with a right answer. It has given her a new and valuable appreciation of the diversity of the world and the other students at her school. I also love proper referencing styles, not just URLs. Would require an extraordinary amount of work by both the HOD and class teacher.

Comments teachers and Heads of Department made related to improved performance in other subjects include:
• Students are receptive and enthusiastic. I have had frequent verbal feedback from students regarding how this subject has helped students significantly for QCS Test Writing Task, the parent English subject and university subjects.
• Students feel it helps them to achieve better results in other academic subjects due to a development of research and analysis skills.
• Many students interested in taking the course — past students have loved it, felt empowered by it to improve other subjects.
• It helps them write well.

3.1.2 Participants’ views about the challenges of the subject

Participants identified a range of challenging aspects of studying English Extension that included the study of theory and the challenging nature of subject content and assessment, time management and the workload.

Analysis of students’ comments on what they found most challenging about the subject showed:
• 42 per cent felt theory was the most challenging aspect of the subject. This included: finding, comprehending, understanding, volume of theory
• 40 per cent felt assessment was the most challenging aspect of the subject
28 per cent felt time management was the most challenging aspect of the subject. This included: coping with the volume of work; ability to maintain work with other urgent assessment; achieving knowledge required within limited timeframe.

Other comments students made on the challenging aspects of the subject include:
- the significant leap from English to English Extension
- fitting in the content in a short period of time, this has made understanding and internalising the content difficult
- more teacher direction on assignment structure and format / the level of independence — needed more depth in introduction and application of texts
- infrequency of the class — not enough class time
- nothing has disappointed me.

Analysis of teachers’ comments on what they found most challenging about the subject showed that 33 per cent indicated they expected independence to be the biggest problem students faced throughout the course.

Comments include:
- the increasing independence within the course has required a greater amount of verbal conferencing in Semester 2
- students have found the challenges of devising their own focus questions difficult
- parents and students have expressed concerns over increased stress levels
- students drop a subject to go into it — sometimes it is the top student in the cohort. This can upset some departments, especially small ones — teachers are reluctant to see their high achieving Year 11 students drop their subjects at the end of the year.

Analysis of parents’ comments on the subject show:
- 88 per cent did not feel that any aspects of the subject disappointed them
- independence was seen as a challenge — a big change in learning style compared to other subjects
- time management alongside other subject requirements was a key challenge
- the time constraints for doing extensive research to complete tasks was identified as a challenge.

3.1.3 Participants’ views about the benefits of the syllabus

Participants identified a range of benefits for students in studying English Extension. These included the strengthening of analytical, academic and research skills, opportunities for independent study, and a deeper understanding of literature.

Comments from students about the benefits of the course include references to:
- tertiary preparation — insight into tertiary level required: 49% see themselves studying a tertiary course that involves English language and/or literature
- broadening of analytical writing skills — deepens your understanding and analysis of text — learning how to analyse literature in different ways
- benefited other subjects — improved my academic skills, e.g. mainstream English
- developing theory and language ability, expanded vocabulary
- broadens your mind — exposure to theories and knowledge of literature
• improves ability to theorise, research and refine resources — developing more effective referencing and quoting
• an improvement to OP.

Comments from parents about the benefits of the course include references to:
• enormous benefits — particularly tertiary
• opportunity to study a subject at a higher level than would be possible in other subjects
• encouraged a greater appreciation of language
• fostered independence in study
• allows students to extend their knowledge within the English field
• dramatic improvement in writing ability and confidence
• expands awareness of English literature styles
• the course opened up another world of English to us and I feel my child was incredibly lucky to have the experience
• the course appears to push students to achieve results through better research techniques and appreciation to be concise in writing. This was reflected in an improvement in my child's writing in all her subjects
• my child renewed their love of reading
• the challenges and discussions they have encountered
• pushes students to achieve results through better research techniques and appreciation to be concise in writing
• my child has enjoyed the subject and the encouragement from her teacher to get the best out of her and to extend her thoughts and beliefs.

Comments from teachers and Heads of Department about the benefits of studying English Extension include:
• students found it challenging but worthwhile
• enjoyment of exposure to literature and literary theory
• the improvements in the quality of work across the course has been significant
• students have enjoyed their exposure to literature and literary theories
• it has significantly improved the OP scores of many students over the years
• students have achieved well with no students failing at the monitoring stage
• high quality — challenging and demanding
• the course makes strong intellectual demands on the students
• students express high levels of engagement and intellectual stimulation
• the course offers academic students an opportunity to excel.
3.1.4  Teachers’ and Heads of Departments’ views on teaching a course from the syllabus

Teachers and Heads of Department were asked to comment on their experiences of developing and teaching a course using the *English Extension Senior Syllabus 2010*. In particular, teachers were asked if they were satisfied with the way the objectives are grouped under three dimensions.

Analysis of teachers’ comments indicated 100 per cent were satisfied with the way the objectives are grouped under the three dimensions. Eighty three per cent indicated that they enjoyed teaching the course from the 2010 syllabus.

Teachers’ comments about enjoyment of the course include:

- this has consistently been my favourite course to teach each and every year. I love the unique nature of the course and its focus on dynamic high-order thinking
- yes, I have enjoyed teaching the course from this syllabus — Unit 1 more so than the previous syllabus
- I have enjoyed it this year just as much as previous years
- I have enjoyed teaching the course
- it has been challenging and rewarding
- enjoyment of exposure to literature and literary theory.

Teachers commended the *English Extension Senior Syllabus 2010*:

- the explicit connection between the dimensions and the objectives is an improvement
- the shorter word lengths have assisted students in being more articulate
- I like the shortening of Task 1 and Task 2
- the syllabus is clear, concise and easy to follow.

As all teachers and most Heads of Department who responded to the surveys had previous experience using the *English Extension (Literature) Senior Syllabus 2003*, many of the comments provided on the 2010 syllabus made comparisons with the 2003 syllabus.

Analysis of teachers’ comments on their experiences of teaching a course from the 2010 syllabus in comparison to the 2003 syllabus revealed 14 per cent of Heads of Department felt the 2010 syllabus lacks the detail of the 2003 syllabus.

Teacher and Head of Department comments comparing the two syllabuses include:

- the course has been much easier to manage than for the 2003 syllabus
- less assessment is good
- timeframe works well
- Task 3 is more challenging as it requires considerable engagement with theory and development of student cognition
- compared to the 2003 syllabus the new syllabus lacks the detail about the reading approaches and their connections to theory which were valuable in the 2003 syllabus
- I remain less confident about the new focus on ‘evaluation’ in both the standards and tasks
- the non-inclusion of the Approaches Framework diminishes the user-friendliness of the syllabus
• there is lack of direction and depth around the “theoretical approaches”

• I have not enjoyed teaching this course nearly as much as I have enjoyed teaching the course based on the 2003 syllabus. Task 1 is too limiting in its present structure and Task 3 is too broad and ungoverned.

3.2 Assessment

The English Extension Senior Syllabus 2010 incorporates dimensions, objectives and exit standards that are different from the English Extension (Literature) Senior Syllabus 2003. Assessment requirements are based on the three units of study as in the 2003 syllabus and the assessment instruments are similar to those required in the 2003 syllabus.

Key changes in the 2010 syllabus from the 2003 syllabus assessment instruments to which some teachers’ comments refer include:

• Unit 1: Readings and defences — student responses now required to be one reading of a selected text, not two as for the 2003 syllabus, and one separate defence, not two separate defences.

• Unit 3: Exploration and evaluation — students now required to produce an extended analytical written response which evaluates the ways selected theoretical approaches may be applied in investigating a complex text/s in response to a focus question; this is a change from the 2003 syllabus, which required the response to Unit 3 to be in two parts, the first part a spoken/signed presentation of a proposal for applying theoretical approaches to analysis of a literary text, the second part an extended written analytical response developing the proposal.

• A reduction in length requirements for student responses, in particular for Unit 1 (1000–1500 words rather than 1600–2000 words) and for Unit 2 (8–10 minutes for the spoken/signed defence rather than 10–15 minutes).

3.2.1 Participants’ overall views on assessment

Teachers were asked for their opinions on the assessment instruments, guidance provided on assessment techniques and their confidence in using the syllabus standards.

Students were asked for their opinion of assessment in this subject in relation to:

• degree of difficulty

• appropriateness of the response length of the assessment instrument for each of the three units.

Teachers’ views on syllabus assessment requirements reflected general satisfaction. Eighty per cent of teachers felt that the assessment instruments had been successful.

Comments include:

• each task has been challenging but has provided students with sufficient clarity of purpose to achieve standards and criteria

• feedback from students has been positive

• the assessment instruments have allowed students to demonstrate their responses based on the research they have completed.
Fifty per cent of teachers indicated that the guidance provided around assessment in the syllabus is clear. Comments include:

- the three tasks provide clear purposes and contexts in which students are initially supported to develop their knowledge before independently applying them
- the provision of appropriate structure and scaffolding while maintaining the degree of independence and initiative required on the part of the students.

Fourteen per cent of students indicated assessment as an enjoyable aspect of the subject. Comments about enjoyable aspects centred around complex transformation; having fewer but more substantial assessments; extending awareness of essay writing style; reduced breadth and increased depth of tasks; interesting assessments.

Forty per cent of students indicated assessment to be the most challenging aspect of the subject. Comments include references to:

- structure of assessment items
- achieving an A standard
- having to apply a high level of knowledge independently
- required volume of research
- synthesising coherent arguments.

Responses from teachers and some review panel chairs indicated they would like to see further clarification of “evaluation” in the syllabus dimensions. Comments include:

- compared to the former syllabus, I remain less confident about the new focus on ‘evaluation’ in both the standards and tasks
- my only concern is the evaluation of dimension 3 for exit
- feel confident to interpret the standards, with the exception of Criteria 3.1 and 3.2 and the extent to which ‘evaluation’ must be explicit within the students’ work to achieve the various standards.

3.2.2 Participants’ views on assessment in Unit 1: Readings and defences

Analysis of students’ views on the assessment requirements for Unit 1 show:

- 48 per cent felt the task was appropriate for adjusting to the subject: challenging but manageable
- 26 per cent felt the response length was appropriate — comments included that it didn’t feel like it was putting excessive pressure on other subjects, and that it was good preparation for later assignments
- 50 per cent felt this was very difficult/the most difficult task — comments included that initial results were affected by lack of understanding in referencing, and that it was difficult because it was the first attempt at professional tone and language in writing
- 26 per cent felt the response length was too short — difficult to go into adequate depth.

Comments from teachers on assessment requirements for Unit 1 include:

- our students have enjoyed working on the reading and defence in Task 1
- the choice of approach for Task 1 has also been very successful
- the first unit needs to include learning experiences that teach students reader-centred approaches and author-centred or text-centred approaches (as the syllabus requires)
• Task 1 doesn’t require students to engage with both author- and reader–centred approaches. This has created a gap in knowledge which has become evident in Task 3 drafts.

One review panel chair commented:
• It is reduced in complexity. Although evaluation is emphasised in the criteria the nature of the evaluation is not particularly clear. Task descriptions imply very different “evaluation” will occur in Task 1 compared to Task 3.

3.2.3 Participants’ views on assessment in Unit 2: Complex transformation and defence

Analysis of students’ views on the assessment requirements for Unit 2 shows:
• 46 per cent of students felt this assessment increased appropriately in difficulty — comments included that it was a manageable and necessary challenge, and that the complexity was a step up from Task 1 but manageable
• 15 per cent felt it was an enjoyable and interesting task — it provided insight into literary relations and social and historical contexts
• 35 per cent felt the response length was appropriate.

Comments from teachers on the assessment requirements for Unit 2 include:
• 41 per cent felt the time limit did not allow students to demonstrate depth of research, for example the length of time for the oral was too short to cater for the complexity of the task
• Task 2 was particularly effective in engaging students in applying theory
• our students have enjoyed working on the complex transformation
• I like the shortening of Task 2 — it has assisted students in being more articulate.

3.2.4 Participants’ views on assessment in Unit 3: Exploration and evaluation

The timeframe for the evaluation meant that responses to surveys had to be returned before schools had completed the course and before students had completed their responses to Instrument 3.

Analysis of students’ views on the assessment requirements for Unit 3 show:
• 20 per cent of students surveyed felt this task was important and a manageable increase in difficulty
• 13 per cent of students surveyed felt this was the best task of the three as there was more control over direction, e.g. A great task as it was independently structured, this enabled us to explore our interests
• 41 per cent of students surveyed indicated Task 3 to be more difficult than other assessment tasks. Comments include:
  – difficult to grasp what was being asked due to the number of components
  – this task was really hard to structure
  – 26 per cent felt the response length was appropriate (for the timeframe).

Analysis of teachers’ views on the assessment requirements for Unit 3 showed 33 per cent of teachers indicated that the guidance given in the syllabus around Instrument 3 was not clear.
Comments include:

- while the first two assessment techniques are clear, the nature of Task 3 has changed and some example focus questions would assist teachers and students further
- descriptions for the first two assessment instruments are clear. However the description of the third is ambiguous and could be improved
- Task 3 is too broad for students to undertake confidently and successfully. Even with reasonable scaffolding the task proves challenging to confident, independent learners
- greater clarity for Task 3 would assist in meeting the “evaluation” demands
- Task 3 could frame students to investigate a problem that can be addressed through an application of literary theory. This would enable students to have a clearer framework for evaluation, i.e. “did these approaches enable the question to be answered?” The current formulation of producing a close reading doesn’t naturally lend itself to meaningful evaluation (However, close reading is an essential component — the phrase is still important in the task description)
- more explanation of exactly what is required in Task 3 is needed, e.g. what is evaluated? What counts as two approaches? A sample structure for Task 3 needed
- greater specificity regarding Task 3 is needed, with some example focus questions and hopefully an exemplar provided online earlier in the syllabus cycle
- the wording of Task 3 is ambiguous
- I have real concerns with the open nature of Task 3. Even in Trial Conferences for English Extension teachers in 2010 and 2011 there have been significantly different interpretations of Task 3 made by experienced English Extension teachers. I worry that new schools and inexperienced teachers would be poorly supported by the task as it is currently written.
- Task 3 has been a struggle in that it is not clearly defined in terms of its demands.
- I am feeling nervous about Task 3 – when there was a “part A” under the old syllabus it gave me the chance to advise if their theoretical approaches were going to work well with their readings.

One Head of Department commented that students value the independence involved in shaping studies for Task 3.

Analysis of panel chairs’ views on the assessment requirements for Unit 3 showed 60 per cent identified Task 3 as a possible issue needing consideration for the syllabus rewrite. Comments include:

- The wording of Task 3 needs to be re-thought. At the moment it is too ambiguous especially in regard to exactly what students need to evaluate.
- Greater clarity needed around Task 3 and scaffolding common to all teachers and students.

The review panel chairs’ recommendations that the assessment requirements for Unit 3 be clarified will inform the rewrite of the syllabus.

Comments from teachers and review panel chairs on the appropriateness of the response length for Unit 3 assessment include:

- The maximum word lengths need to be extended (Task 2: defence 10–15 mins; Task 3: 2500–3000 words)
• The issue of length remains contentious for most schools. The students are required to show knowledge of the text’s historical context and theoretical background and links to application and evaluation. The tasks as written don’t allow much room for this.

• Students are likely to have problems around fitting everything into 2500 words for Task 3.

• Need to increase word/time lengths.

• I would like to see an extension to the lengths of tasks, especially Task 3, to allow for demonstration of greater complexity and depth.

• I would like a compromise struck between the old and new syllabus. The old syllabus was very demanding in terms of tasks and word lengths but it allowed depth of thinking to be shown. The new syllabus is far more reasonable but I don’t think students are as engaged in the process.

Analysis of students’ views on the response length for Unit 3 assessment shows:

• 22 per cent of students felt the response length in Instrument 3 was too short — comments included that more flexible/higher word limit needed and that meeting response lengths was very difficult.

• 26 per cent of students felt the response length was appropriate.

3.2.5 Participants’ views on the syllabus standards

Teachers were asked to comment on their confidence in interpreting the standards, in writing instrument-specific standards matrices, and in applying the syllabus standards to student work. Heads of Department were asked if they were satisfied with the syllabus standards. Students were asked if they understood the syllabus standards.

Analysis of teachers’ views on the standards shows:

• 100 per cent of teachers surveyed indicated that they felt confident to interpret the standards

• 67 per cent of teachers surveyed indicated that they felt confident in writing instrument-specific standards

• 67 per cent of teachers surveyed indicated that they felt confident in applying standards to students’ work

• half of the teachers surveyed indicated that they did not anticipate any difficulties in determining the relative level of achievement of their Year 12s on exit.

Although teachers indicated that they felt confident to interpret the standards, other comments include:

• a concern is the extent to which “evaluation” must be explicit within the students’ work to achieve the various standards

• my only concern is the evaluation of Dimension 3 for exit.

Analysis of students’ views on the standards shows:

• 67 per cent of students surveyed felt they understood the standards for each assessment instrument

• 33 per cent of students surveyed felt they did not understand the standards for each assessment instrument.

Analysis of Heads of Department views on the standards shows that 71 per cent of Heads of Department surveyed were satisfied with the standards achieved by students.
3.3 Moderation processes: work program approvals and Monitoring

3.3.1 Work programs

A work program is the school’s plan of how the course will be delivered and assessed based on the school’s interpretation of the syllabus. Schools are required to write a work program that meets syllabus requirements. Review panels are responsible for approval processes for work programs.

Analysis of Heads of Department views on writing work programs from the syllabus shows:

- 71 per cent felt the syllabus gave the necessary information to write the school’s work program
- 83 per cent had had their work program approved at the time of the survey.

QSA data shows that 100 per cent of schools surveyed and 94 per cent of all schools trialling the syllabus in 2011 have had their work programs approved since completion of the survey.

Analysis of teachers’ views on writing work programs from the syllabus shows that 50 per cent felt confident that the syllabus gave them the necessary information to write the work program.

District Review Panel Chairs’ comments on main issues arising from work program approval processes include:

- schools not letting go of the previous syllabus in terms of the intent of assessment instruments
- schools not indicating correct length for assessment tasks
- schools providing course and unit overviews that were not consistent with the 2010 syllabus.

Sixty per cent of review panel chairs surveyed found the main inquiries from schools relate to Instrument 3, including:

- requests for guidance over ways Instrument 3 might be handled
- more clarification needed on Unit 3.

Analysis of Heads of Department and teachers’ views on work program approval processes showed 67 per cent of teachers and Heads of Department surveyed felt that the feedback given by the review panel was useful. Comments included:

- we have received only positive feedback
- feedback has been useful in making the necessary alterations for approval
- feedback was very clear and precise
- we received effective feedback.

3.3.2 Monitoring

Monitoring is the process by which review panels consider the school’s implementation of a course and the exit standards in Authority subjects approximately halfway through the course of study. The focus of panel advice is on the school’s assessment decisions about the application of standards and interim levels of achievement.
Monitoring for the trial syllabus occurred in July 2011. District Review Panel Chairs’ comments on Monitoring include:

- no significant issues identified
- provided advice on evaluation and levels of evaluation required
- there are still differences in understanding of what constitutes “application”, particularly in the second task. Advice had to be given that the reading process must be demonstrated and methodologies explicated.

Teachers’ comments on panel advice from Monitoring include:

- Monitoring confirmed the accuracy of judgements and appropriate implementation of the syllabus in my school
- very useful feedback — particularly regarding students’ referencing conventions.

3.4 Resources

English Extension is a theorised study of literature that provides opportunities for students to engage with a variety of theoretical approaches. Some of the most appropriate resources for this subject are those that help make literary theory and its application accessible and manageable for students and teachers.

The English Extension (Literature) Senior Syllabus 2003 included an Approaches Framework that was designed as a starting point for students to begin exploring theoretical approaches and their application to literature study. As the 2010 syllabus is written as a low-definition syllabus, the Approaches Framework from the 2003 syllabus was not incorporated into the syllabus document. A number of survey responses referred to the Approaches Framework.

The surveys asked teachers and Heads of Department to comment on the resources needed to deliver the English Extension course.

Analysis of Heads of Department and teachers’ views on resources for delivering the course showed 100 per cent of teachers and Heads of Department surveyed felt that they had the appropriate resources available to deliver the course.

A school commented that all has gone well — students have been able to get the primary sources they require either at UQ library or on J store.

While half of the schools surveyed indicated they had no issues in finding or developing resources, the other half indicated that they had experienced challenges resourcing the course of study. Comments include:

- contemporary author and reader-centred theoretical texts have recently become more scarce
- some specific theoretical approaches are difficult to find, also the diversity of approaches relevant to Task 3 makes meeting student needs difficult at times.

Other comments on providing resources for the course include:

- it is really hard to get enough resources for students. Money is always a problem
- for the size of the course it tends to be resource intensive
- the students mainly rely on on-line resources and we have been to the UQ library. We do have textbooks. Still it seems that students found it difficult to find material on some theories.
Comments requesting annotated sample student responses include:

- sample assignments on the QSA website would help
- inclusion of examples of readings and defences would be useful
- examples of responses to Instrument 3 when they become available would be useful
- would be good to provide greater elaboration and examples of the “theoretical approaches” in student work.
- providing annotated standards of students work for each task that provide clear evidence of matches between student work and identified standards would help schools.

This issue will be resolved through implementation. Annotated examples of assessment responses will be published on the QSA website when they become available.

Comments requesting a version of the 2003 Approaches Framework as a resource include:

- include the Approaches Framework in the syllabus
- an appendix or resource material booklet containing the support materials from the old syllabus would be useful
- the non-inclusion of the Approaches Framework diminishes the user-friendliness of the syllabus
- a suggested improvement — more support documents
- there needs to be a document supporting the low-definition syllabus. This document should offer resources and theoretical approaches relevant to the various reading approaches as per the 2003 syllabus.

Comments requesting a glossary included:

- include a glossary which defines key terms relating to this subject (e.g. reading, defence, close reading, approach)
- a suggested improvement — inclusion of a glossary.
4. **Findings**

4.1 **Internal consistency of the components of the syllabus**

Responses from teachers, Heads of Department and panellists about the appropriate alignment of syllabus dimensions, objectives, assessment requirements and standards were predominantly positive. All teachers surveyed indicated they were satisfied with the way the objectives are grouped under three dimensions.

4.2 **Degree to which the syllabus communicates intentions to teachers**

The syllabus appears to communicate its intentions to teachers clearly. This is backed up by the high percentage of teachers who rated the syllabus components as being clear for the purposes of writing work programs.

4.3 **Suitability of scope and depth of syllabus requirements**

As shown in the data, the majority of teachers indicated a positive reaction at their school to the extension and challenge that the scope and depth of syllabus requirements provide for students. Eighty three per cent of teachers surveyed indicated they felt the course was going well with their students.

4.4 **Relevance of the subject to students**

Positive responses from students, parents and teachers confirm that this subject is highly relevant to the students who choose to study it. Positive aspects of the course highlighted in the data include preparation for tertiary studies, improvement in performance in other subjects, student enjoyment of the challenges and independent learning style, and student interest in the subject content.

4.5 **Appropriateness of assessment requirements of the syllabus**

The data indicates that the majority of teachers and students considered the assessment requirements appropriate, and that the increase in challenge from Unit 1 assessment to Unit 2 assessment was appropriate.

The data shows that teachers and panellists consider the information the syllabus provides for Instrument 3 is not clear enough. It also shows that schools would like further explanation of how “evaluation” could be demonstrated.

**Recommendation 1:** That the rewritten syllabus clarify how “evaluation” in Dimension 3, *Evaluating and synthesising* could be demonstrated.

**Recommendation 2:** That the rewritten syllabus provide further clarification of the assessment requirements for Unit 3.
The data also shows that teachers, students and panellists consider that the syllabus length requirement of 2000–2500 words for the student response to Instrument 3 does not allow for demonstration of depth and complexity of response.

**Recommendation 3:** That the rewritten syllabus include an increase in the length requirements for student responses to Instrument 3 to 2500–3000 words.

### 4.6 Development of appropriate standards for student achievement

The data shows that 100 per cent of teachers surveyed indicated that they felt confident in interpreting the standards. The majority of teachers felt confident in writing instrument-specific standards matrices and the majority of teachers felt confident in applying the syllabus standards to students’ work.

### 4.7 Resources

The data shows that a significant number of teachers would like to have access to additional resources including:

- a glossary of terms in the syllabus
- a version of the Approaches Framework from the *English Extension (Literature) Senior Syllabus 2003* available on the QSA website
- annotated assessment and sample student responses on the QSA website.

The issue of annotated assessment and sample student responses will be addressed during the course of implementation.

**Recommendation 4:** That the rewritten syllabus be supported by additional resources including a glossary of terms and an updated version of the Approaches Framework.
5. Recommendations

The following recommendations reflect stakeholder feedback on the open trial of the *English Extension Senior Syllabus 2010* with Year 12 students in 2011.

5.1.1 Assessment

It is recommended that the rewritten syllabus clarify how “evaluation” in Dimension 3, *Evaluating and synthesising* could be demonstrated.

5.1.2 Assessment

It is recommended that the rewritten syllabus provide further clarification of the assessment requirements for Unit 3.

5.1.3 Assessment

It is recommended that the rewritten syllabus include an increase in the length requirements for student responses to Instrument 3 to 2500–3000 words.

5.1.4 Resources

It is recommended that the rewritten syllabus be supported by additional resources including a glossary of terms and an updated version of the Approaches Framework.

5.1.5 Syllabus

It is recommended that the rewritten syllabus proceed to general implementation.
### Appendix 1: Survey participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT PANEL</th>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>REQUESTED SURVEYS</th>
<th>RECEIVED SURVEYS</th>
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Appendix 2: Survey of students

The English Extension Senior Syllabus (2010) has been in open trial with Year 12 students in approved schools in 2011. Your feedback on this survey will help inform the rewrite of the syllabus for general implementation in 2012.

Please return your completed survey form in the enclosed reply paid envelope by Friday 16 September 2011.

School name: ______________________________

1. What aspects of this subject have you enjoyed?

2. What aspects have disappointed you?

3. What are the benefits of studying English Extension?

4. What is your opinion of assessment in this subject in relation to
   a) the degree of difficulty and
   b) response length for each of the following assessment instruments?
      i) Unit 1: Reading and defences
      ii) Unit 2: Complex transformation and defence
      iii) Unit 3: Exploration and evaluation

5. Do you understand the standards for each assessment instrument?

6. What have you found most challenging about the English Extension course?

7. Do you see yourself studying a tertiary course that involves English language and/or literature?

8. Are there any further comments you would like to make about the English Extension course?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
Appendix 3: Survey of parents

The English Extension Senior Syllabus (2010) has been in open trial with Year 12 students in approved schools in 2011. Your feedback on this survey will help inform the rewrite of the syllabus for general implementation in 2012.

Please return your completed survey form in the enclosed reply paid envelope by Friday 16 September 2011.

School name: ______________________________

1. What aspects of this subject do you think are most worthwhile?

2. Have any aspects disappointed you?

3. What do you see are the benefits of studying English Extension?

4. What is your opinion of assessment in this subject? e.g.
   a) variety of assessment instruments;
   b) number and timing of assessment instruments;
   c) degree of difficulty and response length

5. What do you consider is most challenging about the English Extension course?

6. Are there any further comments you would like to make about the English Extension course?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
Appendix 4: Survey of teachers

The English Extension Senior Syllabus (2010) has been in open trial with Year 12 students in approved schools in 2011. Your feedback on this survey will help inform the rewrite of the syllabus for general implementation in 2012.

Please return your completed survey form in the enclosed reply paid envelope by Friday 16 September 2011.

School name: ______________________________

STUDENTS
1. What has been the general reaction of the students to the subject so far?
2. What problems have the students faced during the course?
3. From your perspective, how well is your English Extension course going with Year 12 students?

ASSESSMENT
4. How successful have assessment instruments been?
5. In the syllabus, how clear is the guidance provided on assessment techniques?
6. Do you have suggestions that could improve the guidance provided on assessment techniques?
7. Are you confident interpreting the standards?
8. How confident are you in writing instrument-specific standards?
9. Are you confident applying the standards to student work?
10. Do you have any suggestions that would improve the clarity of the standards?
11. From monitoring, your school may have received feedback from the District Review Panel on ways of improving your assessment. In what ways did these comments help you?
12. Are there any other difficulties associated with assessment?
13. Do you anticipate difficulties determining the relative level of achievement of the Year 12 students at exit?

TEACHING THE COURSE
14. How have you enjoyed teaching the course you developed from the English Extension Senior Syllabus 2010?
15. What has gone well in the teaching of the English Extension course at your school?
16. What has not gone well?
17. Do you have any concerns about your expertise to teach English Extension?
SYLLABUS
18. What do you like about the *English Extension Senior Syllabus 2010*?
19. What difficulties have you found with the syllabus?
20. Are you satisfied with the way the objectives are grouped under three dimensions?
21. From your experiences so far, what changes should be made to the syllabus?

WORK PROGRAM
22. Did the syllabus give you the information you needed to write the work program?
23. Is your work program approved? Yes/No (*please circle*)
24. How useful was the feedback you received from the District / State Review Panel?
25. Any further comments?

RESOURCES
26. Do you currently have the resources you need to deliver the English Extension course?
27. Are there any particular aspects of the course for which it has been difficult to find or develop resources?
28. For your experiences so far, what are the most useful commercial resources?
29. What other resources did you find helpful in delivering the course?

FURTHER COMMENTS
30. Are there further comments you would like to make about the syllabus and its open trial implementation?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
Appendix 5: Survey of Heads of Department

The English Extension Senior Syllabus (2010) has been in open trial with Year 12 students in approved schools in 2011. Your feedback on this survey will help inform the rewrite of the syllabus for general implementation in 2012.

Please return your completed survey form in the enclosed reply paid envelope by Friday 16 September 2011.

School name: ______________________________

1. In what year did your school first offer an English Extension course?
2. What have you noticed about the quality of the English Extension course operating at your school?
3. What have been the positive reactions to the English Extension course at your school?
4. What have been the negative reactions to the English Extension course at your school?
5. Have any of the following made the implementation of this syllabus difficult in your school?
   - Staffing
   - Resources
   - Student numbers
   - Other
6. What professional development has been offered to the teacher in your school to equip them for teaching the English Extension course?
7. Are you satisfied with the standards achieved by students in this program?

SYLLABUS
8. What do you like about the open trial syllabus?
9. From your experiences so far, what changes should be made to the syllabus?
10. Do you foresee any changes in the way English Extension is promoted, offered and taught in your school?
11. What lessons have been learnt at your school that could be useful to schools new to the syllabus when it progresses to general implementation in 2012?

WORK PROGRAMS
12. Did the syllabus give the necessary information to write the school's work program?
13. Is your work program approved? Yes/No (please circle)
14. What feedback did you receive from the District / State Review Panel?
15. Any further comments?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
Appendix 6:
Survey of District Review Panel Chair

The English Extension Senior Syllabus (2010) has been in open trial with Year 12 students in approved schools in 2011. Your feedback on this survey will help inform the rewrite of the syllabus for general implementation in 2012.

Please return your completed survey form in the enclosed reply paid envelope by Friday 16 September 2011.

1. What have been the main issues in the approval of work programs?

2. What have been the main inquiries, needs or requests from schools and teachers?

3. At monitoring, what were the issues identified?

4. Are there any issues that you predict may occur at verification? Explain your concerns.

5. Are there any implementation or assessment issues that need to be considered for the syllabus rewrite?

6. Is there any other advice that you would like to provide the writing team for the revision of the syllabus?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
Appendix 7:
Survey of State Review Panel Chair

The English Extension Senior Syllabus (2010) has been in open trial with Year 12 students in approved schools in 2011. Your feedback on this survey will help inform the rewrite of the syllabus for general implementation in 2012.

Please return your completed survey form in the enclosed reply paid envelope by Wednesday 14 September 2011.

1. What have been the main issues in the approval of work programs?

2. What have been the main inquiries, needs or requests from schools and teachers?

3. At monitoring, what were the issues identified?

4. Are there any issues that you predict may occur at verification? Explain your concerns.

5. Are there any implementation or assessment issues that need to be considered for the syllabus rewrite?

6. Is there any other advice that you would like to provide the writing team for the revision of the syllabus?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.