



HSC English Extension 2 at Hornsby Girls High School 2001

In this article David Eldridge, Head Teacher, English, at Hornsby Girls High School, describes how his school has implemented the Extension 2 course for the first time. The article explains how students can be prepared in Year 11 for the activities that are central to the course. It details the organisational, logistical and teaching challenges of the course, and it emphasises the importance of collaboration and professional development in implementation.

David highlights important issues for schools to consider when implementing the Extension 2 course. The positive approach of the article, its recognition of the realities of preparation, programming and teaching, and the practical advice offered should help schools currently teaching or thinking about teaching the course.

Negotiating the uncharted waters of Extension 2 English has been an exciting adventure for students and teachers. At times we did feel adrift, but we never felt alone. Fortunately there are many in the same boat and we have relied on each other for advice, guidance and general support. One of the positive spin-offs of the new Stage 6 English Syllabus has been the sense of collegiality that it has engendered. Not only has teaching and learning been revitalised, but so has the old system of networking, sharing ideas and writing joint programs. We are especially lucky in Hornsby District as we have an active and well supported English Network coordinated by Helen Esmond of Cheltenham Girls High School.

This, plus further opportunities such as LIG events, cross-sectoral workshops and BOS and DET web sites, inspired us at HGHS to embrace the spirit of the new syllabus. We decided to include an extended composition, or mini Major Work, in our Preliminary English Extension 1 program (Outcomes 2 and 3). Students were therefore encouraged to develop their skills in investigating, documenting and reflecting. This foresight has proved invaluable as it has, in effect, allowed us a dummy run of the HSC Course. The intention was never to mimic the HSC Course, but to be guided by the HSC Major Work parameters within the scope of the Preliminary Course syllabus.

We have thirteen students doing Extension 2 at Hornsby Girls High School this year. No one has dropped out of the course since it began. Most are writing short stories,

one is designing a web page, and a few are writing critical responses. One student is doing Major Works in three subjects! I managed to negotiate, on the grounds that this is the first year of the new syllabus, a little extra time within the timetable allocations for students to have access to two supervising teachers. This has proved to be very helpful, not only for the students, but also for Ms Jo-Anne Drayton (the other teacher teaching the course) and myself. We worked closely during the Preliminary Course and this year we have been able to reflect and refine together. Providing opportunities for professional development in the new Stage 6 Syllabus is very much a priority in our faculty.

Last year, during the Preliminary Course, Extension 1 students were encouraged to think about Extension 2, and potential students were strongly urged to consider the course. Late in Term 2 this year we plan to have the Extension 2 students talk to the present Preliminary Extension 1 students. It is also hoped that some mentoring might take place which will not only benefit the prospective students but also the Extension 2 students themselves, especially as they come to work on their reflection statement. Some students are also working with mentors.

The timetabling of lessons and meetings was, and is, difficult. Students have one communal eighty-minute lesson or meeting per fortnight. In addition each student has one twenty to thirty-minute meeting per fortnight on her own with her supervising teacher. We are managing, but it is awkward to coordinate and, at times, almost impossible to find the time.

My discussions with teachers in other schools have revealed how the phrase “work independently” is problematic. Jo-Anne and I are continuing our traditional practice of helping students; that is, we edit, suggest, advise and evaluate. The planning, development, content and presentation are essentially the student’s own work. At the commencement of the course students were given a booklet containing an overview of the course and advice on such things as:

- course requirements
- outcomes and structure
- assessment schedule
- important dates schedule
- helpful hints for planning, researching and time management
- style formatting, including structure
- issues of plagiarism and language without discrimination, presentation, referencing and bibliography.

As information, such as *Sample Marking Guidelines*, has become available from the Board of Studies, it has been added to the booklet. Students were required to complete a contract which was pasted into the Journal.



Important dates schedule

Important dates	Action required
Term 4, week 8	Preliminary research and modelling
Term 4, week 9	Draft Proposal and Journal to be submitted (written and oral)
Term 1, week 2	Proposal and Journal to be submitted
Term 1, week 8	Bulk of research complete and writing in progress
Term 1, week 8	Presentation to class—difficulties and triumphs
Term 2, week 1	First draft of major work Journal to be submitted
Term 2, week 2	Viva voce
Term 2, week 5	Journal to be submitted
Term 2, week 9	Report
Term 2, week 9	Second draft of major work to be submitted Journal to be submitted
Term 3, week 1	Third draft of major work to be submitted First draft of reflection statement to be submitted Journal to be submitted
Term 3, week 7	Final copy of major work, reflection statement and journal

Assessment schedule

Date	Outcomes	Task details	Weighting
Term 1, week 2	1, 2	Proposal Presentation of proposal for Major Work	10
Term 2, week 2	1, 2	Viva voce Interview, discussion and exploration of the work in progress	20
Term 2, week 9	1, 2	Report Part A The impact of independent investigation on the development of the major work	10
Term 3, week 1	1, 2	Report Part B The Journal as a documentation of process	10
Total			50

Major work proposal

A. Tick the area from which your major work will be undertaken:

- Print medium**
Short story(ies)
Poem(s)
Critical responses
Scripts: Radio, film, television and drama
- Sound medium**
Speeches
Radio drama
Performance poetry
- Visual medium**
Video
Film
- Multimedia**
CD-ROM
Web site
Other.

B. The proposal for your major work should be in the form of a report using the following headings:

Statement of intention
Working title
Vision of final product (50 words)

Rationale
Audience
Purpose
Locate in learning context
Link to outcomes
Inspiration
Reasons for your final choice (150 words)

Evidence of preliminary investigation
Experience, knowledge, skills, research (200 words)

Envisaged method or process

Key words that conceptualise each stage (200 words)

Resource list including an annotated bibliography

The critical factors for success (50 words)



Viva voce

In the Preliminary Year Extension 1 course, students were required to do a *viva voce* assessment. They were told that they were to comment on the research and organisation of their work and give a clear indication of where they were heading. It was emphasised that the *viva voce* was a report on the work in progress and that they should seek to answer the questions:

What research have I done so far?

How has my analysis of my research changed or confirmed my view of the topic?

What do I propose to do from this point on?

Following the speech, they are required to answer questions from the assessment panel. A bank of seven questions was formulated for this purpose.

For obvious reasons I am unable, at the moment, to publish the questions for this year's HSC Extension 2 *viva voce*. However, students have been told that when they receive the questions, which will be two weeks before the date of the *viva voce*, they will be expected to discuss the progress of their Major Work in an interview with a panel of two or three teachers.

Students will be asked questions to which they have prepared answers, and ad hoc questions which will give them an opportunity to discuss, explore and reflect upon the process of composing. Questions will be directed substantially at the process of composition and will probably cover the following areas:

- inspiration and originality
- links with proposal
- problems or difficulties and how they have been dealt with
- memorable aspects
- pleasurable aspects
- frustrating aspects
- skills developed and how they were developed.

Students might also be required to read an extract or present a segment of their draft.

Students will be given a copy of the *Marking Guidelines* at the same time as they receive the questions.

The most important principle guiding the conduct of the *viva voce* is equity. Last year during the Preliminary Extension 1 *viva voce*, we were concerned to ensure that each student had an equal opportunity to present her work in progress, without the three assessing teachers asking ad hoc questions, which could be construed as leading questions. The DET video published as part of

the School Certificate LIG package a few years back highlights some of the pitfalls we should be aware of when questioning students.

Report

At the time of writing, the two report assessments scheduled for Term 2 and Term 3 are still a way off but we are giving thought to them. Our questions will focus on the process of independent investigation. We are very aware that the Journal is not assessed as a product in itself but as part of the process of composing the Major Work. The Reflection Statement will not be included in the assessment as it is part of the product and will be marked externally.

We are gradually building an Extension 2 library of resources. We have found the following resources particularly helpful:

Grenville, Kate. (1991). *The Writing Book*. Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd, Sydney.

King, G. (2000). *Collins Punctuation*. HarperCollins, London.

King, G. (2000). *Collins Good Grammar*. HarperCollins, London.

King, Stephen. (2000). *On Writing*. Hodder and Stoughton, London.

Lodge, David. (1992). *The Art of Fiction*. Penguin Books Ltd, London.

Lodge, David. (1996). *The Practice of Writing*. Penguin Books Ltd, London.

Strunk, W. and Whyte, E.B. (1979). *The Elements of Style*. Macmillan Publishing, New York.

Jo-Anne Drayton has joined the NSW Writers Centre which allows her and our students to borrow books from their library.

We have found guest speakers to be most helpful, especially Anna-Maria Dell'Oso who deals with the whole writing process in a logical and accessible way for students. We have invited speakers into our school and have teamed up with other schools so that costs can be shared among a larger number of students.

We always knew that the implementation of the new Stage 6 syllabus was going to make demands on our out-of-school time, placing further strains on that little time we have left after marking and preparation. In terms of increased work load, the past two years have been horrendous but we are now beginning to catch glimpses of calm water ahead.



Ideas and strategies for managing Extension 2 English

HSC English Extension 2 support document

Ideas and strategies for managing Extension 2 English is a support document compiled under the auspices of the Quality Teacher program (QTP) by English teachers from all sectors: Catholic, Department of Education and Training, and Independent. It is published on the QTP web site: www.qtp.nsw.edu.au and can also be accessed through Curriculum Support's English web site: www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au/english.

It provides, in one document, the mandatory syllabus and assessment requirements of the HSC English Extension 2 course; included are references to relevant sections of the NSW Board of Studies' *Assessment, Certification and Examination (ACE) Manual*. Links have also been made to the *Extension 2 Frequently Asked Questions* section on the Board of Studies web site. *Ideas and strategies for managing Extension 2 English* has been published after extensive consultation with officers from the Board of Studies. It needs to be read in conjunction with the official notices that are published regularly in the *Board Bulletins*. Because it is electronically published (as pdf) it can be readily updated if the course specifications are altered.

The document starts with an ideas and strategies section for teachers and students. This section aims to give practical advice about the syllabus requirements and the aspects teachers and students need to be aware of, including assessment tasks. This section is particularly useful for students in helping them to make informed decisions, not only about the content, but also about the medium and form that might best suit their major work.

The second section looks in some detail at each of the major work options, and gives practical examples of each medium. The third section, the Appendix, includes examples of contracts, assessment tasks and other proformas that are currently in use in schools, which might be of practical help to teachers for their own school community.

Your comments and contributions are encouraged. Please contact kerry.underhill@det.nsw.edu.au or gillian.lovell@det.nsw.edu.au at the Curriculum Support Directorate.

Talking about Stage 6 reporting

Schools are at various stages in developing their Stage 6 reporting processes. As English teachers participate in this process, they can consider the following points, and use the discussion questions to analyse and reflect on what they want reports to achieve and ways of achieving this.

Providing stakeholders with meaningful information about students' achievement of the targeted course outcomes is central to an effective reporting system. Stakeholders include parents, students and other community groups which have a valid need to be informed.

Who are the stakeholders in our school community?

Purpose

Reports serve a range of purposes:

- reporting to parents and students
- reporting on students' achievement of course outcomes
- helping students reflect on their learning
- setting directions for their future learning
- providing for other schools and for employers an honest and accessible description of students' achievement at the end of a course or a student's time in the school.

Does our school's current Stage 6 English reporting system adequately serve these purposes? What other valuable purposes does it serve?

Whole-school approach: commonality and difference

Developing a Stage 6 reporting system is a whole-school responsibility. Teachers from different subject areas work together to evolve a system that accommodates the needs of different subjects while at the same time ensuring consistency and continuity across all subjects.

While subjects might vary in significant and legitimate ways in their approaches to programming and teaching, they share an outcomes-based approach to assessment. This commonality provides a common language and a common perspective. It is essential that all subjects, in reporting on achieved outcomes, attribute the same meanings to the reporting language; for example, if a performance scale describes a student's achievement of outcomes as "consolidating", the word needs to mean the same thing in all subjects.