

# EXCELLING IN ENGLISH

**“This above all: to thine own  
self be true.”**

*William Shakespeare*

# HSC ENGLISH IS CHANGING; AND SO ARE WE

**In 2019, the new HSC English course will be examined for the first time. As the only subject automatically included in your ATAR calculation, your performance in English has a significant bearing on your overall result. In this article Talent's Head of English Dr Jenny Wells outlines our revised and updated HSC English program commencing Term 4, 2018 which has been designed specifically to cater for the syllabus changes.**

Our new English program focuses on developing the skills necessary to succeed in the revised Advanced English course.

The primary aim of the program is to guide and support students as they explore challenging texts to investigate complex and evocative ideas and employ creative and sophisticated ways to use language to shape meaning. Students will be encouraged to develop confidence in appreciating, analysing and responding imaginatively and critically to literary texts drawn from a range of personal, social, historical and cultural contexts.

Through an intensive study of the four Modules and a close engagement with the prescribed texts, students will develop a strong understanding of textual content, and enhance their own ability to construct sophisticated sustained responses, short answers, and discursive, persuasive and reflective responses in accordance with the prescriptions of the new HSC Syllabus. Most importantly, students will be encouraged to enjoy the literature and develop confidence in their ability to produce cogent and creative responses.

# What's changing in the HSC

**1) Restructured modules, changed texts.** The new course will comprise of 4 set texts instead of the previous 5, but there is a greater focus on literary texts with Shakespeare, prose fiction and poetry/drama as the mandatory mediums of study.

**2) No more Area of Study.** The Area of Study from the previous HSC has now been replaced by a common module called Texts and Human Experience. In this unit,

students will study a prescribed core text, selected other texts and one related text. This will be the module that ALL year 12 students undertake in Term 4.

**3) New Module C: will test creative writing & self-reflection.** The creative writing component previously assessed in the Area of Study has been moved to a new module named The Craft of Writing, which asks students to read a variety of short texts and to

synthesise a creative, persuasive or discursive piece while reflecting on ideas learned from their short texts.

**4) Less exams, more assignments.** Schools are limited to a maximum of 4 assessments in Year 12 and only one may be under exam conditions, for a weighting of no more than 30%. Students also must be assessed via multimedia presentation for at least 15% of their internal mark.



# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU

The new Advanced English HSC Syllabus provides the opportunity for a deeper and more intensive engagement with challenging texts and ideas. This is enhanced by the reduction in the number of prescribed texts, and by the reduction of the number of questions in Paper 1 of the HSC Examination. Students will be

given more time to explore the key themes and contextual influences of texts, and to practise and refine their own written responses. This allows for a fuller and more personal engagement with some of the most important and significant texts in English literature and literature from other cultures. The study of more intellectually

and emotionally demanding texts encourages the development of refined analytical skills and knowledge of how to apply literary terminology in meaningful ways. It also encourages more sophisticated written responses which demonstrate an understanding of the features of key text types and an ability to use language forms and features to express individual interpretations, creativity and personal reflection. Students will be provided with ample and ongoing opportunities to hone their analytical skills and produce coherent and cogent interpretations of texts from a range of cultural and historical contexts

**Harder to pre-prepare essays.** The new English HSC will challenge students to engage more deeply with their texts, and will make it more difficult for students to tailor prepared responses to the given exam question. This is a positive change, as the temptation to present a prepared response to HSC questions often produced responses which did not address the terms of the specific question, leading to reduced marks.



# COURSE DESIGN

## SENIOR YEARS



**Year 11:** In our Preliminary Advanced English course, students will study challenging texts, with a focus on appreciating, analysing and responding imaginatively and critically to literary texts drawn from a range of personal, social, historical and cultural contexts. The Talent 100 course guides students through the three prescribed Modules: Reading to Write; Narratives That Shape Our World; and Critical Study of Literature. Revolving around specific texts

and text types, the course enables students to develop analytical and creative skills which are transferable across all three Modules. This allows students to extend and deepen their ability to use language effectively, and to refine their understanding of the dynamic relationship between language, texts and meaning. Offered **during the Term** as a 10 week program or as **an intensive Holiday Workshop** program, our course offers a strong and rigorous focus on critical study of texts composed for different purposes in a range of contexts.

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No longer will students and teachers be able to look to last year's lessons and assessment tasks for easy learning short cuts. Everyone will be experimenting together.

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**Year 12:** Our HSC English program has been specifically designed to help students develop confidence in appreciating, analysing and responding imaginatively and critically to literary texts prescribed by their schools.

**In Term 4**, the Common Module will be taught over the **10 Week term**, building analytical tools and skill sets to be able to take allocated schools texts and frame ideas into cogent supporting arguments.

**In 2019**, Modules A, B & C will each be taught as an intensive **3 day workshop** during the January Holidays (Module A), April holidays (Module B), and July holidays (Module C) with an optional **Assessment Package** for each module.

Our program focuses on teaching students how to think critically, analyse texts and build supporting arguments without “rote-learning” essays. This is particularly important to address the recent

changes in the HSC curriculum which will see students responding to more challenging and unpredictable questions compared to previous years.

Each course module will comprise two teaching components being:

**A. Intensive Workshop** (15+ hours)

These 3 day workshops will be run by Dr Wells and taught in small group format (max 25). Designed to ensure students understand the requirements of each module, by the end of the workshops students will be able to:

- perform close textual analysis and refine analytical and creative skills
- enhance their ability to engagement with complex and sophisticated ideas
- create an essay ‘scaffold’ and write short answers that ‘answer the question’
- use that scaffold for a text specific question in an exam environment.

Although not all of the prescribed texts taught in schools will be specifically covered, the most commonly taught texts will certainly be addressed. However, the skill of textual analysis is transferable to all texts and is relevant to the treatment of the themes/ideas/context of all texts.

**B. Assessment Package** (5-6 hours)

This optional package is a comprehensive essay development program offered **one-to-one** for students to critique and develop their ‘scaffold’ and apply it to two sample questions (including your own school assessment tasks).

The objective of this additional option is to consolidate the learnings gained in the workshops and to cater to the specific needs of the individual student.

A one-on-one relationship will be established with a tutor who will guide the student in organising their ideas, and in constructing tables or mind-maps of key themes, examples, and analysis. Using this information, the student will be supported in producing responses to essay questions. These responses will be assessed and marked by the tutor, and the student will then be encouraged to use this feedback to further refine the response and to achieve the most effective response.

In this way, the student will be provided with a model of how to approach the preparation of essay and examination responses in an organised and systematic way which will help to build confidence, efficiency, and quality.

# COURSE DESIGN

## JUNIOR YEARS



**Years 7-8:** In these Stage 4 English courses, each unit of work is designed to interest and actively engage students. The focus is on guiding them to respond to a variety of texts critically, imaginatively and interpretively and compose accurate, clear and coherent texts. They are encouraged to use English with increasing control and understanding of the form and features of language and structures of texts, and with increasing awareness of purpose, audience

and context. In speaking, writing and representing, students are given opportunities to develop their skills in shaping meaning through the thoughtful selection and ordering of appropriate content and by drawing on a widening repertoire of language choices. They experiment with form and language in different modes and technologies to produce various types of texts, and they are given guidance in how plan, draft and edit to produce polished texts.



**Years 9-10:** In these Stage 5 courses, the units of work focus on developing students' ability to respond to and compose a comprehensive range of imaginative, factual and critical texts using different modes and technologies. There is a strong focus on close textual analysis as a crucial aspect of interpreting and evaluating meaning, perspective, cultural assumptions, ideologies and language. Students are also provided with a wide range of strategies used to shape

imaginative, critical and analytical compositions. They are assisted in working through the composing process, including planning, researching, drafting, conferencing, editing and publishing. In preparation for HSC English, the Stage 5 courses provide students with the skills of reflecting on their composing process and assessing how it has affected the final version of their text.

# MEET THE HEAD TEACHER



## DR JENNY WELLS

### Teaching Experience - 35+ years

Head of English, Talent 100, Present  
Head of Studies, APGS, 2014-2016  
Head of English, Presbyterian Ladies' College, 2007-2012  
Head of Student Support, Kambala School, 2005-2007  
Head of Academic Support, Kambala School, 2002-2005  
Head of English, Ascham School, 1994-1995  
Lecturer in Continuing Education & Tutor in English Dpt, USyd, 1989-1992

#### Qualifications

- PH.D from the University of Sydney
- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) from the University of Sydney



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