

Online Access English FAQs

Getting Started

Where will I find information about the Online Access English Course?

On MyAberdeen, in the Course Information folder, you will find:

- A short introductory video
- The Online Access English programme handbook
- The Assessment Timeline
- Contact details for queries
- A guide to navigating MyAberdeen
- A guide to using discussions
- Links to information about education programmes at the University of Aberdeen
- Academic Support resources
- This Frequently Asked Questions guide

Where will I find information about other support available at the University of Aberdeen?

- In the Course Information area, you will find a folder of information about academic support. This includes links to the [Learner's Toolkit](#), the [Achieve Skills Portal](#) and [Library Resources](#).
- You will find further information about pastoral, financial and practical support available to students on the [Student Services](#) webpage.
- Information about Disability Services can be found [here](#).

Are there other places I can go for support in academic study?

- [Improving your Writing](#) guide from the Student Learning Service (SLS)
- [SLS](#) offer workshops and study support on academic skills
- More resources are available through [Toolkit](#)

How long do I have to complete the course?

Your registration lasts for one year and it is your responsibility to monitor this to ensure you complete in time. If you have queries about this, contact onlineaccess@abdn.ac.uk.

Who should I contact if I have further queries about the course?

- For general queries about the course, contact onlineaccess@abdn.ac.uk.
- There will also be online Collaborate drop-in sessions periodically throughout the year at which you can ask queries about the course materials and/or assessments; notifications will let you know when these will take place.

IT queries

How do I access the course materials?

Log in to [MyAberdeen](#) using the login details provided when you registered for the course. You will see 'Course Content' down the middle of the page, including the following:

- Course Information folder
- Unit Materials
- Final Assessment Information

All materials can be accessed at any time, by clicking on the folders and documents and opening the files within them.

How do I access my student emails?

Log in to the [student email portal on the University of Aberdeen website](#) using the login details provided when you registered for the course.

Do I have to use my student email account, or can I just use my personal email account?

It is important that you use your student email account as this is the one we have on file and the one to which we will send your final results. You will also receive useful information to this account from IT, the library, registry, etc.

What do I do if I don't know my login details for MyAberdeen or for my student email account?

Email IT on servicedesk@abdn.ac.uk.

What should I do if I am having IT problems?

Email IT on servicedesk@abdn.ac.uk.

Course Activities

What do the course activities involve?

The Online Access English comprises four units.

Each unit is made up of online videos, presentations, activities and self- and peer assessment tasks, all of which are designed to build your skills in critical reading and writing as well as your engagement with language and literature. You will upload activities to the online discussion areas and will receive feedback on these from your peers.

Do I have to work through the activities in order?

You can work through the units and activities at any time, but it is recommended that you work through them in order, as they are designed to build your skills in a cumulative manner. Many of the activities build directly towards your final assessments.

Where do I post the peer assessment activities?

If you go to the discussion board area, you will see that the threads are labelled to correlate with the activities in each unit. Find the appropriate thread and hit 'reply'. Content can be uploaded by clicking on the plus sign within a circle, and selecting 'insert local file'.

Will I be allocated a partner for peer assessment activities?

No, you should just select a post which has been uploaded by one of your peers and leave feedback on it by hitting 'reply'. One of your peers will do the same for you.

Do these peer assessments contribute to my overall grade?

The peer assessments are designed to build your skills in giving and acting on feedback, as well as affording you opportunities to gain feedback on your work. This is invaluable preparation for the final assessments and will build your critical reading and writing skills. They do not contribute to your overall grade, but our experience is that students who engage fully in these activities are more likely to be successful in the final assessments.

Do I have to undertake all the course activities before I sit the final assessments?

The final assessments can be undertaken at any time but, again, our experience is that students who engage fully in the course activities are more likely to be successful in the final assessments, and to get more out of the course.

Final Assessments

What do the final assessments involve?

The Online Access English course is assessed by two final papers. Paper 1 is an online, timed textual analysis exam which involves reading a short, unseen, non-fiction passage and answering 30 marks' worth of questions on it. These questions will be a mixture of understanding, analysis and evaluation questions. Paper 2 is a persuasive essay on a topic of your choice, up to a maximum of 1500 words, which can be uploaded at any time.

Where can I find more information about the final assessments?

On MyAberdeen, in the Final Assessment Information folder, you will find:

- A short video which introduces you to the assessments
- A brief guide to the assessments
- The Paper 2 persuasive essay rubric
- Useful guides to aid writing
- Paper 1 Textual Analysis revision materials, including a sample passage, PowerPoint and Top Tips guide
- A link which enables you to purchase access to the final assessments if you have not already done so
- Practice Paper 1 Assessment

How long is the Paper 1 exam?

The Paper 1 exam is 90 minutes long

Can I stop and start the Paper 1 exam?

No, it is designed to be undertaken in one sitting

How long will the Paper 1 passage be?

Approximately 1000 words long

Will I be able to print out the Paper 1 passage?

Yes, but you will need to be able to do this within the 90 minutes, so we would recommend having your resources, including your printer, set up and ready to go.

What sorts of questions will I be asked in the Paper 1 exam?

- Understanding questions (including putting key ideas into your own words and summarising in your own words)
- Analysis questions (such as analysing the writer's use of word choice, imagery, tone, sentence structure, etc.)
- Evaluation questions (e.g. evaluating the effectiveness of an opening, a conclusion, an image or an anecdote)

Do I need to write in full sentences in the Paper 1 exam?

No, we recommend that you use bullet points and do not write in full sentences, to ensure you are able to complete the paper in time.

Is my technical accuracy (e.g. spelling, punctuation, grammar etc.) assessed in the Paper 1 exam?

No, this is not assessed. However, if your expression makes your point unclear or insufficiently precise, you may not gain all the marks for that question.

How many questions will there be in the Paper 1 exam?

There will be 30 marks' worth of questions, and it will be made clear how many marks each question is worth. You should pay attention to this as one clear, distinct point is required for each available mark.

How will I know I have written enough for each question?

For understanding questions, one clear, distinct point is required for each mark available. For analysis questions, one quotation and one analytical comment is required for each mark available. No marks are given for quotations alone.

How should I revise for the Paper 1 exam?

- You should start by working through the revision materials in the Final Assessment Information folder, entitled 'Paper 1 Textual Analysis Revision'
- You can also access the 'Practice Paper 1 Assessment' from the Final Assessment Information folder – this operates in the same way as Paper 1 assessment and has solutions for you to self-mark your work

Can I use SQA Higher English past papers to revise for the Paper 1 exam?

The Paper 1 exam is similar to, but not identical to, the SQA Higher Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (RUAЕ) exam and you could use [SQA RUAЕ past papers](#) if you require further revision materials. The key difference is that the SQA papers contain two passages and a final 5-mark comparative question, which do not feature in the Online Access exam. We have one passage only and no final comparative question. The [BBC Bitesize website](#) also contains some useful resources, as do these [Youtube videos](#).

What is the pass mark for the Paper 1 exam?

The pass mark is 12/30. This is in line with the University's [Common Grading Scale](#).

If I need to resit the Paper 1 exam, will I be given the same paper or a different paper?

You will sit a different exam with a different passage on a different topic. The question types will be broadly similar.

I normally receive extra time in exams due to a specific learning difference; can I receive this in my Paper 1 exam?

Yes, and you can arrange this by contacting the [disability service](#). If you already have provisions in place for another course at the University of Aberdeen, they will be able to discuss with you whether the same provisions are appropriate for this course, and will advise the Online Access team of the provisions to be put in place. If you do not have provisions in place at the University of Aberdeen, you may be required to provide evidence of your needs or could undertake an assessment through the disability service. Provisions can then be put in place as appropriate. Please be aware that this can take a few weeks to arrange, so you should be mindful of this if you are aiming to exit at a nearby exit point.

For Paper 2, can I write on any topic I wish?

Yes, you can choose any topic for your persuasive essay. The activities in Unit 2 help guide you through the process of choosing a topic and planning your essay. We recommend you choose something about which you hold a strong view, and about which you have plenty to say.

For Paper 2, could I write an argumentative essay (looking at two sides of an issue), rather than a persuasive one?

One of the criteria in the rubric (available in the Final Assessment Information folder) is that you utilise the linguistic features of persuasion. As such, it would be self-penalising to write an argumentative essay as you would not be affording yourself as many opportunities to utilise persuasive language.

What is the word limit for the Paper 2 essay?

The upper word limit is 1500 words. There is no lower word limit, but very short essays may be self-penalising as you will not have the opportunity to develop your arguments fully.

What happens if I exceed the word limit?

Essays which exceed the upper word limit by more than 10% will be penalised. Essays which exceed the upper word limit by more than 50% risk receiving a No Paper award, and may be awarded zero marks.

Can I use an essay I have previously used for another course?

No. You **must** submit a new piece of work which has not previously been submitted as part of any other course, or to any educational institution. Doing so is regarded as self-plagiarism, which may result in you receiving a No Paper award, and gaining zero marks.

Do I need to use a particular referencing system?

As this is a SCQF level 6 course, the only compulsory requirement is that you include a reference list. However, you should make clear when you are quoting someone else's words and it is good practice to make clear to your marker from where your ideas have come. As such, if you wish to use footnotes or in-text citations, we would encourage you to do so. One system you may wish to use is outlined in [the School of Education Guide to Referencing](#).

Is my technical accuracy (e.g. spelling, punctuation, grammar etc.) assessed in the Paper 2 essay?

Yes, technical accuracy is one of the four criteria on which you are assessed for Paper 2. You should see the rubric for further information; this can be found in the Final Assessments Information folder.

What is the pass mark for the Paper 2 essay?

The pass mark is 9/22. This is in line with the University's [Common Grading Scale](#).

If I need to resit the Paper 2 essay, can I redraft and resubmit the same essay?

Yes, you may redraft and resubmit the same essay, using the feedback on your first draft to inform the editing process. Alternatively, you could choose to write a new essay on a new topic.

Submission of Final Assessments

How do the exit points work?

You can submit work at any time, and it will be marked once that exit point closes. For instance, any work received before 19th January 2024 will be marked once that exit point closes on 19th January, and results will be issued on 16th February 2024. Assessment timelines are updated each academic year and displayed on MyAberdeen in course information.

Do I need to submit both assessments at the same exit point?

No, you can submit at any time during your one-year registration. However, you will not receive your results until both assessments have been marked.

How do I sit my Paper 1 exam?

The link will be available in the Assessment page on [MyAberdeen](#).

How do I submit my Paper 2?

A Turnitin link will be available in the Assessment page on MyAberdeen. You will upload an anonymised (identified only by your student ID number) **single** Microsoft Word file which includes cover sheet, declaration of own work and references. The cover sheet can be found in the Assessment area.

Why do I submit my assessments to Turnitin?

Turnitin is a powerful tool which highlights potential plagiarism within submitted work. It has a large database which contains students' work throughout the UK, and is not restricted to highlighting plagiarism between students at the same university.

Do I need to submit a hard (paper) copy of my assessments?

No, submission, marking and feedback will all be electronic, using MyAberdeen and Turnitin.

What if I make a mistake when uploading?

You only have one opportunity to upload your assessment. If a mistake is made during the submission process, please contact the programme administrator on onlineaccess@abdn.ac.uk.

What happens if my submission is late?

If you miss the cut-off for an exit point, your work will be marked when the next exit point closes.

Can I receive an extension for submission at a particular exit point?

No, due to the frequency of the exit points, extensions are not ordinarily granted. You should exit at the next exit point instead.

If I am running out of time to complete the assessments, can I pay to extend my registration on the course?

Yes, we should be able to accommodate this, although you will be charged a fee to re-register; you should contact onlineaccess@abdn.ac.uk for further details.

What happens next?

How are assessments marked?

Your Paper 1 exam will be marked question by question, and you will receive an overall mark out of 30. You will receive written feedback which highlights your strengths and areas for development.

Your Paper 2 essay will be annotated and you will receive comments on the body of your script. There will also be written comments in the feedback box, a mark for each of the four criteria, and an overall mark out of 22.

How do I access my feedback?

On MyAberdeen, there is an icon in the icon bar at the top called 'Gradebook'. If you follow this, you will see the two papers listed and will be able to access your feedback. Your Paper 1 feedback is accessed directly through the Gradebook; the Paper 2 feedback is accessed through Turnitin.

Will I be able to see my Paper 1 answers again?

No, this is a secure assessment so you cannot gain access to the answers again; you will, however, receive written feedback to enable you to work on your next steps.

For Paper 2, do I have to pass all four criteria to pass overall?

Yes, you need to pass all four criteria to pass Paper 2 overall.

For Paper 2, are marks deducted for referencing?

No, but you must ensure you include a reference list.

For Paper 2, are marks deducted for technical accuracy?

Technical accuracy is one of the criteria, so it is possible to fail if your technical accuracy is consistently inaccurate. Technical accuracy is weighted equally with the other three criteria.

How is my overall mark for the course calculated?

Your Paper 1 mark is converted to a mark out of 22, and an average of the Paper 1 mark and Paper 2 mark will give you your overall mark. This will be visible in the Gradebook. An alphanumeric mark is assigned in line with the University's [Common Grading Scale](#) (e.g. A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, etc).

Is a D a pass?

Yes, a D is a pass.

What should I do if I fail?

Please read the feedback which will provide advice relating to resubmission. If you wish to discuss your next steps further, please contact onlineaccess@abdn.ac.uk in the first instance.

If I only fail one assessment, do I need to resit both?

No, you only need to resit the failed assessment.

Am I allowed to resit more than once?

No, you may only resit each paper once. If you fail the resit, you fail the course overall.

If I pass with a D, but require a C for entry into a university programme, am I allowed to resit?

Yes, you may choose to resit one or both assessments to improve your mark.

When will I get my results?

The Assessment Timeline, which can be found in the Course Information folder, outlines the dates when results will be issued. You will receive a notification or message to let you know when the results are available. Your transcript will be sent to you a few days after your results are available.

If I submit earlier in an exit point, will I get my results earlier?

No, all scripts submitted will be marked once the exit point closes. We have a rigorous process of moderation, cross-marking and verification, and all results are ratified by an external examiner at an exam board. This is to ensure parity and consistency. Due to the complexity and workload involved in this process, results cannot be issued out with the dates specified on the Assessment Timeline.

In the case of re-submission, are marks capped?

No, when marking resubmissions, markers can use the full range of CGS grades.

Where will my transcript be sent?

Your transcript will be sent to your University email address a few working days after results release day. If you have a problem with accessing your University email address, please contact IT (servicedesk@abdn.ac.uk).

Transcript content

Your transcript will display all grades that have been awarded during the course. Therefore if you undertake a Resit, both your first attempt grade and resit grade will be displayed on your transcript.

If I fail an assessment twice, can I take the whole course again?

No. You may only take the course once. Students who have failed the course will not be allowed to re-register.

Access to Further Study

Is this course worth the same as SQA Higher English?

The Online Access English course is at SCQF level 6, which is the same level as Higher, and it is regarded by many institutions as an equivalent of Higher English. However, it is a 15 credit course, whereas a Higher is worth 24 credits.

Can I use this course to satisfy GTCS entry requirements to Initial Teacher Education programmes at the University of Aberdeen?

Yes, this course is accepted as an equivalent of Higher English by the University of Aberdeen. You should check with the admissions department whether a particular overall grade is required for the specific programme to which you are applying.

Can I use this course to satisfy GTCS entry requirements to Initial Teacher Education programmes at other institutions?

Most Scottish universities accept the Online Access English course as an equivalent to Higher English and the GTCS have recognised it as an equivalent. However, you should contact any institution to which you are applying to check that they will accept it, and check if they require you to achieve a particular grade.

Is the course shaped in the same way as SQA Higher English?

Many of the skills and dispositions built throughout the course are the same as those built by the SQA Higher English course, but the courses are not identical. The units and course activities are uniquely designed for an online cohort, and the final assessments are tailored to the units of work throughout the programme.

How do I cite the Online Access English course on my UCAS application?

On completing your UCAS application, you need to put in the subject, the awarding institution (which is the University of Aberdeen - you will have to free type and abbreviate this to UoA or Abdn), and if gained, type in the date awarded and the grade gained. This all goes in the **qualification section** of your application form.

It is also a good idea to state clearly in your personal statement that you are undertaking, or have undertaken, the course.