

Unit 2: Desk Study (6372)

(20%) (1 hour 30 minutes examination)

This unit sets textual material for writing tasks. Students must answer **one** question.

The Desk Study tests the student's ability to use appropriate reading strategies and to produce writing for specified purposes and audiences. Students study one set of source material with a common link, usually of content, and are asked to complete one writing task based on this material. A short commentary on the language used in their own writing style is also required.

The source material, consisting of whole pieces and/or extracts, is given out approximately two weeks before the examination, so that students have time to familiarise themselves with it in advance. Teachers should not discuss the material with students. Students may make marginal notes on the advance material and must bring this in to the examination, but they may not bring to the examination any additional notes on separate sheets. They should spend about a quarter of an hour in the examination in further preparation and about three quarters of an hour in writing the task and a further half an hour on the commentary.

The examination asks students to:

- select material for a particular purpose
- re-present material in a different form
- direct writing for a specific audience
- show an awareness of appropriate tone and style in writing
- summarise a particular aspect of the material
- produce articles, scripts, handouts, leaflets, texts for noticeboards, letters, letters, prepared talks, brochures, programmes, information sheets, web pages, questionnaires etc
- comment on the language in the style they have used.

The source material will be demanding; it may be drawn from journalism, fiction and non-fiction books, and students may also be presented with pictures, graphs or diagrams in a wide range of possible material, though the emphasis will always be on material to be read. The writing task is usually intended to be read, but occasionally tasks include writing scripts for broadcasting, speeches or talks to specified audiences.

The Desk Study assesses a range of editorial skills, including comprehension, summarising, paraphrasing, re-organising and structuring material. Preparation for the Desk Study throughout the course should develop students' reading and comprehension skills and should lead to a more focused analysis of texts as well as fostering the ability to structure and present material succinctly, with an awareness of audience and purpose.

Exemplar material used in preparation for the examination should introduce students to a wide variety of styles and genres leading to an understanding of the structures and conventions of different genres and the relationship between writers and readers. Pre-released material gives students the opportunity for thoughtful reading and background research of substantial texts, as well as annotation; the examination itself allows them to demonstrate their creative abilities and their practical understanding of language variations.