

ENGLISH STUDIES CONTENT ENDORSED COURSE

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Piloting the course in 2010

After presenting at the ETA Conference with Sam Schroder in 2010, having piloted the course for one year, we were excited to meet so many enthusiastic teachers who were planning to implement the new English Studies Content Endorsed Course. Now after a year of formal implementation of the course, we hope to provide some insights of our experiences teaching the course in this article.

As two of the pilot schools in 2010, we have found the most positive aspect of the English Studies Content Endorsed Course is the flexibility of the course and units of work that allow the teacher to suit students' needs, interests, abilities and career aspirations. Within the course there is a wide choice of modules with only one mandatory module in each of the Preliminary and HSC course. Modules range from 20-40 hours and there is an extensive variety of activities within each module. Teachers can even design their own 20 hour school-based module for the Preliminary course to better suit the needs and interests of their students.

At both *Ambarvale High School* and *Picton High School*, students completed 40 hour modules that ran for ten weeks (rather than 20 hours for five weeks.) This decision was purely based on the students' needs and feedback from students during the course. It was much more beneficial for our schools to study the units of work in more depth and ensure students possessed a deep understanding of the modules taught.

The flexibility of the course allowed us to specifically cater for each class and thus engage students in the content and activities that were relevant to them. Beginning with *Digital Worlds* we found the students immediately appreciated the relevance of this module, especially in areas such as internet privacy, how to ensure your personal safety on the internet and hacking. Both high schools were able to cater for the learning styles of each class and within the unit focused on vastly different areas. However, both classes achieved the objectives of the course, completed assessment tasks according to the syllabus and above all, students were engaged with the course content and students who were disengaged in English in previous years were beginning to enjoy English!

Another positive outcome was an improvement in student achievement, due largely to an engaging content,

the ability and time to draft and re-draft their writing with like-minded students working together towards a specific goal to attain their HSC with a view to enter the workforce or TAFE. Students in the English Studies Content Endorsed Course saw their marks rise in a way they had not experienced in English before.

How do I select students?

Ambarvale High School thought it would be in the best interest of students to provide a 'package' individually suited for each student, including streams that were designed for students and their future goals. These included students achieving either:

- HSC with an ATAR
- HSC without an ATAR
- Career Pathways

Every student in Year 10 was interviewed prior to their subject selections by the Deputy Principal, Careers Advisor or Transition Advisor and placed into one of the three streams above. Parents and caregivers were involved in this process, ensuring all students were placed correctly. A permission note had to be returned if students were enrolling in the English Studies Content Endorsed Course to ensure parents were fully informed and knew that students enrolled in the course would receive their HSC but would not receive an ATAR.

What is the general profile of an English Studies student?

The English Studies Content Endorsed Course student:

- Wishes to gain their HSC
- Does not wish to gain entry into university directly after schooling
- Has difficulty coping with the demands of the Standard course, according to recent performance but not necessarily because of low ability.

Community links

Within our community we were fortunate to participate in *Broaden Your Horizons*, a program designed to assist students in gaining employment after school. The program allows students enrolled in the English Studies course to participate in a series of lessons whereby

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members of the community speak with and assist students in their career pathways. Students have had the opportunity to meet with several people from within the community from a wide variety of occupations. This initiative has assisted our students in having clearer goals for their future, providing links to the community and supporting the Preliminary mandatory module, *Achieving Through English: English and the worlds of education, careers and community*.

Transition advisor

Ambarvale High School also introduced a Transition Advisor to assist students who are not seeking an ATAR. Students have had opportunities to participate in work experience and other experiences to ensure they are prepared for work and are increasing their employability.

How does English Studies compare to other Stage 6 English courses?

Similarities	Differences
A 2 unit course requiring 240 hours of study, including a 120 hour Preliminary course and a 120 hour HSC course	Non ATAR: students cannot gain entry into university directly from school
Same aim as the Standard, Advanced and ESL courses	No public examination
Contributes towards requirements for the HSC	More flexible structure, allowing the course to be tailored for students

Example of a scope and sequence

	Term 1 Preliminary	Term 2 Preliminary	Term 3 Preliminary	Term 4 HSC
Week 1 – 10	Digital Worlds – English for the web	Achieving Through English: English and the worlds of education, careers and community (mandatory)	The Big Screen – English in film-making	We are Australians – English in citizenship, community and cultural identity (mandatory)
	Term 1 HSC	Term 2 HSC	Term 3 HSC	
Week 1 – 10	On The Road – English and the experience of travel	Part of the Family – English and family life	Playing The Game – English in Sport	

Assessment

Assessment must adhere to particular requirements, including the number of tasks (3 to 5 for the Preliminary course and 3 to 5 for the HSC course) and specific weightings for components. One of those tasks must be a “formal examination”, but there is no public examination.

Component	Weighting /100
Students will develop knowledge and understanding of various forms of texts, exploring the ideas and values of those texts and how language and other techniques are used in the texts to convey meaning.	30
Students will develop skills in reading, listening and viewing and in writing, speaking and representing.	30
Students will develop knowledge and skills in using language accurately, effectively and appropriately for a range of purposes, audiences and contexts.	25
Students will develop skills in planning and working individually and collaboratively.	15

Assessment Strategies may include portfolios of students' work prepared over time, individual and group presentations, research assignments, in class tests, viewing/listening tasks, multiple choice/short answer tests or written reports related to excursions or other work involving experience with the community beyond school.

One year later...

One year after the introduction of the English Studies Content Endorsed Course, it has proven to be greatly successful for a number of reasons. Firstly all students achieved their HSC including students were previously at risk of not achieving the outcomes for Stage 5. Students also provided feedback that the course provided them with relevant and engaging content and that their appreciation for English increased. As a result our Standard English classes also decreased in size, and students were placed in classes that were relevant to their future career goals and with students with similar aspirations. For 2011 we had two English Studies Content Endorsed classes and will probably maintain two classes per year. Many students, as a result of studying the course and working with our Careers Advisor and Transition Advisor, also found full-time employment.

Need more help?

Twitter is an excellent resource and many teachers have begun sharing helpful links and resources within a Twitter learning community.

DEC teachers have access to comprehensive resources, including planning tools and starter units of work for all modules, via the Curriculum Support website: www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/english/stage6/cec.htm

Non-government teachers should speak to the relevant authorities in their sectors to ascertain what resources are available to them. At the very least there will be schools in your sector which taught the course this year and may be willing to share some of the resources they have developed.

Contact

For more information about our experiences as pilot schools, please contact:

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HSC PAPER 1 STUDENT DAY

Friday, 24 February 2012
at Sydney University

Experienced HSC markers and teachers provide students with detailed information about how to address aspects of Paper 1 of the HSC examination. At the HSC Paper 1 Day, students can enjoy the carnival atmosphere of O Week against Sydney University's imposing architecture

Cost: Students: \$42. Teachers accompanying student group: free of charge.
Members not accompanying students: \$90 (inc GST).
Non members not accompanying students: \$200 (inc GST/Membership)

Book online: www.englishteacher.com.au/Shop/Events.aspx.

Registration closes: Monday 13 February 2012, payment must accompany bookings.

HSC Student Study Days in 2012

Extension 2 – Sunday 11 March at Beverley Hills Girls High School

Extension 1 Sunday 20 May at Newington College, Stanmore

Modules (Standard, Advanced and ESL) – Friday 15 June at University of Technology or Sydney University.