



Nova Scotia Examinations (NSE) English 12 and English Communications 12 Information Guide

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Overview

The purpose of the NSE English 12 and English/Communications 12 is to assess student achievement in relation to specific curriculum outcomes for each course. The individual student mark on the examination contributes 30% to the student's course mark.

All students registered in English 12 or English/Communications 12 will write the examination on the date specified in the provincial assessment schedule published and distributed in May of the preceding school year. In the 2011–2012 school year, NSE English 12 and NSE English/Communications 12 will be written on January 27, 2012, for first-semester courses, and June 19, 2012, for second-semester and full-year courses. NSE English 12 is written by students registered in English 12, Advanced English 12, and English 12: African Heritage.

The NSE English 12 and English/Communications 12 are written in one morning. Each examination consists of three reading sections; prose, poetry and visual/media text and two writing tasks; an essay and a letter.

Scoring takes place at both the school and provincial levels. English 12 and English/Communications 12 teachers score their students' exams using the *Marking Guide* provided by the Department of Education. The examination is worth 30% of the student's course mark, and contributes to the final student evaluation in Reading and Viewing and Writing and Other Ways of Representing. In addition, senior-high English teachers representing all school boards mark a sample of student examinations at a marking session held in the summer. Results from the provincial marking session are used to provide information to policy makers on the implementation of the course curriculum and on standards of student achievement in relation to expected learning outcomes. Results are published in the annual *Minister's Report to Parents*.

Although English 12 and English/Communications 12 students work toward the same outcomes, the courses are different in terms of pace, scope, emphases, and resources. Therefore, two separate examinations are made available for each January and June administration. Refer to the Program Design and Components section of the *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: English 10–12*, pages 107–113 for an explanation of the different emphases of these two courses.

Examination Format and Marking Scheme

The 2011–2012 English 12 and English/Communications 12 examinations will be written over one morning (2½ to 3 hours). The examinations are divided into five sections: three reading sections and two writing sections. Examinations will be marked out of 30 points: 15 points in reading and 15 points in writing. In order to calculate a student’s course mark, teachers will add the total number of points on the examination (out of 30) to the student’s class mark (out of 70).

The table below outlines the new format:

Section	Question Number(s)	Points	Time Allowed (approximately)
Reading: Prose	1–18	9	45 minutes
Writing: Essay	19	10	55 minutes
Reading: Poetry	20–25	3	20 minutes
Writing: Letter	26	5	25 minutes
Reading: Visual/Media Text	27–32	3	20 minutes

Curriculum Links

NSE English 12 and English/Communications 12 are outcome-based assessments. They test specific curriculum outcomes prescribed in the *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: English 10–12*. Tables of Specifications (pages 4–6) are derived from this curriculum and act as the framework for the development of the examinations.

All Nova Scotia Examinations must meet standards for fairness, reliability and validity, as laid out in the *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada*. Because not all outcomes can be reliably assessed in large-scale examinations, NSE English 12 and English/Communications 12 address only those outcomes from the strands of Reading and Viewing, and Writing and Other Ways of Representing that can be reliably assessed in a large-scale context. Speaking and Listening outcomes are assessed and evaluated entirely by the classroom teacher. Outcomes assessed through the NSE are also assessed by teachers on an ongoing basis throughout the course using a variety of appropriate strategies as outlined in the *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: English 10–12* (pages 169–178). The specific or key-stage curriculum outcomes that the English 12 and English/Communications 12 examinations are able to assess are listed on the following page:

Reading and Viewing

Students will be expected to

- read widely and experience a variety of literary genres and modes from different provinces and countries, and world literature from different literary periods
- articulate their understanding of ways in which information texts are constructed for particular purposes
- use the cueing systems and a variety of strategies to construct meaning in reading and viewing complex and sophisticated print and media texts
- make informed personal responses to increasingly challenging print and media texts and reflect on their responses
- articulate and justify points of view about texts and text elements
- show the relationships among language, topic, purpose, context, and audience
 - ▶ note the relationships among language, topic, purpose, context, and audience
 - ▶ describe, discuss, and evaluate the language, ideas, and other significant characteristics of a variety of texts and genres
- respond critically to complex and sophisticated texts
 - ▶ examine how texts work to reveal and produce ideologies, identities, and positions
 - ▶ examine how media texts construct notions of roles, behaviour, culture, and reality
 - ▶ examine how textual features help a reader and viewer to create meaning of the texts

Writing

Students will be expected to

- make effective choices of language and techniques to enhance the impact of imaginative writing and other ways of representing
- demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which the construction of texts can create, enhance, and control meaning
- apply their knowledge of what strategies are effective for them as creators of various writing and other representations
- use the conventions of written language accurately and consistently in final products
- integrate information from many sources to construct and communicate meaning

Tables of Specifications: Reading/Viewing

NSE English 12 and English Communications 12, are written in one morning and consist of five tasks, three relating to the Reading/Viewing outcomes and two relating to the Writing outcomes.

There are three reading sections: one based on prose text, another based on poetic text and a third based on visual/media text. Following each reading passage are multiple choice questions and short answer questions. Approximately forty percent of the questions are multiple choice and sixty percent are short answer questions. In total there are 30 questions. All questions are worth one-half point for a total of 15 points in reading.

Reading questions fall into one of three cognitive levels, with the weighting of the three levels reflecting the different emphases of the English/Communications and English 12 course requirements. Cognitive levels indicate the way the reader is processing the text.

Literal Comprehension questions are designed to elicit responses that indicate students have comprehended explicit information in the text.

Non-literal Comprehension questions are designed to elicit responses that indicate students have comprehended implicit information in the text such as inferences, connotative meanings, idioms, and figurative language (e.g., simile and metaphor).

Critical Response questions are designed to elicit responses that demonstrate students' ability to think critically about texts through analysis, synthesis, or evaluation of explicit and/or implicit information in the text.

The tables on the following pages present the English 12 and English/Communications 12 examination frameworks for Reading/Viewing.

**Table of Specifications for Reading/Viewing
NSE English 12**

Number of Texts	Type of Text	Number of questions	Literal Comprehension	Non-Literal Comprehension	Critical Response
1 or 2	Prose Examples include: short story, information text, essay, real-life narrative and other types of prose writing.	18	3–5	4–6	8–10
1 or 2	Poetry	6	1–2	1–3	2–5
1 or 2	Visual/Media Text	6	1–3	1–3	3–5
Total Points (each question is worth half a point):		15	2.5–5	3–6	6.5–10

**Table of Specifications for Reading/Viewing
NSE English/Communications 12**

Number of Texts	Type of Text	Number of questions	Literal Comprehension	Non-Literal Comprehension	Critical Response
1 or 2	Prose Examples include: short story, information text, essay, real-life narrative, and other types of prose writing.	18	9–11	2–4	4–6
1 or 2	Poetry	6	4–6	2–4	1–3
1 or 2	Visual/Media Text	6	1–2	1–3	6–8
Total Points (each question is worth half a point):		15	7–9.5	2.5–5.5	5.5–8.5

Scoring Rubrics: Writing

There are two writing tasks in the English 12 and English/Communications 12 examinations: an essay and a letter. The essay is worth 10 points and the letter is worth 5 points for a combined total of 15 points in writing.

Writing Task	Excellent	Proficient	Acceptable	Limited	Unsatisfactory
Letter	5	4	3	2	1
Essay	9–10	7–8	5–6	3–4	1–2
Total Points:	14–15	11–12	8–9	5–6	2–3

Nova Scotia English Examinations Essay Writing Scoring Rubric

EXCELLENT (9–10 points)

The task is adhered to and an appropriate topic is developed with thoughtful ideas supported by carefully selected and relevant details. The writing is skillfully organized: a distinct main idea is fully developed with effective use of transitions and logical paragraphing. Choices of language and techniques contribute to effective writing. The writing demonstrates control of conventions considering the proportion of error to the length and complexity of the response.

PROFICIENT (7–8 points)

The task is adhered to and an appropriate topic is developed with good ideas supported by purposefully chosen details. The writing is well-organized: a clear main idea is developed with good transitions and logical paragraphing. Choices of language and techniques contribute to good writing. The writing demonstrates control of conventions considering the proportion of error to the length and complexity of the response.

ACCEPTABLE (5–6 points)

The task is adhered to and an appropriate topic is developed with relevant ideas supported by adequate details. The writing is somewhat organized: the main idea is developed mechanically or with some coherence using some transitions and some logical paragraphing. Choices of language and techniques contribute to conventional writing. The writing may demonstrate lapses in control of conventions but communication remains clear.

LIMITED (3–4 points)

There is an attempt to adhere to the task: the topic is vaguely developed with superficial ideas that are vaguely supported by details; some details may be irrelevant. The writing is organized in a limited way: the main idea is vague or is not clearly developed with few transitions and vague paragraphing. Choices of language and techniques are awkward and contribute to limited and vague writing. The writing demonstrates lapses in control of conventions and errors may be distracting.

UNSATISFACTORY (1–2 points)

There is little attempt to adhere to the task: the topic is not developed or is developed incoherently; details, if present, do not support the topic. There is little or no evidence of organization: a main idea is lacking or is developed incoherently with little or no evidence of transitions and paragraphing. Choices of language and techniques are minimal. Errors in conventions may contribute to confusing writing.

INSUFFICIENT (0 points)

There is no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the assignment as stated.

Nova Scotia English Examinations Letter Writing Scoring Rubric

EXCELLENT (5 points)

The purpose of the letter is effectively fulfilled: topic development is clearly focused; a distinct awareness of the designated audience is evident in the tone and selection of ideas and details. The writing is skillfully organized: a distinct main idea is fully developed with effective use of transitions and logical paragraphing. Choices of language and techniques contribute to effective writing. The writing demonstrates control of conventions considering the proportion of error to the length and complexity of the response.

PROFICIENT (4 points)

The purpose of the letter is fulfilled; the topic is well-developed; a general awareness of the designated audience is apparent in the tone and selection of ideas and details. The writing is well-organized: a clear main idea is developed with good transitions and logical paragraphing. Choices of language and techniques contribute to good writing. The writing demonstrates control of conventions considering the proportion of error to the length and complexity of the response.

ACCEPTABLE (3 points)

The purpose of the letter is fulfilled: topic development is adequate; some awareness of the designated audience can be inferred from the appropriateness of tone and selection of ideas and details. The writing is somewhat organized: the main idea is developed mechanically or with some coherence using some transitions and some logical paragraphing. Choices of language and techniques contribute to conventional writing. The writing may demonstrate lapses in control of conventions but communication remains clear.

LIMITED (2 points)

The purpose of the letter is vaguely fulfilled: topic development is unclear; vague awareness of the designated audience is not sustained, as indicated by shifts in tone and/or in the selection of ideas and details. The writing is organized in a limited way: the main idea is vague or is not clearly developed with few transitions and vague paragraphing. Choices of language and techniques are awkward and contribute to limited and vague writing. The writing demonstrates lapses in control of conventions and errors may be distracting.

UNSATISFACTORY (1 point)

The purpose of the letter is not fulfilled: topic development is obscure; little awareness of the designated audience is evident. There is little or no evidence of organization: a main idea is lacking or is developed incoherently with little or no evidence of transitions and paragraphing. Choices of language and techniques are minimal. Errors in conventions may contribute to confusing writing.

INSUFFICIENT (0 points)

There is no evidence of an attempt to fulfill the assignment as stated.

Eligibility

English 12

All students registered in English 12, Advanced English 12, and English 12: African Heritage will write the NSE English 12 on the dates specified in the provincial assessment schedule. Students studying English 12 by correspondence will also write on the specified dates.

Students who are on Individual Program Plans relating to English Language Arts and students enrolled in the International Baccalaureate English course(s) are working within outcome frameworks that may differ from those of the Atlantic Canada Curriculum. These students will be evaluated using other approved forms of assessment and will not write NSE English 12.

English/Communications 12

All students registered in English/Communications 12 will write the NSE English/Communications 12 on the dates specified in the provincial assessment schedule. Students studying English/Communications 12 by correspondence will also write on the specified dates.

Students who are on Individual Program Plans relating to English Language Arts are working within outcome frameworks that may differ from those of the Atlantic Canada Curriculum. These students will be evaluated using other approved forms of assessment and will not write NSE English/Communications 12.

Exemptions

All students registered in English 12, Advanced English 12, and English 12: African Heritage must write the NSE English 12. All students enrolled in English/Communications 12 must write the NSE English/Communications 12. In exceptional cases, the principal, in consultation with the student and/or parent/guardian, may grant an exemption to an individual student. In such cases the student's mark will be exclusive of the examination and determined by the English 12 or English/Communications 12 teacher in consultation with the principal. Exceptional circumstances are determined on a case-by-case basis. The reason for the exemption should be documented with supporting evidence, e.g., statement of a health professional.

Exemptions are not granted on the basis of how challenging the examination might be for a particular student. The examination assesses Reading/Viewing and Writing learning outcomes of the course, and is a requirement for course completion.

Adaptations

Certain students will require adaptations in order to allow them to demonstrate their abilities in relation to learning outcomes. These adaptations should in no way change or modify the learning outcomes of the course, but will provide eligible students with alternate ways to show that they have met the outcomes for Reading/Viewing and Writing. In order for students to be eligible for adaptations, they must have used these adaptations on a regular basis throughout the course, including during classroom based assessments. Decisions regarding adaptations will be made at the school level and must reflect only the adaptations documented in the student's cumulative record file. A copy of the list of adaptations from the student's cumulative record file must be attached (with a paper clip; not stapled) to the student's examination booklet. Please refer to *Adaptations: Nova Scotia Assessments and Examinations* for details regarding the use of specific adaptations for the NSE English. This document is available on-line at <http://www.plans.ednet.ns.ca/nseeng>. Request forms for the read-aloud adaptation are available at <http://www.plans.ednet.ns.ca/nseeng>.

Security

Nova Scotia Examinations are secure. All examination materials must be returned to the Department of Education after student work is marked, including all *Marking Guides* and all examination booklets, both used and unused. Examination materials are numbered, and all booklets and *Marking Guides* sent to a school are tracked. No part of the examination, including student work, is to be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, scanning or by any other information storage or retrieval system. Teachers are not permitted to make use of the texts and the writing prompts from the examinations in their teaching.

The evaluation of student achievement in relation to the selected learning outcomes on these examinations is premised on students' encountering the examination tasks for the first time. Any prior exposure compromises the validity of the conclusions drawn about student ability.

In addition, the Department of Education will use assessment items from past secured examinations in future examinations in order to ensure comparability year over year. Therefore it is essential that examinations remain completely secure. This is an important part of ensuring that different examinations render reliable and valid information about student achievement over time.

Registration for Examinations

Two months prior to the date of the examination, the School Assessment Coordinator will register each student who will be writing the NSE English 12 and English/Communications 12 exams using the on-line registration system (<http://plans.ednet.ns.ca/content/school-registration>).

The School Assessment Coordinator will need to have the following information on hand in order to register students for the NSE English 12 and English/Communications 12:

- **Contact information**
- **Total number of students:** The School Assessment Coordinator will determine the total number of students writing each exam.
- **Alternate formats:** Exams are available in alternate formats (Braille, large-print, black-and-white, or audio CD) for students with documented adaptations (see “Adaptations” on page 10 of this guide). The School Assessment Coordinator will determine with teachers how many of each format will be needed and will provide the names of students using these alternate formats.
- **Student lists:** A current student list will be required for each class taking the English 12 (including Advanced English 12 and English 12: African Heritage) and English/Communications 12 exams. The School Assessment Coordinator will type or copy-and-paste this class list into boxes on the online registration form. Alternatively, the coordinator may paste the entire list of students requiring the exam into one box.

Administration of Examinations

The 2012 administration dates for NSE English 12 and English/Communications 12 are January 27 and June 19, 2012. Approximately one week prior to the administration date, a package will arrive at the school and will contain the materials listed below. It is essential that the School Assessment Coordinator open the package immediately after receipt in order to check that all materials ordered are present.

Materials for the School Assessment Coordinator

- Memo RE: NSE Important Information
- Quality Control Declaration (to be completed by the School Assessment Coordinator prior to return of examination materials)
- Security Reminder
- Canada Post return Bill of Lading Slip(s) (for the return of examination material to the Department of Education)

Teacher Materials

- Student Booklet(s)
- Student Response Form(s)
- Instructions to Teachers
- Note: Duty to Report
- Mark Record Form(s) (to be retained by the teacher/school)
- Marking Guide(s)
- Response Form Overlay(s)

Before Administration

- Approximately two months prior to the date of the examination, teachers and the School Assessment Coordinator determine the number of examinations required for each course as well as the types and numbers of examinations required in alternate formats (Braille, large-print, black-and-white, or audio CD). See “Registration for Examinations” on page 11 for more details.
- The School Assessment Coordinator ensures that exams are scheduled according to the dates in the provincial assessment schedule.
- The School Assessment Coordinator ensures that students with special needs will be appropriately accommodated (see “Adaptations”, page 10).
- The School Assessment Coordinator verifies the examination materials as soon as they arrive at the school. It is the school’s responsibility to inform the Department of Education immediately of any missing examinations and/or of any examinations that have been damaged or are incomplete.
- The School Assessment Coordinator distributes the “Instructions to Teachers” sheet and discusses administration issues with teachers administering the examinations.
- The School Assessment Coordinator ensures that the examination venue does not display material that might advantage students in writing the examination.
- The School Assessment Coordinator divides the examination material into bundles so that there is a teacher package for each teacher and a complete examination for each student. A complete examination includes an examination booklet and a *Student Response Form*.
- Teachers ensure that students have dark blue or black pens, and HB pencils.
- The School Assessment Coordinator maintains security of the examinations and ensures that neither students nor teachers have access to the examinations (including *Marking Guides*) until the morning of the administration date.

During Administration

- Teachers/invigilators ensure students are under supervision at all times.
- Teachers/invigilators ensure students work independently at all times.
- Teachers/invigilators make dictionaries and thesauri available for student use.
- Teachers/invigilators allow up to three hours for students to complete examinations.
- Students retain their examinations and stay in the examination room for at least one hour after the administration has begun (or longer, if so required by school examination procedures).
- Dark blue or black ink must be used in the short answer sections of the reading tasks as well as in the essay writing and letter writing sections of the examination.
- Multiple-choice questions must be answered on the *Student Response Form* using an HB pencil.
- Other than multiple-choice questions, students do all their work in the examination booklets.
- Teachers/invigilators do not read to students or discuss examination questions with students.
- Students work at their own pace; however, suggested times are given for each task (see page 2).
- Teachers/invigilators collect all examination materials from students before students leave the examination room and ensure that all materials are returned by students.

After Administration

- Adaptations are recorded on the front cover of the examination booklet and a copy of the list of adaptations from the student's cumulative record file is clipped to the booklet..
- School Assessment Coordinator distributes the *Marking Guide* to teachers.
- Teachers follow the *Marking Guide* in marking student work. It is important that teachers not write on the examination booklets or on the *Student Response Forms*.
- Teachers record exam and course marks on each student's *Mark Record Form*. The *Mark Record Forms* are retained at the school.
- As soon as possible following the completion of marking, teachers must return to the School Assessment Coordinator all student booklets (used and unused), all *Student Response Forms* (used and unused), and all *Marking Guides*. The school determines the date for this return of materials by teachers, allowing sufficient time for the School Assessment Coordinator to account for (and if necessary follow up on) all materials sent to the school, to sign the Quality Control Declaration, and to package and post the required materials to the Department of Education (using the Canada Post return Bill of Lading slip provided) by the return date stated on the Nova Scotia Examination (NSE) Packing Slip English 12 and English/Communications 12 .
- **Nova Scotia Examinations are secure. Therefore all materials received by the school, including the student booklets (used and unused) and the *Marking Guides*, must be accounted for and returned to the department. Under no circumstances is reproduction of any part of the examination, including student work, permitted.**

Scoring and Reporting

School Level

A *Marking Guide* is provided to each English 12 and English/Communications 12 teacher for use in marking the examinations. Teachers mark student exams using the guide, and enter the each student's mark on the *Mark Record Form*. This form is retained at the school for record-keeping purposes. The examination booklets, *Student Response Forms* and *Marking Guides* are returned to the Department of Education.

Provincial Level

All student examinations and accompanying materials are returned to the Department of Education. A sample of student examinations is randomly selected, of sufficient size to allow results of student achievement on these examinations to be reported with a high level of confidence for each school board and for the province. The examinations in this sample are scored centrally. Short answers in the reading sections and both writing tasks are marked by experienced senior-high English teachers under the direction of the Department of Education Evaluation Coordinator. Multiple-choice questions in the reading sections are machine-scored.

During the marking sessions, table leaders lead a group of four or five markers. Table leaders are experienced high-school English teachers who have had successful experience in previous marking sessions. Table leaders meet for several days prior to the marking session. During this rangefinding session, the table-leader group, led by Department of Education Evaluation Coordinator, interprets the essay and letter scoring rubrics by selecting student pieces from among the examinations to serve as exemplars of each level of achievement. The group then writes rationales using the language of the rubric to justify the consensus scores. This set of exemplars and their accompanying rationales are collated into a *Scoring Guide*. The *Scoring Rubrics* and the *Scoring Guides* are used as reference tools throughout the marking session by all markers in order to ensure consistency in scoring the writing tasks. In addition, during the table leader rangefinding sessions, examples from student examination responses are identified to illustrate the short answer reading questions of the *Marking Guide*. These exemplars are used in training markers to score the short answer reading questions consistently. Table leaders play a key role in ensuring the marking at the provincial level meets high standards for reliability.

Before beginning to score student work, markers are trained by table leaders in the use of the *Scoring Rubrics* and *Scoring Guides* if they are marking the writing tasks. Markers are trained by table leaders in the use of the *Marking Guide* if they are marking short answer reading questions. Each question is scored by the same group of markers to further ensure consistency in scoring. Following initial training, reliability checks in which all markers score independently the same pre-scored paper are conducted periodically throughout the scoring session. In addition, 10% of written responses (short answers, essays, and letters) are scored by experts and the scores compared with the scores given by markers. These procedures, from the preliminary rangefinding sessions to the use of consistent scoring tools and reliability measures throughout the marking sessions, ensure the reliability of the results produced by the provincial marking sessions.