

# Higher English Coursework

“Broadly Discursive” Portfolio



# Portfolio Requirements

## Higher English – two pieces

- 1300 words and each piece is marked out of 15. One has to be 'broadly discursive' and the other 'broadly creative'.
- Overall, the Folio is worth 30% of your overall mark. Do your very best and make it count!

**NB** – You are allowed detailed feedback on **one full draft** of each folio piece. It is therefore very important that you spend time and effort on this first draft as it is the **only** one your teacher can give you feedback on.

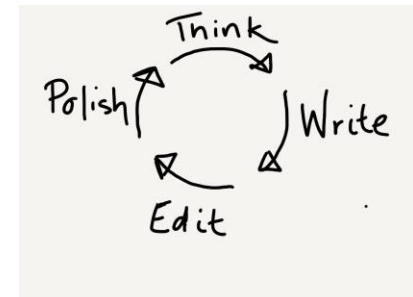
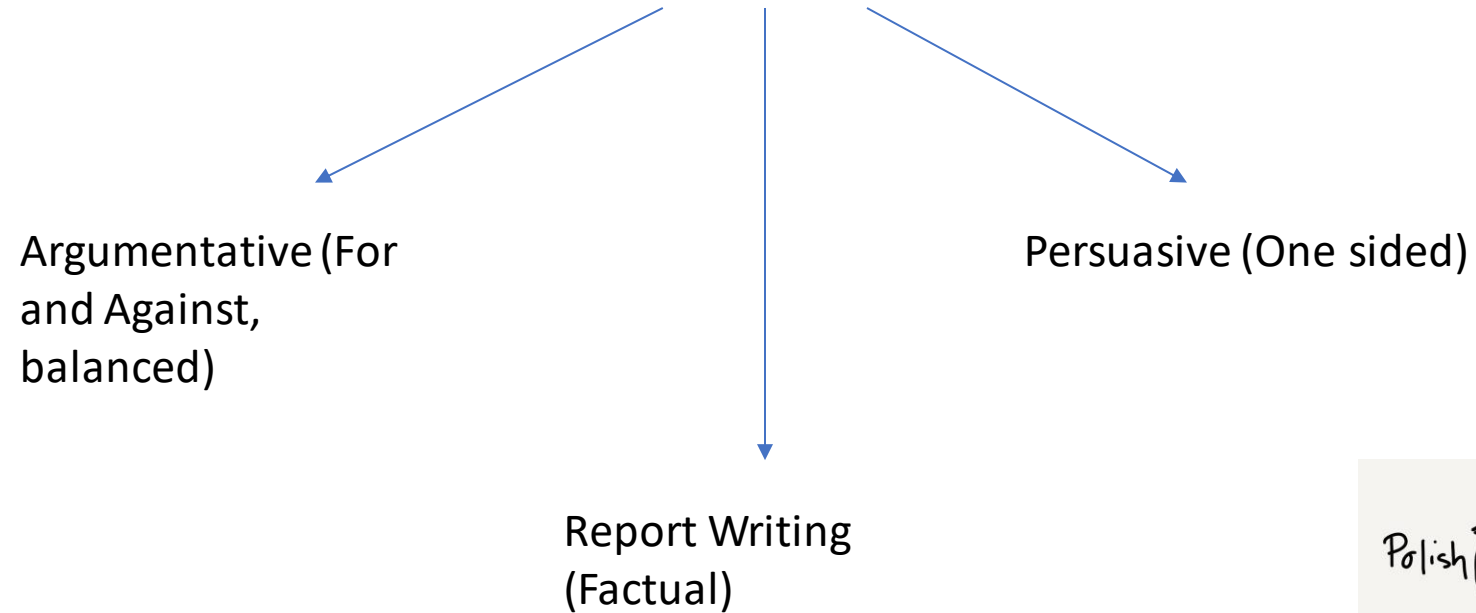
You can, however, have informal discussions and help with your planning before you submit a draft.



# What is Discursive Writing?



## Discursive Writing





# Which one should I do?

- If you are interested in purely **factual information**, pie charts, graphs and pictures, then **report writing** is for you.
- If you feel really strongly about something and want to **voice your own opinion**, then **persuasive writing** is the best option for you to express your point of view and **passion** about a particular topic.
- If you find a topic interesting and fascinating but are not sure which side of the argument you are on, because **both sides have valid points**, then write an **argumentative/discursive** essay. It's more balanced and **two-sided**.

The most commonly chosen type of writing is persuasive.





# Planning

- The process is similar to that for your Added Value Unit from N4, but you have to do some more research and your writing has to have more depth.
- Hints:
  - ✓ Think – what is it I’m trying to say? What words will best express it?
  - ✓ This is an opportunity to put your ideas forward in the best way you can so you want to stand out from all the other candidates.
  - ✓ Keep your structure logical for your paragraphs – start by listing your arguments and then you can decide how you are going to develop each argument.
  - ✓ Be clear.
  - ✓ Keep a record of your sources as you will need to include this.
  - ✓ **Make your notes in your own words – very important unless you are quoting directly from a source.**



# Choosing a Topic

Love Island/Jeremy Kyle

Citizen cards

TV License to be scrapped

Distance learning for education rather than classrooms

Cyberbullying

SPL should be revised

Harsher consequences/fines/charges for celebrities who commit crimes

Review of the criminal justice system

Plastic pollution

Ban on energy drinks

Schools having therapy pets

Negative effects of bodybuilding

# Topic ideas

#folioinspo Twitter

<https://debatingmatters.com/topics/>





# Topics to avoid

Legalisation of  
marijuana

Euthanasia

Capital  
punishment

Refugee crisis

Abortion

Some mental health  
topics

Smoking in  
public places

Brexit

Should Scotland  
have a second  
referendum?

Guns in  
America/school  
shootings



# But what am I aiming for?

- Look at the next slide for positives and negatives in an existing essay



## Why Zoos Should be Endangered

For most families, days out to the zoo are an amazing experience, where they can get up close to animals large and small from far-flung places that they may have only seen in picture books or on TV. However, the reality is not always pretty or cute due to large groups of noisy people gawking at the animals and even harassing them as the animals pace up and down their cages in boredom or frustration or sitting in a corner, lonely and depressed. They may chuck food at them or knock on the glass of their enclosure, increasingly disturbing and distressing these animals. Even those animals that look like they're having fun - the monkeys and penguins - would be much more exciting to see swinging in the jungle, rather than in a cage, or hunting on the ice caps instead of being thrown fish at feeding time. Although it is a commonly held belief that animals do not belong in zoos, we need to look at things from another point of view. If we look at how animals are being endangered, whether by hunting or by reduction of their natural habitat, we can see how zoos can be beneficial to them, serving as a place of safety.

There are many arguments as to why zoos should be banned. Insufficient space is one of the best reasons to support this. No matter how large zoos try to make their enclosures, it will never be able to simulate the space that is required for some of the animals. This lack of space is particularly an issue for animals that travel large distances. According to numerous studies, elephants, which typically travel 30 miles a day, are held captive in places that are on average a thousand times smaller. As a result of this confinement, many of the animals suffer from stress, boredom and depression. This is particularly clear in the case of the penguins at Scarborough Sea Life Centre many of whom are on antidepressants due to anxiety and stress. This is due to the fact that they're being kept in captivity in a zoo, thousands of miles from where they belong. In the last decade, zoos across the nation have turned increasingly to antidepressants, tranquilizers, and even antipsychotic drugs to ease behavioural problems within enclosures. On top of this, animals are no longer able to survive in their natural habitat due to the fact that animals born into zoos do not learn how to hunt or master necessary skills that are essential to survive in the wild. In addition, removing individuals from the wild further endangers the wild population because the remaining individuals will be less genetically diverse and will have more difficulty finding mates.

On the other hand, there are many arguments for keeping zoos the way they are. Zoos have improved significantly in the last 25 or so years. Gone are the old steel-bar enclosures and cold cement cages. Most zoos these days use natural-looking barriers like moats or ditches to separate animals from people, and have mini-habitats that resemble the animals' natural environment. Zoos save endangered species by bringing the animals into a safe environment, where they are protected from poachers, habitat loss, starvation and predators. In 2016, there were 39 animal species listed by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) as extinct in the wild and these species would have vanished totally were it not for captive populations around the world, many of which reside in zoos. Furthermore, many zoos also have breeding programs for endangered species. In the wild, these individuals might have trouble finding mates and breeding. Successful breeding programs brought the Pere David's deer back from extinction. Though this Asian deer ceased to exist in the wild, Chinese and European zoo programs enabled four of the deer to be released back into the wild in 1985, where they're now self-sustaining. A good zoo provides an enriched habitat in which the animals are never bored, are well cared for, and have plenty of space. This means that by bringing people and animals together, zoos educate the public and foster an appreciation of the animals. This exposure and education motivates people to protect the animals.



# So...what next?

- Once you have decided on your topic you need to spend some time planning.....



# Task 1

- Make a shortlist of **three** topics for your discursive essay (you don't need to decide which type of writing you will use yet)
- Using skimming and scanning techniques, find **at least four sources** for **each** of your topics.  
*You do not* have to read the sources fully at this stage. It is good enough to know the main ideas
- Write a short paragraph for each of the three topics, explaining what you would write about if you chose this topic.



# Task 1 Example: Example (time taken: 8 minutes!)



- Topic 1: Jaffa cakes are biscuits and not cakes
  1. <https://inews.co.uk/inews-lifestyle/jaffa-cake-or-biscuit-explained-mcvities-new-pineapple-flavour-1379214>
  2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-38985820>
  3. <https://metro.co.uk/2015/05/25/jaffa-cakes-are-not-cakes-10-reasons-why-the-jaffa-is-a-biscuit-5194703/>
  4. <https://mcvities.co.uk/products/jaffa-cakes>

I plan to argue that Jaffa cakes are biscuits and not – as the name suggests – cakes. This will be a persuasive essay looking at the definition of a “cake” for tax purposes as well as popular opinion. I will then use data from the McVities website to emphasise my opinion that Jaffa cakes are not biscuits.



# Where to look for information

- Non-fiction books on the specific topic you have chosen.
- Online sources.
- Television.
- Newspapers.
- Magazines.
- Official Social Media Pages (NASA, National Geographic, BBC, etc.)
- Ted talks
- **Avoid** Wikipedia for anything other than very quick searches to find out very basic information to research further!



# Task 1 - continued

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- Using skimming and scanning techniques, find **at least four sources** for **each** of your topics.  
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