Modified Subjects

2011 Assessment Report

MODIFIED SUBJECTS

2011 ASSESSMENT REPORT

OVERVIEW

Assessment reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

Modified subjects are designed to allow students with identified intellectual disabilities to demonstrate their learning in a range of challenging and achievable learning experiences. One subject in each of the nine learning areas is provided in modified form, including the Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan: Modified and the Stage 2 Research Project: Modified.

The number of students undertaking modified subjects has grown this year, with students being given results in Stage 2 subjects for the first time.

SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT

Assessment of modified subjects at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 is 100% school-based. Modified subjects are structured quite differently from other subjects, as assessments are designed to enable students to develop and achieve their identified personal learning goals and to develop their capabilities.

Teachers assess each student's evidence of learning and provide a 'completed' and 'not completed' result based on the student's personal learning goals and on the capabilities selected for development in the subject.

Review

A peer-review process verifies schools' assessment decisions for:

- Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan: Modified

- Stage 1 English Pathways: Modified

- Stage 1 Mathematics Pathways: Modified

- Stage 2 Research Project: Modified

- other selected Stage 2 modified subjects.

Teachers provide school samples for the peer-review process, with schools nominating teachers as reviewers. Two reviews were held this year, one at the end of each semester, with 47 schools submitting samples for review. Formal feedback is provided to school principals regarding the outcomes of the review, and teachers ensure final results reflect the outcomes.

School samples

School samples for the more able students with intellectual disabilities will always be a good indicator of learning. The majority of the evidence submitted at both reviews this year was from this range of students. Many of the schools that presented this form of student evidence presented student evidence gathered over the whole semester or year. This proved to be a good way to show evidence of progression over time towards meeting personal learning goals and developing chosen capabilities. In most instances it was easy to find the evidence to demonstrate the learning. A number of schools went into a great amount of detail annotating individual pages of student work to cross-reference personal learning goals. This made the review process relatively straightforward. For other schools, as a result of limited or no annotation, searching for evidence to match the learning goals in the student work samples slowed down the review process considerably. However, in general, school samples were very good at actually demonstrating students' evidence of learning and their knowledge, skills, and understanding.

Checklists

Across the range of modified subjects, a variety of checklists have been used to provide evidence of student learning, some developed by students and others developed by teachers and other support persons. In the cases of students with higher levels of need, some schools have used checklists to cover all aspects of student learning and have used photographic and video evidence to demonstrate student participation and demonstration of personal learning goals and capabilities.

As an example, in one set of student evidence provided for review, an explicit annotated checklist, signed off by the teacher, was provided as evidence for a task related to making a telephone call. The student had several components to undertake to successfully complete the task including how to use a phone book to obtain a number, how to dial the number, how to make the relevant phone call, and writing down a message. This was then reinforced by annotated photographic evidence. The use of a checklist, if correctly annotated, is an excellent method of evidence collation for a multifaceted task.

Video and photographic evidence

Given the significant differences in curriculum delivery in the set of modified subjects, there have been many individual adaptations made to using video and photographic evidence.

Video evidence appears to be used predominantly in the area of teaching students with severe and multiple disabilities. There was some excellent video evidence provided by teachers and other school staff who were able to capture fleeting moments of students displaying evidence of learning.

Photographic evidence is possibly the most common evidence supplied by special schools. Some of the schools have managed to use photographs to capture, on multiple occasions, evidence of students meeting their personal learning goals. Some schools have used photos of students undertaking group work. This was very pleasing, as it shows a range of students in the one classroom undertaking learning applicable to their context and needs. There was a very good range of photographs used by a number of schools, and it gave students a wide range of opportunities to

show evidence of their learning in a variety of different places and situations, and at a variety of times.

Research Project: Modified

It was very pleasing to see such a good outcome in the Research Project: Modified. Twenty-seven schools provided samples for review and all were confirmed as 'completed'. In a number of samples, the students' personal learning goals were further developed from one or two goals identified in the Personal Learning Plan: Modified or from the students' negotiated education plans or equivalent.

Different schools managed the Research Project: Modified in different ways. In some cases, the entire project was student driven and full of individual student work. This made the review process relatively straightforward. The proof of student learning was evident in many ways throughout these projects. The students with the highest needs undertook a project with a different slant. A significant number of these students undertook a project around post-school options.

All samples provided good evidence of the four key areas. However, two key areas, 'Communicating the project outcome' and 'Reflecting on the project', are worthy of comment. Evidence of communication (for students without a recognised system of communication) was a signed statement written by a teacher or support person on the types of interactions that were observed while the student was engaged in the project.

In several samples, reflection was addressed by the submission of a written piece provided by a post-school options provider on the types of activities that were undertaken and enjoyed by the student. It was impressive to see the innovative approach that some schools have adopted to ensure that the Research Project: Modified becomes an important and integral part of the SACE.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

In a few instances, the set of assessments in the school samples submitted for review did not match those in the accompanying learning and assessment plans. The use of addendums for learning and assessment plans was minimal. It was apparent for some schools that the use of the addendum to indicate changes of learning goals and/or assessment tasks would have been useful in making it easier to confirm the school's assessment decisions.

In most instances, the packaging and presentation of school samples was of a very high standard. Schools have taken on board the information presented at planning and clarifying support forums in regards to the review process. For a small number of schools that had not attended the forums, the school samples were of varying quality. An approved learning and assessment plan and a completed Student Description Sheet should accompany the school samples. This problem should be overcome with attendance at the 2012 training opportunities.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The quality of the assessment tasks and the evidence of student learning were generally very well evidenced across a variety of formats.

The Student Description Sheet outlines the learning context and can make the student evidence much more powerful as a record of learning. However, the use of this sheet was quite varied. Some schools did not maximise the use of the Student Description Sheet as well as they could have, by using sweeping generalised statements describing the students and their learning needs. In some instances, the personal learning goals indicated on the Student Description Sheet did not match the goals listed on the relevant subject learning and assessment plan. It is important to ensure that there is some correlation of goals on both documents.

Schools may possibly need to work more strategically on the development of assessment and learning plans relating to the number of personal learning goals and capabilities to be developed, demonstrated, and assessed in the subject. This seemed to be the most significant issue in relation to modified subjects in the review process. There were a significant number of schools that listed all of the capabilities to be assessed along with multiple personal learning goals and this, in some cases, created significant workload issues for teachers or schools in gathering evidence of learning.

In the planning phase, careful consideration of the key personal learning goals and capabilities, related to the needs of the students, is required. It is also better, at the individual task level, to be more selective in the learning goals and capabilities chosen, rather than attempting to address all goals and capabilities in every task. This reduces the complexity of tasks for students and also reduces teacher workloads. It is important to remember that the personal learning goals and capabilities stated in the learning and assessment plan should be demonstrated over the set of assessment tasks.

Chief Assessor
Modified Subjects