# Government of South Australia LogoSACE Board Logo2024 Ancient Studies Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2024 assessment cycle, gives 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, and the quality of student performance.

Across the Assessment Types for this subject, students can present their responses in oral or multimodal form, where 6 minutes is the equivalent of 1000 words. Students should not speed-up the recording of their videos excessively in an attempt to condense more content into the maximum time limit.

If a video is flagged by markers/moderators as impacted by speed, schools will be requested to provide a transcript and markers/moderators will be advised to mark/moderate based on the evidence in the transcript, only considering evidence up to the maximum word limit (e.g. up to 2000 words for AT3).

If the speed of the recording makes the speech incomprehensible, it affects the accuracy of transcriptions and it also impacts the ability of markers/moderators to find evidence of student achievement against the performance standards.

The Subject Renewal program has introduced changes for many subjects in 2025, and these are detailed in the change log at the front of each subject outline. When reviewing the 2024 Subject Assessment Advice, it is important to consider any updates to this subject to ensure the feedback in this document remains accurate.

School Assessment

Teachers can improve the moderation process and the online process by:

* thoroughly checking the PSR (Performance Standard Record) is accurate and closely matches assessment decisions made on student work samples
* ensuring all task sheets are uploaded with the sample.

Assessment Type 1: Skills and Applications

Students produce at least four skills and applications tasks, with at least two of the tasks completed under supervised conditions. These tasks, taken together, comprise a maximum of 4000 words, or equivalent in oral or multimodal form. Students should use a variety of forms to present evidence of their learning.

Students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of texts, artefacts, ideas, events, and/or people while reflecting on the political, social, cultural, and/or economic diversity within the ancient world.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* carefully considering the selection of assessment design criteria across the tasks that target the most appropriate features, rather than including all features for all tasks
* allowing greater flexibility in how students can respond to or present the task
* ensuring task design is clear and aligned with specifically chosen performance standards.

The more successful responses commonly:

* used a variety of historical accounts and perspectives to develop an argument and discuss features of the ancient world and their influence
* when referring to literature, plays, and/or other art forms, demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the text in question, explained the ancient context of its performance/release/portrayal, and used it as an opportunity to explore diversity and significance within the ancient world
* highlighted potential biases and issues that may be present in ancient sources, as well as considering the historical context and nature of these sources. This analysis was incorporated fluently into student responses and not added as "an extra"
* were targeted in answering the question prompts and effectively utilised the provided source material in timed tasks to ensure answers were appropriately evidenced. These responses referred to source material through paraphrasing as well as direct quotations
* incorporated evidence from a range of sources smoothly into their discussion and argument and referenced it effectively
* made use of a wide range of primary sources, written and artefacts, and displayed the ability to think critically about the nature of those sources, acknowledging alternative points of view where appropriate
* made critical use of secondary sources, particularly relevant where a range of interpretations of the evidence were possible
* made use of academic sources in the form of journal articles or similar to explore the opinions of specialists
* made extensive and knowledgeable use of subject specific language, often integrating this fluently into their work
* used direct and targeted quoting of ancient source material used to support ideas and arguments
* demonstrated a range of application of communication skills in a variety of text types or assessment formats across the assessment type
* presented original ideas and commentary in responses using secondary source material to explore ideas and support arguments
* consistently wove analysis throughout the responses rather than wait for a conclusion to sum up ideas or reconnect with arguments
* explored a range of perspectives to demonstrate contextual understanding and a depth of knowledge
* enabled students to explore multiple sources and respond in depth to teacher set questions to source analysis-type assessment tasks.

The less successful responses commonly:

* lacked authentic engagement with primary and/or ancient source material, most evident when making broad sweeping statements about source material without providing further analysis or context
* relied heavily on recount of information, plots, or events, with limited analysis of ideas. Examples of this was seen in responses about battles, Homer’s Odyssey and/or drama texts
* overused PowerPoint presentations focused solely on delivering information about topics for multiple tasks within the assessment type
* used little or sometimes no referencing
* made use of overly generic sites like Britannica, historyonthenet, study.com, worldhistory, Wikipedia etc.
* did not use primary sources, or did not use enough primary sources
* made little or no use of subject specific language.

Assessment Type 2: Connections

Students produce at least two connections tasks, exploring connections between different ancient societies, between an ancient society and a contemporary society, between an ancient society and another society, or within an ancient society. All tasks together comprise a maximum of 2000 words, or equivalent in oral or multimodal form, and at least one task should focus on the ideas and/or innovations that emerged from the ancient world and include consideration of their influence.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* paying careful attention to selecting the most appropriate assessment design criteria for Connections tasks
* paying careful attention to task design that elicits thoughtful exploration of ‘influence’ in the tasks, not just a comparison
* being reminded that "Ideas or innovations that emerged from the ancient world" (RA2) may not have lasted into the modern world. Connections between ancient societies are entirely valid.

The more successful responses commonly:

* had a focus on a central idea or concept for exploration grounded in the ancient world
* featured clearly articulated and well synthesized communication of ideas
* made use of a wide range of primary sources, written and artefacts, and displayed the ability to think critically about the nature of those sources, acknowledging alternative points of view where appropriate
* could discuss sources rather than just cite them
* explored concepts or ideas in detail without trying to cover multiple aspects of comparison
* directly addressed the influence of ideas or innovations from the ancient world, avoiding broad, sweeping generalisations
* moved beyond just examining the similarities and differences between societies, and there was evidence of insightful analysis and evaluation of the connections between or within societies.

The less successful responses commonly:

* tried to 'force' a connection where one was not entirely evident
* made broad sweeping comments about the influences of the ancient on the modern which were logically flawed
* lacked a depth of research (RA1) with limited use of a range of source materials to explore and investigate ideas
* failed to synthesise evidence and instead simply compared without any thoughtful analysis
* were responses that relied on simple description and connections like "that was then, and this is now" which were basic comparisons rather than any attempt to address RA2 adequately.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Inquiry

Students produce one literary, societal, or historical inquiry, which is presented as an informed and persuasive argument. The inquiry gives students an opportunity to explore an area of specialisation of individual interest where they propose and develop a particular point of view about an issue, as negotiated with their teacher. At least 50% of the inquiry should be located in the period from c. 2000 BCE to 907 CE.

Students may produce their informed and persuasive argument in the form of a written essay to a maximum of 2000 words, or in multimodal or oral form to a maximum of 12 minutes or equivalent. All features of the assessment design criteria for this subject are assessed in the inquiry.

Teachers can improve the marking process and the online process by:

* providing clean unmarked copies of Assessment Type 3 Inquiry which do not identify schools nor provide marking rubrics attached to work
* ensuring students clearly outline the inquiry question via a cover sheet or at the start of their assessment (e.g., on the first page/first slide).

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* ensuring that inquiry questions are constructed to elicit an argument and discussion of ideas
* ensuring that time in the teaching program is given to skill development in consistent in-text referencing and/or footnoting to support the demonstration of A1
* explicitly teaching and insisting that students include commentary on the nature of the source material to support demonstration of A3
* guiding students in the Inquiry as a sustained argument not a collection of ideas organised with subheadings. The use of a clear introduction with a thesis along with topic sentences and linking sentences at the end of paragraphs may support students develop more cohesive and logically sequenced response (A1&A2)
* guiding students in the choice of mythology as a topic. Mythology-focused inquiries work better when they are connected with influence, or as a reflection of society at the time, otherwise the student is at risk of narration, often without sources to cite
* guiding students in the treatment of KU1 to be about knowledge of the ancient world and ensure students do not provide more detail in the modern aspects of comparison style responses than the treatment of knowledge and understanding of the ancient world
* paying close attention to how students are addressing A3, RA2 and KU3 in the Inquiry as inadequate coverage of these assessment design criteria can exclude students from achieving in the higher grade bands.

The more successful responses commonly:

* interrogated the validity of primary source perspectives and contrasted the differences in perspectives over time and place
* made discerning use of high-quality academic sources such as journals and university publications
* devised a question which directly necessitated analysis of primary source material
* were highly polished in written expression
* made thoughtful comments about artefacts or archaeological evidence where relevant
* used a variety of sources including primary source material, academic journals, and reputable websites
* featured clearly structured, articulated and well synthesized communication of ideas
* incorporated evidence from a range of sources smoothly into their discussion and argument
* made use of a wide range of primary sources, written and artefacts, and displayed the ability to think critically about the nature of those sources, acknowledging alternative points of view where appropriate
* made critical use of secondary sources, particularly relevant where a range of interpretations of the evidence were possible
* had well focused questions that invited a thoughtful, balanced, and well-reasoned response
* explored less obvious lines of inquiry in a sustained and authentic manner while also having a central idea and argument that was sequentially developed
* used correct technical and subject specific language which also signposted a depth of understanding and broader understanding of historical or literature context
* had a clearly established analysis and critique of source material and the context of materials, i.e. when material was constructed, its usefulness and limitations in context to how the inquiry is using the material to support analysis or a point of view. More than just saying broad comments like, ‘Plutarch is less reliable because he was writing a long time after events’
* supported ideas and arguments with a range of academic style secondary source journal articles and readings, enabling students to engage in a range of perspectives and research which either supported their ideas or presented alternate ideas for the student to respond to.

The less successful responses commonly:

* were disjointed and read more like a loose collection of ideas grouped under subheadings that may or may not have been relevant to the topic or more specifically the inquiry question
* lacked a consistent referencing system throughout the Inquiry and then only provided a bibliography at the end. In some cases no bibliography was provided
* made broad sweeping comments about "slaves" or “women" with limited discussion on perspectives or the nature of source material (primary or secondary) on these topics
* made comments that projected modern values onto the ancient world in their analysis. This was especially relevant for topics which covered equality and women, justice, freedom (and slavery) and social classes which are vastly different today. Having contextual knowledge is key here
* repeated information, usually broad in nature, in the main body of the argument rather than introduce more depth or detail in the research
* focused on similarities between two or more things which tended to be more descriptive and rely on recount. This was most evident in inquiries that focused on recounting the treatment of mythologies across genres or cultures. Or where students compared too many societies or areas, leading to less depth
* narrated events and stories or spent much of the Inquiry describing content, often in sequence, rather than critically analysing
* focused purely on comparisons without providing a more critical treatment of information
* heavily relied on travel websites or generic sites for information on ancient societies and cultures
* used illustrations as decoration rather than to enhance the Inquiry
* did not refer to or effectively utilise primary source material
* did not synthesize evidence in questions that required it. This was particularly prevalent in questions that compared ancient and modern societies. Many of these were simple descriptions of "that was then, and this is now" which were basic comparisons rather than any attempt to address RA2 adequately
* made superficial comparisons. e.g. comparing Stalin and Caligula or Hitler and Hannibal which were limited in synthesis and tended towards a description of similarities and differences
* included too much content that lay outside the scope of the subject outline, either too much modern history or content that was not clearly relevant to the ancient world in comparison type responses
* propositions that were too broad e.g. "greatest ruler of the ancient world" or "most important feature of the Roman Empire". These also typically lapsed into descriptions of the person or event rather than analytical response tied to a central idea
* did not evaluate the nature of sources as evidence.