# Government of South Australia LogoSACE Board Logo2024 Outdoor Education Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

This 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. It provides information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, and the quality of student performance.

The Subject Renewal program has introduced changes for many subjects in 2025, these changes 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 and online process by:

* thoroughly checking that all grades entered in Schools Online are correct
* ensuring assessment tasks are submitted for the identified sample and any variation adjustments are noted
* ensuring the uploaded responses have identified names on AT2 planning documents to identify which student completed the work.

Assessment Type 1: About Natural Environments

A variety of tasks were submitted by schools that displayed student understanding against the assessment design criteria of Evaluation, Understanding & Analysis. Creative tasks that were purposely designed for the cohort of students that addressed the specific features allowed greater flexibility in student responses, allowing the students to achieve at the higher band level. Overly scaffolded tasks limited student success in the higher-grade band.

It is important to note that whether one or two tasks are used, the total word count (or equivalent) is 1600 words or 10 minutes oral/multimodal. For example, one task of 1600 words or two tasks of 800 words (or equivalent).

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* including tasks that provide an opportunity for personal observations from natural environments to complement a scientific understanding of how these natural environments work and their interactions with humans
* allowing opportunities to demonstrate an understanding of environmental systems and issues with first-hand engagement in natural environments
* including task design that allows students to demonstrate their interpretation of environmental issues and solutions for future sustainable practices.

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* provided an ongoing connection to the place being studied during the course, which provided insight to issues investigated and how this made students feel
* displayed a comparison of human impact, management strategies and environmental outcomes in a **natural** environment
* had student discussion centred on several varying perspectives from user groups, management authorities, commercial operators, impacted groups etc. Linking back to management or influence to degradation
* had discussions that were further substantiated by photographic evidence used from appropriate secondary sources relevant to the issues being discussed and from subject matter experts (e.g. sustainability/personal development strategies are referenced to observation, management documentation and explained against appropriate current theory)
* investigated an environmental issue from a range of perspectives (e.g., a day trip or journey, where students could recognise firsthand, the different perspectives and issues impacting the natural environments considered, and provide a more unique, insightful, and informed response)
* investigated environmental sustainability providing critical evaluation of strategies and future suggestions
* used appropriate examples and images from personal experience and linked written text to images
* presented a response with appropriate order and flow of ideas using Outdoor Education language
* discussed and analysed the impacts to an ecosystem and how this alters sustainability
* explored interactions of humans in the natural environment and considered at least one other perspective that was relevant to the theme of the task. Such as sand dune destruction from the perspective of developers, tourism, and the difference in environmental view.

The less successful responses commonly:

* had limited evidence or connection to the **natural** environment
* included little to no references to secondary sources, relying on a personal point of view or one perspective
* did not incorporate images from personal observation
* attempted to address too many performance standards
* included minimal reference to personal experiences and/or secondary references to explain, illustrate and support personal opinions and ideas
* had excessive questions requiring short answer responses did not allow for students to show depth of exploration, understanding or analysis
* included minimal reference to personal experiences and/or secondary references to explain, illustrate and support personal opinions and ideas
* responses did not include varied perspectives relating to human interaction with natural areas

Assessment Type 2: Experiences in Natural Environments

Students undertake two tasks that include documented evidence collected and annotated when planning for safe and sustainable outdoor activities or journeys in natural environments (PA1). They also need to reflect and evaluate their planning, leadership, and collaboration with others by considering appropriate leadership styles, planning, risk assessment, decision-making, and use of interpersonal skills (ERP1).

Students need to focus on both the development and application of outdoor skills (ERP2) and should aim to include personal images, observations, and assessments. One of their experiences should provide the opportunity to plan, lead, and facilitate an activity or journey. Students could use peer and self-assessment together with reflective practice to evaluate the development of their planning, practical skills, risk management, self-reliance, leadership, and facilitation skills.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* ensuring tasks are purposefully designed for specific student cohorts and experiences
* ensuring that tasks do not assess too many Performance Standards for word/time limit. This allows for a narrowing of task scope and greater depth of response by students
* designing tasks that assess PA and ERP (EUA is not suggested for assessing AT2 in the Subject Outline)

The more successful responses commonly:

* used multimodal responses that included clearly labelled diagrams, pictures, and video/s to support discussion of personal experiences
* showed detailed evidence of planning and discussed the implications their planning had on the experience in natural environments
* discussed how decision-making impacted the overall experience and analysed the outcomes of the decisions
* reflections and evaluations justified decision-making and/or planning by analysing the outcome of those elements
* reflected on expedition outcomes against the performance standards
* analysed skill development with evidence to support the development through the use of peer, teacher, and self-feedback.
* report focused on key elements within each criterion i.e. planning, leadership etc. Showed astute and comprehensive evaluation and reflection of these elements
* used visuals from theoretical sources to support ideas/reflection of experiences
* focused on a small number of significant outdoor skills/behaviours to allow for in-depth and critical reflection rather than a superficial description of a comprehensive list of outdoor skills/behaviours
* made good use of appendices to provide supporting documentation of planning and personal responsibility and referred to snippets/artifacts of significant aspects which were then referred to in detail throughout the body of discussion
* presented a response succinctly with appropriate order and flow of ideas using Outdoor Education language.

The less successful responses commonly:

* attempted to address an excessive number of Performance Standards with little opportunity to reflect and evaluate on performance or development
* presented as a recount of what occurred with little reflection or evaluation on how to improve or transfer learning
* included little to no planning evidence or did not specify which aspect of the planning the student had been responsible for
* identified elements of their planning and showed evidence of it in action, however, provided little to no justification or analysis of this planning
* did not evaluate a particular skill and its development, making general performance comments with no evidence of understanding or development
* did not utilise evidence to support their discussions, for example, photos, skills checklists, feedback from self, peers, or teachers
* focused on a large range of skills rather than an insightful exploration of one or two
* did not include annotation of support material such as photos, images, and diagrams to critically reflect what was being displayed.

# External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Connections with Natural Environments

The “Connections with Natural Environments” task requires students to discuss personal experiences and connections in natural environments (ERP3), while also considering other perspectives on human interaction with these Natural Environments (EUA1), and how exploring these personal connections enhance personal development and/or environmental sustainability (EUA3). This focus provides scope for students to explore an area of personal interest related to, or as an extension of, their outdoor activities, journeys, and experiences in natural environments. While some topics cross-over with, and may draw insight from ecology, geography, agriculture, sport, recreation, tourism, history, psychology and so on, it is important that topics are primarily based on students’ personal experiences within natural environments.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* ensuring greater flexibility for how students can respond through appropriate task design
* ensuring students develop a topic that allows them to incorporate their personal connections and experiences in natural environments that is within scope of the subject e.g., Environmental sustainability issue/theme and or personal/social/wellbeing development influenced by personal connections/experiences with natural environments
* ensuring there is a clear understanding of what is implied by a natural environment, i.e., predominantly remnant native vegetation, coast, or riverine area where natural ecological processes prevail which may have management strategies applied to manage sustainability or human impact issues
* ensuring students are not restricted in their response by excessive scaffolding of the task e.g., using a prescribed range of non-specific focus questions
* ensuring students do not include their or teacher’s name or school in the submitted investigation

Teachers/students need to note that for this task the total word count is 2000 words or 12 minutes oral/multimodal.

The more successful responses commonly:

* investigated a topic with a recent personal interest, connection and/or experience that is consistent with the context and nature of the course (i.e., has an environmental sustainability/personal development focus relating to personal recreation activities conducted in natural environments, such as those participated in during the course
* were well structured with a clear developmental flow of ideas and concepts using personal examples, thoughts and ideas, supported by appropriate research and theory
* were clearly articulated, used guiding questions to support their evidence, clearly labelled sections, and included a range of personal pictures, videos etc.
* contained deep reflection and evaluation focused on their experiences and observations in the outdoors, linked to recent outdoor journeys and experiences
* used a variety of multimodal communication methods. For example, personal observations, journal entries, photos with captions, videos, diagrams, graphs, charts, videos, interviews, PowerPoints with voice over etc.
* presented a topic that clearly addressed the performance standards and was designed with them in mind
* discussed important concepts such as personal connection and experiences throughout their presentation not as an isolated one-off section
* referred to primary and secondary sources to support ideas developed. For example, email from subject matter expert, interview with stakeholder, news article, conservation lobby report, etc.
* referenced credible research, and subject matter experts were discerningly ranked against surveys and opinions of classmates or the general public
* described in detail their topic or area of exploration, identifying why it was of significance/importance to them, giving clear direction for future strategies or benefits
* discussed health and wellbeing, as part of personal development meaningfully by underpinning it with credible research/theory and extensive personal observation/experiences
* connected their exploration of topic and theoretical knowledge with personal experience, ideas, actions, or future directions (e.g., beach clean-ups, climate rally, trail maintenance etc…)
* included reflection and evaluation relating to the development of personal connections with natural environments and strong evidence of their learning through personal action and transfer of experience
* analysed how human interaction would impact on the ecosystem and vice versa, considering both positive and negative consequences where relevant
* discussed environmental problems/issues with analysis and evaluation of cause, effect, and environmentally sustainable solutions
* considered a range of perspectives drawn from a wide range of primary and secondary sources including primary data from observation, research, and stakeholder interviews and surveys, supported by credible research and subject matter expert opinion
* wrote in the first person with discussion of their own thoughts, opinions, and feelings (e.g., I found, I observed, I felt, I learnt, this led me to believe, on reflection I now understand, my photo below demonstrates, etc.).

*The less successful responses commonly:*

* focused on topics such as tourism, sport studies, agricultural studies, psychology, child studies, art, history, economics etc. that were not clearly aligned to Outdoor Education or personal connections with natural environments (i.e., not within scope of the subject and consequently not adequately addressing the performance standards)
* used heavily scaffolded non-specific task directed focus questions
* interpreted natural environments to include ‘artificial’ outdoor environments such as backyards, sports fields, or created suburban parks/lakes
* chose topics that were broad, unrelated to Outdoor Education and in some cases, with little or no personal connection. For example: Great Barrier Reef, Commercial Food Waste, Solar Power Initiatives, and Fruit Fly eradication programs. These tended to be mostly internet driven, lacking personal connection, experiences, or observations
* presented important and/or new information in tables/charts which were not referred to in discussion
* excluded environmental strategies and/or reflection on personal development or did not link these to personal connections or experiences in or with natural environments
* only briefly reflected on personal experiences, connections, and observations
* did not provide adequate evidence of exploration and/or personal connection to topic (e.g. photos, videos, observations, thoughts)
* relied on a narrow range of (one or two) secondary sources for information
* were over the word/time limit while simultaneously lacking depth of understanding, personalisation, analysis, or evaluation.

General

The term “Natural Environment” should be seen as applying to areas of predominantly remnant native vegetation, coast, or riverine area where natural ecological processes prevail which may have management strategies applied to manage sustainability or human impact issues.

Students in all assessment types should be clear as to what is being included within the word/time count. Teachers should refer to the [SACE word count policy](https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/documents/652891/3fc65095-f0a3-4d57-a4c5-0fc5e696f8f2) to support students in the inclusion of, and reference to, artifacts, and text boxes containing supporting detail/documents.