

Information Processing and Publishing

2010 ASSESSMENT REPORT

Technology Learning Area



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

INFORMATION PROCESSING AND PUBLISHING

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GENERAL COMMENTS

It was evident that many teachers and students have been working diligently to produce work of a high standard. Moderators were very pleased with all the hard work and effort that has gone into the subject this year. Some of the beautiful designs produced reflected innovative talent among the students. Layouts used were not just centred all the way through the document. Many merits were recommended, and the students who received them produced creative designs in their practical work, good analysis in the issues task, a good comparison and analysis with recommendations in the technical task, and a design task that reflected a good understanding of design principles, both in the written and practical sections. It is important for teachers recommending a student for a merit to put the *full* SACE registration number of the student on the merit form.

As a general rule, the white bags were labelled correctly with the name of the course and the unit being studied written clearly. Labelling of samples in the white bag was very helpful to moderators; for example 'Top A', 'Middle A', and so on. Some teachers need to be reminded to submit subject reports and all assessment tasks in the teacher's folder so that moderators have a clear understanding of the work set. Instructions to students also need to be included. Each student's work needs to be clearly labelled and all assessment tasks for that student need to be included in the bag sent to moderation. When moderators are looking at the selection of students from a particular school, they look at *all* components of the subject. This gives the moderators a thorough understanding of the standard of the student work across all areas and enables moderators to make an informed decision.

Teachers are reminded to read carefully the instructions on the results sheets. The final column of the yellow results sheet is for the moderators to complete and needs to be left untouched by the teacher. It is a good idea for the teacher to make a photocopy of the sheet before sending it off, just in case it becomes lost or damaged in transit.

The work that some students are producing is outstanding. Students are displaying their enjoyment for the subject in the excellent work they submit and in the time they spend creating their final products. Teachers need to be congratulated for their hard work and tireless energy which obviously encourages their students to work to the best of their ability.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 1: PRACTICAL SKILLS

It was pleasing to see a variety of new tasks being set for each unit of the course. Teachers have shown that they are generally feeling more at ease with the requirements of the subject and have designed some excellent tasks related to their local area. Moderators are always seeking new tasks and related student work to put on the SACE website as exemplars or support material.

Teachers who put comments on student mark sheets, showing where marks were awarded and why, assisted their students to identify where mistakes were made and how they could improve. Teachers who awarded marks without any comment at all on the mark sheets were not giving their students the full benefit of their expertise. Half marks

should not be used by any teacher. Marks for communication on practical tasks should be given if the task communicates the appropriate message correctly. If it does not, this section should show that marks were not awarded.

Although many wizards and templates are available, they are not recommended for use. Teachers who allowed students to use them without a penalty risked moderation changes when compared to other schools where the students' designs were their own. Original design is what moderators are looking for from all students.

Some students are still gluing their work instead of printing it back to back. This is not acceptable and should be penalised by teachers, as it does not meet the publishing components of the subject.

Teachers are asked to be very careful when using themes across all practical tasks. In many cases, the second and third task produced by the student used the same design and skills as the first task and very little new content was added. Students can be disadvantaged if there is no new design in these tasks, as they should not be given any marks for new design when the marks would have been given in the first task. This is a case of double-dipping. As a general rule, it is wise not to use themes across all tasks, as it gives the students little chance to display the breadth of their creative skills.

Moderators found that graphics plagiarism was more common this year. In some cases, the graphic used for their own magazine cover was exactly the same as the one used in the example for investigation. If graphics are used, they must be edited and incorporated in original ways into the student's own design, otherwise students should not be rewarded as it is not their own work.

Some teachers gave an advertisement as a task and simply required the students to produce a slogan and a graphic. There was not enough text in this task for students to display their capabilities with the software and to show formatting skills to advantage. Teachers are asked to make sure that they have enough text with a task so that students have plenty of opportunity to be creative in their final product.

More teachers are enrolling their students in Electronic Publishing than in the past. The students who do well in this unit are those who labelled all their files; that is, there are no untitled files anywhere on the website. On opening, the site index should stand out from all the other folders as the key to the website. If this is not the case, the teacher needs to penalise the students for poor file management. When scrolling is required in a website, a 'back to top' link is good practice. In some cases file management did not comply with web standards; for example, images should be in their own folder, file names should be lower case separated by an underscore, and the first page should be the index page. Teachers are referred to the 2009 assessment report for more discussion of web conventions.

Moderators found that dummy links were a problem with some websites. They can occur randomly and if it happens to the student, the link needs to be deleted and the image relinked. Links can be checked by hovering over the image. Div layers should be avoided and instead students need to use CSS styles or tables to ensure graphics do not move all over the screen. There should be no underscoring in a website. Good navigation should be found around the page and not at the bottom of the screen.

In some cases teachers renamed folders causing links to malfunction. Links must work in Electronic Publishing, otherwise moderators have no evidence on which to check the marking scheme. Broken links affect the whole web page. All student work from the one

class should be on one CD or USB drive. The work should be all inside the student folder to be transferred to the electronic media, to avoid broken links.

In general, digital presentations were the best the moderators have seen for a long while. The students' use of hyperlinks and layouts were excellent in many cases. If teachers set digital presentations for their students as a task, high marks should be awarded to students who use dot points, graphics, and tables in their work. Full text notes can be handed up with the presentation and paragraphs of text should be penalised.

Moderators noted that a number of teachers were not marking out spelling errors or penalising their students accordingly. If a student's work has many spelling errors, it is not communicating the message appropriately and needs to be penalised.

Successful students avoided enlarging graphics to the point of poor definition. They had been taught by their teachers to search for another graphic of appropriate size in order to avoid this problem.

Busy page backgrounds detract from the message in both Desktop Publishing and Electronic Publishing, providing poor contrast as a general rule.

Moderators noted that a number of teachers were giving their students inappropriate scaffolding. In some schools it was evident that every student in the class had been given scaffolding that left little room for innovative design among students. This practice is not recommended by the moderation panel.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 2: DESIGNING AND SKILLS APPLICATIONS

Moderators saw some beautifully presented work in this component throughout many schools in the state. Teachers of the most successful students asked them to investigate and annotate two of each product they were making. Students should be able to show their understanding of the design principles in six examples. More than this is unnecessary, and tends to substitute amount of work for quality of thought.

It is pleasing to note that few students presented no annotated examples of their product. However, there was evidence of inconsistent learning of the principles of successful design. For example, only the most successful students demonstrated an understanding of proximity.

Annotation of examples must reflect a good understanding of the design principles of contrast, alignment, repetition, and proximity. Comments such as 'I like this picture because it looks good' do not address design features and principles. A more successful comment might be: 'The contrasting colours draw in the reader's eye and are very effective.' It is a good idea to get students to write the headings of the design principles around the example and then write something appropriate under each. This way the students cannot forget to write about any of them.

In the devising section, only one page of colour themes and fonts is necessary to demonstrate design choices. Multiple pages are not required. The editing of graphics should also be shown in this section. Graphics need to be manipulated in order to remove watermarks and white backgrounds, where applicable.

There is often a student who loses their work in Electronic Publishing each year, either through losing their USB drive or when the whole computer system of the school crashes. Loss of work in this way is not grounds for misadventure in most cases, as the student

should have backups in different places. It could also be wise for all students to do a print screen of each page of their website as evidence that they have produced the work required. This should be provided in the production section of the design and skills task.

Using a magazine back cover as one of the pages in the production in this component in many cases offered insufficient scope for students to demonstrate their skills. Moderators recommend instead an article, subscription form, or something similar to allow for more complex design. As a general rule, there must be at least one design plan for each page of the final production in the design and skills task. These plans need to be very thorough and show comprehensive detail, including fonts, font size, font colour, backgrounds, graphics, and where graphics are to be placed, along with layout plans for text, and so on.

Most students correctly formatted the bibliography, including adding in the date websites were accessed. If teachers need help with bibliography styles, they can refer to the SACE Guidelines for Referencing on the SACE website.

The most successful students set out their design and skills task with clear headings for investigation, devising, production, and evaluation, making it easier to mark by the teacher and easier to follow by the moderator. These students used the third person when writing in investigation and devising sections, and used the first person when writing in the evaluation section of this component. Hardware and software were not only mentioned, but these students stated what they were used for as well. Moderators were looking for good contrast, good definition in graphics, good alignment, and some drafts to show the progress to the final product. This does not need to be excessive pages of work.

Teachers who set a mail-merge task in the Business Documents should support students to submit all elements of the task along with the data source.

Surveys and interviews need to be referred to in evaluation. Surveys were undertaken in many cases and evidence of the survey was included in the appendixes. However, successful students also made thoughtful reference in their evaluation to evidence gained from the survey. There is no point in conducting a survey if it is not being used, and teachers should not reward students who do not draw conclusions from data contained in their appendixes.

The formatting of telephone numbers by the students must be consistent. The number can be set out in one of two ways; for example, xxxx xxxx or 0x xxxx xxxx. Mobile telephone numbers should be set out as follows: 04xx xxx xxx.

If teachers are using a task which includes creating a T-shirt design, the actual T-shirt should be sent in for moderation. Printing the design on paper is not adequate.

When a map is required in a task, it is important that the students present a readable map. In a number of cases the map presented was far too small.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 3: ISSUES ANALYSIS

This year it was very pleasing to see that the most successful students had taken heed of past advice and presented work that reflected a good analysis of the problem.

Teachers are asked to be vigilant with word-count in this component of the course. A number of students were found to be writing too much in their answer and exceeded the word-count significantly. Teachers are required to stop marking at the word-limit and not read any more of the answer. This means, if the work is marked correctly, that the student

gains no credit for anything, such as the final summary, included after the limit is exceeded. A word-count should be shown on all written components of the course.

The students who gained high marks in this component wrote their own analysis in this task and, where they used tables, graphics or quotations from other sources, they reflected upon the facts presented. Such tables and graphics are usually not part of the word-count, but argument based on them is. Successful students addressed the scenario and used their own discussion to outline the issues that they identified in their answer.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 4: TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS

This year the technical and operational understandings component of the course was exceptionally well done. Most students were successful in presenting enough comparison between the products researched, and overall it was the best component completed by students. Students are reminded to research current technology in this area. Dot matrix printers and floppy disks are not normally considered current technology.

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