2021 Outdoor Education Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2021 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.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: About Natural Environments (40%)

Tasks prepared by schools were generally creative and allowed for students to demonstrate their learning and achievement at higher levels against the Exploration, Understanding and Analysis assessment design criteria. The better tasks were purposefully designed for student cohorts whilst addressing the Learning Framework appropriately within context of the subject and allowed flexibility in how students were able to respond.

Teachers/students need to note that, whether one or two tasks are used, the total word count (or equivalent) is 1600 words or 10 minutes multimodal (20%). For example, one task of 1600 words or two tasks of 800 words each.

The more successful responses commonly:

* used multimodal communication or a variety of modes, for example images in a report, video, PowerPoint with audio etc
* were linked to a practical or personal outdoor experience (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)
* were based on tasks that focussed on a few specific features, allowing greater depth but less scope
* had clear links to the topic or question with specific wording in the performance criteria being answered in in an articulate fashion, addressing each performance criteria clearly and explicitly
* discussed specific strategies for environmental sustainability or personal development because of personal connection with the environment, where EUA3 was assessed
* focused on using their own explorations and personal experiences of the natural environment as a catalyst for their response using a variety of primary and secondary evidence along with data (e.g. personal observations, annotated photos, videos, tables, charts and diagrams)
* used explicit headings, sections, neat formatting, structure, and sequential flow of writing to address specific performance standards
* used references to support their research, understanding and analysis
* supported their personal observations with secondary research from credible sources (e.g. sustainability/personal development strategies are referenced to observation, management documentation and explained against appropriate current theory)
* considered a range of perspectives relating to the interaction of people and natural environments
* used technical, environmental, ecological, or developmental terminology and language
* could describe personal actions undertaken in relation to their topic
* used tables to include information that supported the discussion, rather than a lot of new or critical information and/or analysis.

The less successful responses commonly:

* attempted to address too many performance standards in each task, resulting with lack of depth in analysing topic/issue
* used a descriptive report style that relied on internet research as main source of information and images rather than utilising personal observations and images to inform critical analysis, supported by relevant research
* included minimal reference to personal experiences and/or secondary references to explaining, illustrate and supporting their opinions and ideas
* included diagrams and pictures but did not reference, refer to or mention them in their discussion
* lacked supporting evidence from primary or secondary references, photos, or images etc.
* did not consider or discuss other perspectives relating to human interaction with natural areas
* were over the word/time limit while simultaneously lacking depth of understanding or analysis.

Assessment Type 2: Experiences in Natural Environments

Students undertake two tasks. They should include documented evidence collected and annotated when planning for safe and sustainable outdoor activities and journeys in natural environments (PA1). They also need to reflect and evaluate their planning, leadership, and collaboration with others by consideration of 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 photos, observations, and assessment. Students should have at least one opportunity to plan, lead, and facilitate an activity or journey (progressive development ideal). Students could use peer-assessment, self‑assessment, together with reflective practice to evaluate development of their planning, practical skills, risk management, self-reliance, leadership, and facilitation skills.

Teachers/students need to note that for both tasks the total word count (or equivalent) is 2500 words or 15 minutes multimodal (50%).

The more successful responses commonly:

* used multimodal communication. For example, images in a report, video, PowerPoint with audio etc. to provide evidence
* included personal reflections relevant to the assessment design criteria features for that task
* used self, teacher, or peer assessments to demonstrate evidence of skill development and evaluation
* used annotated pictures, journals, diagrams, interviews, and videos to display evidence of significant Planning and Application as well as evaluation/reflection on planning, leadership, skill development and collaborative skills
* structured tasks with clear headings and sequential flow of information
* used evaluated their skill development and performance by considering what worked well, improvements, personal observations and how they would transfer this experience to aid future experiences
* task addressed specific wording in the performance criteria articulately, clearly, and explicitly
* provided judgement and critical reflection/evaluation rather than simply describing their experiences
* used personal observations, photos, teacher feedback or performance checklist to demonstrate personal skill or attribute development to support critical reflection and evaluation
* focussed on a small number of significant outdoor skills to allow for in-depth and critical reflection, rather than superficial description of a comprehensive list of outdoor skills
* made their own assessment tools or referred to key performance indicators
* made good use of appendices to provide supporting documents of planning and then referred to these in the body of their text
* were based on tasks that assessed on a few specific features, allowing greater depth. For example, only 2‑3 features being assessed for a 1500 word task.

The less successful responses commonly:

* provided a recount of actions and events than critical reflection and evaluation
* lacked connection between development of skill and its application in an outdoor setting
* included a large appendix comprising whole class’ planning materials without clarity about the student’s own contribution and without analysis of specific artefacts’ significance in the main body of the task
* provided photos or videos without captions, annotations, or voice overs to contextualise and critically reflect on what was being displayed
* focused on development of a large range of skills, rather than a deeper exploration of a few significant skills
* were over the word/time limit while simultaneously lacking depth of understanding or analysis.

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, 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. While some topics cross-over with, and may draw insight from ecology, geography, agriculture, tourism, history and so on, it is important that topics are primarily based on students’ personal experiences within natural environments.

Teachers/students need to note that for this task the total word count (or equivalent) is 2000 words or 12 minutes multimodal (30%).

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 clear development of ideas and concepts using personal examples, thoughts and ideas, supported by research and theory
* were clearly articulated, used guiding questions to support their evidence, clearly labelled sections, a range of personal pictures, deep reflection and evaluation focused on their experiences in the outdoors which were linked to recent outdoor journeys or experiences
* used a variety of multimodal communication methods. For example, personal observations, journal entries, photos with captions, diagrams, graphs, videos, power-points
* presented a topic that clearly addressed the performance standards and was structured with them in mind
* referred to primary and secondary sources to support ideas being developed. For example, email from subject matter expert, interview with stakeholder, news article or a conservation lobby report
* described in detail their topic or area of exploration, identifying why it was of significance/important 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
* connected their exploration of topic and theoretical knowledge with personal experience, ideas, or future directions e.g., beach clean-ups, climate rally and trail maintenance
* included reflection and evaluation relating to the development of personal connections with natural environments and strong evidence of their learning through personal action
* analysed how human interaction would impact on the ecosystem and vice versa, considering both positive and negative consequences where relevant
* considered a range of perspectives drawn from a wide range of primary and secondary sources including primary data from observation and stakeholder interviews/surveys
* wrote in the first person with discussion of their own thoughts, opinions, and feelings (e.g. I found, I observed, I learnt, this led me to believe, on reflection I now understand, my photo below demonstrates, etc.)

The less successful responses commonly:

* focused on tourism, sport studies, agricultural studies, psychology, or history related topics that were not clearly aligned to outdoor education and connections with natural environments
* interpreted natural environments to include artificial outdoor environments such as backyards and neighbourhood parks
* chose environmental topics that were broad, unrelated to Outdoor Education and in some cases, little or no personal connection. For examples: Great Barrier Reef, Commercial Food Waste, Solar Power Initiatives, and Fruit Fly eradication programs
* only presented important and/or new information in tables which were not referred to intext
* excluded environmental strategies and/or reflection on personal development or did not link these to personal connections with natural environments
* only briefly reflected on personal experiences and connections
* did not provide adequate evidence of exploration and/or personal connection to topic (e.g. photos, videos, observations)
* relied on a narrow range (one or two) of secondary sources for information
* were over the word/time limit while simultaneously lacking depth of understanding or analysis.