2022 Outdoor Education Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2022 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.

It is acknowledged that schools were impacted differently by COVID-19 restrictions throughout 2022, and hence student’s abilities to engage with natural environments may have varied. Schools adapted to the circumstances well, providing students with alternative experiences and assessments, utilising SACE variations and the amended specific features/requirements where needed.

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.

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.

From 2023, 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.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: About Natural Environments (20%)

Tasks prepared by schools were typically creative and allowed for students to demonstrate their learning and achievement at higher levels against the Exploration, Understanding and Analysis assessment design criteria in varied ways.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* ensuring tasks are purposefully designed for specific student cohorts whilst addressing the Learning Framework appropriately within the context of the subject (environmental issue and or personal/social development through connections with natural environments)
* allowing greater flexibility in how students can respond to or present the task
* ensuring tasks do not assess too many Performance Standards for word/time limit. Narrowing of task scope allows greater depth in student response.

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. 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 integrated modes, for example images or video in a report, PowerPoint with audio etc
* were linked to a practical or personal outdoor experience and/or connection (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)
* had clear links to the topic or question with specific wording in the performance criteria answered 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 discussion flow to address specific performance standards
* used appropriate references to support their personal research, understanding and analysis
* supported their personal observations with secondary research from credible sources and subject matter experts (e.g. sustainability/personal development strategies are referenced to observation, management documentation and explained against appropriate current theory)
* addressed matters of ecological or personal/socially developmental significance
* discussed an environmental problem/issue considering cause, effect, and sustainability outcomes
* considered a range of perspectives relating to the interaction of people and natural environments (e.g. user, manager, historical, etc.)
* used referenced, technical, environmental, ecological, or developmental terminology, theories, and language
* could describe personal actions (thoughts, understandings, and beliefs) taken in relation to their topic
* used referenced tables to include information that supported the discussion

The less successful responses commonly:

* attempted to address too many issues/topics in task, often resulting in a lack of analytical depth
* used a descriptive report style that relied on internet research as main source of information and images rather than using personal observations and images to inform critical analysis, supported by relevant research and expert opinion
* included minimal reference to personal experiences and/or secondary references to explain, illustrate and support personal opinions and ideas
* included diagrams and pictures etc. but did not reference, refer to or mention them in their discussion
* lacked supporting evidence from primary or secondary references, theories, photos, or images etc.
* did not consider or discuss alternative perspectives relating to human interaction with natural areas
* used tables to include new or critical information and analysis that was not supported by in text discussion, this was often considered outside the word/time count
* were over the word/time limit while simultaneously lacking depth of exploration, understanding or analysis.

Assessment Type 2: Experiences in Natural Environments (50%)

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 is 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 as well as their personal experiences/connections in natural environments (ERP3).

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* ensuring tasks are purposefully designed for specific student cohorts and experiences
* allowing greater flexibility in how students can respond to the task
* 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. For example, only two to three features being assessed in a 1500-word task
* designing tasks that assess PA and ERP (EUA is not suggested for assessing AT2 in the Subject Outline)
* basing tasks on personal experiences that allow assessment of a few specific features, allowing greater depth, analysis, and evaluation.

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

The more successful responses commonly:

* used multimodal communication. For example, images in a report, video, PowerPoint with audio etc. to provide evidence of planning and learning
* 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 response with clear headings and sequential flow of information
* evaluated their skill development and or performance by considering what worked well, improvements, personal observations and how they would transfer this understanding to aid future experiences
* response addressed specific wording in the performance criteria articulately, clearly, and explicitly
* provided judgement and critical reflection/evaluation rather than simply describing their experiences
* personal observations and evaluations were referenced to appropriate secondary research and theory
* used personal observations, photos, teacher feedback or performance checklist to demonstrate personal skill or attribute development to support critical reflection and evaluation of significant learning
* focussed on a small number of significant outdoor skills/behaviours to allow for in-depth and critical reflection, rather than superficial description of a comprehensive list of outdoor skills/behaviours
* made their own assessment tools or referred to key performance indicators
* 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

The less successful responses commonly:

* tried to address too many Performance Standards (5)
* provided a recount of actions and events rather than critical reflection and evaluation
* lacked connection between development of skill/learning 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 significant artefacts in main discussion
* provided photos or videos without captions, annotations, or voice overs to contextualise and critically reflect on what was being displayed
* focused on the development of a large range of skills/behaviours, rather than a deeper exploration of a few significant aspects of learning
* were over the word/time limit while simultaneously lacking depth of understanding, personalisation, or analysis.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Connections with Natural Environments (30%)

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 in natural environments. 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 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 development influenced by personal connections/experiences with natural environments
* 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

Teachers/students need to note that for this task the total word count (or equivalent) is 2000 words or 12 minutes 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 clear development 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, a range of personal pictures, videos etc., deep reflection and evaluation focused on their experiences in the outdoors which were linked to recent outdoor journeys and or experiences
* used a variety of multimodal communication methods. For example, personal observations, journal entries, photos with captions, videos, diagrams, graphs, charts, videos, interviews, power-points with voice over etc.
* presented a topic that clearly addressed the performance standards and was designed with them in mind
* 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.
* 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 and personal observation
* connected their exploration of topic and theoretical knowledge with personal experience, ideas, actions, 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
* 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
* 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, child studies, art or a history related topic that was not clearly aligned to outdoor education or personal connections with the natural environment
* used heavily scaffolded non-specific task directed focus questions
* interpreted natural environments to include essentially ‘artificial’ outdoor environments such as backyards, sports fields, or created suburban parks
* 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 internet driven, lacking any personal connection or observation
* 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 with the natural environment
* 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, personalisation, analysis, or evaluation.