

Cross-disciplinary Studies

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
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CROSS-DISCIPLINARY STUDIES

2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessor's Reports give an overview of how students performed in the 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, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Commentary

In Assessment Type 1, students are required to prepare a commentary which explores key elements of the selected disciplines and their connection to the learning interest, develop understanding of the learning interest and knowledge of the relevant capabilities. They are also required to analyse and evaluate information from different sources and perspectives, while reflecting on their own learning and on evaluation of feedback from others. Although students are likely to gather a broad range of evidence of learning, a final synthesised commentary should be presented for assessment.

Students were able to achieve in the higher grade bands where *Commentary* tasks were well designed to allow students to clearly address the performance standards. The inclusion of guiding questions to direct students in their tasks assisted in this. Importantly, the inclusion of an explicit identification of the disciplines being covered assisted students in a more thorough coverage of the Knowledge and Understanding assessment design criterion. In addition, when the focus capabilities were clearly stated, students were able to make direct reference to their understanding and knowledge and how the capabilities connected to the learning interest.

The variety of methods used for students to gather information about their learning interest was varied and suited to the students' learning needs and situations. Students responded well to research conducted outside the classroom, including field trips, interviews and surveys.

Teachers are reminded to provide opportunities to address the Analysis and Evaluation assessment design criterion. Where AE2 is being assessed, clear evidence of evaluation of the contribution of the disciplines is needed. Where AE3 is being assessed, evidence of not only reflection on individual learning is required, but also an analysis of this learning. If AE4 is being assessed, evidence of students evaluating feedback from others is essential. Where this evidence was provided, and tasks were well-constructed, students were able to achieve in the higher grade bands. Teachers are reminded of the word and time limits for this assessment type.

Assessment Type 2: Group Project

This assessment type is designed to assess each student's ability to work collaboratively in a group to plan, organise, and implement a group project that focuses on a learning requirement or an aspect of the content. There must be opportunities for all students to collaborate in the decision-making process and to share responsibilities in responding to the project. Students should also have the opportunity to reflect on their contributions and to receive feedback from others.

The group project may be in the form of a collective outcome, an individual outcome or a combination of both; however conditions on how students are assessed should be clearly established before the students begin the project. When the group project is assessed as a collective outcome all students are awarded the same result, therefore it is advisable that there are clear structures in place for teachers to identify individual evidence of student involvement in the group project, and of their contribution to any final outcome. This aspect of assessment could be simplified if, during the planning stage, each student is made responsible for one aspect or section of the project. Successful students included a written individual reflection outlining their participation and contribution to both the planning and the implementation of the activity. Some students also kept a written record/diary of their involvement or an annotated photo or video journal could be used.

If electronic evidence is submitted, it is important to clearly identify the students involved. An audio recording or video of a group of students speaking, when students are not clearly identified, makes verification of teacher marks challenging. For example, individual recordings or students wearing name tags in video footage would be of assistance.

As with the Commentaries, the specific features of the Analysis and Evaluation criterion were not well addressed in some tasks. Task design needs to provide opportunity for student to demonstrate in-depth, comprehensive analysis and evaluation. Students need also to have opportunity to reflect on their own learning and on feedback from others. Provision for this should be clearly stated on the task cover sheet.

Assessment Type 3: Presentation and Discussion

This assessment type provides students with an opportunity to consider an aspect of their learning to integrate and apply their cross-disciplinary knowledge and skills through the generation of an idea followed through to its conclusion.

Presentation of student learning in this assessment type took a variety of formats and allowed students to share their learning in creative ways. Although most students presented their learning through an oral presentation to the class, there were some students who enhanced their presentations with videos, performances or products.

The second element of this assessment type requires the teacher to participate in a discussion with the student. The discussion involves the teacher asking questions to allow students to demonstrate evidence of learning against the performance standards. When teachers used the discussion section of this task effectively they were able to draw out more information and evidence of learning allowing students to further develop their coverage of the performance standards.

Although discussions may be conducted individually or in groups, all students must be assessed individually. Whatever the format chosen to present evidence for this assessment type, teachers need to ensure an adequate audio/video record is made of the presentation and discussion.

The analysis and evaluation of student learning must be assessed in this assessment type and task design should provide clear opportunity for students to meet the specific features and achieve in the higher grade bands. The design of some tasks limited students' opportunity to address this criterion and resulted in restricted student evidence of learning against the intended criteria.

Teachers are reminded to be aware of the time limits set for this assessment type.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Analysis

A range of analysis tasks were presented for this assessment type. These included issue responses, written tests, case studies and extended responses to articles. A variety of formats were also utilised by teachers to present student evidence, with the majority hand-written. The use of electronic evidence significantly increased this year. Teachers are asked to ensure that only 60 minutes is allowed for the presentation of this evidence.

Task design continues to be a key factor in this assessment type. Students who scored highly in this task were given the opportunity to demonstrate evaluation of the contributions of the selected disciplines, an understanding of the learning interest and application of aspects of the disciplines to solve problems with creativity and initiative. In designing tasks teachers are encouraged to limit short answer questions. Instead, the use of open ended questions where students are given the opportunity to explore their learning interest and apply their knowledge and understanding, gives them a better opportunity to meet the performance standards to a high level.

The majority of tasks presented only had the four compulsory specific features as required in the subject outline. This was evident in both 60 minute analyses and gave students the opportunity to present evidence to the higher levels. Teachers are encouraged to continue this practice to support the assessment of this task.

Teachers are reminded again that they must ensure that they include a task sheet (including any source material) and answer sheet for each analysis (if applicable), with their external assessment to support the marking of this task.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

In some instances the assessment design criteria identified on the learning and assessment plan were different to the ones identified on task sheets. If there are changes made to the program during the year teachers are required to make an addendum to the plan and that this is sent in with the moderation materials.

For moderation of school assessed material teachers are reminded to package student material to include an approved learning and assessment plan (and addendum if applicable), a complete set of task sheets for Assessment Type 1, Assessment Type 2, and Assessment Type 3 and a 'Variations — Moderation Materials' form if applicable.

Teachers are reminded that for the external *Analysis* assessment, students work should be identified only by school number and student registration number, and that no teacher marks or comments should be made on these submissions.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Students who achieved in the higher grade bands were able to clearly demonstrate an understanding of their learning interest through an integration of the disciplines being covered. Whilst students need to clearly identify the disciplines, it is the integration of them that shows a clear grasp of the cross-disciplinary approach. Teachers are strongly encouraged to highlight this integration in the development of their learning and assessment plan and task design.

In developing or evaluating their program, teachers are encouraged to ensure a strong learning interest is evident. Some programs were primarily an extension to a subject already provided within the Stage 2 SACE curriculum and needed to demonstrate explicitly the disciplines being drawn on and the learning interest being developed. Clearly identifying the disciplines and capabilities being addressed within each assessment task will further support this.

Clearly stating the disciplines and capabilities being addressed on a task sheet would assist both students and moderators.

Please be aware that it is not a simple task to convert to this subject part way through the year. Students have been disadvantaged where this has happened as tasks already completed have not addressed the performance standards specific to this subject.

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Chief Assessor