

Cross-disciplinary Studies

2011 Assessment Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY STUDIES

2011 ASSESSMENT REPORT

OVERVIEW

Assessment reports give 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, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Commentary

The variety of styles of tasks within this assessment type demonstrated that tasks were designed to suit the needs of the students and the disciplines being covered. Many tasks included research conducted outside of the general classroom, with guest speakers, visits to local businesses, interviews, surveys, and photography being some of the data-collection techniques used.

The responses to these tasks that were graded in the higher grade bands generally had very clear task descriptions, with the specific features assessed by the task being clearly identified in the questions asked, making it easier for students to achieve. Likewise, when a task was designed in a cross-disciplinary manner (rather than focusing on separate disciplines), performance standards were better addressed in student work.

Teachers are reminded to be aware of the word-limit and time-limit set for this assessment type.

Assessment Type 2: Group Project

Again a wide range of task styles were covered by this assessment component. This enabled students to develop their group work skills while working within their individual areas of strength. The more successful tasks enabled students to demonstrate thorough planning with teachers providing clear expectations about how to achieve the performance standards.

An area of concern for this component was the lack of evidence in some projects to support how individual students contributed to the tasks. It is vital to be clear about which students worked collaboratively in the task, and that a thorough report of individual student involvement is included. Ideas used for demonstrating individual student involvement include: an individual diary kept by a student during the course of the task; a written record by either the student or their teacher explaining involvement; and a photo or video journal.

If video evidence is submitted for this assessment type and it includes groups of students conducting their work, it is important that each student is clearly identified during the video. This assists greatly in the moderation process.

The assessment design criteria of analysis and evaluation were not well addressed in some tasks. Task design needs to provide opportunity for students to demonstrate in-depth, comprehensive analysis and evaluation. Students also need to have opportunity to reflect on their own learning. Provision for this should be clearly stated in the task cover sheet.

Assessment Type 3: Presentation and Discussion

Students chose to make their presentation in a variety of ways. Many presented orally to an audience, while others provided a written format. For moderation purposes it is vital that evidence of student presentations and discussions held with teachers is provided, either in comprehensive written form by the teacher, video footage, or audio recordings. Teacher notes on a marks sheet are not adequate for substantiating grades.

Again in this assessment type, analysis and evaluation of student learning needs to be a focus, with clear opportunity given for students to achieve the higher grade bands. When students were given opportunity to personally reflect on their own learning and their development in the relevant capabilities, they achieved a higher level.

It was evident that teachers used the discussion section of this task to draw out more information from students to further develop their coverage of the performance standards. This is a very valuable part of the task for students.

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

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Analysis

A variety of analysis types were presented for this assessment type. These included issue responses, written tests, case studies, and extended response to articles. The majority of these tasks required students to handwrite their responses; however, other forms of electronic responses were also used.

Students who were able to score highly in this task were given the opportunity to demonstrate the specific feature AE1 (as numbered in the subject outline) to a high level. In designing tasks, teachers are encouraged to limit the number of 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, gave them a better opportunity to meet the performance standards to a high level.

While this assessment type allows for more than the four compulsory specific features (KU2, A1, A2, and AE1) to be assessed, teachers are strongly encouraged to only use these four when designing their tasks. The marking panel felt that the

time frame allowed for this task limits students' opportunity to provide evidence to a high level if more than these four specific features are assessed.

Teachers must ensure that they include a marking paper with their external assessment to support their marking of this task. This could include the opportunities where students can provide evidence for the performance standards, and any other information that is believed may assist the marking panel in formulating their judgment. Any task that uses outside sources, such as journal articles or videos, should also be included in the materials sent to the SACE Board to assist the markers in the great variety of learning interests being assessed.

As there are two separate tasks in a 20-credit subject that are presented as evidence for the assessment of the performance standards, the panel would greatly encourage both tasks to have all four compulsory specific features assessed. This provides greater opportunity for students to provide evidence to support the grading of the four specific features being assessed.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

In some instances the assessment design criteria identified on the approved learning and assessment plan had been adjusted. If there are changes made to the teacher's program during the year, teachers should make sure that an addendum to the plan is made and that this is sent in with the moderation materials.

Each student's work should have the assessment task sheet attached to it. The evidence supplied by students should contain a word-count (if applicable) and have attached the assigned grade for each of the specific features, not just an overall grade given by the teacher.

On many occasions tasks submitted for the external assessment had students identified and marks allocated on their work. It is important for teachers to remember that identification and marks are not required on the work. What is required is that a student's SACE registration number is clearly identified on all student evidence, as well as the instructions for students to complete the particular task.

Assessment of student achievement should be made with reference to the performance standard only. The panel found on occasions that some external responses were allocating marks to a question which is then mapped to the performance standard. This can lead to a weighting of a specific feature. Grade decisions should be holistic.

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. While students need to clearly identify the disciplines, it is the integration of them that shows a clear grasp of the cross-disciplinary approach. The assessment panels strongly encourage teachers to highlight this integration in their learning and assessment plans' development and task design.

In developing or evaluating a program for a student, all teachers are encouraged to ensure a strong learning interest is evident. The panels found that some programs were just an extension to a subject already provided within the Stage 2 SACE

curriculum and that these programs needed to demonstrate through task design the learning interest being developed.

The assessment panels would also encourage teachers to view the new materials that will be on the SACE website in 2012.

Chief Assessor
Cross-disciplinary Studies