2021 Essential English 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: Responding to Texts

Students produce three responses to texts. At least one of the responses must be produced in written form, and at least one response in oral or multimodal form. For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning primarily in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* communication
* comprehension
* analysis.

The more successful responses commonly:

* were in response to texts that were appropriate for the student’s level of ability
* included a strong discussion of specific techniques and conventions supported by appropriate examples
* were in response to texts that provided opportunities for rich analysis of the ways in which creators conveyed information, ideas, and perspectives (An1)
* incorporated evidence purposefully
* analysed specific passages or scenes but made considered links to the text as a whole, rather than make generalisations
* included supporting annotations that provided further evidence of the student’s comprehension and analysis skills
* specifically explored the elements of cultural, social and/or technical language (An2)
* allowed students to demonstrate achievement against a limited number of selected performance standards
* relied on texts like videos, songs, or articles that allowed the student to highlight a contemporary issue which could be discussed from their local or community perspective
* answered targeted prompt questions that focused on Comprehension and Analysis of a specific text.

The less successful responses commonly:

* were in response to guiding questions that elicited a recount of the text rather than analysis or thorough comprehension
* lacked structure and cohesion in the development of their ideas
* did not include enough supporting evidence from the texts analysed
* did not provide evidence of ‘speaking’ (C1)
* recounted, described or summarised the text being analysed
* focused on a plot summary at the expense of considered analysis
* examined ideas or techniques without making connections between these elements
* were assessed against too many performance standards which did not allow for any depth
* were in some circumstances assessed against the Application standards which are more appropriately assessed in Creating Texts than Responding to Texts
* did not provide sufficient evidence of Analysis 2 within the assessment type
* included responses where students struggled to identify and understand language and stylistic features.

General Comments

The Communication assessment design criteria explicitly refers to ‘coherent writing and speaking’. Student responses that did not include oral elements did not provide moderators sufficient evidence of C1 to support decisions.

Assessment Type 2: Creating Texts

Students create written, oral, and multimodal texts for procedural, imaginative, analytical, persuasive, and/or interpretive purposes.

Students create:

* one advocacy text
* two additional texts.

At least one of the responses must be produced in written form, and at least one in oral or multimodal form. For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning primarily in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* communication
* application.

The more successful responses commonly:

* had a clear audience and purpose which provided a structure for the text
* allowed students to create three distinct text types with varied purposes, audiences and conventions which enabled them to demonstrate a wide range of language and stylistic features appropriate to the genre
* were advocacy texts that focused on a local context that students could connect with
* included oral and multimodal presentations that played to student strengths (e.g. cooking and make-up tutorials)
* encouraged skills or areas that were of personal interest to the student
* demonstrated appropriate textual conventions
* had been scaffolded to develop student understanding of their target audience and the purpose of the text.

The less successful responses commonly:

* included a writer’s statement which did not allow students to demonstrate the creative components within the Application criteria. Students analysing their own work used up too much of the word count and generally did not meet the Application performance standards
* as a group of responses were all similar in their approach (e.g. all informal or all with a similar/same audience) thus only demonstrating application of a narrow range of conventions
* discussed points of view rather than advocate for a specific change
* were assessed against too many performance standards for individual tasks
* used explicit/inappropriate language that did not suit the audience or purpose of the text
* did not develop stylistic elements appropriate to the intended purpose and audience
* were multimodal or oral presentations that did not provide sufficient evidence of the student’s communicative ability
* tasks where students are interviewing or asking others very simple questions did not provide evidence of the individual student’s communicative ability (e.g. a promotion video where people are spotlighted does not demonstrate sufficient evidence of the student’s communicative ability).

General Comments

* Teachers are asked to please ensure LAPs and task sheets are uploaded in teacher materials.
* The Communication assessment design criteria explicitly refers to ‘coherent writing and speaking’. Student responses that did not include oral elements did not provide moderators sufficient evidence of C1 to support decisions. Scripts or notes are not adequate evidence and do not meet the requirements of the subject outline.
* Closer consideration should be given to the context for filming or recording of audio. Filming from a distance can affect audio quality/clarity.
* Teachers are encouraged to provide students with ample opportunity to meet the Analysis and Comprehension criteria in Responding to Texts tasks. Designing creative tasks that assessed Analysis and/or Comprehension did not allow students to successfully demonstrate against either criteria.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Language Study

The Language Study requires students to select a context in which language is used for a purpose with a particular audience. Students focus the study with a question or hypothesis. Students use at least two different language resources as the focus for the study. Students are required to analyse how the language used in the resources can answer the question or prove or disprove the hypothesis.

Students are required to communicate in clear and coherent writing or speaking. They should:

* use the textual conventions of the style of study they complete
* choose a format which is appropriate for the context and purpose of their study
* demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which language features are used in a variety of texts for a specific purpose
* analyse ways in which the creators of texts convey information, ideas and perspectives
* analyse the use of cultural, social or technical language in the given context
* select and use a range of language and stylistic features in the study to convey the information that answers the question.

Successful questions included (please also look at the 2020 and 2019 report for a variety of question types):

* How is language used in visual and written Australian drink-driving resources to deter young people from drinking and driving?
* How does the AFL use language and stylistic features to appeal to their target audience?
* How does my local ALDI supermarket use a range of language features to attract customers to shop at ALDI?
* How do two different media texts use language to influence their audiences by commenting on the Novak Djokovic situation in positive or negative ways?
* How is language used by Oprah Winfrey in her Golden Globes speech and Emma Watson in her UN speech to advocate for women?
* How does World Vision (or Salvation Army) use language on its website and on Facebook in order to persuade people to donate to their cause?

The more successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated a clear understanding of purpose, context and audience
* used a specific, detailed, and explicit focus question
* used two language resources and identified them in the question or in the introduction
* used meaningful language resources which enabled them to analyse at the highest level
* provided textual evidence in the form of quotations, visual imagery or specific examples
* used relevant metalanguage to inform their analysis for example: colloquial, metaphor, jargon
* exhibited control over grammar, spelling and punctuation conventions
* had a clear structure, planned, drafted and edited their work and adhered to word count or time restrictions
* explored a context of personal interest
* analysed the use of social, cultural or technical elements of language explicitly
* understood and named the context of their study and showed throughout their language study an understanding of how the language appealed to specific audiences
* considered examples and evidence which best revealed the conventions and explained the use of stylistic and language features for their intended audience
* showed how the crafting of the texts through stylistic conventions reinforced the ideas presented
* structured the study by adhering to the textual conventions of the study format chosen whether report style, multimodal or oral response
* used appropriate software to structure the study, if using PowerPoint doing so with skilful application to all required aspects
* completed an oral response which communicated with the audience using clear and coherent speaking rather than just reading to them.

The less successful responses commonly:

* provided only a recount of what the student did without analysing language use
* described an event or place rather than analysing the language used at it
* discussed the language of animals and/or inanimate objects
* provided a plot recount of texts
* described the language use rather than analysed it
* used only one language resource or used more than three
* communicated generally about language without referring to specific resources or examples
* provided lists or tables of terms without analysis of their use in context
* posed a question which did not support language analysis
* did not refer to the social, cultural or technical uses of language (An2)
* did not plan or draft carefully
* used lengthy and irrelevant quotes or didn’t use quotes or specific examples at all
* did not use the metalanguage of the text type
* compiled a literature review of a particular type of language use without personal analysis of language
* reviewed the success of the text type rather than analyse the language used
* conducted an unnecessary survey or interview
* conducted an unnecessary comparison of texts which was beyond the ability of the student to accomplish
* completed a task from the old ESL subject namely an interview analysis How does language determine the success of an interview (it is disappointing that this still persists)
* submitted a task they had completed for Responding to Texts
* did a class task rather than chose an independent language study
* did not utilise their 1500-word count or time limit appropriately
* focused on comparing language resources rather than analyse how the language used in the resources
* did not use the Essential English subject outline information for the Language Study or refer to the Language Study topic ideas.