

Aboriginal Studies

2010 ASSESSMENT REPORT

Society and Environment Learning Area



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

ABORIGINAL STUDIES

2010 ASSESSMENT REPORT

GENERAL COMMENTS

The provision of options for coursework assessments allowed students to adequately address criteria without the need to complete all tasks in essay form. The *analysis* criterion tended to be marked generously across assessment components and presentation modes; this was particularly apparent in the Community Report and Investigation components.

It is recommended that teachers consult the relevant section of the *Learning Area Manual* which contains information about moderation, marking requirements and procedures for each of the course components. It is also recommended that, at the appropriate time for each assessment component, teachers provide students with the relevant criteria for judging performance.

Moderators and markers noted that student engagement, interest, and understanding of the course were reflected in the assessment tasks.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 1: COMMUNITY REPORT

In 2010 students continued to interact with a wide variety of Aboriginal communities and organisations throughout South Australia and the Northern Territory to complete the Community Report. Student presentations of their interactions and experiences with Aboriginal communities and organisations were enhanced by the use of clearly labelled maps, diagrams and photographs.

It was noted by moderators that the provision of scaffolding supported those students with developing literacy skills in achieving success in this component; and by following the five sub-headings outlined in the curriculum statement generally the assessment component requirements and criteria for judging performance were met.

All students successfully met the *description* criterion to a high degree. However, students are reminded to focus on analysis and reflection rather than producing a narrative of events and activities that were undertaken. Successful Community Reports contained thoughtful analysis of, and reflection on, the time students spent with the community or organisation, thus allowing them to meet the *analysis* and *reflection* criteria to a high degree. These Community Reports also contained an Aboriginal 'voice' to support the student's analysis and reflection; quotes from the people that they had interacted with and learnt from were included.

The moderators were pleased to note that more students acknowledged the Aboriginal people they had interacted with in the bibliography of their Community Report.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 2: COURSE WORK

Students' work reflected a range of classroom activities and the resources available. The most successful work was written clearly and included criteria appropriate to the topics and tasks. By assessing one or two criteria for each task, and providing a broad marking scheme, teachers enabled their students to address the criteria more effectively than when three or four criteria were selected and a low range of marks were allocated. It is recommended that when options are provided within a task that these are presented as options for presentation, rather than as different task types.

Of the assessment criteria, *critical analysis* continued to be less successfully addressed. This is an area that requires explicit teaching. Moderators recommend that well-constructed exemplars are included to guide students, and to support them in developing the skills needed to adequately address this criterion. Given the nature of this subject, teaching about bias and reliability is important. Another area where the moderators recommend more explicit teaching relates to the viewpoint, held by many students, that all Aboriginal people hold the same opinion on issues of importance to Aboriginal people. Students need to become 'critically literate' as they research, evaluate resources and make judgments.

It is recommended that if an assignment is visually presented it needs to have a brief explanation to show how the criteria have been met, and to explain the purpose. It is also recommended that when students create artworks, rather than present the actual work, which could be damaged in transit, photographs are attached to the assessment task sheet.

Topic 1: Histories

Generally the Histories topic is taught first by teachers, and the assessment task is in the form of an essay. However, students with developing literacy skills, or those who were responding to an essay question that was too broad for a restricted word limit (such as an essay on early contact history or invasion), or those who focussed on inappropriately selected assessment criteria, were often disadvantaged as they tended to write recounts rather than show evidence of investigation or analysis. Moderators noted that the breadth of research for essays was often limited and that historically inaccurate information was not corrected (e.g. Cook settled Australia in 1770). Students are reminded that a strong reference list and bibliography are essential for an essay to be highly successful.

Tasks that involved three or more assessment criteria were generally less successful. Where teachers provided an alternative assessment mode to essays, such as through a creative response or a PowerPoint presentation, all students, particularly those whose literacy skills are developing, were able to show evidence of their knowledge and understanding. It is recommended that when PowerPoint is used that the *analysis* criterion is not included for assessment as this style of presentation makes it difficult for students to adequately demonstrate analysis.

Topic 2: Aboriginal Cultures and Identity

Where the teaching resources and the topic focus was on cultures, this allowed students to develop an understanding of what identity is and what it means to Aboriginal people.

Many classes read autobiographies or interviewed Aboriginal people. Where these autobiographies or interviewees were appropriately selected, students demonstrated sound understanding in relation to Aboriginal cultures and identity – as was evident by the use of appropriately selected supporting quotes. It was pleasing to see that when students interviewed an Aboriginal person, they acknowledged the interviewee in their bibliography.

Again, the moderators noted that many tasks continue to require students to address three or more criteria, or were too vague and broad in their design, or the criteria for the task were inappropriately selected. In each of these cases students were disadvantaged as they could not adequately show their knowledge and understanding, and this impacted on the mark awarded for this topic.

Topic 3: Contemporary Issues

Tasks which enabled students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues included writing newspaper articles, letters to the editor or a politician, PowerPoint and oral presentations. As in previous years, moderators noted that the focus for this topic was on locally-based issues, or broader-based issues that were current and contentious; by undertaking such tasks students were able to demonstrate their understanding to a high degree. The chosen issues generally focused on a discussion of the causes and effects of racism, thus allowing students to explore the *investigation* criterion. Well-structured tasks that did not focus on too many issues allowed students with developing literacy skills to successfully meet the task criteria.

Topic 4: Aboriginal Arts

Aboriginal Arts selected included poetry, performance, photographs, paintings and music. Selection of the artworks was often made in relation to issues of significance to Aboriginal people, including the way in which art reflects cultural values, tradition and identity, as well as how it can be used as a means of political and social expression. Moderators noted that students were able to demonstrate their understanding to a high degree when they had a strong interest in the art form they had chosen to investigate, or when they had selected a contemporary artist.

Students were less successful when they were required to meet more than two criteria, or when the criteria were inappropriately selected, or the focus was on a comparison of too many art forms. When the task required students to produce their own artwork, the most successful examples were accompanied by explanations or rationales that provided supporting information against the criteria being assessed.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 3: INVESTIGATION

Generally investigations followed the structure recommended by the curriculum statement and adhered to the maximum word limit of 2000 words. Students were disadvantaged by either selecting topics that were too broad, or by exceeding the specified word limit. Where choice of topic/hypothesis was specific, students were best able to address the criteria of this assessment component. Where topics addressed a specific question (e.g. using how, why, what, who, why or did), investigations maintained a stronger level of analysis and reflection.

Markers noted that students who accurately referenced their sources, and included the Aboriginal people they had interviewed or surveyed, met the research criteria

better than those who had little or no referencing. Overall the level of referencing was poor and many students did not acknowledge their sources of information. Bibliographies were generally poorly constructed, or not provided at all. It is recommended that teachers explicitly teach students how to construct a bibliography or reference list. Students should avoid the use of unacknowledged photographs.

Students who had a broad research base and worked with a specific question or hypothesis tended to address all criteria to a higher degree than those students who relied solely on the internet for their research, or used a topic with no specific question (e.g. Aboriginal Health). Those students who relied heavily on the Internet, particularly Wikipedia, as their sole source of information, were also generally unable to meet the *research* and *communication* criteria. Many students who indicated in their bibliography that they had interviewed Aboriginal people did not include any reference to the views of this person in their investigation. Students who provided a range of Aboriginal peoples' viewpoints were able to meet the *research* and *communication* criteria to a high degree. However, markers were concerned by the number of investigations that did not include Aboriginal perspectives as required in the *communication* criterion.

Students whose investigation topics were about local and/or contemporary issues were generally able to document a range of perspectives and thus meet the *analysis* criterion more successfully than those students who chose a broad topic. Students are reminded to use research material that is up-to-date and to access current statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Investigations that were based on a one-word topic (e.g. Art) tended to be a simple recount of facts with little or no analysis. Markers noted that when students included the perspectives of Aboriginal people the assumption was often made that all Aboriginal people have the same views. Information tended to be provided in a simplistic and narrow manner without discussion. The marks awarded for the *analysis* criterion, which is the most heavily weighted of this component, were low and as a result the overall mark for the investigation was low.

Teachers should explicitly teach research methods and analysis, as well as provide students with exemplars of successful investigations so that they can successfully develop investigation questions/hypotheses and meet the *analysis* criterion.

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