

Aboriginal Studies

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

ABORIGINAL STUDIES

2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessors' 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

The number of students who studied Aboriginal Studies was smaller than in previous years; however, both the moderators and the markers noted the continued student engagement and interest in the course. Students' level of performance in the school assessment component was reflected in their level of performance in the external assessment component.

In the main, options provided for school assessment tasks allowed students to adequately address criteria without the need to complete all tasks in essay form. However, the moderators and markers noted that students' ability to successfully meet the reflection assessment design criterion varied; some school assessment tasks do not lend themselves easily to reflection because the criterion does not always fit the form required by the task.

It is highly recommended that teachers consult the relevant section of the subject operational information on the SACE website for information about marking requirements, moderation, and procedures for each of the course components. It is also recommended that, when they submit student materials for moderation, teachers carefully read the information provided by the SACE Board about the requirements for the moderation process to ensure that they know what is to be included for the required student sample.

Assessment Type 1: Response

For Assessment Type 1: Response the subject outline requires at least two responses, one of which involves 'a reflection on what students have learnt about intercultural communication from two or more sources'. Although all four topics were represented in this assessment type, Topic 1: Histories, Topic 2: Aboriginal Cultures and Identities, and Topic 4: Aboriginal Arts were the most popular choices in allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. The moderators noted that when teachers provided an alternative assessment mode to essays, such as a creative response or a PowerPoint presentation, most students, particularly those with developing literacy skills, showed evidence of their knowledge and understanding. It is recommended that students who complete a PowerPoint presentation include with the script a printout of the slides.

The three assessment design criteria for this assessment type are knowledge and understanding, reflection, and communication. The moderators noted that students were often disadvantaged when too many or inappropriately selected specific features of the assessment design criteria for this assessment type were used. When the set task appropriately matches the assessment design criteria, students achieve at a higher standard. The moderators particularly noted this in relation to the reflection criterion, which lends itself to some forms of assessment tasks and not to others.

Assessment Type 2: Report

Students continued to interact with a variety of Aboriginal communities and organisations throughout South Australia and the Northern Territory to complete Assessment Type 2: Report. The interactions included visits to Uluru and Mutitjulu and the Flinders Ranges, as well as to Clontarf and Pika Wiya. Students who chose to visit organisations often did so over a series of visits rather than on 3 consecutive days.

Students presented their interactions with Aboriginal communities or organisations in several formats, including PowerPoint. Reports were enhanced by the inclusion of clearly labelled and annotated visual materials such as maps, photographs, and diagrams. Successful reports clearly acknowledged, through attributed quotations and in the bibliography, the Aboriginal people with whom students had interacted.

It was also noted by the moderators that teachers supported students, particularly those with developing literacy skills, in achieving success in this assessment type; however, the moderators recommend that, as a part of any such strategy, students are reminded of the importance of acknowledging, in both their report and the report's bibliography, the Aboriginal people with whom they interacted.

Students generally met the knowledge and understanding criterion to a high degree, as evidenced by background research undertaken before their visits to the communities or organisations. However, the moderators also noted that many student responses to the reflection criterion tended to consist of a narrative of events and activities that they had undertaken; the subject outline requires students to include a *reflection* on their own learning about intercultural communication and understanding through their interactions with Aboriginal people and the activities undertaken.

Successful reports contained thoughtful analysis of, and reflection on, the time spent with the community or organisation. Students who supported their reflection also included an Aboriginal 'voice' through the use of quotations from the people with whom they had interacted and from whom they had learnt. This evidence met the communication criterion to a high degree. These students generally acknowledged their Aboriginal sources in the report's bibliography.

Assessment Type 3: Text Production

The subject outline requires students to undertake at least one text production for Assessment Type 3: Text Production. Students generally completed two text productions across the four topics, with Topic 3: Contemporary Issues the most popular choice. A variety of assessment forms, both written and multimodal, were

used in this assessment type. The moderators noted that, when teachers carefully selected the specific features to be assessed to match the task design and intent, students were able to successfully show their knowledge and understanding. It is also recommended that teachers keep tasks manageable by not including too many different options for students to address in one task.

The assessment design criteria to be assessed for this assessment type are knowledge and understanding, analysis and evaluation, and communication. The moderators noted that, generally, the knowledge and understanding and the communication criteria were well addressed by students; however, the analysis and evaluation criterion was often done poorly. It is recommended that, given the nature of this subject, teachers explicitly teach about bias and reliability.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Investigation

Investigations generally followed the structure recommended in the subject outline and adhered to the maximum word limit of 2000 words; however, the word count was missing from many final products. One student's final product was in the form of a multimodal presentation.

Topics chosen by students in this assessment type covered a broad range of issues and concepts and included a mixture of general issues such as racism in sport and Indigenous housing in remote communities, as well as local and specific issues such as the success of the Wiltja program and the impact of the Stolen Generation on family members.

A result of C– or better was achieved by 84% of students; 15% of students achieved a result in the A grade band, 40% in the B grade band, and 30% in the C grade band. Students were advantaged by selecting topics that were not too broad and that had an obvious purpose. Investigations for which the student's choice of topic or hypothesis was narrow or for which the topic addressed a specific question (e.g. using how, why, what, who, why, or did) maintained a strong level of analysis and reflection. This ensured that students were best able to address the specific features of the assessment design criteria for this assessment component.

Students who had a broad research base for their investigation, and who 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 who used a topic with no specific question. Students who relied on the Internet for their information were generally unable to consistently meet the assessment design criteria for Assessment Type 4: Investigation. Students who provided a range of Aboriginal people's perspectives met all criteria to a high degree, particularly the reflection criterion. However, the markers also noted that, in relation to the analysis and evaluation criterion, students still tended to generalise about Aboriginal perspectives, on the assumption that all Aboriginal people have the same views on the issues under discussion.

The markers noted that, although the SACE Board cover sheet for Assessment Type 4: Investigation was generally used, it was frequently not completed as required. In several cases there was no indication of the specific feature that the student was addressing for the knowledge and understanding criterion in the investigation, whereas in other cases a class-wide selection of specific features had

been made. A student may set out intending to cover one specific feature, but the final investigation may not reflect this. It is recommended that, before students submit their investigation, teachers help them in correctly identifying the specific feature that they have used for the knowledge and understanding criterion.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

It is highly recommended that, when submitting student work for moderation, teachers carefully reread the information provided by the SACE Board about moderation requirements, particularly requirements for presenting the student sample. The moderators also noted that on occasion teachers did not clearly supply the following information on their task sheets: the assessment type, the specific feature(s) of the assessment design criteria being assessed, and the student's level of achievement against the specific feature(s) of the assessment design criteria when the work was assessed or the mark awarded.

Teachers' attention is drawn to the SACE Board external assessment cover sheet, which is available on the SACE website. A copy of the cover sheet, which outlines all the required information such as student registration number, investigation topic or issue, and specific features of the assessment design criteria covered (particularly for knowledge and understanding), is to be attached to the front of every student's investigation.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Student work in both the school-assessed component and the externally assessed component of Aboriginal Studies continues to reflect a range of interests and classroom activities. However, there are areas where the moderators strongly recommend more explicit teaching. These relate to the use of capital A and I for Aboriginal and Indigenous as well as the need to overcome the widely held assumption that all Aboriginal people hold the same opinion on issues of importance to them. The moderators are still concerned about the annual repetition of historically inaccurate information and terminology (e.g. that Captain Cook settled Australia in 1770 and brought convicts with him) and the personification of governments and Western culture as 'the white man'.

It is recommended that teachers teach research methods (e.g. to equip students with the skills to assess the relevance and currency of research materials), as well as the importance of acknowledging sources and using bibliographies for research-based tasks. These skills will help students to demonstrate achievement against the analysis and evaluation criterion. It is also recommended that teachers show students examples of successful investigations so that they can develop investigation questions or hypotheses that meet the analysis and evaluation criterion.

Teachers are encouraged to look at the exemplars of annotated student work on the SACE website and to discuss them with their students to determine what makes a good student response.

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Chief Assessor