

# Aboriginal Studies

2013 Chief Assessor's Report



Government  
of South Australia

**SACE**  
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# ABORIGINAL STUDIES

## 2013 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

### OVERVIEW

Chief Assessors' 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.

Moderators and markers noted students' continued high level of interest and engagement in the course. Students performed strongly in both school assessment and external assessment; 100% of students achieved a C grade or higher in the school assessment and 98% a C grade or higher in the external assessment.

### SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

#### Assessment Type 1: Response

The three assessment design criteria to be assessed in Assessment Type 1: Response are knowledge and understanding, reflection, and communication. The subject outline requires students to undertake at least two responses for this assessment type: one response involves 'a reflection on what students have learnt about intercultural communication from two or more sources'. All four topics were represented, as in previous years, but Topic 1: Histories, Topic 2: Aboriginal Cultures and Identities, and Topic 4: Aboriginal Arts were the most popular topics in allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in Assessment Type 1.

The moderators noted that, when teachers provided an alternative to essays as an assessment mode, such as a creative response or a PowerPoint presentation, most students, particularly those developing literacy skills, were generally able to show evidence of their knowledge and understanding. However, moderators highly recommend that students who complete a PowerPoint presentation include a printout of the slides as well as the script, and that oral presentations are accompanied with a script or support cards.

#### Assessment Type 2: Report

In 2013 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. There was an increase in the number of organisations visited by students as part of the report. Several student visits extended over several days and more than one organisation. Community visits included Uluru/Matijulu, the Tiwi Islands, Point Pearce, and Ikara. Organisations visited included Pika Wiya, Tauondi, and the Living Kurna Cultural Centre.

Students generally met the knowledge and understanding criterion to a high degree, as evidenced by background research undertaken before the visits to the communities or

organisations. It is recommended that teachers clearly indicate on individual student task cover sheets the Aboriginal viewpoints being discussed in each report, as these may vary with each student. The moderators noted that many student responses to the reflection criterion tended to produce a narrative of events and activities that had been undertaken rather than a reflection, as specified in the subject outline, on the student's own learning about intercultural communication and understanding through interactions with Aboriginal people and the activities undertaken. The moderators highly recommend more explicit teaching before the student interactions in relation to the reflection criterion and the differences between narrative and reflective writing.

Reports were enhanced by the inclusion of clearly labelled and annotated visual images such as maps, photographs, and diagrams. 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, and met the communication criterion to a high degree. The moderators noted that successful reports included clear acknowledgment of the Aboriginal people with whom students had interacted through the use of attributed quotations in the report as well as acknowledgment in accompanying bibliographies.

### **Assessment Type 3: Text Production**

The three assessment design criteria to be assessed in Assessment Type 3: Text Production are knowledge and understanding, analysis and evaluation, and communication. The subject outline requires students to undertake at least one text production for this assessment type. Generally two text productions were completed by students across the four topics, with Topic 3: Contemporary Issues continuing to be the most popular choice, followed by Topic 1: Histories and Topic 2: Aboriginal Cultures and Identities. 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. The moderators also noted an improvement in students' ability to analyse and evaluate issues.

## **EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT**

### **Assessment Type 4: Investigation**

The breakdown of the investigation results shows that 98% of students achieved a mark of C– or better, 18% of students achieved a result in the A grade band, 46% in the B grade band, and 34% in the C grade band. No students achieved an A+ for their investigation in 2013.

Investigations generally followed the structure recommended in the subject outline and adhered to the maximum word-limit of 2000 words; however, the markers noted that on several final products students did not include the final word count. The markers were pleased to note an increase in the number of students who chose interesting contemporary topics that had recently been in the media (e.g. Adam Giles's comments on adoption), as well as generally making better choices, with more specific issues rather than generic topics such as 'poverty' or 'petrol sniffing'. The markers also noted that the removal of the reflection ('intercultural') criterion from Assessment Type 4 had led to generally higher-quality student responses.

The markers noted that there is a huge gap in student standards of referencing. Referencing makes a considerable difference to the overall grade. Too many students still only include links to websites (unlabelled). The standard of referencing will be substantially improved if students use Harvard (or equivalent) referencing early in the investigation process, and write down the details of every new reference they find.

## **OPERATIONAL ADVICE**

The moderators noted that on occasion teachers did not clearly give the following details on their assessment sheets: the student's name, the assessment type or specific topic, and the level of achievement against the specific feature of the assessment design criteria when the task was assessed or the mark awarded.

When students complete an art-based task, teachers are reminded to include a photograph of the artwork in the student materials, and not to send the art works to moderation. Teachers are also reminded that having too many criteria for any particular task disadvantages students who are unable to cover the criteria in any depth.

When tasks are submitted on DVD or memory stick, printed backup copies should, if possible, be available in case the moderators cannot successfully access the electronic copies.

It is also recommended that teachers make sure that their task sheets reflect any changes to the assessment design criteria. For example, KU2 and KU3 and AE1 now use 'and/or' in relation to the issues and topics they cover.

## **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 and markers highly 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 Aboriginal people, and the tendency of students to personify European groups as 'the white man'.

Teachers are encouraged to look at the exemplars of annotated student work on the Aboriginal Studies minisite and to deconstruct these with their students in considering what makes a good student response.

Aboriginal Studies  
Chief Assessor