

# Agriculture and Horticulture

2011 Assessment Report



Government  
of South Australia

**SACE**  
Board of SA

# AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE

## 2011 ASSESSMENT REPORT

### OVERVIEW

Assessment reports give an overview of how students performed in 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-BASED ASSESSMENT

#### Assessment Type 1: Practical Skills

A wide range of tasks was used by teachers to assess student performance in this assessment type. Some of these tasks were strongly focused on the manipulation of apparatus and equipment, and the demonstration of individual or collaborative skills. Student evidence of achievement against the relevant specific features is required to confirm the grades allocated to students. Video or photographic evidence could be supported by students writing a short self-reflection in these areas. Similarly, oral presentations and oral responses to questions need to be supported with some form of evidence that can be confirmed by the moderators. Video and photographic evidence can be provided electronically and the SACE Board has prepared a fact sheet on the submission of electronic materials which is available on the SACE website.

While many teachers provided their students with the opportunity to achieve against the performance standards at the highest levels, there was concern that students in some classes were not given this opportunity for all specific features. This was particularly true of those features requiring students to analyse and evaluate data and the results of their practical tasks. In other classes, it was felt that students were assessed as achieving at the highest level without evidence being provided to support this level of achievement.

It was found that individual tasks that assessed student performance against a limited number of specific features, usually a maximum of four or five, generally provided students with the best opportunity to achieve at the highest levels.

#### Assessment Type 2: Skills and Application Tasks

Again, a wide range of assessments was presented in this assessment type, reflecting the diversity of teaching and learning programs and the diversity of agriculture across the state. Generally, these tasks reflected the requirements required by the performance standards, but in some cases tasks that had been used in previous years needed to be reviewed in light of the new subject outline. The introduction of the new SACE has provided teachers with the opportunity to reflect on their assessment tasks and to update them to meet the new learning requirements

and assessment design criteria. Teachers are advised to check the moderation feedback provided to schools to determine which, if any, of their tasks could be considered for renewal or replacement.

Most classes were given at least one test in this assessment type. While tests provide a good opportunity to assess student performance against a number of specific features in a supervised setting, it is important that the tests give students the opportunity to achieve at the highest level. This requires that there is a good balance of higher-order questions which allow the more able students to demonstrate the ability to evaluate, analyse, and form conclusions. Providing students with hypothetical case studies that allowed them to analyse information, evaluate procedures and processes, form conclusions, and develop recommendations was seen as a good way of ensuring this occurred.

Written assignments were another popular way of assessing students in this type. Again there were many examples of good task design that allowed students the opportunity to excel. However, there were some cases where the task design did not allow or ask students to demonstrate the higher-order skills required at Stage 2. Such assignments often only required the gathering and presentation of information with very little, if any, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis.

Assignments provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to critically and logically select and consistently and appropriately acknowledge information about agriculture and horticulture and issues in agriculture and horticulture from a range of sources. It was pleasing to see many students demonstrate evidence of this by using appropriate and extensive in-text referencing and bibliographies.

## **EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT**

### **Assessment Type 3: Investigation**

It was pleasing to see that all teachers used the appropriate assessment format for the assessment of their students' investigative tasks. The assessing of the tasks used appropriate performance standards, although some tasks did not provide students with the most suitable format to adequately demonstrate higher-order analysis and evaluation.

The types of investigative tasks presented were appropriate, but it was generally found that those tasks which were experimental did allow students to more readily demonstrate the required analysis and evaluation. Case studies (for example, of properties) and investigative reports (for example, mulesing or live animal exports) often did not ensure that students included the required assessment design criteria of analysis and evaluation. Many of these tasks were more of a report rather than an analysis of the procedures and planning associated with the topic.

Students who presented an experimental report frequently included photographs of their experiments, and this was a good method of explaining the format of their experiment, as well as demonstrating experimental results. Some students included statistical analysis of their results, but this analysis should also be referred to these in their analyses and conclusion.

Most students included an appropriate bibliography, and it was pleasing to see a number of students use appropriate footnoting in reference to the bibliography in their text.

Some students used this external task to explore various areas of interest, which made the reading and assessment of the tasks an enjoyable and interesting exercise.

## **OPERATIONAL ADVICE**

Teachers should remember that the yellow result sheet that is submitted prior to the collection of moderation materials contains the final school result. Therefore it is extremely important that these sheets are filled out accurately and that all tasks have been completed and assessed prior to the pick-up date for the result sheets. Late requests for changes can only be made by the principal in a special letter to the SACE Board explaining the particular circumstances.

Teachers are reminded that if one of the students whose work has been selected in the moderation sample is missing one or more assessed tasks from the moderation materials package, they should ensure that this is reported on the Variations in Materials for Sample for Final Moderation Materials form. The same applies to work that is missing as a result of the student having been granted special provisions in the school assessment. Moderators must moderate the evidence that is presented to them, and if a task is missing without explanation, they must assume that it was not completed. This could have an impact on the moderation effect for all students on that grade level. Similarly, if a student did not complete all assessments, it is helpful to indicate this so that moderators do not waste time searching for work that does not exist.

Providing a marking scheme for each task which indicates where each specific feature is assessed and the grade achieved assists the moderators to confirm the teachers' judgments against the performance standards. Likewise, a summary sheet for each of the students in the sample, indicating how the assessment grade for each assessment type has been arrived at, is very helpful to moderators.

It was pleasing to see that most moderation packages were well organised and presented in the way outlined in the advice provided on the SACE website.

Teachers should be aware that markers should not be able to identify either the school or the student when marking the external tasks. To this end, please ask that students include only their ID number, and not include their name or photos which could identify their school; for example, photos that include their teacher.

Students should also be reminded to present work in a font size that allows for easy reading by moderators. A minimum size of 11 points is suggested.

## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

It is important that teachers preparing for 2012 thoroughly read the subject outline and the learning area manual when preparing their learning and assessment plan. Additional checks during the year can also be useful.

Clarifying forums provide an ideal opportunity for all teachers to gain a deeper understanding of the requirements of the course through professional discussion and the sharing of ideas and strategies. They can enable teachers to develop a better understanding of how to help students prepare for the investigation and the assessment of the investigation.

Agriculture and Horticulture  
Chief Assessor