

Agriculture and Horticulture

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
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SACE
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AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE

2012 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.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Moderators were more readily able to confirm teachers' grades this year, indicating that teachers are becoming more proficient in assessing tasks against the specific features of the assessment design criteria.

Assessment Type 1: Practical Skills

With the diversity of agricultural enterprises that exist across the state, it is pleasing to see that once again students were presented with a wide range of practical tasks relevant to their particular context. However, there were still a number of classes where there was little or no evidence to support the allocated grade for some specific features, in particular those relating to the manipulation of equipment and apparatus, I3, and the demonstration of individual and collaborative skills, A3. In many cases, practical skills tasks had a strong emphasis on these features and, with little supporting evidence, it was difficult to confirm the grades awarded by teachers. Checklists, which indicate the skills expected and their level of proficiency, are a relatively simple way to provide this evidence.

Teachers are reminded that at least one of the practical skills tasks must be a design task, where students are required to demonstrate achievement against the specific features that relate to designing and undertaking an investigation. Students must ensure that the agricultural significance of their investigation is clear.

While many teachers provided their students with the opportunity to achieve against the performance standards at the highest levels, this was not evident in all classes. This was particularly true of those features requiring students to analyse and evaluate data and the results of their practical tasks. Often students were not given the opportunity to reflect on the agricultural relevance of the tasks that they undertook. Students could also relate their practical activities to economic, social or environmental issues. Students should be expected to solve problems and/or make recommendations from the outcomes of their practical tasks at a level appropriate for Stage 2. The design of some tasks did not allow the necessary rigour required to achieve at the higher grade bands.

Awareness of occupational health and safety principles and demonstration of safe and ethical working practices should be part of practical activities. The use of

appropriate footwear, protective clothing, and safety equipment is essential for many tasks that involve agricultural industry activities. This safety aspect could be assessed in I3.

Assessment Type 2: Skills and Applications Tasks

Once again, in most cases a wide range of tasks were utilised in this assessment type. However, some tasks were more appropriate for Assessment Type 1: Practical Skills, and limited the students' ability to demonstrate high achievement in some specific features. Students in some classes were only exposed to a limited variety of task types, such as all tests or all essays, and this may have reduced student achievement across the range of specific features, or may have unfairly disadvantaged some students not as skilled at that type of task.

As in Assessment Type 1, the opportunity for students to demonstrate high levels of achievement, particularly against the specific features in analysis and evaluation, was limited in some classes. This was particularly true in tests, as many were seen to have a high proportion of lower-order recall questions and not enough higher-order questions that would allow for the differentiation of the more capable students in the class.

Sources used in the gathering of data and information must be acknowledged in a bibliography or reference list and by using in-text referencing. Similarly, charts, graphs, and diagrams should also be appropriately acknowledged.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

Overall, there was an improvement in the standard of the tasks presented from previous years. This was particularly evident in the students' abilities to analyse errors and suggest improvements to the design of the investigation. Some areas for improvement include the ability to analyse data, to formulate conclusions, and to connect data with the relevant agricultural concepts.

Students are reminded that their SACE registration number, which should be visible on every page, and their school number should be the only information which may identify them or their school. Photos that identify the school or the teacher should also be avoided. Students should also ensure that they do not exceed the maximum word-limit. The word-count, which should be indicated on the task, also includes any of the student's own data and analysis even when it is included in appendices. Teachers are reminded that there should be no indication of grades or comments visible on the task.

Students should be aware of the specific features that are assessed in the investigation and should therefore choose a topic that allows them to demonstrate their skills in designing an investigation, conducting and recording results, analysing data, evaluating procedures, and explaining issues in agriculture or horticulture. A recount or report on an activity will rarely allow the student to demonstrate achievement against these specific features at the highest level. While case studies can be legitimate investigations, it is important that they are focused on an

investigable question and are assessed against the current assessment design criteria rather than criteria from past years.

As noted previously, all sources of information must be acknowledged appropriately. There should also be an analysis and evaluation of the information gathered.

While there has been an overall improvement in the standard of work received, teachers are strongly urged to involve themselves in professional discussions to assist their students in meeting the requirements of this assessment type.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

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. However, as student work is moderated according to assessment type, teachers are asked to segregate student tasks accordingly. Any changes to the approved learning and assessment plan need to be recorded in the addendum to the plan and should be signed by the school principal. Teachers are asked to provide a signed copy of the learning and assessment plan (with an addendum if appropriate) and a copy of all of the assessment tasks given to the students during the course.

It would be helpful to both students and moderators if each task has a cover sheet attached which clearly indicates what students are expected to do, which specific features are to be assessed, and an indication of how the assigned grade was achieved.

In any assessment package there may be individual tasks missing. If a task has been assessed but has been misplaced, this should be recorded using the Variations — Moderation Materials form. Any task that is not recorded on this form will be assumed to have not been completed. Work that has not been completed should be assessed as I rather than E.

Students should also be reminded to present work legibly, with appropriate font size and spacing.

GENERAL COMMENTS

It is important that teachers preparing for 2013 thoroughly read the subject outline and the subject operational information on the website. As many schools will need to submit a new learning and assessment plan this year, teachers need to take note of the change to the analysis and evaluation specific features in the 2013 subject outline. The relevant changes should also be made to assessment tasks.

Teachers are also encouraged to actively engage in professional discussions, either at local area meetings, state conferences, or meetings organised by the SACE Board, to assist their students to achieve to their potential.

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