

# English Communications

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government  
of South Australia

**SACE**  
Board of SA

# ENGLISH COMMUNICATIONS

## 2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

### OVERVIEW

Assessment 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

In 2012 moderators commented that students were offered the opportunity to achieve sound attainment in English Communications when teachers demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of the course requirements. This was evident in task design which permitted students to reveal their skills to the best of their ability across the range of performance standards. It was clear from learning and assessment plans, addendums, choice within assessment types and task design when teachers had taken the strengths and interests of the student cohort into account along with the assessment design criteria of the subject outline.

The purpose of the moderation process is not to assess student work. Its function is instead to confirm the assessment decisions made by teachers wherever possible. As such, moderation was made particularly efficient when teachers followed the instructions for this process by submitting accurate records of mark sheets and correct sample materials labelled appropriately. Confirmation of assessment was effective where teachers had indicated student achievement using the grades of the performance standards for assessment types as opposed to numeric grades for individual tasks.

Teachers are reminded of the importance of the accuracy of data submitted to the SACE Board prior to the moderation process. All work must be submitted by students and assessed by teachers before the completion of the school assessment result sheet. This document is a record of the final consideration of results at that time and is not a set of predicted marks. Since there is no opportunity to adjust this assessment decision at a later date, a careful check of data is recommended prior to the submission of this information. The school assessment grade calculator (available on the SACE website [www.sace.sa.edu.au](http://www.sace.sa.edu.au)) can be used to combine the grades for assessment types to determine the school assessment grade. Teachers are also reminded to refer to the SACE website for subject operational information. This provides important dates for deadlines during the course of the academic year and, in particular, the key dates associated with School Assessment materials.

## Assessment Type 1: Text Analysis

At the heart of this section of the course is the development of students' personal and critical understanding of ideas, values and beliefs represented in a range of texts. Therefore the selection of texts based upon the needs, abilities and interests of the class group is important. Teachers are reminded that texts may be linked or treated separately in this assessment type.

Students were provided with a range of diverse and challenging texts. Novels, poetry and film were represented equally, with less evidence of response to dramatic text as performance and independent novels. For the most part this assessment type was correctly represented according to the choice of four text types; however teachers are reminded to refer to the subject outline to ensure text choices are valid. Students were disadvantaged when prescribed text types were not complied with. For example, the analysis of a film trailer or a magazine or journal article in this section of the course is inappropriate as a text choice, and the opportunity for students to demonstrate evidence of their learning against assessment design criteria in this instance is much reduced.

Most student work revealed adherence to the course requirements of two written responses and one oral response. It was encouraging to note more students completing multimodal presentations. Also successful was the range of forms offered to students as opportunities for response. While the traditional analytical essay was well represented, teachers also offered alternatives to suit their students' interests and strengths. Forms such as blogs, interviews with the author or director, speeches or presentations made as if the student was the director or author. This range often enabled students to demonstrate a repertoire of skills in relation to analysis and conventions of forms.

Moderators noted that students who were able to demonstrate attainment at the highest levels of the performance standards for knowledge and understanding, application and communication had often addressed one of the three analysis criterion in each response of this assessment type. In task design of this kind, students were more likely to address criteria explicitly and in some depth.

Teachers are reminded of the importance of assessment design criteria when constructing tasks. Moderators commented on the need for closer consideration of Application criterion Ap2; the 'use of evidence from texts to develop and support a response'. Students are encouraged to incorporate evidence in the form of quotations and avoid retelling events or information at the expense of analysis in responses.

Opportunities offered to students to address An2, the 'analysis of connections between the ideas, experiences, values, and beliefs of students, and those explored in texts' were inconsistent. Where teachers had designed tasks and taught explicitly with this as the sole analysis criterion, students appeared to perform well. Successful tasks encouraged students to consider their own experiences and personal views in some depth. Some of the best examples of the higher performance standards included student connections made to the contemporary world of politics, human rights or environmental issues.

Poetry responses were most successful when texts were considered as a group of two or more poems as opposed to individual texts. This task appeared to be most inconsistent in terms of student success due to task design and text choice. It was also noted that more students responded to two poems in 2012. While four or more

texts can be unmanageable for students, teachers are reminded that one poem is insufficient and does not fulfil the requirements as stated in the subject outline. The choice and selection of song lyrics should also be carefully considered. In a number of cases this text type reduced the depth of analysis in responses and did not provide opportunity for students to achieve at high performance standards.

Students benefitted from explicit teaching of text, scaffolding and a choice of tasks when constructing responses. Task design is crucial to student success. Moderators noted the success of student work which had been achieved with the design of a specific supporting analysis checklist by a teacher. This assisted students in addressing assessment criteria and performance standards explicitly. The importance of task design to provide opportunity to reach all levels of performance standards including the higher levels must be considered carefully. It was noted, for example, that the creation of a visual scrapbook page with a brief written explanation of choices made in its design did not offer a successful opportunity for students to achieve in this section of the course.

## **Assessment Type 2: Text Production**

For this assessment type, students compose three texts. One text must be produced as a 90-minute supervised written assessment under test conditions. Students produce the remaining tasks in written, oral, or multimodal form. Teachers and students are reminded of the maximum limit of 1000 words for a written text, 6 minutes for an oral text or equivalent for a multimodal text. The composition of the three texts should be produced for the three distinct purposes prescribed in the subject outline. This is important to allow opportunity for students to meet the performance standards for knowledge and understanding, application and communication at the highest levels.

Students who were most successful in this section of the course were able to exhibit a variety of writing styles and forms for the differing purposes of their texts. Students who were unable to reveal diversity in their choice of form and style were restricted in the demonstration of assessment criteria. For example students who completed a report and two recounts tended to write for the same purpose and reduced evidence of the performance standards at the high levels. Task design is important in encouraging students to demonstrate diversity in writing skills. It was observed that picture books as narratives, some poetry task design and biography were among options that did not afford this opportunity to students again this year.

There was evidence of successful engagement and interesting responses where students had been provided with tasks that offered some flexibility in response due to choice and where tasks had been designed with the interests and abilities of the cohort in mind. Examples of these tasks included 'How to get an A in Year 12', 'Why should.....(text name) stay on the Year 12 curriculum?', 'Mourning the death of civilised women' and the reasons that one particular character or subject is better than or preferable to another, for example a superhero and a pop star.

The success of visual stimulus, particularly for descriptive writing was evident in the samples of student work for this assessment type especially when students had an element of choice in the selection of images. Photography and well known art work featured significantly in this task design. Multimodal texts, including film were also evident as successful text production forms.

The supervised written assessment under test conditions must be completed according to the subject outline requirements. The majority of moderation samples revealed that this task appears to have been completed appropriately. However, in a minority of cases students appeared to have been provided with the tasks beforehand. Teachers are reminded that students are to be made aware of the general requirements in advance, but must not receive topics until the set time. Students should complete this task without the help of the teacher, without the opportunity to draft their writing outside the 90 minute period and should not have access to the internet.

### **Assessment Type 3: Communication Study**

This section of the course comprises of two parts: a comparison of two examples of communication chosen from one of the five specified categories and a practical application. Students are expected to explore and compare the relationship between form, purpose, audience, language and context by comparing two texts in the first part of this study. In the practical application, students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a particular aspect of language and communication.

Teachers are asked to ensure that each of the texts selected for comparison come from one and the same of the categories. In a few cases students attempted comparison across two categories which disadvantaged them. Advertising was the most popular option for this task with mass-media communication second in order of choice. While written comparison was the most popular form of response, teachers are reminded that students may elect to complete this task as an oral or multimodal presentation of a maximum of 6 minutes.

Students experienced success when task design for part one encouraged comparison throughout the entire response. Students who analysed texts separately and compared in only some parts of their response did not achieve as well. The synthesis of texts through analysis of key areas outlined in the subject outline provides the best opportunity for the demonstration of performance standards.

The analysis of hard copy advertisements remained a frequent choice with travel, cooking and car programs still well represented in large numbers. However, an emerging popular choice was the comparison of film trailers. Students performed best in this instance when text choice and task design was executed with particular consideration. Moderators commented on the success of some trailer text choices, for example an original film advertisement compared with a remake generated decades apart. Success was also experienced when trailers were selected according to their genre. On the other hand moderators also mentioned that the similarity in form alone did not guarantee success. In fact where this was the only point of connection or comparison analysis was superficial. It was also observed that when choices were very different, such as the choice of trailers for *Transformers* and *Ted*, analysis was not demonstrated well or in any real depth.

As with the other assessment types in the course, task design and text selection can provide the key to success for students. In some cases students were not guided to analyse specific examples of texts. Instead they were directed to the generic form or entire text type such as email communication, television news reporting or newspapers in general. In the absence of specific examples of texts to compare, students often resorted to description or retelling without analysis.

Within this section of the course, students are expected to demonstrate evidence of their learning in relation to knowledge and understanding, analysis, application and communication. Teachers are reminded that this includes the ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of KU2 – that is, the ‘knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators and readers of familiar and unfamiliar texts use a range of language techniques and strategies to make meaning’. In some cases students identified features of language by naming them without consideration of purpose or effect.

The second task, the practical application can be selected from the eight applications offered. Each of these tasks is unique and has specific assessment requirements. As such teachers are reminded that each practical application consists of two components. The individual details of these requirements must be adhered to in order to meet subject requirements and to avoid the repetition of information across the response.

The best examples of practical applications involved students exercising choice and control in their selected topic and form. This also enabled students to engage well in the reflection element of the task. Students who considered the production and reflection parts of this task with equal importance achieved most consistent results.

Evidence of oral reflections in the form of transcripts, student notes and printed slides together with recordings provide moderators with the most reliable evidence to confirm assessment. Teacher notes or task sheets regarding the quality of students’ oral presentations without other evidence is insufficient material for the moderation process.

Once again *writing for publication* remained the most popular choice for this task. This option continues to provide students with the opportunity to produce original texts and, in the case of the selection of specialist publications, the ability to reveal detailed understanding of audience and context in oral reflections. Children’s books were still evident although in fewer numbers. Students who select this option can be distracted by presentational devices at the expense of language in construction and reflection. The emphasis upon language choices and decisions and an explicit understanding of the development process of writing to publication standard should be emphasised in this application reflection.

Represented to a lesser extent at moderation were the remaining applications of workplace *writing*, *film-making*, *investigating*, *language*, *multimedia web authoring*, *oral language* and *interacting*.

## **OPERATIONAL ADVICE FOR SCHOOL ASSESSMENT**

Overall, moderators commented favourably upon the submission and organisation of required sample materials; however in some cases non-nominated student work examples were submitted. In a small number of cases these incorrect and sometimes incomplete samples of work made the authentication of assessment very difficult. On the other hand, work organised according to assessment type and labelled clearly supported the process. Teachers are reminded that work needs to be labelled accurately with SACE numbers.

An approved learning and assessment plan together with an addendum, if necessary, are required in the information sent for moderation. Context sheets also assist with this process. In the case of missing work, teachers are required to



account for the absence by completing the Variations - Moderation Materials form. Teachers are also requested to indicate clearly when work has not been completed by students whose materials are selected in the moderation sample. If tasks have not been completed within an assessment type, performance standards should be matched appropriately against evidence of work. The application of a mathematical system of deduction of marks is not an appropriate method to adjust attainment since it does not allow for an accurate reflection of the performance standards.

The inclusion of formative work or drafts is not a requirement for all tasks. Specific requirements of assessment types and tasks in relation to the submission of materials can be found in the subject outline. Teachers are also reminded of the Supervision and Verification of Students' Work policy and the necessity to provide appropriate evidence of oral presentations. The inclusion of oral transcripts and/or detailed notes assisted moderators when they were submitted in conjunction with recordings. The submission of power point slides as the sole evidence of an oral presentation did not offer moderators the same opportunity to confirm assessment decisions.

Teachers are requested to adhere to the SACE Word-count policy or time limit for tasks. In a small number of cases it was clear that students had repeatedly disregarded this requirement. Furthermore plagiarism remained a concern for a minority of moderation materials submitted. Teachers are advised to authenticate the originality of student work during its progress to avoid the submission of plagiarised scripts.

Finally moderators recommend that schools undertake internal moderation wherever possible in order to ensure that marking standards are consistent. This is significant for schools with multiple classes in a single assessment group. Schools are asked to consider carefully the benefits of such groupings. In some cases students could be disadvantaged by this decision if teachers have not discussed standards and read student work samples across classes.

## **EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT**

### **Assessment Type 4: Folio**

Markers were impressed by the quality of the writing and analysis that many students demonstrated in the folio. Students who achieved at the higher levels of the performance standards wrote with a maturity and confidence that made their folios insightful and engaging. It was apparent that, in most cases, the folio had been completed in the second half of the year when students' skills had developed as a result of the shared tasks completed for the school assessed component. Students who had carefully drafted and edited their writing achieved highly in the application and communication assessment criteria. It was noted that in some folios one part had been edited well, yet another part lacked the same level of attention. Students are advised to use language and terminology they are confident with rather than trying to sound sophisticated but lose meaning in the process.

The subject outline specifies that the folio is 'a product of independent study, but it is appropriate for teachers to advise and support students in choosing an example of communication as well as provide a structure for the text production.' Markers commented that the majority of the class groups reflected high levels of independence regarding the example of communication chosen for part 1 and the style of writing produced for part 2. On the other hand, there were a number of

classes where it was clear that students had had limited choice for both parts of the folio and this had an impact on the marks that were allocated. Further comment on this issue can be found below when parts 1 and 2 of the folio are discussed separately.

The majority of students adhered to the 2000 word count, usually allocating about half to each part. Another frequent practice was to assign 800-900 words for Part 1 (text response) and 1100-1200 for Part 2 (text production) to ensure that students had sufficient opportunity to write a comprehensive writer's statement. Both approaches produced folios of excellent standard. In some cases, however, students went over the word count and effectively presented an incomplete folio because markers can only read the first 2000 words. In some cases some or most of the writer's statement was not considered for marking because the student had exceeded the word count. Students are to include the word count for each part of the folio at the end of the work.

Although not a very common issue, markers once again commented that folios where parts 1 and 2 were connected in some way were not as successful as those that were not because achievement in the application performance standard was limited by repetition. Folios that comprised of responding to a persuasive speech and writing a persuasive article, responding to and producing a short story, responding to and producing a brochure restricted the student's ability to produce texts for 'different contexts, audiences, and purposes' (Ap4). Some students had also been allowed to take a scene from a film they had analysed in part 1 and rewrite it from a different point of view for part 2. Such an approach to the folio restricts students unnecessarily in terms of demonstrating their best writing skills. If students can demonstrate they can write for two purposes and audiences across the folio, they are showing achievement of Ap4.

Plagiarism was again detected across both parts of the folio, and attracted penalties when confirmed. Film reviews and speech analyses in part 1 were the most frequent causes of plagiarism, and in part 2 brochures proved the most problematic, especially when the subject matter was something that already has much written about it.

It was surprising how many students had included their name on the folio. In order to ensure anonymity, it is essential that the writer's name, the school's name and the teacher's name or any other identifying detail be removed from the folio. The student's SACE registration number, however, must be clearly marked on the work.

## **Part 1: Response to an Example of Communication**

Responses that were guided by a well-worded topic or question were the most successful. It was clear that teachers had, in many cases, provided advice and support when students formulated their questions to ensure that their analyses met the requirements of the task. Questions that contained words such as 'language techniques', 'appeal to the audience', 'stylistic features' or 'effects on the reader or listener' directed students most appropriately. On the other hand, questions that focused on content, characters or themes did not give the student enough scope to address KU1, 2, 4 and An1. For example, 'How effectively does the director explore the theme of ...' is not as suitable as, 'Discuss the effectiveness of the film techniques the director uses to explore the idea of ....'. It should be noted that when selecting film texts, the 'language techniques' can be interpreted to mean 'stylistic



features' because it is accepted that sound, lighting, camera techniques, etc are all elements of filmic language.

A number of markers reported that they often read responses where some of the task requirements were evident but not others. For example, when responding to film, many were able to say what techniques the director had used but did not discuss the likely effect they had on the audience. Similarly, an entire essay devoted to the student's opinion of the text was of little value in displaying knowledge of how the text was constructed. The better responses focused on specific structural and language features and their connection to the audience. General descriptions of stylistic features that one would expect to find in a particular type of text without specific reference to the student's chosen text, did not indicate a comprehensive understanding of that example of communication.

Part 1 responses that scored well were logically structured, clearly written and included relevant evidence from the chosen text. The essay was the most popular form for the response, but reports were also common. Students who named the creator of the text, outlined what techniques they were discussing and mentioned audience in the introduction, steered the response to meet the performance standards at the highest levels. Essays that included topic sentences and well-structured paragraphs that explore the subject mentioned in the topic sentence also attract high marks. The inclusion of appropriate evidence to support the student's ideas in the form of quotations, paraphrasing or examples from the text was crucial. Students need to be reminded how to embed quotations accurately and effectively into their writing and not resort to including whole sentences (or multiple sentences) that may not fit grammatically nor provide the exact evidence required. Furthermore, students should not use the same quotation more than once in a response because it demonstrates a limited knowledge of the text. Abbreviating the title of a text or the creator's name to an acronym is not advisable because it does not suit the level of formality expected for the text response.

The choice of text made a considerable difference to the success of the subsequent response. Markers related that the range was diverse with students selecting from literary and everyday texts. In classes where students had had the opportunity to choose widely, but with teacher guidance, the results were strong. It was apparent that students had been encouraged to choose texts that extended them beyond their comfort zone, allowed them to meet the task requirements as per the subject outline and demonstrate high achievement of the assessment criteria.

Ascertaining the level of independence demonstrated by students within a class was at times made difficult because the same form of communication (eg newspaper feature articles, persuasive speeches, magazine advertisements, song lyrics) was analysed by everyone and the only concession was that students could choose a different example within the form that had already been selected for them. In some cases, the level of independence was very limited – there were whole classes that responded to a music video, the cover of a book, an article from one newspaper, an advertisement, a movie trailer, or more than half the class responded to the same drama performance. While this approach is taken by teachers to assist students who would otherwise have difficulty completing the task, it does limit other students from achieving at a higher level. A recommendation is that teachers broaden the base from which the student can choose their text; for example, any aspect of a newspaper (leading story, opinion piece, advertisement, special feature, etc), or any type of speech (informative, persuasive, eulogy, school assembly speeches, etc). This will encourage students to be more independent in their choice and, thereby, fulfil the technical requirements of the task more explicitly.

At times, there was some confusion regarding which example of communication the student was analysing. For instance, when students responded to film trailers they sometimes digressed into discussing the film itself leaving the reader wondering whether the student could distinguish between the two. Similarly, students who analysed book covers seemed to get it confused with the book itself, or discussed the cover as though it was designed and written by the author. Such fundamental misunderstandings about the function and authorship of the text do not position the student well for high achievement.

Independence also extends to the level of scaffolding that is provided for the students. If responses were heavily scaffolded, the result was that there was very little variation between the students' responses and markers found it difficult to award high marks. In extreme cases, all of a class's responses (based on an independently chosen film) comprised of eight paragraphs each beginning with the same topic sentence. Another situation that indicated too much teacher intervention was when students in the same class used the same phrases and terminology, such as 'pathos appeal', 'antistrophe', 'tricolon technique'. It was apparent to many markers that the lower the level of independence regarding text selection, the greater the amount of scaffolding and direct teaching detected in the response, thus again negating evidence of the folio being a 'product of independent study'.

Popular choices were film texts, poems, songs, journalistic articles, advertisements, and speeches (although the frequency with which Martin Luther King's, *I Have a Dream* speech suggests an over-reliance of a single text). One marker commented on the appearance of short films from *Tropfest* as another good source of film that is both unfamiliar and accessible. Within each of these text types, however, there were some poor choices. As a general rule, responses to animated films tended not to be very successful for a number of reasons. Firstly, the film was usually a long time favourite and was not being viewed with a critical eye, hence the response focused on retelling the plot or explaining the moral of the story. Secondly, students rarely discussed the animation as a stylistic feature, which was considered a major oversight in terms of the student's analytical skills. Another text choice that often proved problematic was song lyrics where students inevitably resorted to explaining or retelling what the lyrics meant rather than analysing the language techniques used and their effect on the audience. Responses based on music videos and computer games tended to be simplistic and content based. High achievement of KU1, 2 and 4, An1, and Ap3 was difficult to demonstrate when such familiar texts were only being described. Finally, a small number of students selected a whole text type (eg soap operas) or an entire series (eg *The Big Bang Theory*) rather than 'an example of communication' which limited their achievement.

Examples of advertising were once again popular and there was a trend towards better selection of advertisement from the previous year. Nevertheless, some of these responses still relied too heavily on the visual devices used by the creator and not enough on the language techniques, the audience, and the context that influenced its construction. Selecting an advertisement that has a level of complexity is crucial to ensure that the response is not repetitive and is appropriate for Stage 2 study.

Some students selected complex, unfamiliar texts (for example, a poem), but the response was a long list of language techniques that were defined and illustrated with an example from the text, without actually discussing what effect the techniques had on the audience. Students who focused on fewer language techniques but analysed them and their effect generally produced responses of a higher quality. All

in all, though, students tended to produce better responses to texts in which they were interested and relatively new to them. The greater the familiarity with the text, the less likely the student was to be objective and insightful in the response.

Other observations made by markers that should be avoided to improve the depth of the response are: devoting too many words outlining the plot of films, novels or plays, analysing more than one text (eg two poems or advertisements), writing a supporting study as well as the analytical response, addressing An2 (analysis of connections between ideas in the text and those of the student) when it is not required in the folio, and the inclusion of other researched interpretation of texts.

## **Part 2: Text Production with Writer's Statement**

Markers reported favourably on the way part 2 of the folio was completed in 2012. There was a greater range of writing that was engaging, imaginative and sophisticated supported by a clear understanding of purpose, audience and language devices. When students had a personal connection with the subject matter, the writing was particularly evocative and powerful. While there were fewer cases this year where the text produced contained no or minimal writing (eg short films, posters, display advertisements), some students still opted for such choices which meant their work did not satisfy the requirements set out in the subject outline. Some students unnecessarily produced more than one piece of writing (eg three, unconnected short poems) which effectively took words away from the writer's statement.

There seemed to be two general ways that teachers presented the task to students; either allow the students to choose freely based on their strengths or allow them a wide range within one text type, such as narrative which provided many options in terms of form and style. An interesting approach noted by one marker was taking students to a place of interest as a prompt for their writing which could be creative or functional, and in a form chosen by the student. On the other hand, in some classes it was clear that the level of independence was minimal because every student's work was a narrative based on the same stimulus (e.g. one song). This approach must be avoided because it does not match the description in the subject outline and prohibits students from choosing a type of writing with which they are confident and will showcase their best writing skills.

Successful pieces of writing included personal recounts, descriptive writing, narratives, letters to the editor (if the student was familiar with the subject matter), vignettes, monologues, email-based stories, comedies, articles for specialised magazines, play scripts, opinion pieces (based on social, regional, cultural issues), and satire. Different types of expository writing were also presented (informative, persuasive, instructional, etc) and their success depended on how the subject matter had been treated. If, for example, an article was about a topic on which much is already written (eg smoking) and relied heavily on statistics and facts, the writing was derivative and lacked originality. A better topic may have been to write about the new cigarette packaging laws and how they might affect people's behaviour.

Types of writing that markers reported as problematic and low scoring were brochures (one of the biggest sources of plagiarism), letters of complaint (inappropriate content and tone), picture books, simplistic poetry, clichéd narratives, anything that involved minimal writing (wedding or 21<sup>st</sup> invitations), gossip column articles, and reviews of films or games (lack of originality). Stories based on the

paranormal were still quite popular and were often heavily influenced by horror films and so lacked a unique voice. Students are reminded that content and language that is overly offensive is inappropriate. Control of tenses, especially in recounts, and correct use of dialogue punctuation needed greater attention in some folios.

The better writer's statements were those where students had tried to explain how they had made their piece of writing effective or interesting for the reader. This seemed to shift the focus from *what* had been written to *how* it had been written. Students who wrote at least 300 words in the writer's statement were better able to explain and justify choices they had made in their writing enabling them to address Ap1, 2, 3 and KU1, 2, 4 at the higher band levels. Explanations of techniques such as symbolism, point of view, omission of detail, dialogue, ambiguity, variety of sentence lengths, metaphor, persuasive language, rhetorical devices and the like can only be done effectively over an extended writer's statement. Overall, the stronger students were able to identify linguistic techniques and conventions in an accurate manner, support their comments with evidence, and explain the effect of the techniques on the audience.

Students who wrote in very general terms about their writing did not produce effective statements. Stating that they used informal or formal language, the past tense, tone, sentences, was not insightful and usually indicated that the writer's statement had not been given the attention it required. Others discussed the language features of the text type in generic terms but not how they had applied these techniques in their own writing. For example, they could discuss elements of narratives in general (orientation, complication, resolution) but had little or no reference to their own narrative. Over-generalisations should also be avoided, such as, 'teenagers like horror so they will read my story' or 'the article is written for anyone who wants to read it'. Similarly, expressions such as 'grab the audience,' 'a certain mood' and 'the story is relatable' are not useful in demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the writing process. It is important that comments made about the audience, purpose, and language techniques of the piece of writing are specific and relevant.

Students are advised to avoid a lengthy explanation of the ideas behind the writing at the expense of justifying the language decisions made. This was most often evident when students chose to write personal recounts which often produced moving and sensitive pieces of writing but the writer's statements tended to focus on why they had chosen to write about that particular incident rather than explain their language decisions. Other common errors were to describe the research process, or simply restate what they had written in each paragraph without making any reference to the language techniques they had employed.

Many students recognised the importance of the writer's statement and had used it to analyse several language techniques. Others devoted their word allocation to illustrating how they had used one technique and then had no opportunity to discuss anything else. For example, including multiple quotations as evidence of the descriptive language that has been used in a piece of writing does not demonstrate a deep understanding of that language technique. If, on the other hand, the student explained why descriptive language was used in relation to the reader, and gave an example that accurately illustrated the point, the student could have included discussion of more techniques and written a more effective writer's statement.

## **OPERATIONAL ADVICE FOR EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT**

When presenting materials for marking or moderation, students and teachers are advised to consider the following points to ensure that work can be read easily and efficiently:

- write the question or topic at the top of each task
- font size should be at least 11 points
- line spacing should be at least 1.15
- word count should be recorded at the end of each item of work
- remove any staples that impede easy reading of the work
- teacher comments, performance standards and marks should not appear on folio pieces
- copies of the texts analysed should not be included in the folio
- student names, school names and teacher names should be removed from all folio pieces.

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