

# Legal Studies

2011 Assessment Report



Government  
of South Australia

**SACE**  
Board of SA

# STAGE 2 LEGAL STUDIES

## 2011 ASSESSMENT 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.

### GENERAL

There were 1006 students who studied Stage 2 Legal Studies in 2011. Assessments in the form of an external examination and school-based assessments were undertaken by these students. These assessment tools provided ample opportunities for students to demonstrate the required performance standards.

### SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT

#### Assessment Type 1: Folio

Most summative tasks had been adapted to meet the word count and provide opportunities for students to show a high level of proficiency against the performance standards. There were many different types of tasks used, including tests. A few samples did not adhere to the word count requirements. Teachers need to carefully plan their tasks to keep within the total word count. The use of a mid-year or trial examination as a folio task is not recommended as these generally exceed the word count. However, if used it is recommended that only the evaluation section of a trial examination be submitted for moderation. In designing assessment tasks, questions should go beyond seeking a definition. They need to include higher order questions that allow students to show evidence of the *evaluation* assessment design criteria, under supervision. Oral assessments were well done, but must also adhere to time allocations and word counts. The better assessment tasks went beyond an explanation of terms and asked students to apply their knowledge. This often occurred by using past examination stimulus questions or sections of media articles.

#### Assessment Type 2: Inquiry

The most successful inquiry tasks were those that selected an appropriate legal question, in line with the subject outline. It was pleasing to see that only a few inquiries chose topics of a social nature that did not allow students to meet the course requirements. The more successful tasks allowed students to design a research question where they could demonstrate detailed, credible research and evaluation of their sources. Too many inquiries only focused on knowledge about the research question. Students need to go beyond arguments 'for and against' and critically evaluate their topic, and link it to their understanding of the legal principles in

the subject outline. Many inquiry tasks failed to include one or more recommendations or conclusions, as required in the subject outline. The most successful inquiry tasks included strong evidence of research, synthesis, and analysis of information and opinions, and appropriate acknowledgement of sources. Teachers are reminded that they need to allow adequate class time to enable them to guide and verify the students' work.

## **EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT**

### **Assessment Type 3: Examination**

The examination provided students with ample opportunity to demonstrate their level of knowledge and understanding, communication and evaluation of the legal principles, and processes as required in the subject outline. This year there were two major changes to the content of the subject outline; firstly, the removal of the 'Relationships and the Law' topic from the course, and secondly, a stronger focus on the *evaluation* of key legal principles and processes in relation to the Australian Legal System, in the assessment design criteria.

There was no overall change in the format of the examination, which comprised compulsory Part A: Short Answers (60%), and Part B: Extended Responses (40%) where students could choose two questions from the eight options provided.

The need to apply the *evaluation* assessment design criteria in this new course resulted in questions requiring greater critical analysis of legal principles in Section 1 of Part B: Extended Responses. Section 2 required students to evaluate a key statement and use examples to support their evaluation. With this greater emphasis on *evaluation*, the short answer questions were designed to be more streamlined, with each of the four short answer questions covering each of the four topics in the subject outline.

#### **Part A: Short Answers**

All questions in this section were compulsory. Overall, the responses presented an improvement on previous years. Students performed best in Question 1 on Law-making and in Question 3 on Justice Systems. For Question 3, 72% of the responses were awarded a score above 10 out of 15 marks, with 13% of students achieving full marks. For Question 1, 65% of responses were awarded a score above 10 out of 15 marks, with 12% achieving full marks.

Students also responded well to Question 4 on Constitutional Government, with 62% of students gaining a score above 10 out of 15 marks and 12% of the cohort attaining full marks.

Only 43% of candidates achieved greater than 10 out of 15 marks for Question 2, with only 4% gaining a perfect score. The most successful students in this question were those who were able to answer parts (e) and (f) accurately. Successful responses demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the parliamentary stage of law-making and the operation of our federal system of government.

Markers suggested that there was a high number of attempts to answer questions in Part A. Markers also noted that students have taken up the advice of previous Chief Assessors, by showing they are more aware of the meaning of directive terms (for

example, 'identify', 'suggest', 'describe', 'outline', and 'discuss'). The less successful answers suggested that students lacked the knowledge and understanding of some aspects of the course. Students are encouraged to thoroughly learn all of the content in the subject outline.

### **Part B: Extended Responses**

In general, the responses to these questions proved more challenging for students. This section focused on the *evaluation* assessment design criteria. The more successful students chose carefully to maximise the opportunity to demonstrate that they could critically analyse and evaluate the question selected.

In Section 1, Questions 5 and 6 were the most popular and the ones where students demonstrated the greatest success. For Question 5, 64% of the students obtained a score of 13 marks or more out of a possible 20, with 23% of students achieving more than 18 marks for their response to Part 1.

For Question 6, 62% of the students obtained a score of 13 marks or more out of a possible 20, with 14% of them achieving more than 18 marks.

Question 7 and Question 8 were poorly answered. In order to be successful, students needed to include greater factual detail and show evidence that they could critically analyse. The most successful responses discussed a range of legal principles in relation to the question asked and made some form of informed judgement about the effectiveness of each.

In Section 2, Question 9 was the most popular question, with nearly 70% of students choosing it. However, popularity did not necessarily transfer to a high level of success. 11% of students received a mark greater than 17 out of a maximum of 20 marks. 47% of students who answered Question 9 received a mark above 13 out of 20 marks.

Question 10 was less popular, with only 3% of students choosing the option and the responses often failed to show adequate knowledge and understanding.

Question 11 was answered most successfully. 27% of students were awarded 17 or more out of a possible 20 marks and 62% of students received greater than 13 marks.

Question 12 had a success rate of 36% of students receiving 13 marks or more out of a possible 20, and 8% of students were awarded more than 17 marks.

### **OPERATIONAL ADVICE**

The majority of schools submitted the moderation materials requested. Only a few schools failed to submit all tasks, or give explanations for assessed student work that was missing or students who had been given special provisions in their school assessment. Teachers are encouraged to make sure that their approved SACE Board of SA Learning and Assessment Plan, and any Learning and Assessment Plan addendum, as well as a set of all tasks are included. Mark schemes are also useful.

Moderators are more readily able to confirm teacher's assessments when cover sheets on the summative tasks provide greater detail of the assessment conditions and specific assessment design criteria being addressed.

Legal Studies  
Chief Assessor