

Outdoor Education

2013 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
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OUTDOOR EDUCATION

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.

Forty-one schools offered Outdoor Education with a total enrolment of 463 students.

Schools used their natural environments and the skills of the teaching staff to develop interesting programs that assisted students to develop practical skills while also reinforcing the theoretical components of the subject outline.

Students who achieved at high levels in this subject displayed extensive evidence of reflection and analysis in all components and demonstrated a high level of understanding of the subject content. This reflection, analysis, and understanding is less evident when students produce short responses that are heavily based on secondary sources or diary-type journal entries that do not address the assessment design criteria.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Moderators noted that a variety of assessment tasks were presented for moderation. Well-designed tasks gave students the opportunity to provide their evidence in a range of assessment modes such as written tasks, tests, video, multimedia, and oral presentations.

When students were given tasks that enabled them to display skills of understanding, application, communication, and evaluation they were able to achieve well in this component. Students who were less successful focused on a small selection of the specific features within the assessment design criteria. It is important that tasks are designed in such a way that students have the opportunity to provide evidence against all assessment design criteria and that tasks include provision for high levels of evaluation, analysis, and reflection. Tasks that allow students to provide responses that demonstrate depth are usually those with a relatively small number of questions or parts to the task. This reduces the likelihood of responses becoming superficial.

It was pleasing to see tasks with suitable word limits. The 30% externally assessed investigation has a maximum word-count of 2000 words; therefore, it is reasonable to expect that students could display evidence of understanding, application, communication, and evaluation in fewer than 2000 words in coursework tasks. In fact, many students perform better in shorter, focused tasks in which they are encouraged to provide evidence against a few specific features in depth rather than

just recalling facts and observations.

Moderators noted that tasks which are directly related to course topics, environmental studies, planning and management practices, sustainable environmental practices, and leadership and planning allow students to provide evidence that moderators can confirm more readily. In some tasks it was difficult to detect the link between the task and the subject outline. It should also be noted that students are not permitted to use coursework tasks that have been assessed in the practical performances associated with the group or individual practical components. An example of this is when students have completed a risk management plan in the folio section and have used the same plan for their group practical or individual practical.

It is important that moderators are able to readily access any oral and multimedia presentations that are presented for moderation together with evidence of marking against the criteria. The document Preparation of Non-Written Materials (found on the Outdoor Education minisite under Assessment > Advice on Preparing Stage 2 Materials) provides useful information for this.

Assessment Type 2: Group Practical

The group practical component continues to be the foundation of Outdoor Education programs. Students have again generally performed well in this component. It is the practical nature that attracts most students to this subject. It was pleasing to see a wide range of journeys and locations used, with students enjoying worthwhile and rewarding experiences and linking these journeys to coursework.

The majority of teachers are now using the practical knowledge and skills checklists, as required by the subject outline. These checklists are available on the Outdoor Education minisite. Most teachers are running expeditions that met the criteria of three days minimum during the first semester. If students are unable to demonstrate some of the indicators on the checklist, there should be valid reasons why these are not assessed. These reasons should be reflected in the overall assessment of the student, and should be explained in the notes section. Teachers are encouraged to include written comments on the pro forma as this provides feedback to the student and also allows the moderators to gain a better understanding of the ability of the student.

At least one of the journeys must be of a lightweight and nodal nature. Where possible, the students should be involved as much as possible in the planning of these journeys as preparation for their individual journey in Semester 2. It should be clear to the moderators what part of the planning students were involved in before the trip, including the location and the route followed.

Where teachers are assessing the assessment design criteria of 'Investigation and Critical Analysis' or 'Reflection and Evaluation', there needs to be student evidence of these criteria in the material submitted for moderation. It assists moderators to see how this evidence has been assessed by teachers.

Assessment Type 3: Individual Practical

All students should keep a planning folio and this should be submitted as evidence for final moderation. It should be clear to the moderators which tasks were allocated to each student. Students who performed well in this component displayed thorough and well-documented planning, with clear evidence that they were responsible for all aspects of planning of their allocated part.

In addition to evidence of detailed planning, high-achieving students displayed a meaningful evaluation and reflection in their report, with insightful emotional and cognitive responses throughout. When providing evidence of their evaluation and reflection, these students did not simply use a diary of what they did, but instead provided a critical analysis of the planning, risk management, and running of the expedition.

The reflection is one of the final pieces of work for the year and thus it is a good opportunity for students to show what they have learnt throughout the year. They should be encouraged to look carefully at the questions they have been asked in conjunction with the performance standards on which they will be assessed, so that their responses show critical analysis and reflection. The report must be a maximum of 1500 words if written or a maximum of 6 minutes for an oral presentation, or the equivalent in multimodal form.

In this assessment component, as with the group practical, it is important that teachers use the SACE-approved practical knowledge and skills checklists, and they are encouraged to write comments to allow moderators to get a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the students.

The individual practical should allow high-achieving students to plan and conduct the expedition in a self-reliant manner with minimal input from the teacher. For safety reasons, students must have experience in the chosen activity from the group practical or from previous years. Teachers need to shadow their students while they complete the individual practical, and should use checkpoints, meeting points, and communication systems to ensure the safety of their students. These will help teachers to validate their grading of the student's journey.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Investigation

Markers commented favourably on the standard and range of environmental issues investigated. It was evident that students who clearly identified an issue that created debate and was directly related to an expedition were able to complete their investigation well. It is strongly recommended that students and teachers work together before deciding upon the issue to be investigated so that the question that is selected allows the student to meet all assessment criteria.

In the better investigations, students used an appropriate range of primary data sources including observations and photos taken while on an expedition. These were then used as the foundation of the student's report. These students also included material from appropriate and relevant sources and clearly linked their findings to secondary data. They were prepared to consider a range of perspectives and management strategies while examining these critically.

Their reflection clearly articulated emotional and cognitive responses and made a genuine connection to the issue and the environment they travelled through. It is important that the students succinctly present their analyses, conclusions, and recommendations based on the findings of their investigation and not get caught up in over-using secondary data, as this can limit students' performance against the assessment criteria.

Tables, images, graphs, and visual materials were used effectively and were usually referenced correctly. They supported the analysis and discussion without introducing new data or being used as way of topping up the word-count.

The more successful investigations were well structured with the use of subheadings that defined the topic being discussed and demonstrated a clearly stated investigation process. High quality investigations also used referencing either from expert opinions or secondary data throughout the investigation.

Each student's investigation must use the generic cover sheet (found on the Outdoor Education minisite under 'Forms') and include a word-count.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Moderators commended those teachers who prepared their student materials for submission following the guidelines in the subject operational information.

Teachers are advised to consider the following:

- Include clear task sheets for each piece of student work. This gives moderators an understanding of what the task involves and how it is assessed against the performance standards. Tasks should be clearly labelled, not just numbered task 1, 2, 3, etc.
- Include the approved learning and assessment plan. If changes are made to assessment items in the approved learning and assessment plan, then the addendum must be included with the moderation materials.
- An assessment spreadsheet for the class which separates the assessment for course work, outdoor journeys, and/or self-reliant expeditions enables moderators to confirm assessments more readily.
- Include a complete set of summative tasks for each of the students identified in the sample as specified in the subject operational information.
- Practical knowledge and skills checklists should be used for both practicals *and* tasks, and should show which specific features will be assessed and what the assessment conditions are.
- The specific features to be assessed and outlined in the learning and assessment plan should correlate with the specific features that were assessed in the tasks given during the year unless the addendum has been completed.
- A Variations — Moderation Materials form must be included if students have been given special provisions, or if their materials for final moderation are incomplete. If student work is missing and no valid reason is provided, moderators must assume that the work was not completed and adjust their moderation decision accordingly.

- As outlined in the subject operational information, the external investigation should not identify the school or any students or teachers.
- The subject operational information should be consulted closely. This document can be found on the Outdoor Education minisite under 'Planning to Teach'.

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