

Nationally and Interstate Assessed Languages at Continuers Level

2013 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

NATIONALLY AND INTERSTATE ASSESSED LANGUAGES CONTINUERS LEVEL

2013 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

The Nationally and Interstate Assessed Languages at Continuers Level Chief Assessor's report provides general information and feedback about the school assessment component and the oral examination for Arabic, Armenian, Bosnian, Croatian, Dutch, Filipino, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Khmer, Macedonian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Sinhala, Swedish, Tamil, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Yiddish at Continuers Level, relevant for SACE students.

The report gives an overview of how students performed in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. The report provides information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards and the quality of student performance.

For information and feedback regarding the written examination, please refer to Assessment on the subject page of the SACE website.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

In general, evidence of student learning provided for moderation purposes displayed a good quality of student performance, successful application of learning requirements, assessment design criteria and performance standards as set out in the Nationally Assessed Languages Continuers Level 2013 Subject Outline.

It was evident that teachers who had familiarised themselves with the Stage 2 subject outline and school assessment requirements had prepared their students well and based their assessment decisions appropriately on the performance standards.

To give opportunity for students to achieve potential, teachers are encouraged to pay attention to task design. Tasks should be clear and assessment conditions appropriate. Clear and comprehensive task sheets with easy to follow descriptions often provided opportunities for students to perform at all levels of the performance standards, including the highest level.

Overall, responses which successfully demonstrate the performance standards to a high level are relevant, create the desired impact on the audience, demonstrate highly developed sophisticated control of language use, and show insightful interpretation, analysis, evaluation and reflection on own values and practices.

For students to be able to demonstrate their learning at the highest level it is advisable for them to be exposed to a variety of different tasks to express their own ideas and the opportunity to focus on evaluation and reflection.

Assessment Type 1: Folio

The folio is made up of three different assessments: Interaction, Text Analysis, and Text Production. Schools have the choice (as stated in the learning and assessment plan) of asking students to complete between three and five assessments for their folio, including at least one of each of the above assessments. Most schools chose to complete five assessment tasks (one interaction task, two text analysis tasks, and two text production tasks).

Most teachers designed appropriate tasks for this assessment type which provided students opportunities to demonstrate that they had met the performance standards.

Interaction

An interaction assessment task has to give students an opportunity to interact with others to exchange information, ideas, opinions, or experiences in [Language].

The most popular styles of task in the oral assessment were conversations, interviews and PowerPoint presentations followed by responding to questions. If a presentation or talk is chosen as the interaction task, please note that it is important that students have the opportunity to respond to questions, to demonstrate specific feature E3, 'Use of strategies to initiate and sustain communication'. This must be done within the time limit of 5 to 7 minutes.

The most successful students demonstrated a clear idea of the purpose, audience and context of their interaction, and this understanding influenced the way the interaction was structured and the language that was used. They also demonstrated competence in the Ideas and Expression assessment design criteria by expressing opinions in response to open-ended questions without using a script or over-relying on pre-rehearsed questions.

It is important for an appropriate interlocutor to be engaged in the interaction tasks, so that students are given the opportunity to expand on answers, encouraging personal responses and free expression of ideas.

Generally, interaction tasks were recorded clearly. However, where the interaction is presented between students, such as a role play or interview, it is imperative that the students are clearly identified on the recording.

Marking schemes based on the performance standards were well used.

Text Production

Grades allocated in the text production tasks were by far the most consistent. A variety of tasks were presented to students and they were designed to meet all levels of the performance standards. Good tasks clearly articulate the context, purpose, and audience and the text type for production, as well as the kind of writing (e.g. descriptive) the students are required to produce.

The subject outline allows for a range of assessment conditions, and the length for a text production is not prescribed. However, teachers are encouraged to clearly identify their conditions (e.g. test conditions, drafted tasks) and word limits.

Text Analysis

The text analysis was the assessment type with most variation. Students need to analyse sufficient text(s) to show that they can perform at the highest level of the performance standards. Teachers must ensure that the assessment design criteria, as outlined in the assessment task sheet and in the learning and assessment plan, have been assessed. Specific feature IR2, 'Analysis of the language in texts' would most logically be assessed by a text analysis assessment task, yet some students were not given the opportunity to address this specific feature through a text analysis task. Questions should be designed to give all students the opportunity to perform at all levels of the performance standards.

Good design of the assessment enables students to analyse linguistic, cultural, and stylistic features as well as to evaluate cultures, values, and ideas in texts. The text analysis is an opportunity to demonstrate learning of interpretation, evaluation and reflection. This is an opportunity for bilingual skills to be developed and insights into language and culture demonstrated. An outcome is the smooth move between [Language] and English – a vital part of language education; it is also considered part of language and literacy.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

The in-depth study allows students to demonstrate research into, and personal reflection on, an aspect or aspects of a topic— preferably one that the student is interested in — and present a Written Response to the Topic in [Language], an Oral Presentation in [Language], and a Reflective Response in English.

The majority of schools managed this very well and students achieved a high standard. The best responses showed clear evidence of research and were elicited using a clear set of guidelines in the task description.

This year's in-depth studies generally included a broad range of topics which allowed students to showcase the diversity of learning and interests. Students successfully demonstrated their knowledge, skills and understandings.

Tasks should be designed carefully so that students are guided in their research and are able to extract, interpret and analyse relevant information from various sources.

Students need to be supported in designing tasks for the Written Response and Oral Presentation, which although based on the same topic, have a different purpose, context and audience, and are supported by evidence of research, interpretation and text analysis, and preparation.

In general, opportunities for students to perform at their highest level need to be provided through the process of selection of an appropriate, challenging topic. A possible question for the students to consider before deciding may be 'What will I learn from this in-depth study?'

In Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study, a time limit is set for oral tasks (Oral Presentation in [Language], and Reflective Response in English, if presented in oral format). A number of oral tasks were substantially longer than this. Teachers and students are advised to keep within the time limit as anything longer than this cannot be considered when assessed or moderated. Similarly, the written tasks for the In-

depth Study have a prescribed word limit, and anything over the limit is not assessed or moderated.

An Oral Presentation in [Language]

The stronger oral presentations had a specific focus and did not rely heavily on notes, presenting an interesting and relevant aspect of the research. One issue that was of concern was that some students presented a written piece which was almost identical to their oral presentation.

In this assessment students demonstrate the capacity to present ideas, opinions, information, and experiences in [Language] on the aspect of their in-depth study. Teachers are reminded to clearly specify a context, purpose, and audience for the assessment.

Students who achieved a high standard in the oral presentation in [Language] task were able to present or discuss the process and findings of their in-depth study research in a spontaneous and independent way without over-reliance on reading from a script. Successful oral tasks demonstrated analysis and comprehensive knowledge, supported by opinions on the topic investigated.

Interaction, for example responding to questions, is not a requirement of this task. Discussion of the in-depth study topic takes place as part of the oral examination. A individual presentation is the most appropriate task format.

A Written Response to the Topic in [Language]

The stronger responses for written response in [Language] analysed findings from a variety of sources and synthesised information. Better responses correctly referenced quotes and the ideas of others and were then elaborated in the student's own words.

Teachers are reminded to clearly specify the purpose and audience, the text type for production, and the kind of writing required (e.g. persuasive).

A Reflective Response in English

Most reflective responses met the required word limit and contained reflection on culture, language and the learning process. Students would benefit from careful guidelines in the task description, including suggestions about what they need to address in order to write a good reflective response. In some examples there was a paragraph or two where students reflected on their learning, but then lapsed into a recount of the information they had in their [Language] written response.

For the reflective response in English, the most successful students obviously had a clear idea of what they wanted to achieve in this assessment. They focused on certain aspects and elaborated in detail with reflection on their learning. Less successful responses did not have a clear purpose other than to present some general information of the topic or simply describe the process of their research. The reflection requires personal deep thinking; it must not be a recount or a narrative.

The in-depth study, in principle, will enable the students, at the end of the research journey, to reflect on new findings. It may lead her/him to a change of mind, to an

adjustment of beliefs. The reflection of the whole in-depth study is definitely not merely on the methods of how to look for suitable resources, but how the thinking has changed, any learning that was new or surprising, or challenged their own values or beliefs in relation to the topic. Therefore, a topic that the students already have a deep knowledge of might not provide for such opportunity.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Examination

Oral Examination

The oral examination of 10–15 minutes comprises a conversation and a discussion of the student's In-depth Study.

Section 1: Conversation

In the conversation, students converse with the examiners about their personal world. Topics covered typically include life, family and friends, home, local environment, school, hobbies, interests, aspirations, and travel. Most students performed with confidence in this section, and demonstrated thorough preparation and familiarity with the language. The best responses contained not only information, but also the students' impressions and opinions.

The most successful students provided extensive, relevant responses to the questions asked. The majority of students' responses were fluent, and many students addressed the questions with confidence, providing relevant answers. They were able to move the conversation forward confidently, displaying a good command of the language and a rich and extensive vocabulary, handling unpredicted questions well. These students also readily clarified, elaborated on, and justified their opinions and ideas and paid particular attention to pronunciation, intonation, stress, and clarity.

Most students were able to discuss a wide range of topics. A few students appeared to have difficulties in expressing their ideas or thoughts, and they needed some prompting with their answers. In some languages, although responses were relevant and correct, there was a lack of depth when the students were asked to expand upon their views and opinions. In addition, some responses in some languages indicated that students had difficulties with finding appropriate words and expressions.

The accuracy of language used by the students was mostly very good. The language was usually appropriate and correct with minor mistakes which did not impede meaning or alter the context. In some languages, grammatical mistakes seemed to stem from students directly translating English language structures into the language or using English pronunciation of words.

Many students displayed a good capacity to maintain the conversation; asking questions and asking to repeat or explain questions. If they happened to make a mistake they were able to correct themselves in an appropriate manner.

Hungarian (continuers)

Most students handled the conversation very well. The majority of students understood the questions and provided satisfactory and relevant answers to most questions. The depth of the responses varied and depended largely on the ability of the students to express themselves in Hungarian. Topic openers were handled better than follow-up questions. Some students needed questions rephrasing rephrased or repetitive repeated prompting to elicit comprehensive answers. Students should be provided with ample opportunity to practice speaking in Hungarian to ensure that they are prepared for the conversation part of the oral examination.

Section 2: Discussion

The discussion section of the oral examination relates to the In-depth Study where students are required to discuss a topic that they have researched at length — one that relates to an aspect or aspects of a topic associated with ‘The [Language]-speaking Communities’ or ‘The Changing World’ themes. As part of the discussion, students may be asked questions relating to reflection.

The level of preparedness for the discussion varied across languages and between students. In some cases there were obvious signs of insufficient research in the chosen topic. There was some concern about the choice of topics which did not always lend themselves to reflection and analysis of cultural values and ideas, which is one of the expectations of this part of the examination. Teachers are advised to help students to select a topic that is relevant to ‘The [Language]-speaking Communities’ or ‘The Changing World’ themes.

Many students were very well prepared for this part of the examination. The range of topics was wide, and included famous people, art, history, places worth visiting, festivals, events and traditions.

Students who chose their topics wisely and researched them at length, were thoroughly prepared and were able to maintain and advance the discussion appropriately and effectively. They maintained the discussion and used the texts and resources studied to support their ideas and opinions, often demonstrating insight into their topic. They demonstrated a sound knowledge and appreciation (sometimes even enthusiasm) of their topic and were skilled in expressing and elaborating on ideas and opinions. They had also mastered the linguistic elements of the language and used an excellent range of vocabulary and grammatical structures effectively.

The stronger responses were clear and thorough with a depth of information. These students had the appropriate vocabulary and grammar required to discuss their topic with ease resulting in an interesting discussion. During the discussion it was evident that many students knew their topic in depth and were therefore able to provide concrete examples, facts and statistics. The students were able to analyse, compare and draw often independent conclusions from the information. They were able to use the collected information which means that they were very familiar with their topic and had the skills to convey the information successfully.

A number of students were able to formulate and share their own reflections and in the case of some topics they were able to express their own evaluation of events or their emotional attitude to them, and how the researched theme impacts on the local [Language]-speaking Community. They were also able to reflect on their learning effectively.

Many students were able to refer to the sources of their information and it was evident that they evaluated the sources' credibility. Some also referred to their own or their relatives' experiences as part of their oral bibliography of sources. Some students took the opportunity to speak about objects brought to the examination.

The language used was for most part good, accurate and fluent. If mistakes took place they were of a similar nature as in the conversation.

The in-depth study outline forms were used well.

Hungarian (continuers)

While it was obvious that all students chose a personally relevant topic, the ability to reflect on their own learning was varied. The better discussions were those where the students could demonstrate their understanding of their chosen topic by using appropriate vocabulary and topic-specific terminology. Topics related to 'The Hungarian-speaking Communities' were handled better by the candidates than topics from the 'Changing World'. Some topics from the latter often seemed to lack any in-depth research, and reflections were either superficial or difficult to place in the context of changing values.

Written Examination

For information and feedback regarding the written examination, please refer to Assessment on the subject page of the SACE website.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

All student work and supporting materials are to be submitted as required. Where student work is missing, a 'Variations in Materials' form should be provided.

There is no need to submit the supporting materials, e.g. the texts studied for In-depth Study, the draft of the written tasks, and so on. Evidence of students' learning will only be looked for from the assessment tasks.

It is vital that moderators are able to access and hear the oral, as there is at least one oral task within each assessment type. Teachers should refer to the SACE website about preparation of non-written materials, and submission of electronic files, and submit work in accordance with these instructions. Discs should be checked to make sure that all orals are able to be accessed by moderators.

A CD/DVD for each student with oral tasks in a separate file (not in a continuous single file) is a good option for presentation of audio files. An alternative is to have a folder of tasks for each student on a single CD/DVD. In either option, students' identification (i.e. SACE number) should be indicated clearly for each audio file.

A copy of the Learning and Assessment Plan should be included with each school package, together with a complete set of task sheets. If there have been changes in the Learning and Assessment Plan since it was approved, the addendum should be completed.

When submitting the final grade for the assessment type, teachers are advised to check their calculations or determination of the grade carefully, to avoid any clerical errors.

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