

Workplace Practices

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
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WORKPLACE PRACTICES

2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessor's reports give an overview of how students performed in the 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 COMMENTS

Workplace Practices attracts a diverse range of students all involved in an array of VET courses or workplace contexts and teachers are to be commended for their work with these students. Most teachers designed a course with a general focus in order to meet the needs of this diverse range of students. Tasks were general in nature, but encouraged students to choose an industry focus for their course. A small number of schools developed a course designed to meet the needs of a specific cohort for a specific industry need, such as sport and recreation, information technology, or aquaculture.

It was noted that students who had an industry focus for their studies did particularly well in the subject this year. These students were able to demonstrate progression in their learning over the semester or the year, and to show an understanding of the skills relevant to their chosen industry.

Students who undertook a VET course often demonstrated the most significant learning when they completed work experience in conjunction with their VET as part of the performance. It is also important to note that VET units of competency can be used to provide a context for folio tasks, but cannot replace one of the tasks.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

In 2012, the school assessment component was subject to a moderation process. Much of the work submitted to moderators was confirmed. The most common reasons for adjustment are outlined in this report against the assessment types.

For some assessment groups, moderators noted several variations to the submission requirements for Workplace Practices;

- Submission of formative as well as summative work for students. Only work for tasks listed on the approved learning and assessment plan should be submitted for moderation.
- Too many tasks assessed in comparison with the guidelines for the number of tasks as stated in the subject outline. For a 10-credit subject, students should provide evidence of their learning through four or five assessments, including

the external assessment component. For a 20-credit subject, this range is seven or eight, including the external assessment component.

- A lack of evidence of the specifics of each assessment task as designed by the teacher to guide students' work. Task sheets should provide clear direction to students about the work expected of them and how it will be assessed against the performance standards; this information also enables moderators to confirm results more readily.
- Omission of the approved learning and assessment plan. The subject operational information for Workplace Practices (available on the SACE website) specifies that teachers should include in the moderation materials an approved learning and assessment plan, with an addendum if applicable.
- Student work missing without use of the 'Variations — Moderation Materials' form: when work is missing and no valid reason is provided on the form, moderators must assume that the work has not been completed and adjust assessment decisions accordingly.
- Some students' external tasks were included with materials from the school-assessed component. The subject operational information provides the details of when and how the external component should be submitted for assessment, and these should be followed carefully.
- Word-limits applied to school-assessed tasks; students penalised for exceeding a word-limit. The subject outline does not specify word-limits for the school-assessed assessment tasks; word counts in these tasks should only be provided as guidelines for students.
- Tasks submitted using multimodal methods were more successful when audio/visual evidence or comprehensive teacher notes were provided. Teachers should ensure that the multimedia can be fully and readily accessed by moderators; this includes ensuring that the soundtrack is audible. Further advice about preparation of non-written materials and submission of electronic files can be found on the SACE website.
- Students reflection tasks sometimes submitted twice, that is, in the both Assessment Type 2: Performance and Assessment Type 3: Reflection. This did not allow students to correctly show their Knowledge and Understanding in Assessment Type 2 and was effectively double dipping.

Assessment Type 1: Folio

The scope of the tasks designed for the folio component was varied and often derived from the topics described in the subject outline. Schools that used topics from the subject outline (e.g. Area of Study 1, Topic 4: Finding Employment) were clearer for moderators to understand. Some negotiated topics enabled students to address local issues and industry-specific knowledge.

Highly scaffolded and step-by-step tasks did not provide as much opportunity for students to demonstrate their Knowledge and Understanding or Investigation and Analysis at higher levels of achievement as more open-ended tasks.

Reflection must be assessed in the folio component and students were enabled to perform at the highest levels when they were given tasks that allowed them to reflect on their own learning and evaluate themselves and their workplace or industry. This provided opportunities for thorough, insightful, detailed, and considered Reflection and Evaluation.

Tasks that were designed to suit the student's workplace experiences provided the most meaningful learning opportunities and allowed students to achieve at the highest levels.

The assessment design criterion Application is not specified by the subject outline for folio tasks, and teachers are reminded that it is preferable to focus on the three specified criteria.

Assessment Type 2: Performance

The performance component relates specifically to the workplace-related activities that students undertook, with student evidence of learning in these activities assessed with reference to the Knowledge and Understanding and Application assessment design criteria.

The majority of students undertook either vocational learning in a workplace, using work experience, structured work placement, volunteering, or part-time work, and some took part in high-level performance programs or undertook VET units of competency.

Students were enabled to address the assessment design criteria for this assessment type, and so to perform at the highest levels, when they were given ample opportunity to demonstrate this knowledge through a variety of means, such as a journal, an oral discussion with the teacher, or photo stories with explanations. Where students provided no evidence of their learning it was difficult to assess these criteria.

Some teachers provided scaffolding in a booklet style for students to use to report on their workplace learning. This can be useful for some students but may also restrict achievement for others, especially if this discourages detailed and informative responses. However, in some instances, VET competencies were the only evidence supplied to support students' evidence of learning. In these instances, there was insufficient evidence of Knowledge and Understanding, and Application at the higher grade bands. For example, competency alone does not necessarily demonstrate a student's comprehensive, perceptive, or insightful Knowledge and Understanding of the vocation.

When student evidence was not provided, the grade recorded is not automatically an 'I' (Incomplete), because the criterion of Application can often be assessed by the teacher.

The occasional use of pre-2011 forms from the Work and Vocational Studies subjects did not allow evidence of student performance to align well with the performance standards in the subject outline. It is important that teachers use the forms provided each year on the SACE website to report on students' work.

In cases where a students' VET Statement of Attainment or an academic record from an Registered Training Organisation (RTO) is not yet available, schools may verify achievement in a letter signed by the principal.

The most successful students included evidence of their Knowledge and Understanding and Application in three forms:

1. student evidence of their learning in a journal, portfolio, or other format, where students addressed the Knowledge and Understanding criterion
2. a Teacher's Report on Student Performance — Vocational Learning or Teacher's Report on Student Performance — VET, where the teacher clarified their grade and informed the moderators about the student
3. a Workplace Supervisor's Report or VET Statement of Attainment/academic record from an RTO.

Forms are available on the SACE website.

Assessment Type 3: Reflection

For a 20-credit subject, at least two reflections are required. For the 10-credit subject, at least one reflection is required. Moderators noted that in some instances only one reflection was provided for students undertaking a 20-credit subject, and that it covered a single industry or workplace focus. This disadvantaged some students, as the requirements of the subject outline were not fully met. In these instances, students were not able to demonstrate depth in Knowledge and Understanding or to provide thorough and insightful evidence of Reflection and Evaluation. Also, in these instances, evidence of Investigation and Analysis did not demonstrate performance at the higher grade bands; that is, as being perceptive (A) or well-informed (B).

It was evident to the moderators that students were able to achieve at higher levels when the reflection tasks allowed them to self-evaluate — not just to evaluate their workplace or industry, but to evaluate themselves and their relationship to that workplace.

For students who undertook the 20-credit subject, the most successful students in Assessment Type 3: Reflection were those who reflected on two very different vocational experiences or had two different focuses, such as a personal reflection and a workplace reflection.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Investigation

In 2012, the externally assessment was subject to an external marking process.

The majority of students chose to complete an issues investigation, while fewer chose the practical investigation across the 10-credit and 20-credit variations of Workplace Practices. Approximately 85% of the investigations were presented as written reports although, increasingly, there is a trend towards multimodal forms of presentation, including photographs of students working and their finished products (particularly in the practical investigation). Where multimodal presentations were used, the students who performed the best were those who had both written (e.g. PowerPoint or Prezi) and an oral component, with a final Reflection and

Evaluation on their learning, rather than a reflection on the style of presentation. Students must ensure that any presentation is fully and readily accessible to markers, including an audible soundtrack.

Effectively designed investigations clearly offered the students the best opportunity for achievement at the higher levels. Students who chose a practical or issue investigation from their chosen industry generally engaged at a more meaningful level with the work and the investigative process.

For the issues investigation, students who were asked to demonstrate their understanding and investigation of an issue important to their chosen career performed far better than students whose issues investigation had no context. It was also noted that issues worded in a way that demanded debate and a response were generally more successful. For example, a question such as 'Does shift work negatively impact on a person's quality of life?' allowed students to demonstrate learning across the performance criteria far better than a topic such as 'The pros and cons of shift work.' It is also important to note that many topics such as 'How do I become a manager?' or 'Why is this brand so recognisable?' are not appropriate as issues for the investigation and do not allow students to effectively meet the performance standards of this subject.

Students were also able to meet the performance standards at a high level when they focused on local, national and/or global issues related to their chosen industry, rather than personal issues related to their own life.

Task design for the practical investigation was most effective when students were allowed to demonstrate their skills in an individualised task related to their chosen career. Heavily scaffolded practical investigations did not give students the scope to investigate, demonstrate, analyse, evaluate, and reflect on their learning. It is also important that students complete a practical investigation of a real product, service, or task. Students who only described how they would plan, make, deliver, and evaluate a product or task were unable to demonstrate learning in either Investigation and Analysis or Reflection and Evaluation if they did not put their plans into action. The most successful investigations provided evidence of the student's engagement in the process of completing the practical. This included videos, photographs, and feedback from relevant people. Students and teachers should also distinguish between a practical *project* and a practical *investigation*.

The assessment design criteria used for the investigation are Knowledge and Understanding, Investigation and Analysis, and Reflection and Evaluation. These were used in varying degrees depending on the type of task undertaken.

Knowledge and Understanding was generally well demonstrated by students in both the practical investigation and issues investigation. The most effective responses were from those students who were able to link their practical demonstration or issues investigation to their chosen industry focus. Markers found that students who provided this context more readily met the A and B grade bands of the performance standards for this criterion.

Investigation and Analysis was demonstrated with varying levels of success, with the most successful being students who demonstrated the personal relevance of their investigation to their career. In the most effective investigations, students demonstrated investigation from a wide range of sources, including secondary (books, journals and internet) and primary sources (such as interviews, surveys, questionnaires, and students' own experiences). The use of primary sources enabled

students to demonstrate insightful analysis because the analysis was based on personally relevant information. When students directly referred to their research, their ability to demonstrate effective Investigation and Analysis was greatly increased, for example, 'Talking to the manager enabled me to better understand...', 'From my surveys it was clear that...', or 'Source Two clearly demonstrated that...'. With secondary sources, students who presented the information and explained the significance were more successful than those who simply presented the information as they found it. For example, when using statistics on employment, students were most successful when they demonstrated an understanding on what they meant and the impact this might have on their own career.

Students who used both primary and secondary sources also performed to a higher level when analysing the relationships between a range of work-related issues, tasks, or practices. For example, students undertaking practical investigations demonstrated perceptive and well-informed analysis when people related to the task (e.g. employer, trainer, guests) were able to provide operational advice and feedback that could be followed through and analysed. Without this, the students are simply demonstrating a task with no investigation or analysis taking place.

An understanding of the 'dynamic nature' of workplace issues, tasks, cultures, and environments was problematic for many students undertaking a practical investigation, but was met most effectively when the student completed some initial investigation into their product or service they intended on producing or demonstrating. For the issues investigation, students who used a range of resources to help inform their own decisions were the most successful.

Students met the final assessment design criterion of Reflection and Evaluation with varying degrees of success. The more successful students did more than just summarise their findings and provide a brief reflection on the process or their learning. Practical investigations in which students researched, investigated, and undertook to produce a product or replicate a task or service in the workplace provided scope for students to reflect on and evaluate their own work. Practical investigations where students *imagined* how they would undertake a task, but did not actually complete it, did not provide an opportunity for students to meet the performance standards for this criterion, beyond some cursory reflective description or attempted evaluation. Issues investigations that incorporated Reflection and Evaluation throughout the report were more successful than those that provided a small reflective paragraph at the end of the report or presentation. With issues investigations, those responses that had industry relevance and that were meaningful to the student provided the best possible opportunity for significant Reflection and Evaluation.

Students are to be reminded that it is important they adhere to the word-limit for the investigation.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

For work submitted for moderation, it was noted that the more successful students were those who received ongoing and meaningful feedback from teachers. This also enabled the moderators to confirm grades that were awarded. A number of teachers submitted work without comments, appropriate forms, or marks against the performance standards. This made it difficult to confirm the student grades. Teachers are reminded that moderators do not mark student work.

For Assessment Type 2: Performance, it is essential that the current forms, available on the Workplace Practices page of the website, are used and filled in appropriately to ensure that evidence of student learning is provided to the moderators. This includes the Workplace Supervisor's Report and the Teacher's Report on Student Performance. Any students using VET for their performance must also have evidence of the completion of their units of competency. Where these are not yet available, a letter from the school principal verifying the completion of the relevant competencies is required.

For the external investigation, the subject operational information indicates that the school number and students' SACE registration numbers must be used instead of school and student names. It is essential that all work is de-identified of student and school names. It is also required that teachers do not put marks on the student work, including comments, ticks, grades, or ticks on the performance standards. Also, teachers should direct students to adhere to the word limit for the external investigation.

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