2019 Society and Culture Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the previous year’s assessment cycle, gives 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, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

With the move to online submissions, teachers should consider including the task sheets, an indication of performance standards and the allocated grades in with individual assessment tasks. Teachers should also consider converting files to pdf format where graphs, multiple text boxes and images are used to ensure work is clear and readable on all platforms. It is strongly recommended that teachers should submit the learning and assessment plans (LAPs) on the new form, and upload it with task sheets in the teacher materials section. Considering the nature of the subject, teachers should consider updating tasks or the sources of the task to reflect the contemporary focus of the subject.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: **Folio (50%)**

Student work for this assessment type was generally of a high standard. The majority of students completed four written responses and there were some good examples of multimodal tasks undertaken by students. Students were more easily able to achieve at the high levels of the performance standards when completing tasks that allowed them to develop and demonstrate skills of social inquiry and include evidence from both primary and secondary sources in their responses. Students were also more likely to achieve in the higher grade bands by undertaking tasks that offered choices, for example in the issues to be investigated, and by completing tasks that promoted an in-depth investigation and critical analysis of issues. Whilst a number of students were restricted by a lack of diversity in task types, such as completing a series of reports, or predominantly tasks with short answer questions, it was pleasing to see many students were provided with opportunities to vary the format of their responses in this assessment type.

With the shift to digital submissions, it is important to use the free text of the file submission to aid in clarity and to align the tasks with the LAP. This could either be done with keywords connected with the LAP, e.g. ‘Multicultural Australia’, or numbering the folio tasks, for example, ‘Task 1: Youth Culture’, specifically if there are two folio tasks that fall under the same topic or grouping. Previously, student’s name on tasks assisted moderators, however with the move to online submissions, names cannot be seen; therefore should be identified by using the student SACE numbers.

The more successful responses commonly:

* specifically addressed the nature and causes of social change (KU2), as well as power structures (IA2) directly related to aspects and/ or issues in society
* had well-scaffolded task design which allowed for structure and focus, while allowing for variation and individuality
* used contemporary issues that engaged and motivated students (KU1)
* cited and used primary and secondary quality sources effectively, with a strong emphasis on synthesis (EC1)
* used sophisticated levels of language and extended vocabulary, as well as subject-specific vocabulary (EC2)
* had a variety of perspectives that appropriately acknowledged sources and relevance to the aspect or issue in the topic (EC1)
* had clear student’s voice particularly when using different perspectives (IA1)
* allowed for variation of the mode of delivery across the folio, so students had the choice to present their work in ways that suited the task and their voice.

The less successful responses commonly:

* focussed too much on the narration about the historical aspects of the issue instead of the social change (KU2)
* failed to utilise the use of primary sources or did so superficially (IA1, EC1)
* sat too far outside the scope of the subject without much focus on the SOR performance standard, and more as coursework for other subjects such as English, Legal Studies, Religion Studies, and Health
* lacked referencing (EC1)
* surveyed cohorts were too small or narrow to be used as reliable data, e.g. own class, year level (EC1)
* were overtly scaffolded which restricted variation of student responses
* had poorly written tasks that do not allow students to demonstrate their capability.

Assessment Type 2: **Interaction (20%)**

There are two components for the Interaction: Oral and Social Action. Evidence of both elements must be included and files clearly and appropriately named.

Overall, teachers need to ensure that videos, songs, or articles that are used allow students to highlight a contemporary issue which can be related to and discussed from a student’s local and/or community perspective (CL1).

It is important to note that the oral assignment is a separate assessment from the group task. Even though the task might be connected to the topic, as under the subject outline, evidence of students’ orals needs to be included. Although orals may be done in groups, students are individually assessed; therefore, clear identification should be included if more than one student is talking in the same file. The teacher should consider visual recordings to assist with this.

With regards to the technical/operation aspects, teachers are advised to name the individual files particularly to use the file naming conventions, for example, naming the files as ‘Oral task’, ‘Oral task 1’, ‘Social action’ etc. instead of using student names or codes. If student work has images, graphs etc. consider converting the file to pdf so that work can be viewed on varying platforms.

The more successful responses commonly:

* provided explicit evidence of the performance standards, especially the collaboration (CL1, CL2, Cl3)
* did action research before starting the social action which was included in the submission (CL2)
* gave clear evidence of the specific roles of each group member (CL1, CL3) and provided evidence of exploration and inquiry into a chosen topic or issue, as well as planning of social action, including the individual roles of group members (CL1)
* considered innovative practices to raise awareness of and/or implemented social action (CL3)
* analysed the researched information and personalised responses (CL3)
* included feedback sheets for the audience/ community to evaluate if a presentation, expo or activity was used as a part of the social action (CL1)
* included a discussion on the effectiveness of the group and suggested improvements (CL1)
* discussed the contemporary issue investigated along with an evaluation of the group processes, for example, group life and roles, both group and individual reflections (CL1)
* articulated well the content knowledge by using sophisticated persuasive language
* addressed an appropriate/ relevant audience.

The less successful responses commonly:

* failed to explain the purpose of the social action or evaluate the effectiveness of social a which limited the impact and/or effectiveness of the task (CL1, CL2)
* provided a general recount of what the group did and not the individual members’ contributions (CL3)
* lacked evidence related to interaction and oral components (EC2)
* included only the reflection as evidence of group task
* provided a script without any other support material
* was an overlay of a folio task instead of an oral task which needed to be a separate task
* had superficial content.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

Overall the quality of the investigations has been of a good standard. There was a wide range of contemporary topics covered. The better Investigations tended to be topical and local, such as issues related to ambulance ramping, the treatment of emergency service personnel, abuse within nursing homes, social media and its impacts on or more aspects of society, the legislative and ethical debate of pill testing, Uber and the taxi industry, and the role of e-scooters in the city. Some old favourites, for example, youth depression and teenage drinking were not handled well. A number of Investigations looked at attitudes towards Muslims and Muslim clothing, the effects of detention on asylum seekers, often inclusive of the Muslim perspective through secondary research and/or through interviews. A few topics were not local or Australian, which led to difficulties with accessing sources, particularly primary data. Other popular topics were cyberbullying, cyber safety, medical marijuana, a variety of indigenous issues, body image (male and/or female) and NO Jab, NO Pay. Some Investigations were highly relevant to the author, such as aged care in the local community, working with disabled students in the workforce; and integration into Australian society.

The more successful responses commonly:

* had thoroughly defined the topic or hypothesis that was not generic with well-designed and effective focus questions that were carefully worded, unambiguous, well-structured, and built-in different perspectives and social change. Also, avoided prejudging the issue when choosing the focus questions with strong student voice which offered authentic views supported by primary and secondary sources
* organised their investigations by breaking the main body into three to four key sections using the focus questions as headings to allow for clarity, guidance and analysis. Arguments were well-developed within paragraphs
* used a wide range of carefully selected sources which included both reputable primary and secondary materials which were reliable, valid and relevant with contrasting opinions (EC1). An attempt was made by almost every student to undertake primary research and discussed it in their investigations. When primary sources were used such as survey or/and an interview, students were generally able to acknowledge the possible unreliability of the survey, although there was less scrutiny of the interviewees. Considered a range of stakeholder perspectives with local, national and international aspects or situations. Reference lists were accurate in their acknowledgement of primary sources
* demonstrated ongoing analysis of the research findings where pertinence information was pinpointed, discrepancies discussed and an overall finding was made clear
* used up-to-date sources with consistently accurate referencing both in-text and in a reference list. Also thoroughly cross-referenced the sources, particularly primary and secondary sources
* used material that was contemporary that featured current social issues often recently featured in the media instead of too much delving on the historical aspects
* reflected on the research by identifying weaknesses and strengths and synthesised the ideas, and conclusions offered suggestions/recommendations for possible future action and predictions. Also included were proposals and critiques of the likelihood of materialising the action and how they might impact or impacted the people/ community
* demonstrated sound communication skills including topic and subject-specific terminology and showcased the ability to focus on a core set of aspects or issues related to the topic
* revealed close working with the assessment criteria and a knowledge of the recommended format. Research issues were well-planned and showed evidence of an openness to unexpected findings
* showed a good understanding of the mechanisms of change and the implications (KU2)
* used well-labelled and relevant images, graphs etc. to support arguments in the body of the text
* considered the impacts on different groups by explicitly explaining the interest groups (i.e. not referring just to society as a whole)
* were proofread for expression, spelling and grammar and met the word count.

The less successful responses commonly:

* generalised society as ‘people’, therefore not able to showcase knowledge and understanding of the aspects that create a society as a whole
* had too many words spent on the methodology which could be used for the discussion. Also, used a large portion of the investigation answering closed questions, for example, “What is x?”, rather than focusing on ‘Why?’ and ‘How?’ questions
* showed that knowledge and understanding of the nature and causes of social change (KU2) was not explicit
* showed an unnuanced approach to the chosen issue which led to ambiguity in the discussion which also suggested a lack of forethought, understanding of the complexity or scope that could be covered in-depth within a 2000 word report
* demonstrated assumptions about the topic rather than knowledge and understanding based on research. Often overlooked contradictions that emerged from the findings or the data used. Also, wrote what should happen or advice directed to the reader without acknowledging who suggested the change and how current social/ cultural factors affected by it
* selected easily available online sources which questioned the reliability and/ or validity and how these sources could be connected to the topic. Often information from the sources were used at face value without much understanding
* used note format and/ or included the survey and interview questions in the body of the report without incorporating the findings into the text
* selected topics that often led to biased reports, for example, teenage depression or alcohol abuse that the writer already felt an authority on before undertaking research which led to a limited scope of perspectives. This is not to say students cannot complete their investigations on such topics, but that students who felt strongly about a topic tended not to be impartial and veered quickly into persuasive or unsubstantiated findings
* worded the focus questions that prejudged the result of the research findings
* had difficulties with basic expression and organisation that led to the impediment of meanings and disrupted the coherence of understanding
* over-relied on secondary sources or if the primary source was used, the community/ school-based surveys/ easy-to-gather surveys was the only primary source selected (for example from school teachers or counsellors). Often these primary source/ data has no connection to the topic
* had topics based on a statement rather than a researchable question which hampered the ability to go deep into the topic. Often the investigations described or gave a recount with little to no focus on interpretation and analysis
* failed to utilise the allocated word count to tease out discussion and analysis. The majority of the investigations were between 1000 to 1400 words and would have benefitted from an additional focus question or case study. A number of investigations spent too many words instead of one or two sentences on copious definitions, relayed what a graph showed without any analysis/explanations
* did not follow the provided structure, leading to limited evidence of KU2 and KU3. At times there were too many subheadings, beyond the three or four resulting in a lack of depth and analysis
* used American and European sources to discuss issues related to Australian focus without making adequate connections/application to the local Australian context
* included sections out of the subject scope, for example, discussing the metabolic impacts of drugs/alcohol used on the body without connecting to the research questions. Also, predominant was topic/s related to the environment which was more suited to Geography. Topics related to the environment can be a topic area, but the investigation should emphasise the social and/or cultural perspectives and impacts rather than scientific or environmental impacts
* covered topics that were not especially current.