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Cross-disciplinary Studies

2015 Chief Assessor’s Report

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## 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.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Commentary

It is critical that the task design allows students to meet the performance standards that are being assessed. Students were able to achieve in the higher grade bands where commentary tasks were well designed to allow students to clearly address the performance standards. It is important that students are aware of the specific features that they are being assessed against and these should be visible on the task sheets. Where students were able to address the specific features directly and link their understanding to the learning interest, they achieved higher grades.

When designing tasks, teachers are encouraged to take advantage of the variety of ways in which students can demonstrate their learning. Teachers are encouraged to leave feedback on tasks to support where they see the evidence for the grade they are giving. Moderators find written comments and highlighted performance standards very useful in supporting the student evidence.

Assessment Type 2: Group Project

This assessment type is designed to assess each student’s ability to work collaboratively in a group to plan, organise, and implement a group project that focuses on a learning aspect of the content. Students must be given the opportunity to collaborate in the decision-making process and to share responsibilities in responding to the project. It is essential that students have the opportunity to individually reflect on their contributions to the task. Students need to clearly identify and describe their individual role within the group project. Students should have the opportunity to reflect on their group project and their role in the group. Teachers should safeguard against changes to a student’s group and have strategies in place to ensure the student is not disadvantaged. In some cases it may be appropriate for the student to work with the teacher in order to complete the task.

Successful students were able to demonstrate their collaboration skills in a range of situations and to reflect in depth on their learning relative to the learning interest. They were then able to apply their knowledge and understanding to solve problems and develop further questions in relation to the relevant disciplines.

Teachers need to ensure that task design provides opportunities for students to complete the task to a high standard and so should allow students to demonstrate comprehensive analysis and evaluation. The collective outcome, individual outcome, or a combination of both needs to be evident to the moderators. Some group project outcomes were not obvious, which made moderation difficult. In instances where evidence is submitted electronically, it is important to clearly identify the students involved.

Assessment Type 3: Presentation and Discussion

Teachers should ensure that recorded presentations and discussions have accessible audio. As identified in the subject outline, each student should be assessed individually on the discussion, regardless of whether individual or group discussions are conducted. This provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the learning interest and evaluate their own learning.

The first part of this assessment type requires a presentation of student learning and this took a variety of formats, allowing students to share their learning in creative ways. Although most students presented their learning through an oral presentation, there were some students who enhanced their presentation with videos, performances, or products. It is important that all presentations are recorded and all electronic evidence is provided for moderation. Teachers must also ensure that each student is clearly identified.

The second part of this assessment type requires the teacher to participate in a discussion with the student. The discussion involves the teacher asking questions to allow students to demonstrate evidence of learning against the performance standards. When teachers used the discussion section of this task effectively, they were able to draw out more information and evidence of learning, thus allowing students to further develop their coverage of the performance standards. The discussion should be recorded and the recording must be provided for moderation. The students who completed the discussion successfully were able to reflect in depth on their learning relative to the learning interest.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Analysis

A range of analysis tasks were presented for this assessment type. Teachers provided a variety of stimuli for students to respond to, including previously viewed videos or articles, and issue responses, as well as unseen short-answer and extended-response questions. Teachers are asked to ensure that only 60 minutes is permitted for each analysis task.

Task design continues to be an important factor in the external assessment. Teachers are encouraged to use open-ended questions and so provide students with the opportunity to explore the learning interest in detail and apply their knowledge and understanding. This maximises the students’ chances of meeting the performance standards at a high level. It is vital that teachers design questions that provide students with adequate opportunity to meet the specific features assessed by this assessment type. The students who achieved higher grades often had more opportunities to express their knowledge, generally through extended-response questions. Students who were required to respond to mainly short-answer questions were not able to reach the performance standards at a high level, as the task did not provide opportunity for students to answer in detail. Students need to have a clear understanding of what their learning interest is so they can articulate and analyse using their discipline knowledge.

The weighting applied to questions is also important. If only one question is used to address a particular specific feature, and a student does not manage to answer that question due to time constraints, then the student may be disadvantaged. Teachers are advised to provide questions that address more than one specific feature, and to spread these throughout the paper so that students who do not manage their time effectively are not disadvantaged. Students should not be assessed on a marks scheme, but should be assessed against the required specific features of the performance standards, namely KU2, A1, A2, and AE1.

Teachers are reminded again that they must ensure they include an answer sheet for each analysis task with their external assessment to support the marking process. They are not required to attach one to each student’s work. When students are completing a written analysis, a dark pen colour is encouraged, as light colours can be hard to read. Teachers are reminded not to write comments or mark student work in any manner for the external assessment.

## Operational Advice

School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers. Teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators. Teacher grades/marks should be evident on all student school assessment work.

For moderation of school assessment material, teachers are reminded to package student material to include an approved learning and assessment plan with an addendum if appropriate, and a complete set of task sheets for all assessment types. Teachers should ensure that the disciplines are clearly identified on the front of each task and that each task is clearly labelled with the assessment type.

Teachers are reminded that for external assessment, each student’s work should be identified by student registration number and that no teacher comments or marks of any kind should be made on these submissions.

Teachers should ensure that video and audio material is submitted according to SACE Board advice on preparing Stage 2 materials.

## General Comments

Students who achieved in the higher grade bands were able to clearly demonstrate an understanding of their learning interest through an integration of the disciplines being covered. Teachers are strongly encouraged to highlight this integration in the development of their learning interest and assessment plan and task deign.

In tasks that assess specific feature KU3, ‘knowledge and understanding of the relevant capabilities’, it is important that teachers identify the capabilities on the task sheet. Those students who were able to address the capabilities directly and link their understanding to the learning interest were successful. In tasks that assess specific feature AE3, ‘analysis of and reflection on the student’s own learning’, students should be given the opportunity to reflect on their learning throughout the task. It is critical that the disciplines being addressed are clearly stated on all task sheets, as this assists both students and moderators.

Written comments on school assessment work that identify the specific features being addressed and highlight student evidence against the performance standards are useful for confirming grades.

Finally, when teachers are developing or evaluating their program, they are encouraged to ensure a strong learning interest is evident. Some programs were primarily an extension of material already provided within other Stage 2 subjects and needed to demonstrate explicitly the disciplines being drawn on and the learning interest being developed.

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