2020 Psychology 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 to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Investigations Folio

This assessment type requires students to complete at least one group investigation and one individual investigation using SACE approved research programs. Students typically produce two written reports of a maximum of 1500 words each (excluding the 250 words proposal) for a 20-credit course, and they are viewed as a set. Students develop proposals, analyse and interpret data to form conclusions, evaluate research approaches and discuss research ethics relevant to the investigation. Teachers are encouraged to support students research interest when selecting a research focus so long as it is within the bounds of the research program. Materials for this assessment type were appropriately submitted for moderation, except when tracked changes were used, as the use of track changes can be confusing for moderators.

The more successful responses commonly:

* included discussion on the effectiveness of the group and suggested improvements
* analysed the researched information and personalised their response
* clearly explained the intent of the investigation in the introduction, including what data would be used and how it would be used to test the hypothesis or address the research question
* appropriately displayed data, including graphing and table conventions, in accordance with the intent described in the Introduction
* discussed a range of realistic improvements that were appropriate and provided clear explanations about how each improvement would improve the quality of the findings
* provided evidence to demonstrate initiative in applying constructive and focused approaches
* interpreted results accurately and provided a systematic and in-depth discussion of the evidence leading to the formulation of logical and highly relevant conclusions
* discussed research ethics specific to each investigation
* used psychological terms effectively and communicated ideas concisely and clearly.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not include a maximum 250 word proposal, or proposals were inadequate
* provided too much or too little data, or repeated measures of central tendency unnecessarily, making the interpretation of the evidence and ability to form adequate conclusions difficult
* provided data analysis that was not discussed or relevant to the investigation aim (such as calculating standard deviation but not discussing it in the report)
* used inaccurate or inappropriate graphing conventions such as inaccurate scales
* included raw data or calculations in the report unnecessarily
* did not follow SACE approved research programs
* repeated similar and/or generic ideas for both investigations, particularly in the discussion of research ethics and evaluation of the sample used
* exceeded the word count [up to a maximum of 1500 words (excluding the proposal and quantitative and qualitative data) or provided very brief discussions in sections
* discussed ideas in general terms rather than relating specifically to the research program used
* discussed data that did not appear in the result section of the report
* could not clearly differentiate key evaluative terms such as reliability and validity
* included large sections of the report that are not required such as excessive background information or excessive reference to other research conducted.

Assessment Type 2: Skills and Applications Tasks

The number of tasks submitted in this assessment type varied and included a mixture of tests and assignments. Most tasks were completed by the students electronically, including timed tasks such as tests, allowing students to practice for the end of year examination. Providing the minimum number of tasks could allow students to demonstrate high levels of achievement. Electronic submission of materials for moderation was generally easily accessed, although some tasks could have been clearer for moderators, such as test layouts. Some tasks were not submitted, and when this is the case, the Variations form must be appropriately completed and submitted with moderation materials.

The more successful responses commonly:

* included timed tasks that was of a similar style and structure to the end of the year examination
* provided evidence from a range of assessment design criteria and included a range of different tasks
* demonstrated the varied ways students can show their learning and skills
* provided detailed responses with appropriate use of psychological terminology
* appropriately acknowledged information from a wide range of sources and explicitly demonstrated how sources of information have been critically and logically selected in assignments.

The less successful responses commonly:

* came from tasks that didn’t align with the knowledge and skills covered in the SACE Stage 2 subject outline
* relied too heavily on previous examination questions, when adapted and diverse questions are preferable
* responded to sets of tasks that were only made up of tests
* provided very brief responses, especially in tests
* used only few sources of information, or cited unreliable sources of information in research type assignments
* primarily demonstrated evidence of the knowledge and understanding criteria with limited evidence of the analysis, and evaluation and application assessment design criteria.