

Nationally and Interstate Assessed Languages at Background Speakers Level

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
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NATIONALLY AND INTERSTATE ASSESSED LANGUAGES BACKGROUND SPEAKERS LEVEL

2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

The Nationally and Interstate Assessed Languages at Background Speakers Level Chief Assessor's report provides general information and feedback about the school assessment component and the oral examination for Japanese, Korean, Malay, Persian and Russian at Background Speakers 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

To give opportunity for students to achieve their potential, teachers are encouraged to pay attention to task design. Tasks should be clear and assessment conditions appropriate.

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

There are three assessments in this part: interaction, text production and text analysis. Most teachers designed appropriate tasks for this assessment type which provided students opportunities to demonstrate that they had met the performance standards.

Interaction

The most popular styles of task in the oral assessment were discussions, interviews and multimedia presentations followed by responding to questions. Use of a diverse range of topics and styles such as discussions, interviews, forums or debates may give further opportunity for students to demonstrate their capacity to interact with others for the purpose of exchanging information, opinions, and ideas in [Language].

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*).

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 *Ideas* and *Expression* assessment design criteria by expressing opinions in response to open-ended questions without using a script or over-reliance on pre-rehearsed questions.

The less successful students used mainly rehearsed general information on the topic, with less analysis of the topic. Some students need more confidence and preparation to respond at some length to unscripted questions and comments.

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.

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

Responses were more successful when they were based on a specified contemporary issue and focused on one text type. This provided opportunity for formative preparation, with explicit focus on the language and structure relating to this text type. Successful responses were achieved when the question was more specific than 'write an essay on...' or 'write a response to...'.

The most successful responses met the task requirements of:

- addressing an issue as specified in the subject outline. It appeared less sufficient to provide, for example, a recount of a film, or information on a topic without considering different perspectives
- conveying opinion about the issue, as well as providing information. The better responses were from students who were able to use information and ideas arising from the text(s) to form and express their own opinions.

Sometimes students had difficulty in creating texts in which they expressed ideas, opinions, and perspectives on contemporary issues. Students will benefit with more exposure to a wide range of texts and clearly specified assessment task: a 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.

A variety of text types was seen, covering a range of different contexts. Many responses were written appropriately and concisely, addressing the conventions of the text type. Revision of different forms of writing and scaffolding may help students do their assessments with confidence.

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

It is important that students are given the opportunity to fulfil the requirements as set out in the subject outline. Some good text analysis tasks allowed students to compare the perspectives, ideas and opinions in the text/s on the topic so that students were able to demonstrate their competence in the assessment design criterion *Evaluation and Reflection*.

Students will benefit practicing and developing skills in contrasting information, opinions, perspectives, and ideas in texts and also in drawing their own conclusions. Most students responded to question/s in their own words and with appropriate textual references to support their opinions. In the less successful responses, students identified the key issue but were not able to incorporate examples from the text/s effectively in supporting their own views.

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

Students are required to carry out an In-Depth Study of a contemporary issue of their choice. While it is appropriate for teachers to advise on suitable issues, the In-depth Study must be a product of independent study. Where a teacher chooses the topic of the in-depth study, then each student should research a different aspect of the topic. All students must undertake an individual study, and develop their own ideas, opinions, and perspectives, supported by evidence of research, text analysis and evaluation, and planning and preparation.

Students who focused on a specific topic which was of interest or relevance to them generally had more success. Some students chose broad and general topics, making it difficult to demonstrate the specific features of the assessment design criterion *Ideas* to a high level.

It is important to note that the three assessments should differ in context audience, and purpose.

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.

Topic Choice

Teachers are encouraged to discuss proposed topics with students in detail. For example, Tourism in this context is not about descriptions of the landscapes, but considering issues such as the impact of the travellers on the living environment and

everyday life of the local people. Another example is a mere description of a cultural festival is irrelevant to the expectations of an in-depth-study; students should provide evidence of the development of their own ideas, opinions, and perspectives.

To assist with meeting the requirements of the In-depth Study, a procedure such as outlined below may be negotiated with students:

Step 1: Selection of appropriate topic – themes and contemporary issues/topics
Students, supported by the teacher, should carefully consider their proposed topic for the In-depth Study, ensuring it is relevant to the list of themes and contemporary issues/topics in the subject outline.

Step 2: Checking resources
Another consideration in the selection of a topic is the sources of information accessible to the students. It is important that the range of texts includes a variety of contemporary sources, with different perspectives presented in different text types. A range of different texts should be selected for analysis, so that students can explore their topic in sufficient depth. At least three of the texts should be in [Language]. In practice, it would be appropriate to reconsider the topic chosen, as early as possible, if no relevant resources can be found.

Step 3: Assessment tasks
Time lines are set up for the three required assessment tasks – Oral Presentation in [Language], Written Response to the Topic in [Language], and Reflective Response in English. It is important to note that the three tasks are to differ in context, audience and purpose.

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?’

An Oral Presentation in [Language]

In this assessment students demonstrate the capacity to present ideas, opinions, and perspectives 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 issue investigated.

A Written Response to the Topic in [Language]

The stronger Written Responses 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. Responses were less successful when presented as a series of quotes without attempts to analyse and evaluate the information, ideas or perspectives.

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

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 or perspectives, 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 issue. 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

In general, most students were well prepared for the oral examination, demonstrating knowledge and skill in exchanging and explaining information, opinions, and ideas in spoken [Language]. Most students performed well and displayed a good knowledge and understanding of their In-depth Study. They interacted confidently with the examiners and were prepared to share the knowledge gained from their research.

In discussions pertaining to their research, some students demonstrated an awareness of issues of reliability and validity of internet resourcing. Some students considered the experience equipped them with the capabilities to succeed in their tertiary studies as well as to operate in a knowledge based global economy.

Stronger responses successfully created the desired interest and impact, engaged the audience, expressed complex ideas and elaborated in detail with in-depth, well-informed analysis of contemporary issues/topics. Some students produced sophisticated observations and conclusions. Most of the students' answers were consistently accurate and appropriate in terms of expression. Those students who showed insightful reflection on their own values, beliefs, ideas, and practices performed better.

A variety of different and interesting topics were chosen for the in-depth study. The in-depth study outline forms were used well.

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 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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