

Home Economics

2010 ASSESSMENT REPORT

Health and Personal Development Learning Area



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

HOME ECONOMICS

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GENERAL COMMENTS

A total of 392 classes offered study in either 2-unit or 1-unit Early Childhood Studies, Food and Hospitality Studies, Nutrition Studies, and Textile Studies, with an overall subject enrolment of 4167 students. With no changes to the Home Economics Curriculum Statement for 2010, teachers were able to confirm their understanding of the subject requirements. Teachers are reminded to refer to the learning area manual for the appropriate sample of work to send in for final (central) moderation.

It was pleasing to see that teachers had embraced contemporary issues in their subject area, and had developed a range of challenging tasks for students, often with the benefit of utilising local resources to support students with practical experiences. Many Food and Hospitality Studies teachers exemplified local regional produce and showcased hospitality skills linked with their local community. The selection of innovative, appropriate, and challenging tasks provided students with valuable opportunities to demonstrate a wide range of practical skills, supported with relevant planning and research.

It is essential that teachers provide clear instructions on task sheets for students which address all assessment components using the correct learning requirements, selected areas of study, and criteria for judging performance. Feedback from teachers provides opportunities for students to gain a clearer understanding of the process of assessment, as well as supporting the development of processes throughout the year. Many teachers provided evidence of the practical application through the submission of relevant, annotated images, as well as providing feedback to students using an appropriate form.

Teachers must attach the task sheet to all samples of student work. Although packaging and labelling of work improved this year, the general guidelines for selection and packaging material in the learning area manual must be adhered to. It should be noted that only students completing single-unit subjects can be considered by their teacher for a Merit Certificate.

Teachers are required to include a summary marks sheet for the class for final moderation. Although the electronic marks sheet was commonly used, it should be noted that when using either the electronic or equivalent handwritten marks sheet, teachers must ensure the correct transfer and rounding of numbers from the spreadsheet to the official SACE Board results sheet (yellow).

Where teachers allowed students to present the action plan or evaluation report in table format, students had limited opportunity to achieve success in demonstrating the requirements of the task. Teachers are encouraged to use the SACE Board exemplars as models for writing action plans and evaluation reports to ensure that students are provided with appropriate opportunities for successful outcomes against the criteria for judging performance.

Teachers should familiarise themselves with the SACE word-count policy, as well as guidelines concerning the supervision and verification of student work, to safeguard against plagiarism.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 1: INDEPENDENT PRACTICAL INVESTIGATION

Issues selected for the action plan must reflect the task and demonstrate students' understanding of issues. A greater discussion is required in many plans to demonstrate depth of understanding, especially in relation to the area of study chosen. Students should be more discerning in their selection and discussion of key issues. In some cases teachers are following a generic format, often with the same issues appearing in all three tasks. Some teachers allowed students to select issues such as Year 12 standard and time available, rather than addressing the area of study and focusing on issues relevant to the task setting. Where the task was clearly scaffolded, students had a better understanding of issues forming the basis of the action plan. Where students had identified and discussed relevant issues linked to the identified area of study, the action plan was more successful. The implementation plans were often superficial or generic, or not even presented.

The word-count was not always identified on action plans and evaluation reports. Teachers must insist students write to the word-limit, and acknowledge that other forms of presentation allow students to achieve successful outcomes. Whatever the method of presentation chosen, teachers should use the criteria for judging performance and provide evidence of work when students use an alternative approach to the written format.

Some schools allowed students to present the action plan in table format. This style did not allow students to demonstrate evidence of a depth of understanding of issues. Teachers are reminded to familiarise themselves with the SACE word-count policy, which clearly states that any analysis required for the assessment task should be presented in the body of the text, and not in supporting tables. The marks in the 'A' band were often generous and feedback from the teacher was often inconsistent with the language in the performance standards. The use of case-studies presented too many issues for the students to address successfully, and often caused confusion for students as many of the issues were not relevant to the practical application.

The practical application must be undertaken independently. The task should be designed to challenge students with a rigour and standard appropriate for Stage 2, supporting an advanced skill level and reflecting contemporary issues relevant to the area of study. Where teachers provided detailed feedback and digital images of the practical to support marks awarded against the criteria for judging performance, moderators could validate student achievement. In some instances, it was obvious that practical tasks did not clearly reflect the issues identified in the action plan, and the marks awarded did not reflect the processes, outcomes, strengths, and weaknesses evident in the evaluation report. Some teachers did not use a holistic approach to marking the practical. However, the range of practical ideas presented across the four subjects was pleasing, mostly demonstrating challenging, relevant, and contemporary ideas.

For the evaluation report, teachers should assist students with processes to reflect on issues identified in the action plan, rather than relying on generic issues. Teachers must ensure that students make strong links between the planning, practical application, and evaluation report. Students often need support in addressing the criteria in the evaluation report, particularly when they present a description of what occurred. Where reports were successful, students were able to demonstrate clear strengths of the practical, as well as weaknesses and suggestions for improvement, and to make clear connections with issues identified in the action plan.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 2: DIRECTED PRACTICAL INVESTIGATION

Many teachers designed innovative and challenging tasks that were well structured to direct students to formulate an opinion related to the selected area of study. The more successful students supported their research with evidence of primary and secondary sources of information. Successful research tasks were carefully worded in task design, and supported students to develop an opinion within 400 words on a focused and contemporary issue. Where students were asked to develop their research from case-studies or respond to a number of teacher-directed questions, there was limited opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to express an opinion or address the criteria for judging performance successfully.

Some tasks did not provide students with an opportunity to develop an opinion, particularly where research questions were presented that were too broad or too prescriptive for the word-limit imposed. Some students were not given sufficient direction and often used too many quotes, leaving little space within the word-limit to formulate their opinion. Successful teaching of research skills should reduce the incidence of plagiarism and assist students to write concisely. Many students wrote well over the maximum word-count.

There is still concern about the use of referencing in tasks where research is undertaken. Teachers should encourage students to use recent, relevant, and local data (within Australia), and use a balance of primary and secondary sources to support the analysis of issues in formulating an opinion in research tasks. Students must support their opinion with credible sources of information, particularly when using the Internet, and document their sources in a bibliography. Teachers are encouraged to support students in the use of referencing according to SACE guidelines.

The practical application in this task must be clearly linked to the research task, and support the area of study selected. Although some practical tasks were challenging, others needed to address the selected area of research. Many teachers used appropriate documentation to award marks, using the performance standards to support the marks awarded against the criteria for judging performance. Teachers were generally creative in demonstrating new and challenging ideas in their selection of contemporary tasks. Some teachers developed tasks where students could work in pairs or small groups to complete the practical.

The most successful and in-depth investigations linked evaluation with the research undertaken, showed good connections between the practical and research, and provided analysis of issues. Some evaluation reports tended to describe the process of the practical rather than demonstrate an analysis of the decision, processes, and strengths and weaknesses. Students must identify appropriate suggestions for improvement as a result of their reflection on the task. Teachers should be aware that the marks awarded for the practical component should reflect the feedback in the evaluation report in order to justify the marks awarded for the task.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 3: COLLABORATIVE TASK

Good practice was observed in most schools, with a range of challenging tasks presented from both small and large classes. Topics selected were often quite innovative and reflected a range of contemporary issues. Many schools demonstrated clear sharing of responsibilities in the decision-making process, as this was evident in the planning and reflection on the task. Although some schools used extensive documentation to support the planning, others showed little evidence of this aspect of the task. In some cases, no evidence of planning was submitted. It is suggested that teachers provide clear guidelines

for students to support them to contribute to shared decision-making, and to take responsibility for agreed decisions and assignment of roles.

It is recommended that written evidence of planning includes identification and discussion of issues, as well as documentation of various roles for students. Some classes did not effectively document group planning. The usual word-count of 400 does not apply to the written plan for the group decision-making task. It is suggested that teachers carefully monitor the planning and roles of group members to provide accurate marking and feedback for individual students against the criteria for judging performance. Some schools were challenged when there were very few students in the class. Students of Early Childhood Studies must be aware of legal issues and current regulations when visiting early childhood centres, as well as completing the activity under teacher supervision. Teachers are reminded to select appropriate tasks for the target audience. Practical tasks commonly provided opportunities to support local events, particularly where groups were catered for. In many schools, evidence of the practical demonstrated a strong team approach, with students embracing the intentions of the collaborative task, and often expressing their enjoyment in the challenges of undertaking the task.

The evaluation process, although an individual task, was often based on the student's individual performance or feedback from the target audience with little or no reflection on the collaborative processes. Once again, teachers must be aware of the requirements for addressing the criteria for judging performance for this assessment component. Successful evaluation tasks analysed the factors affecting the group performance as well as the collaborative processes and outcomes of the task, whereas less successful reports were more narrative in style and included information such as how much the guests had enjoyed the occasion.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 4: SPECIAL STUDY

Although it was pleasing to see a wide selection of contemporary issues in 2010, the task of selecting an original, contemporary issue posed a challenge for many students and some whole classes. In the more successful studies, students developed an issue rather than presenting information on a topic, providing them with the opportunity to develop an argument in their writing and to examine their selected issue from a range of perspectives.

More students made a clearer link to a selected area of study this year, and this seemed to assist them with defining the focus of their study. Teachers must support students with close supervision of the study, and guide students with the correct structure and requirements of the study. Clearly defined focus questions with supporting and achievable topics gave students the opportunity to achieve success in their writing. Teachers should ensure that students select useful focus questions that assist them to provide opportunities for adequate discussion and analysis. Introductions that were well structured provided a clear outline of the scope of the study. Precise details regarding methodologies and sources of information assisted students to be successful.

Selecting a contemporary issue is critical in the success of the study. While many students selected current issues from the media and made a direct link to an area of study, there were still many inappropriate issues selected for the subject area. Many issues selected in Early Childhood Studies did not focus on children's growth and development, and students often struggled to make links with the roles and responsibilities of parents in the development of children. Similarly, many issues selected in Food and Hospitality did not refer to hospitality, and sometimes students selected topics based on nutrition or farming, making no clear link to the food and hospitality industry.

Where it was clear that teachers had supported students in selecting original, controversial or contemporary issues, students generally achieved success in the discussion and analysis criteria. Introductory paragraphs, on the whole, gave a clear indication of the direction of the research. Some students tended to add incidental information, making the introduction quite lengthy — occasionally using data and information that would be more appropriately used in the discussion and analysis. A clearly planned introduction is the foundation of a successful approach to the study.

Teachers are reminded to use the areas of study at the planning stage to help guide students to develop an appropriate issue. A few studies were very project-like, often caused by the narrow selection of a topic, rather than identifying a clear, well-focused issue. Students who made a clear association to an area of study developed well-defined focus questions. In some cases, students selected focus questions with very few links to the research question or hypothesis, and so had difficulty in developing an argument or addressing their selected issues in the discussion and analysis.

Outlines of methods of enquiry were often brief, demonstrating little preliminary research. In some cases methodology was not documented in the introduction. The poor use of suitable primary resources was a disappointing feature of many studies. However, many students were creative in accessing information through email or blog-type sources. Reliance on the Internet was very strong, and often formed the basis of evidence for some students. This approach limited students' ability to examine the material for relevance and bias.

A great deal of factual information was often included in the discussion without reference to sources. This often made it difficult to determine the extent of the use of supportive evidence. Where graphs and tables were used successfully, they were well presented and discussed, using data that was relevant. Many students are still using graphs directly from websites, without integrating them effectively. There were many simple pie graphs, often poorly used in discussion. Graphs showing 100% agreement with a statement were not very useful, suggesting students need clearer direction in the selection and interpretation of data rather than just presenting graphed figures. Some surveys were not relevant to the research. Students need to take care with interviews so that responses are not biased or treated as expert opinion. The more successful studies were able to include opinions and ideas from well-referenced sources and the discussion was relevant to the material researched. Teachers and students should familiarise themselves with SACE Board referencing guidelines.

Many students were able to write relevant conclusions without the inclusion of new data and quotes. However, some students wrote brief conclusions, often summarising information presented, rather than presenting a range of conclusions based on research presented.

Teachers are encouraged to closely supervise and assist students in their study from the start through to completion. Although the quality of writing was of a high standard across many schools, the lack of proofreading is often evident. Close supervision in the drafting and editing stages should eliminate errors in grammar. Teachers should carefully follow the guidelines for conducting the study, and familiarise themselves with the SACE Board guidelines relating to the supervision and verification of students' work. This would support teachers to address concerns relating to the level of intervention that is acceptable, as well as safeguarding against plagiarism. Teachers and students are reminded of the breach of rules for plagiarising material, and consequent penalties for students of this breach. It was pleasing to see that the majority of studies this year were closer to the word-limit of 2000 words, with fewer students writing in excess of the word-limit.

The timing and guidance provided to students throughout the process of the investigation is critical in terms of ensuring success. A number of students did not complete the investigation, thus limiting their opportunity to achieve success in the 2-unit subject.

Students need to take care to avoid identifying themselves, their teacher, or their school, especially through unnecessary attachment of appendixes or in the bibliography.

The more successful special studies were a pleasure to read, as they demonstrated a depth of understanding of the contemporary issue, clear communication, and a real interest in and enthusiasm for the research, while effectively addressing the criteria for judging performance at a high level.

Chief Assessor
Home Economics