

Information Processing and Publishing

2014 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: Practical Skills

It is important that teachers familiarise themselves with any changes to the subject outline each year. It was apparent that a great number of students had been assessed using performance standards dating back to 2012. In 2013 there was a change to specific feature AE2 (evaluation of text-based products and the design process used). Teachers who continued to use outdated performance standards disadvantaged students. At least one practical skills task needs to assess AE2.

It is also important that teachers regularly check their approved learning and assessment plan (LAP), ensuring that all course requirements are met, and that any changes to course requirements are addressed by the LAP. Course changes from the originally approved LAP need to be documented in the addendum and signed off by the school’s SACE coordinator.

It was evident during the moderation process that some of the sets of tasks submitted by schools for the moderation of practical skills did not meet course requirements in producing the specified number of pages with sufficient text. In a 20‑credit subject there must be evidence of at least eight A4 pages with sufficient text, and in a 10-credit subject at least five A4 pages with sufficient text. It is important in practical skills assessments where AE2 has been indicated as being assessed within the task that evidence of AE2 is provided with the product for final moderation.

Actual text needs to be used in products, not fill-in text such as ‘Lorem ipsum’. The use of fill-in text does not allow students to achieve and demonstrate at the higher levels of specific feature DA3 or provide evidence of DA1 or DA2. It is not possible to check for spelling and grammatical errors when fill-in text has been used. Task design needs to ensure opportunities are available for responses to demonstrate design and layout of text. Tasks requiring insufficient text limited the opportunities for achievement at the higher levels. It is better to have five good-quality tasks with sufficient text rather than six tasks that do not provide opportunities for students to demonstrate development and application. Regardless of the focus areas undertaken, there must be evidence of adequate text over all practical skills tasks.

Tasks from the print-based focus areas of Desktop Publishing, Personal Documents, and Business Documents need to be printed rather than submitted electronically. Moderators are not able to confirm the student’s ability to select and use appropriate hardware and software (specific feature DA1) at the highly proficient level for these focus areas when the responses are submitted electronically. These focus areas are print-based and not electronic, and therefore must be presented in their final printed format. If edge-to-edge printing is not available, it is acceptable to leave the white edges on paper (leave A4 page as it is). It is preferable to do this rather than trimming the white edges.

Responses in the practical skills that demonstrated the A grade band in the area of development and application manipulated graphics, demonstrating a highly proficient use of software. These students were given practical tasks that increased in complexity and difficulty over the course of the year. The use of pixelated graphics should be avoided.

Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis

When writing a report or essay, supporting evidence should be included in the appendix and referred to in the body of the report. This will assist students to respond thoroughly without exceeding the word-count. All tables need to be referred to and discussed in the body of a report. However, when using tables within the body of the report, there are strict guidelines set out by the SACE Board in the Word-count policy. Teachers are encouraged to ensure that they familiarise themselves with the policy, and that they provide the information to their students. (Further information is provided in the Assessment Type 3 section of this report). If the text in the tables provides analysis or argument, then it needs to be included in the word-count. Word-counts need to be indicated on each task in this section. It is important that students do not exceed these word-counts as moderators do not read past the word-count limit, and exceeding the limit may disadvantage students.

Responses to the technical and operational tasks using a question and answer format limited students’ ability to demonstrate understanding at the comprehensive level. Often questions to be answered were not open enough and therefore did not encourage students to investigate further, limiting their ability to achieve at the higher grades. It is important in this assessment component that students show evidence of U1 (understanding of appropriate hardware and software for the completion of text-based communication tasks) in the technical and operational understanding task. It is recommended that teachers use this task to assess U1.

Good task design provides opportunities for analysis and evaluation, as well as opportunities to include social, legal, and/or ethical issues. When discussing legal issues, it is best to cite Australian examples and legislation.

Social, legal, and/or ethical issues should be mentioned explicitly within the body of a report, not just alluded to, as this demonstrates understanding at the higher grades. One strategy is to use sub-headings for each issue, as this will ensure that students are explicitly discussing them. Students can address social, legal, and/or ethical issues in both the issues tasks and the technical and operational tasks, or in only one of these responses.

Responses that achieved at the higher grade levels referred back to the task scenario, addressing it wherever relevant. Many responses seen at moderation did not refer back to the task scenario at all.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Product and Documentation

All external assessments should include the SACE Board external assessment cover sheet as the first page of the documentation, clearly indicating product and documentation word-counts, student SACE number, and the school number. A task sheet should be included with the external assessment for each response, as this enables the marker to identify the requirements of the final product.

The product and documentation task is best presented in an A4 display folder divided into sections clearly marked with the headings of: Investigating, Devising, Producing, Evaluation, and Bibliography. Three-ring folders, hard-covered folders, or folders of greater size than A4 are not to be used as they are bulky and heavy to handle in the marking process. Lever-arch folders and manila folders tend to come undone, allowing work to fall out. Therefore, teachers are advised to use A4 display folders. The binding of documentation should be avoided, as adequate margins are often not provided for, which cuts off text and part of the final product. (Refer to the 2015 Information Processing and Publishing subject operational information document on the Information Processing and Publishing minisite.)

A support document for the assessment of the product and documentation is available on the minisite. It is highly recommended that teachers use this template as a guideline for marking student work. Due to the handling of external assessments, it is imperative that students place their SACE registration and school numbers on every page of their documentation, including any labelled CDs. This allows identification of student material, and enables work to be returned to the correct folder if it becomes separated.

Greater opportunities for students to achieve in the higher grade levels are possible if students are given a choice about the genre of the product, rather than the teacher prescribing the topic and providing the text and images to be used, which can hinder the application of specific feature DA3 (application of layout and design principles to the production of text-based documents or presentations). Poor task design did not provide opportunities for students to demonstrate DA3 sufficiently. In a 20-credit subject, task design should allow students to create a product with approximately 1500 words in the final product. For example, a CD cover, a ticket, or a poster do not allow approximately 1500 words.

It is important for teachers to check that there is no information on the responses submitted that would identify the student or school. This includes surveys included in the bibliography. The only identification should be the SACE registration number.

Throughout the documentation, students should be using the design principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. However, it was evident in the documentation that some students focused on design principles other than these. While the markers acknowledge that there are many design principles, it is important to remember that this course focuses on these four design principles, and these design principles should be the main ones discussed in the documentation. Students who did not annotate, evaluate, or discuss work in progress using these design principles were disadvantaged.

By only investigating one or two samples, students may be disadvantaged as they are unable to demonstrate at the higher levels of the performance standards of AE2 (evaluation of text-based products and the design process used). It is recommended that students research and annotate at least two samples for each page of the final product. For example, if the task asks for a magazine cover, contents page, 2-page spread, and an editorial, students need to annotate two samples of each of these products. Samples annotated should be based around the topic of the students’ final products. No more than ten examples for the investigation are suggested to be done by the students. When annotating samples, students must discuss and provide examples of each of the four design principles. It is not enough to write general comments about each sample.

It is important that the size of the sample that is being annotated is at least A5 in size. Small thumbnail images of samples are too small for the external markers to see what students are discussing. Once students have annotated the examples in the investigation using the design principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity, it is important that they do not write their likes and dislikes underneath the annotations. This information should be included as part of the investigation summary which is included in the word-count. Teachers are encouraged to inform their students that the summaries at the bottom of the examples pages will count towards the word-count for investigation**.**

Markers noticed that when ‘time constraints’ were mentioned in the investigation summary, some students wrote about distractions and not the actual time or due date of the assignment. Any personal reference to the student or their situation should not be mentioned in any of the summaries.

With regard to the annotations of the design principles, it is clear that the concept of proximity is generally not understood, with some students choosing not to provide annotations about proximity at all. It is important that students demonstrate their understanding of all four design principles.

Students whose focus areas are Desktop Publishing, Personal Documents, or Business Documents should not select websites to annotate, as website samples will not reflect the product that will be produced. Students whose final product is a website should be the only ones using samples of websites to annotate. When collecting samples to annotate, avoid using items such as school websites or school stationery that will identify the school.

The maximum word-count for all three summaries (investigation, devising and evaluation) should be a total of 1500 words for a 20-credit subject, and 800 words for a 10-credit subject. When the documentation word-count is exceeded, markers will stop reading at the specified maximum word-count. Students should clearly display the word count of each summary by providing it at the bottom of each of the three summaries (investigation, devising, and evaluation). External markers will not read content in the summaries once the word-count is reached. In these cases, it often adversely affected the final grade given. It is important to remember that annotations and other supporting documentation are not included in the documentation word-count.

Unfortunately, many products were significantly under the approximate word-count. A number of markers had problems with determining whether students had met the product or documentation word-counts. It is imperative that students write their total word-counts on the SACE front cover.

Students who achieved in the higher grade bands were closer to the prescribed product word-count. Products well under the approximate 1500-word count for a 20-credit subject, and 900 words for a 10-credit subject were disadvantaged. To assist external markers to verify product word-counts, it is recommended that a word dump of the product, with the total word-count, be included in the producing section of the documentation.

Hardware and software used must be listed, as well as stating their intended use and where they will be accessed. The evaluation of the selected hardware and software should be evident in the evaluation summary.

Included in the investigation summary and included as part of the word-count should be some evaluation of the samples annotated. There was an increasing trend to include evaluation of samples after the annotations. Unfortunately, these evaluations became part of the word-count and were unable to be read if the sum total of these when added to the three main summaries exceeded the maximum word-count for the documentation.

Consideration must be given at all times to the appropriate use of tables. The SACE Board Word-count policy clearly outlines that tables are not included in the word-count when the information provided in the tables illustrates or supports the body of the text giving support to concepts discussed. If content included in a table introduces a new concept or adds to the argument, it becomes part of the word-count. For example, many students used tables to annotate their own products to demonstrate AE2; unfortunately, in doing it this way, a new concept has been introduced and the text must be included in the word-count. The information in the table should be referred to in the main body of the text. Annotation of final products should be part of the evaluation summary and is included in the word count.

Design plans were generally not done well by a number of students. More detail was required that would enable another person to reproduce products directly from the design plans. One design plan per product is required. Design plans can be hand drawn or computer generated. Each plan is to be of an A4 size enabling external markers to check specifications indicated on each plan. Artwork and sketches are not design plans and they lack information regarding font styles, colours, and so on.

The devising summary needs to document and justify reasons for the choices that have been made in regard to the design and layout of each page of the products. At all times, students should use the design principles when discussing choices and selections, annotations, etc. This shows a deeper level of understanding.

Teachers and students need to be reminded that screen shots of a step-by-step process are not necessary in the devising section of the documentation. Three or four samples of work in progress using the design principles to explain changes are sufficient.

In responses that achieved higher results it was evident that spelling and grammar had been checked in both the products and the documentation prior to submitting the external task. One of the things that assist students to gain good marks in this component is having their work drafted for spelling and grammatical errors. It is important that students can spell ‘repetition’ (not ‘repletion’), ‘fonts’ (not ‘founts’), ‘border’ (not ‘boarder’), ‘definitely’ (not ‘definately’), and other key words so that they are not penalised for something that could be easily fixed before submitting work. Errors in spelling and grammar do impact on the assessment of DA1.

Students who achieved in the higher grade levels showed evidence of AE2 by annotating their own final products using the four design principles and discussing the design process undertaken in creating the final products. This was done in the evaluation summary.

Students can be disadvantaged if some of their work from Assessment Type 1: Practical Skills is used as part of their final product. Everything in the external assessment must be new work.

The use of appendices to present documentation or final products is not appropriate. An appendix should be used, for example, to include evidence of surveys.

Documentation must clearly identify the design process of investigating, devising, producing, and evaluating. It is important that the final products are clearly identified for the markers. In the marking process it was difficult at times to distinguish between works in progress and the final products.

Beginning the final product early in the year disadvantages students as they may not fully understand how to use the software they have been given to use. A number of responses indicated in the evaluation of the product that the students found it difficult not knowing how to use the software adequately due to beginning the external assessment prior to the conclusion of the teaching of the use of the software.

Adequate time must be given to students to complete the product and documentation task. It was evident that some students had only been given 2–3 weeks to complete the whole task. It is advised that, where possible, students be given 8–10 weeks to complete the task.

Surveys must be referred to in the evaluation summary, not just added at the back of the assessment task. There is no point in having them if no reference is made to them in the evaluation summary.

Image manipulation must be more than resizing the graphic. There must be clear evidence of image manipulation in the devising section of the documentation. This could include changing colours or backgrounds, cropping the image, using different effects on the image, and so on. When manipulating images for any of the print focus areas, image resolution should be set at 300 dpi rather than leaving resolution at the default setting of 72 dpi. Students who achieved at the higher levels did not use clip art but manipulated graphics and in some cases created their own.

Final products from all focus areas including Electronic Publishing should avoid the use of centre-aligned text.

Final products need to reflect the authenticity of what they are. For example, brochures or business cards should be folded and cut to size, not just presented as an A4 page. Brochures that need to be folded must be printed back to back and folded appropriately. Business cards that have a front and back should be printed back to back and cut down to size. If products are to be printed back to back, the final product should never be glued together or have elements of scrapbooking, such as ribbons.

Coloured paper should not be used when printing the final product. This is a distractor which often affects the quality of the product. If a background colour is needed, it must be computer generated as part of the design. Gluing and scrapbooking items, such as glitter and lace, are considered distractors and not part of the design when marking. All elements that are part of the design must be computer generated.

Teachers must ensure that the SACE Board guidelines regarding appropriate topics are followed. Samples collected, images, and final products must be appropriate for an audience of students under 18 years of age. Evidence of inappropriate topics or sexually explicit images was seen in some documentation and final products. These must be avoided at all times.

Thematic tasks limit the development of DA2 and DA3, as students are locked into repeating the same design.

External markers assess the external task (product and documentation) with reference to the performance standards. Teachers must not provide any evidence of their assessment in the responses submitted for marking.

**Electronic Publishing**

The following comments relate specifically to products for the Electronic Publishing focus area.

A common trend in 2014 was to include one page of terms and conditions. This page has been used to make up the product word-count. This does not demonstrate at the high level of DA3, as the text has just been copied and pasted on the page and not manipulated in any way. There also needs to be adequate text in the main body of the task.

Use of online template sites such as WordPress and Weebly limits the student’s ability to demonstrate manipulative skills and application of layout and design principles at the higher grade bands. Students are locked into the use of the widgets on these sites, limiting the demonstration of DA3. The subject operational information clearly states that templates are not to be used. Students who did use templates were disadvantaged. Markers cannot access WordPress files.

If a site is not working, markers look for evidence in dump screens, so it is important for students to include these in the producing section of their assignment. Students must have screen dumps of the final website in the producing section of their documentation. Screen dumps provide evidence of a fully functioning site and may need to be referred to if there are some elements of the site that are not functioning when it is marked. Some electronic responses included footage of the website being navigated through. This was further evidence of a fully functional website.

Individual disks should have no identifying features on them such as school logo or student name. Mark sheets should not be included on the website disk.

When marking electronic products, the external marker must be able to clearly identify the location of the index page. If this is not readily evident in the files, it is evidence of poor file management.

It was interesting to see that a number of electronic responses used Google Chrome in place of Internet Explorer as their browser. Their documentation indicated that they found they were getting fewer errors using Google Chrome.

When choosing to do a website, it is advised that more than one website should be investigated for their annotations to ensure that varying design layouts are considered.

Graphics must be inserted into the website and not be hosted on the Internet as a link. Electronic content should be created within the website. External sites that generate HTML links such as YouTube unfortunately need Internet connectivity. Students should avoid embedding this generated code into their websites, as this restricts the ability for students to demonstrate the application of layout and design principles in the production of text-based products. It is strongly recommended that this is avoided. It is better if content is downloaded and inserted rather than relying on Internet connectivity.

When setting up websites, it is important to ensure that the site can be viewed on any screen rather than a fixed resolution screen.

To help external markers in marking electronic products, teachers are asked to check the burnt disks providing the electronic products to ensure that all relevant files have been included. This would provide another check point ensuring functionality of electronic files.

## 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.

To help moderators affirm teachers’ grades, a teacher’s folder containing the following documents should be submitted for the moderation of school assessment materials: a copy of the learning and assessment plan, including a signed addendum indicating any changes; a signed Variations — Moderation Materials form if applicable; and a copy of all tasks for assessment types 1 and 2.

For moderation, teachers should ensure that each student has an individual A4 display folder containing all work that the student completed for the school assessment, and teachers should provide associated shaded-in performance standards with a clearly identified grade.

Student folders should be clearly marked with SACE registration numbers. It is preferable that the performance standard sheet indicating the assessment of the practical work is not stapled to the product, as this makes it difficult for the moderator to access work and to view the final products appropriately. A labelled CD, DVD, or USB drive of student work containing all electronic products should be included if Electronic Publishing is one of the focus areas. This CD, DVD, or USB drive should have the student’s SACE registration number and school number clearly printed on it, and should be safely contained in the folio of work.

The selected student samples must be included in the moderation sample. If there is a change to this sample, a completed Variations — Moderation Materials form must be included in the teacher’s folder to identify any missing assessments, providing a reason for their absence.

## General Comments

This year results were submitted electronically for the first time. It is important that teachers understand that these grades are initially sent to the school SACE coordinator. A few days later the school SACE coordinator will submit these final grades to the SACE Board. If a teacher realises that an incorrect result has been entered during this time, they must contact their school SACE coordinator immediately.

The school assessment grades submitted electronically for each assessment type for each student are used by the moderators in the moderation process. This year many teachers provided cover sheets for each student with final grades. Often these grades differed from the results submitted electronically. It is important that teachers realise that moderators disregard these cover sheets and use the electronically submitted results for the moderation process. Where an error is detected by the teacher after the results have been electronically submitted to the SACE Board, a separate process must be undertaken to get the results amended and teachers are advised to seek advice from their principal or delegate if they identify an error.

The teacher folder submitted for end-of-year moderation should include the approved learning and assessment plan (LAP), an addendum indicating any amendments that have been made to assessments that were originally outlined in the school component of the LAP, task sheets, and a Variation — Moderation Materials form, if the sample differs from that requested. Student work should be submitted in individual A4 soft-covered folders. A cover sheet including the student’s name and SACE registration number supports the moderation team to identify the work required to be viewed in the sample submitted for moderation.

It is evident that some teachers are struggling with performance standards. If the majority of a grade assigned sits in one particular band, with some in another, for example, mostly in the A grade with some B, then the result is an A–. As a guide to evidence of calculating grades, this example has been given:

* specific features predominantly in the C grade with evidence of some B: result is C+
* specific features predominantly in the C grade: result is C
* specific features predominantly in the C grade with evidence of some D: result is C–.

Clarifying forums will be held in 2015 for those who need support using the performance standards in making assessment decisions and in designing assessment tasks.

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