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English Pathways

2016 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.

2016 was the last year of teaching English Pathways at Stage 2. Essential English will be taught for the first time in 2017.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Text Analysis

In this assessment type students may complete three or four tasks (for the 20-credit subject). The majority of teachers this year elected to complete three tasks to provide opportunity to place greater emphasis on selected specific features. Most teachers ensured that students met the requirements of the subject outline by producing at least one of the responses in oral or multimodal form.

As always, good task design assisted students to demonstrate their learning against the performance standards. The best examples assessed one or two specific features of analysis at a time, focused on one text rather than multiple texts, and offered a range of differentiated ways to demonstrate learning.

**The more successful responses**

* Demonstrated the student’s understanding across a variety of texts types, such as: extended prose, poetry, media, film, electronic media, documentaries, cartoons, graphic novels, and speeches.
* Clearly analysed the structure and language features used in the text to achieve a purpose or present ideas in a context.
* Examined how language was being used to present a character or person in a particular way, or to present a point of view
* Contained evidence in the form of quotations and examples from the text when completing an analysis of the technique, or a discussion of an idea or concept from a text.
* Demonstrated the student’s understanding of, and ability to use, the appropriate metalanguage to define and describe the features of a text.
* Enabled students to adopt a persona or form when completing an oral or multimodal presentation.
* Demonstrated a clear structure, and accurate and fluent communication skills.
* Adhered to the word-limit and time-limit guidelines.

**The less successful responses**

* Lacked clear referencing of the sources of information used to respond to texts.
* Provided minimal analysis, such as posters and annotated imagery; these could be better supported with an oral component where the student developed the explanation and made clear connections with the point of focus.
* Were heavily scaffolded, disadvantaging students in achieving highly against the performance standards.

**General information**

It aided the moderation process when teachers made a clear delineation between the oral and multimodal form. The oral form is a presentation of information verbally (which means more than just simple reading), while the multimodal form involves the inclusion of visual, textual, and oral modes. Moderators also preferred to see evidence of oral presentations in digital form.

Assessment Type 2: Text Production

In this assessment students produced four texts (for the 20-credit subject). Most teachers ensured student success by ensuring they produced texts that achieved at least two of the three purposes stated in the subject outline: entertain and engage; persuade or communicate a point of view; or communicate observations and information. Students also met the requirements of the subject outline by producing at least one of the four texts in oral or multimodal form.

Again, good task design is important for this assessment type, as it provides opportunities for students to produce a variety of texts for different audiences, contexts and purposes. Offering students choice enables them to demonstrate their ability in areas of interest in a variety of styles, while also exploring the opportunity to develop a range of personal voices.

**The more successful responses**

* Demonstrated the student’s understanding of the specific target audience and purpose of the text.
* Demonstrated the student’s understanding of the structure and techniques used for a range of purposes and audiences across the three purposes stated in the subject outline.
* Were produced for a real-life context, such as informational and procedural texts being produced as a videocast for YouTube or a blog, enabling student engagement.
* Demonstrated a clear structure, and accurate and fluent communication skills.
* Adhered to the word-limit and time-limit guidelines.

**The less successful responses**

* Were often hampered by tasks which offered limited opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding of different forms and styles.
* Involved tasks which were too prescriptive, such has having word-limits for each section, or were prescriptive in structure and style, such as menus or recipes.
* Lacked clear referencing of sources of information used to support their productions, particularly when the purpose was to persuade or communicate a point of view, or to communicate observations and information.
* Were tasks which where procedural, such as recipes, or creating visual advertisements with a brief writer’s statement.

**General information**

Tasks which used the key word ‘advocacy’ when the task required the student to produce an ‘expository’ text did not enable students to achieve as highly against the performance standards.

Reviews produced as a response to a text, such as films or novels, often fitted more appropriately under text analysis rather than text production

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Language Study

The overall standard of language studies in 2016 was consistent with that of previous years. It is pleasing to see students coming to terms with the depth and rigour required in the language study.

**The more successful responses**

* Focused on a specific context which enabled them to discuss specific examples rather than a general overview.
* Had a tightly worded question or a hypothesis which allowed students to explore language use in a context in some depth.
* Kept a focus on the analysis of language use in the chosen context.
* Used metalanguage to explore and analyse language use in the chosen context.
* Chose a limited number of texts to analyse, for example, oral and written texts in the workplace, or two newspaper articles, or the lyrics of two song.
* Did not rely on teacher scaffolding.
* Structured their response to create a coherent argument or observation, with a conclusion that referenced their question or hypothesis.
* Used specific examples which provided a clear reference to make understanding clear.
* Used consistent in-text referencing and/or citing protocols accurately, as and when appropriate.
* Adhered to the subject outline guidelines for word-limit.
* Were carefully drafted and edited to ensure the effective communication of ideas, knowledge, analysis, and conclusions.
* Used specific quoted examples of language use in the chosen context, accompanied by analysis with reference to purpose and audience which enabled students to demonstrate analysis and synthesis of ideas.
* Analysed language use in terms of its technical, cultural, and social purposes.

**The less successful responses**

* Lacked a specific focus, and wrote on a topic rather than a question or hypothesis; for example, choosing a topic such as social networking allowed some students to discuss the pros and cons associated with the form, rather than an analysis of the language used.
* Had a question that was too broad to address in 2000 words.
* Chose a large range of texts to discuss.
* Chose no texts as examples, leading to a generalised overview rather than an analysis of language use in the context.
* Became literature reviews — students are writing a language study, not a research project outcome.
* Copied text without appropriate referencing.
* Took a recount or personal narrative approach to the study.
* Used lists of definitions rather than analysed the use of these words in the context.
* Gave examples but did not explain the use of them.
* Did not use metalanguage to assist their analysis of language use.
* Relied on plot and character discussion when using a literary text for analysis rather than language use.
* Had too much detail on background information in the opening section of the study, thus reducing the word-count available for the actual analysis.
* Defined ‘multimodal’ as paragraphs written on a PowerPoint presentation.
* Did an English Communications task.
* Went beyond the scope of a language study; for example, the language of particular types of animals and the way they communicate with each other is not within the guidelines.
* Did not do the study as an independent study.
* Did not re-draft and edit their work.
* Did not adhere to the word-limit.

This is the last year of English Pathways but many of the questions posed by students in language studies in 2016 might be of interest to teachers and students of Stage 2 Essential English in 2017. A number of questions are listed below. For reference, the language study in the subject outline for Stage 2 Essential English 2017 is described as follows (p11, emphasis added):

Students focus their study through devising a question or hypothesis about the use of language in the chosen context. They select appropriate language resources to analyse and use as evidence in their study. Students use at least *two different language resources*. These resources should be selected and evaluated for the ways in which they develop the student’s understanding of the use of language in the selected context.

* How do the McDonald’s and Subway websites use language in different ways to persuade a range of audiences to buy their products?
* How is the language used in the *Advertiser* to discuss football different to the language used to discuss similar issues on *The Footy Show*?
* How does language used in the Australian Defence Force recruitment videos attract a certain target audience?
* How do the authors of a newspaper cartoon, a Facebook post, and an Operation Sovereign Borders text use language to report on refugee issues?
* How is language used in two different makeup tutorial videos to instruct and engage a specific target audience?
* How has Nick Xenophon used language to appeal to voters in his election flier and his NXT website?
* How has the *Sunday Mail* used language to influence the audience in their articles ‘The silent tragedy of our broken veterans’ and ‘The quiet killer stalking our returned diggers’ to engage their target audience in debate?
* How has the language of cyberpunk in William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* evolved in Neal Stephenson’s *Snow Crash*?
* How language is used in the reviews of Overwatch and the Elder Scrolls: Skyrim to attract and include their specific subculture within gaming?
* How do different travel companies Topdeck and Intrepid use language in their brochures to target and engage specific audiences?
* How is written and oral language used by experienced bakers to help create a community within the workplace?

**General information**

Only include the SACE Board external assessment cover sheet with the language study. There is no need to include material other than the student work.

Students submitting a multimodal language study on a USB drive should ensure that the work can be accessed.

## Operational Advice

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

Other points to be aware of:

* It assists the moderation process if teachers make use of the LAP (learning and assessment program) addendum to provide information about changes to the course.
* Ensure that the course offered to students is in line with the requirements outlined in the subject outline.
* Ensure work is labelled correctly for moderation. This will be assisted by including clear labelling of the text and type, along with student information.
* Task sheets and teacher notes assist the moderators in establishing the decision made by the teacher.
* When student work has not been submitted for assessment, the final grade for that assessment type needs to reflect this.
* Providing clear evidence of the student’s achievement against the performance standards assists the moderation process.
* Students should adhere to word-limits and time-limits listed in the subject outline.

## General Comments

It is interesting to note that fewer students attempted the 10-credit option in 2016. Stage 2 Essential English will not have a 10-credit option in 2017.

Thank you to all the teachers who have participated in teaching English Pathways students over the duration of the course. It is pleasing to see the growth in the subject and the participation of teachers in marking and moderation panels.

As this subject transitions into Essential English in 2017, we welcome the growing and diverse range of students who will access the course and hope that it continues to provide a flexible, engaging, and accessible course for a wide range of students from different situations with diverse learning needs.

English Pathways

Chief Assessor