

# SACE Assessment and Quality Assurance of Board-Accredited Subjects Policy

## Introduction

This policy describes how student achievement is assessed and quality assured in the SACE.

## Principles

This policy is based on the following principles:

*Fairness:* The procedures for assuring the integrity of SACE assessments are fair to students.

*Transparency:* The procedures for assuring the integrity of SACE assessments are explicit and open to scrutiny.

*Cooperation and collaboration:* Schools, other learning providers, and the SACE Board have complementary responsibility for the management of procedures that assure the integrity of SACE assessments.

*Interdependence and responsibility:* The procedures for assuring the integrity of SACE assessments are based on the interconnected and complementary responsibilities of the student, teacher or other provider, school leaders, and the SACE Board in the assessment process.

*Comparability:* The procedures for assuring the integrity of SACE assessments maximise the consistent application of standards to all student assessment in all places of learning in the SACE.

*Operationally manageable:* The procedures for assuring the integrity of assessments that contribute to the SACE are operationally manageable for schools, other learning providers, and the SACE Board, and are as cost-effective as possible without compromising the integrity of students' results.

## Purposes of assessment in the SACE

Assessment in the SACE is part of, as well as an activity at the end of, the learning process. It provides valid and reliable information, giving the student and the wider community confidence that learning has been assessed consistently and appropriately against the stated performance standards.

The SACE Board recognises that high-quality assessment practices play a fundamental role in learning. It acknowledges that students and teachers use assessment information for a variety of purposes. Students, for example, use assessment information to explore their ideas, to demonstrate what they know, to reflect on and monitor their learning, and to determine areas of growth. Teachers use assessment to reflect on their teaching practice and the learning program, and to help in planning teaching, learning, and assessment activities.

The SACE assessment process emphasises the role of teachers. It places a strong reliance on the judgment of teachers, as they are best placed to make decisions about when, where, and how assessment can be used to promote student learning. Teachers make judgments based on each student's evidence of learning.

## **Assessment and key elements of the subject outlines**

Assessment involves making inferences about student achievement on the basis of the evidence available. Key elements of the subject outlines that relate to the assessment process include the:

- learning requirements and assessment design criteria
- assessment types and assessment tasks
- performance standards.

## **Learning requirements and assessment design criteria**

The learning requirements summarise the knowledge, skills, and understanding that students are expected to develop and demonstrate through learning in a subject. They focus on what students are expected to know, understand, and be able to do.

The assessment design criteria are based on the learning requirements of each subject and are used by teachers and assessors to:

- clarify for the student what they need to learn
- design opportunities for the student to provide evidence of their learning at the highest possible level of achievement

Assessment design criteria are the key elements that describe the performance standards. The performance standards for a subject are constructed using three or four assessment design criteria (e.g. knowledge and understanding, analysis and interpretation evaluation, application, and communication). Each assessment design criterion is described in one or more specific features of performance.

## **Assessment types and assessment tasks**

An assessment type consists of one or more assessment tasks designed to support the balance, collection, and organisation of evidence of students' achievement of the learning requirements. There are usually two or three assessment types for a subject at Stage 1 and Stage 2.

At Stage 1, teachers decide on the relative weightings of each assessment type for a subject. The minimum weighting for any assessment type is 20%. Teachers base their decisions on the focus of the learning program, taking into account the needs, aspirations, and abilities of the student cohort.

At Stage 2, the relative weightings of each assessment type for a subject are described in the relevant subject outline. These weightings guide teachers in designing appropriate assessment tasks (with reference to the assessment design criteria and the performance standards). The weightings are also used to determine the relative contribution of each assessment type to the overall achievement in school assessment.

Teachers design assessment tasks that enable students to meet the learning requirements of the subject and demonstrate the quality of their learning against the performance standards. Teachers use the assessment design criteria to design each assessment task. They select relevant specific features from the assessment design criteria to assess the quality of learning that students exhibit in the task.

Teachers record student achievement against each assessment type, using the grades A to E for all Stage 1 subjects and Stage 2 Community Studies, and the grade levels A+ to E- for all other Stage 2 subjects. For modified subjects, teachers assign a result of 'completed' or 'not completed' based on the student's evidence of learning. For a result of 'completed' the student's evidence of learning will

demonstrate achievement against the capabilities selected for development in the subject, and the student's personal learning goals.

## **Performance standards**

Performance standards for each subject in the SACE are designed to make explicit the characteristics that define the quality of students' learning in the subject, and to provide the means of differentiating between students' levels of achievement. The performance standards are applied to both school assessment and external assessment.

Performance standards enable the student to:

- understand what is expected at the end of a learning program
- demonstrate what it means to progress in the specified area of learning
- monitor their progress.

Performance standards enable the teacher to:

- show students what is needed to be successful in their learning
- design assessment tasks that will help students to demonstrate their learning at the highest possible level of achievement
- make decisions about the quality of learning
- provide clarity, consistency, and validity in assessment
- support high-quality teaching and learning.

Performance standards enable the SACE Board to:

- provide clarity, consistency, and validity in assessment
- ensure that decisions about the quality of evidence of learning are comparable by applying a common standard
- report on levels of student achievement fairly, validly, and reliably.

Performance standards describe five levels of achievement, A to E. Each level of achievement describes the knowledge, skills, and understanding that teachers and assessors refer to in deciding, on the basis of the evidence provided, how well a student has demonstrated their learning in a subject.

The performance standards are general descriptions of student achievement at the end of a course of study. As generalised descriptions they may not provide the detail necessary to discriminate between students' achievement in particular assessment tasks, or to give meaningful feedback to students. In order to assess the quality of students' learning, teachers and external assessors may therefore create marking schemes that incorporate the specific features of the assessment design criteria.

## **Assessment and quality assurance in Stage 1 subjects**

At Stage 1 the subject grades A to E are used to assess and report students' achievements.

### **Assessing and recording student learning**

- Teachers develop, and have approved by their principal or delegate, a learning and assessment plan for each subject that they teach. This plan describes the assessment tasks for each assessment type.

- Teachers decide on the relative weightings of each assessment type for a Stage 1 subject. The minimum weighting for any assessment type is 20%. Teachers base their decisions on the focus of the learning program, taking into account the needs, aspirations, and abilities of the student cohort.
- Teachers design assessment tasks so that students can provide evidence of the quality of their learning. The assessment tasks enable students to meet the learning requirements of the subject and to demonstrate the quality of their learning as expressed in the performance standards.
- Teachers use the assessment design criteria to design assessment tasks. Teachers may create marking schemes for the assessment tasks or assessment types. They select relevant specific features from the assessment design criteria to assess the quality of learning that students exhibit in the assessment type or the assessment task.
- Teachers determine their own manner of recording (grades or marks) for assessment types and assessment tasks, in accordance with sector and/or school policy.
- Teachers record student achievement against each assessment task and/or assessment type, using the manner of recording (grades or marks) that they have chosen.
- The results, at the level of assessment type or assessment task, are not reported to the SACE Board. The teacher and/or the school records and maintains these results.
- Teachers combine the results for each assessment type to determine a subject grade between A and E. Teachers make this decision using the weightings for the assessment types that were approved in their learning and assessment plan. Teachers who have used grades between A and E for each assessment type may use the SACE Board's school assessment grade calculator to combine the grades. The subject grade for each student must reflect the performance standards.

### **Quality assurance of Stage 1 assessments**

- The SACE Board provides online clarifying support for the Personal Learning Plan and the Stage 1 English and mathematics subjects that meet the literacy and numeracy requirements.
- Schools nominate teacher(s) to act as moderators in English and mathematics subjects and the Personal Learning Plan, as requested by the SACE Board.
- Moderators participate in online benchmarking activities and online training prior to the start of moderation, and abide by the SACE Board's code of practice.
- For the Personal Learning Plan and the Stage 1 English and mathematics subjects that meet the literacy and numeracy requirements, the SACE Board uses a moderation process of reviewing samples of student work to confirm school decisions at the C grade level.
- The subject grades for all Stage 1 subjects are submitted to the SACE Board.

### **Assessment and quality assurance in Stage 2 subjects**

For Stage 2 subjects, the performance standards describe five levels of achievement, A to E, as set out in the subject outlines. Each level of achievement describes the knowledge, skills, and understanding that teachers and assessors refer to in deciding, on the basis of the evidence provided, how well a student has demonstrated his or her learning. However, to provide a finer degree of information about the quality of learning, the student's achievements are reported on a scale using the grade levels A+ to E-. Each performance standard has three grade levels (e.g. A+, A, A-).

For Stage 2 subjects the grade levels A+ to E- are used to assess and report the student's achievement in:

- each assessment type
- school assessment
- external assessment
- the subject grade.

## **School assessment**

At Stage 2 the school assessment component is weighted at 70% of the total assessment.

In Stage 2 subjects, teachers have direct responsibility in school assessment for setting and marking assessments according to the specifications in the subject outline.

## **Assessing and recording student learning**

- Teachers develop, and have approved, by their principal or delegate, a learning and assessment plan for each assessment group for each subject that they teach. This plan describes the assessment tasks for each assessment type.
- Teachers design assessment tasks so that students can provide evidence of the quality of their learning. The assessment tasks enable students to meet the learning requirements of the subject and to demonstrate the quality of their learning as expressed in the performance standards.
- Teachers use the assessment design criteria to design the assessment tasks. Teachers may create marking schemes for the assessment tasks or assessment types. They select relevant specific features from the assessment design criteria to assess the quality of learning that students exhibit in the assessment task or the assessment type.
- For the assessment tasks within each assessment type, teachers determine their own manner of recording (grades or marks) that is relevant to the subject and the students, in accordance with sector and/or school policy.
- Teachers record student achievement against each assessment task, using a grade or marks.
- The results at the level of the assessment task are not reported to the SACE Board. The teacher and/or the school records and maintains these results.
- The relative weightings of each assessment type are described in the relevant Stage 2 subject outline. These weightings guide teachers in designing appropriate assessment tasks (with reference to the assessment design criteria and the performance standards). The weightings are also used to determine the relative contribution of each assessment type to the overall achievement for school assessment.
- Teachers use grade levels between A+ and E– to record student achievement against each assessment type. An assessment type is made up of one or more assessment tasks. When there is more than one assessment task, teachers select specific features of the relevant assessment design criteria to assess the quality of students' learning for each assessment task. Teachers may create marking schemes that will allow valid, reliable, and fair judgments to be made for the assessment type against the performance standards. The grade for the assessment type can be arrived at by aggregating marks or by combining grades. Whichever method is used, the grade for the assessment type must be referenced to the performance standards.
- The teacher assesses and records a grade level between A+ and E– for each assessment type and reports it to the SACE Board on the results sheet.
- The teacher shades in the performance standard reflecting the grade awarded for each assessment type on the results sheet.

- The grades for each assessment type are combined to form the school assessment grade between A+ and E–, using the weightings stated in the subject outline.
- When there is no evidence of a student’s achievement against the performance standards for an assessment type, the designation ‘I’ (for ‘Insufficient Evidence’) should be used. See the section ‘Missing or Insufficient Evidence of Learning’ in *SACE Assessment and Reporting: Guidelines for Teachers*, available on the SACE website ([www.sace.sa.edu.au](http://www.sace.sa.edu.au)).

## Quality assurance of Stage 2 school assessment

Although the SACE Board does not have oversight of, or direct involvement in, school assessment, it provides schools with procedures and other assistance to support the following quality assurance processes:

### *Planning and clarifying*

- Teachers’ are able to access learning and assessment plans from the SACE website.
- Teachers are able to access online clarifying activities that focus on the application of performance standards.

### *Confirming*

- The school confirms students’ school assessment results by conducting, as appropriate, assessment group activities that focus on developing a consistent school-wide interpretation and application of the performance standards.
- Teachers report to the SACE Board results for each student for each assessment type.
- Principals confirm that the SACE Board policies and procedures have been followed in order to maximise the validity and reliability of school assessment results. To indicate confirmation of these processes, the principal or the principal’s delegate acknowledges that the school assessment results sheet is a true and accurate record of the results.
- The grades for each assessment type are conveyed to the SACE Board on the school assessment results sheet.
- The SACE Board conducts a moderation process focused on ensuring a consistent interpretation and application of the performance standards by all teachers across all schools.
- School decisions are reviewed by moderators appointed and trained by the SACE Board.
- The moderation process is based on student folios selected by schools to represent their decisions about the assessment type
- Schools may decide the assessment group to which students belong for assessment and moderation in a subject.

An assessment group can include, for example: all the students in the school who are undertaking a subject taught by one or more teachers; the students in a particular class taught by a particular teacher; the students in more than one class taught by a particular teacher; the students in more than one school taught by one or more teachers.

Note: Schools Online will automatically create one assessment group, whenever two or more classes of the same subject have the same teacher in a school.

- Schools specify students in the sample to be submitted for moderation:

- All students with a grade level of A+ on *any* assessment type are selected.
  - At least one example of student work from each grade level achieved on each assessment type within the sampling group. Where several teachers teach students in the same sampling group, an example of each grade level on each assessment type is selected by all teachers assessing the assessment group.
- Whenever possible, the SACE Board implements processes that do not identify, by name, the schools from which students' work has come.
  - For each subject, the SACE Board appoints moderators. Whenever possible, the moderators are from each schooling sector and from schools in each socioeconomic quartile.
  - For each subject, a SACE Board Officer, and lead practitioner(s) carry out the following activities:
    - Trains the moderators in moderation procedures through an online platform such as the use of PLATO.
    - Conducting benchmarking exercises in each subject before starting the moderation process, to ensure consistency among moderators in the interpretation of the performance standards. Decisions about the interpretation of the performance standards are based on the evidence displayed in the benchmarking materials.
    - Moderators work individually  
Moderators are allocated to schools. Moderators do not choose the schools they moderate, nor are they allocated to their own school, a school with which they have an association, or a school with which they have a conflict of interest.
    - Ensuring that all the moderation processes are followed according to established procedures.
  - Through a moderation process, the SACE Board confirms or adjusts, for each assessment group, the grades submitted by the school for school assessment, at the level of the assessment type.
  - Change to grades at the level of the assessment type may result in changes to the school assessment grades.

## External assessment

External assessment is weighted at 30% of the total assessment.

In Stage 2 subjects, external assessments can take a variety of forms, including external examinations, investigations or products, and performances.

## Assessing and recording student learning

The Board uses marks and/or grades to assess and record achievement in external assessment.

### *External examinations*

- The assessment design criteria and the performance standards for the subject are used in designing an external examination. Examination setters and vetters are appointed by the SACE Board to design assessment tasks that allow students to provide evidence of the quality of their learning.

- The assessment design criteria and the performance standards for the subject are used to develop a marking scheme that is applied to the questions or sections in the external examination. The marking scheme is based on a selection of specific features from the assessment design criteria and is designed to assess the quality of learning that students exhibit in the examination.

#### *Investigations, products and performances*

- Teachers are responsible for setting the tasks according to relevant SACE Board guidelines, the specific features of the assessment design criteria and the performance standards in the subject outline.
- The teacher provides the first mark for the student's performance, using the specific features of the assessment design criteria and the performance standards. The specific features to be covered in the external assessment are published in the subject outline for each subject.
- A marker appointed by the SACE Board provides the second mark for the investigation or product.
- A second SACE Board marker provides an additional mark for performances, which is used if there is a significant discrepancy between the marks of the first and second markers (see below for details of this process).

### **Quality assurance of Stage 2 external assessment**

Each student's work is marked by at least one independent marker who is appointed and trained by the SACE Board.

The following quality assurance processes are used for external assessment:

#### *Setting and vetting examinations*

- A SACE Board officer, with lead practitioner(s) selects and trains subject experts to set the examination in a subject.
- Assessment tasks in examination papers are designed according to the content of the subject, the assessment design criteria, and the performance standards.
- A SACE Board officer with lead practitioner(s) selects and trains the vetters (who are not members of the setting panel). Veters are established to interrogate the draft examination papers and ensure that they comply with the specifications in the subject outline. They provide feedback to the SACE Board officer.

#### *Training and marking*

- The SACE Board Officer, with lead practitioner(s) selects and trains subject experts to form the subject's marking panel.
- Examination scripts (on which neither the school nor the student is identified) are randomly batched and then marked. Investigations, products, and performances are marked in assessment group batches in which, if possible, neither the school nor the student is identified.
- Examination scripts, investigations, products, and performances are marked with due account given to the performance standards.



### *Single and double marking procedures*

- Some examinations are single-marked or have sections or questions that are single-marked. When single marking is undertaken, one or more supervisors are appointed to ensure that markers are applying the marking guidelines/marks scheme consistently.
- In double-marked examinations or sections of examinations, investigations or products, and performances, the degree of comparability between two markers is identified. If, in the case of an examination, there is a significant discrepancy between the judgments of the two markers, a marking supervisor re-marks the relevant questions or sections of the examination. If, in the case of an investigation, product or performance, there is a significant discrepancy between the judgments of the two markers, the mark(s) of additional marker(s) is taken into account.

### *Determining the external assessment grade*

- An external examination is often made up of several individual assessment items, questions, or tasks. These assessments are marked with reference to the performance standards. The marks gained in the individual assessment tasks are totalled. A grade determination process is used to interpret the quality of the evidence of learning, as indicated by the total marks for the examination, against the performance standards, and to assign the appropriate external assessment grades.
- When the external assessment is a single assessment task, such as an investigation, product, or performance, the assessment is double-marked with reference to the performance standards. The marks gained in the investigation, product, or performance are totalled. A grade determination process is used to interpret the quality of the evidence of learning, as indicated by the total marks for the investigation, product, or performance against the performance standards, and to assign the appropriate external assessment grades.

### **Fair and equitable student results**

- Notwithstanding the procedures outlined in this document to assure the integrity of assessments for school and external assessment, there may arise exceptional situations where the Chief Executive may take additional steps to ensure that students' results are fair and equitable to all students.