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English Communications

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 final year for the Stage 2 English Communications subject. In 2017, Stage 2 English will replace Stage 2 English Communications and will complement Stage 1 English which was implemented in 2016.

English Communications continued to grow in popularity in 2016 with over 7700 students completing the subject. Student achievement was on par with the past few years indicating that the subject was delivered in a consistent manner and that teachers maintained standards from one year to the next. The relatively high percentage of students who completed all the requirements of the subject was a good measure of student engagement with a subject that allowed them to analyse texts and compose original texts to demonstrate their skills as communicators. The comments in this report regarding observations made about the external assessment and the moderation of school assessment contain valuable information that can be transferred and applied to the new English subject in 2017.

Teachers will be able to adapt some of the English Communications course, if they wish, for the 2017 subject, but many may take the opportunity to completely rewrite or substantially alter the course they have previously taught.

Teachers are advised to access the new documents for Stage 2 English and become familiar with the 2017 requirements.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Text Analysis

Within this component of the subject, students produce two written responses and one oral response if undertaking the 20-credit subject. In consultation with the teacher, one of the written responses could be developed into a multimodal presentation. A maximum of 2000 words for written responses was allocated and the oral response was up to a maximum of 6 minutes. A multimodal response was of equivalent length.

**The more successful responses**

* addressed three of the four text types available for study, as specified in the subject outline
* adhered to the word-count and time-limits for responses, as specified in the subject outline
* were in response to challenging and engaging texts
* provided an element of independence for the student through options that included text and task choice
* revealed the importance of task design and explicit teaching in addressing task criteria and the selected form for responses; for example, tasks that required students to consider the ways a single theme was conveyed through the analysis of two or three techniques assisted students
* included successful options, such as essays, interviews with the writer or director, blogs, and multimodal responses
* addressed one of the three specific features of the analysis assessment design criterion in each response for this assessment type
* moved beyond descriptive responses with regard to specific feature An1 and ‘feature spotting’ of techniques and conventions to consider the intended purpose and the impact and effect of the selected features
* linked text selection and assessment criteria carefully in order to elicit a depth of analysis; for example, James Cameron’s *Avatar* film worked well when linked to the specific feature An2 in relation to care for the environment and rights of Indigenous people
* were produced when students were able to select poems from a range, as opposed to the entire class being provided with the same two or three texts
* enabled students to express their own unique voice through their written expression
* demonstrated correct use of grammar, punctuation, and spelling due to thorough planning, drafting, and editing
* included appropriate metalanguage appropriate to the text analysed.

**The less successful responses**

* duplicated or omitted text types by not covering the range required and presented work outside of the subject outline
* revealed responses to tasks that had not been designed with the full range of student ability in mind
* focused upon recount and retelling rather than explicit analysis of an aspect of a text
* demonstrated task design that required students to address all three analysis specific features in each task and this resulted in a reduction in the quality of analysis
* showed that scaffolding proved problematic when teachers controlled all elements of responses from text, task, structure, and content of response right down to the same topic sentences for paragraphs across the entire class set of responses — formulaic and intrusive intervention of this kind impacted negatively, particularly upon student achievement at the highest performance standards
* responded to poetry as individual texts, as opposed to a group or pair of texts
* provided evidence outside of the subject outline in relation to word-limits and time constraints; for example, when students had been permitted to write twice as much as the designated word-count and addressed key criteria in the latter part of their responses *this analysis was not permissible as evidence*.

Assessment Type 2: Text Production

Within this assessment type, students were expected to compose three texts — each one for a prescribed purpose in order to meet the subject requirements for the 20‑credit subject. Students were expected to create texts to ‘entertain or engage a reader or listener’, ‘persuade or communicate a point of view’, and ‘communicate observations or information’.

**The more successful responses**

* demonstrated task design that considered student ability for achievement at all levels and explicitly addressed the unique and distinct purpose of each task within the assessment component
* were constructed as a result of creative, considered, and original task design that encouraged student engagement
* included created texts that use specific conventions, such as magazine articles, that were competent, especially when students had been given control over the context, audience, and topic of the task
* adhered to the subject outline in terms of word-count and time-limit with regard to the production of text
* adhered to the subject outline with regard to the requirements for the completion of the supervised writing task
* presented work in response to flexible task design, especially in cases where students had responded in oral or multimodal forms for two of the three options
* presented variety in form as well as the purpose of the tasks
* presented work other than written recount, narrative, or exposition; for example, moderators noted excellent examples of documentary film-making and descriptive writing in this assessment type
* demonstrated sound engagement on the part of the student with the task; for example, moderators commented favourably upon examples of multimodal expositions that had been constructed on a serious issue for a specific purpose and for an unfamiliar audience when the topic appeared to have been selected by the student.

**The less successful responses**

* incorporated a writer’s statement that was not required as part of the subject outline
* repeated purpose, form, and, in some cases, similar audience across the assessment type — this prohibited the recognition of achievement of a ‘range’ or ‘variety’ of evidence against the performance standards
* demonstrated repetition of the recount form, regardless of the individual purpose of the text production task
* included a single short poem as one of the text production tasks
* revealed misunderstanding regarding the administration of the ‘supervised written assessment under test conditions, without help from the teacher’ — for this task, teachers were expected to provide a choice of topics; students needed to be made aware of the general requirements in advance, but should not have received the topics until the set time.

Assessment Type 3: Communication Study

The communication study for this 20-credit subject has two parts: a comparison of two examples of communication chosen from one of the five specified categories and a practical application consisting of production and reflection. Students were required to explore and compare the relationship between form, purpose, language, audience, and context by comparing two texts in the first part of the study. In the practical application, students demonstrated knowledge and understanding of a particular aspect of language and communication.

This assessment type will not form part of the Stage 2 English subject from 2017.

**The more successful responses**

* supplied all evidence in accordance with the instructions of the subject outline
* presented work where choice and a level of student control was evident
* revealed parity in relation to the comparison, practical application, and reflection — teachers are reminded that these course components were equally important
* demonstrated that students were able to reflect upon the construction of their own text analytically; those students who addressed their writing choices in terms of language and form in relation to purpose, audience, and context were successful
* presented analytical comparisons that were effective due to task design and text choice; for example, moderators commented on the successful comparison of political speeches such as George VI’s declaration of war with George Bush’s address after the September 11 attacks.

**The less successful responses**

* contained missing evidence that made the moderation process problematic; teachers are reminded to provide evidence of oral presentations, such as recordings, printed slides, and transcripts
* demonstrated over-intervention on the part of the teacher. This was particularly the case with the comparison component of the assessment type. Teachers are once again reminded of the SACE requirements for the acceptable level of support on the part of the teacher. These can be found in the subject outline, as well as in the Supervision and Verification of Students’ Work Policy. Specifically, teachers are reminded that they ‘should not dictate or make specific changes in such a way as to put into question the student’s authorship or ownership of that particular piece of work’. Work that has been corrected by teachers in this way multiple times calls into question the authorship of the work
* presented heavily scaffolded and teacher-directed work; this compromised some students’ achievement since there was reduced evidence of original or unique response material
* revealed task design for the individual practical applications that did not adhere to the unique and specific requirements indicated in the subject outline
* focused upon the completion of extensive research in relation to the writing for publication application, which was provided in the form of journals or scrapbooks and was not necessary for submission at moderation.

## Operational Advice for School Assessment

When presenting materials for moderation, students and teachers are reminded of the following to ensure work can be easily and efficiently read:

* 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.
* The correct provision of the requested school-assessment sample materials nominated by the SACE Board is integral to the moderation process. Teachers are also required to include an approved learning and assessment plan (and addendum, if applicable), together with clearly labelled materials organised according to assessment type. Do not de-identify student work to the point that moderators are unable to locate student work either by name or by SACE registration number.
* There was a further increase in the use of the Variations — Moderation Materials form in 2016. However, teachers are reminded of the importance of the form in the accurate identification of reasons that work is missing within the nominated sample. When work is missing and no record has been made, moderators consider that the work has not been completed.
* Missing work must also be taken into account when grades are awarded for assessment types against the performance standards at the time of grade submission. A reduction in the number of tasks completed by students is not likely to constitute a ‘wide variety’ or ‘wide range’ and, as a result, students are unable to achieve at the highest levels of the performance standards if assessment types are incomplete. While teachers are required to use evidence in students’ responses to allocate the most appropriate grade, the application of a mathematical system of deduction of marks is not an appropriate method of adjusting achievement since it does not allow for an accurate reflection of the performance standards.
* Teachers are reminded that, in cases when no work has been completed for an assessment type, the appropriate grade to record is I as opposed to E.
* Furthermore, work presented for moderation that has been submitted after the formal submission of student achievement has been recorded will not be considered for changes in assessment. The electronic marks entered by teachers are final.
* It is recommended that schools undertake internal moderation whenever possible in order to ensure that marking standards are consistent. This is particularly important for schools with multiple classes in a single assessment group. Schools are asked to consider carefully the benefits of such groupings. Students could be disadvantaged by this decision if teachers have not discussed standards and read student work samples across classes.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Folio

The folio has been an opportunity for students to independently analyse and produce a range of text types as the subject outline requires, with a total word-limit of 2000 words. The best results are earned by students who are supported to complete their external assessment independently. Furthermore, a clear awareness of the assessment type’s requirements and assessment design criteria as outlined in the subject outline is reflected in student achievement.

Marker feedback was again largely positive in regards to the standard of work and the solid teaching, and by the fact that all but a few students had produced work in accordance with the subject outline and performance standards. However, the importance of task design was reiterated by nearly all markers. Teachers and students are reminded of the language-rich nature of the subject and that, as such, the focus of student work should be on language features.

**The more successful responses**

* included text choices that were robust enough to provide students with adequate depth to support a sustained response; popular and successful choices included film, TED Talks, poetry, novels, music videos, short film, short story, speeches, and documentaries
* championed the independent nature of the task and avoided having a whole-class response to the same text
* used some scaffolding to support student responses, such as giving students a generic set of questions that could then be refined to suit the individual nuances of student-chosen texts and techniques used to illustrate themes
* had carefully crafted questions that supported students to focus on specific aspects of texts in detail
* avoided formulaic responses and overly zealous teacher intervention
* focused on analysis of techniques used to portray ideas and influence the audience; students who were able to clearly link this understanding to describe ‘how’ a technique is used to develop a specific idea for a specific purpose were able to achieve a higher standard, whereas a clear explanation of links between technique and purpose and audience tended to be lacking in lower-standard responses which merely recounted
* used appropriate metalanguage for techniques and integrated examples fluently into sentences
* had correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling due to thorough planning, drafting, and editing
* included ‘language’ of film as a language feature; analysis of film techniques is appropriate and encouraged when students select film as a text type for their analysis
* wrote with a particular audience in mind
* were edited only once by the teacher, as accordance with the Supervision and Verification of Students’ Work Policy.

**The less successful responses**

* included pop song lyrics, animated children’s films, children’s books, advertisements, and posters. These text examples should be approached with caution due to the limited capacity they present students for analysis. In such instances, student responses often adopted a review or recount style which prevented them from achieving a high mark. Other pitfalls to avoid include responding to a collection of texts or writing about a publication in general terms; examples of this include a whole television series or a newspaper
* showed all students in a class structuring their paragraphs around the same topics, such as ethos, pathos; and logos — if each student has their own different question and response structure, far more variety is evident
* relied heavily on research from outside sources beyond the texts under analysis and should, therefore, not have been included
* were not carefully edited to ensure spelling, punctuation, and grammar were applied correctly — students should be encouraged to edit their work themselves and engage in activities such as peer-editing in class to ensure that the draft they submit to their teacher is the best possible standard of work they are capable of producing independently
* focused on illustrations at the expense of analysing language choices made to convey ideas and impact the audience.

## Operational Advice for External Assessment

When presenting materials for marking, students and teachers are reminded of the following points to ensure that work can be easily and efficiently read.

* Use the SACE cover sheet provided on the website.
* Write the question or topic at the top of each task.
* Use appropriate font sizes and line spacing.
* Record the word-count at the end of each task.
* Leave out teacher comments, performance standards, and marks.
* Do not include copies of texts analysed.
* Omit student, school, and teacher names and school numbers, as well as any other references to the locale that might identify the school from which work has been sent for marking.

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