

Language and Culture

2015 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: Text Analysis

For this assessment type, students are required to respond to texts in the target language. The responses can be in English, the target language, or a combination of the two, and require students to analyse linguistic, cultural, and stylistic features; interpret meaning; and reflect on the ways in which culture is created, expressed, and communicated.

The quality of the responses to set questions varied according to the nature of the questions. Where students did well in demonstrating knowledge and understanding, and analysis and reflection to a high degree in one or both tasks, the questions were of a more open-ended nature. Short-answer questions or those which asked students to provide only literal responses gave less scope for high achievement.

Text(s) which asked students to discuss features of the culture as well as language, allowed students to do very well. Overall, there was an improvement in the type of questions that asked for cultural reflection and analysis, as well as reflection on the language. Students who were given specific assessment design criteria did better than those who were not.

Many themes were covered in the texts given to students. Some texts tended to be too long.

There were very few examples asking students to reflect on one or more short texts that required a comparison of the influence of traditions in a personal or Australian context. In instances where students were asked to respond in English, they should still expect questions relating to the target language. Where the text was in English rather than in the target language, students could not demonstrate achievement in terms of the performance standards.

Assessment Type 2: Interaction

For this assessment type, students are required to interact with others to exchange information, ideas, opinions, and/or experiences in the target language in spoken form. Interacting, asking, and responding to questions in English are not permitted in the specifications of the subject outline for this assessment.

Again, the students who performed at the highest achievement standard were those who were given an opportunity to express themselves spontaneously and at some length. Their success was elicited by more open-ended questions and the requirement of students to consider the use of language as well as cultural matters. Students were then able to demonstrate a depth of ideas and a variety of experiences in a natural manner.

Students who were given clear assessment criteria performed better: for example, demonstrating complexity and depth of ideas, fluency and correct register, and insightful knowledge of language and culture. Students who could show evidence from their prior research rather than just discuss family, marriage, or their own life, demonstrated performance in the higher grade bands.

Students did less well in instances where the teacher dominated the interaction by asking too many questions, or when the questions required only short answers. Students are encouraged to develop and express their own opinions to demonstrate depth of understanding and a breadth of language ability.

Assessment Type 3: Text Production

For this assessment type, students are required to create written texts in the target language in which they express information, ideas, opinions, and/or experiences. Creating written texts in English is not permitted in the specifications of the subject outline for this assessment.

Highly successful students could demonstrate a high level of language use, and were able to offer cultural comparisons. A variety of themes featured in the student texts, ranging across migration experiences, tourism, the role of women and the impact of digital technology.

On the whole, the tasks set allowed students to demonstrate a depth of knowledge and a broad scope of language use. The most successful responses were those that were written for a specific purpose and also demonstrated a range of grammatical structures and features.

Less successful students were those whose knowledge and accuracy of the target language was poor, and who could not offer detailed and well-supported ideas to discuss their chosen topic.

The creative writing tended to be of the narrative or report type while the assessment offers scope for articles, diary entries, essays, brochures, and short stories.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Investigation

The external assessment requires students to write a report in English on their investigation, reflecting on their experience and interview findings in terms of their insights into linguistic and cultural identity.

On the whole, there was an improvement in the quality of investigations presented because some students were more thorough in presenting the results of inquiry questions and the method of their investigation. Where students discussed the question of a changing identity in the Australian context, these students achieved a high standard. However, the number of students who reflected on their ‘own values, beliefs, ideas, and practices’ were still too few.

The investigations presented this year featured a greater breadth of topics, including a comparison of cultural traditions, the roles of men and women, gender and cultural identity, the impact of immigration on values and customs across the generations, the challenges of raising children in the new country, and the value of maintaining the language in the Australian context.

Topics that focused on only cultural features and/or history of the homeland did not allow students to reflect on the changing identities in the Australian context, a key requirement of the investigation.

Students whose investigations achieved highly were those who:

* clearly outlined their research method and showed evidence of it
* referred to a number of resources, including interviews, observations, and readings listed in their bibliography
* provided clear evidence for the information and a conclusion to the research
* discussed cultural and linguistic changes within their community
* discussed changing identity within the contexts of Australian culture and their personal cultural background
* reflected on personal values and what they had learnt by doing the investigation.

Teachers are advised to give students very specific assessment design criteria from knowledge and understanding (specific features KU1, KU2, or KU3) and ideas and expression (specific features IE2 and/or IE3) so that students are given every opportunity to achieve to the highest performance standard.

Similarly, teachers should discourage students from quoting too much from Internet or other textual resources; they should encourage students to express ideas in their own words.

## 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.

The student work presented to the moderators was generally well organised. Moderators found it cumbersome, however, to deal with audio recordings that did not clearly indicate the student’s SACE registration number, or instances where no learning and assessment plans were provided. Cover sheets of a task should also be provided to make it clear to assessors what students were required to do.

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