

2021 Society and Culture Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2021 assessment cycle, gives 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, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Folio (50%)

Student work for this assessment type was generally of a high standard. The majority of students completed four written responses, and there were some good examples of multimodal tasks undertaken by students. Students were more easily able to achieve at the high levels of the performance standards when completing tasks that allowed them to develop and demonstrate skills of social inquiry and include evidence from both primary and secondary sources in their responses.

The more successful responses commonly:

* contained explicit and clear analysis of issues and their connection to the wider society
* analysed information from a wide range of primary and secondary sources and perspectives and provided an insightful evaluation of this evidence
* selected topics which dealt with social change, and were timely
* correctly and consistently referenced a wide variety of relevant primary and secondary sources which were also included in a comprehensive bibliography
* demonstrated multiple viewpoints of the issue being discussed
* included subheadings and graphics to further articulate ideas to enhance the quality of their communication
* undertook a variety of tasks in a range of modes to demonstrate knowledge and understanding in creative ways (e.g. oral presentations, videos, photos)
* identified and understood the nature and causes of social change in relation to contemporary issues and recognised similarities and differences over time (e.g. consideration of the experiences of different generations)
* examined the interactions between different groups within societies and the interconnections between different societies and cultures
* used terminologies such as interdependence, power structures and social change to demonstrate understanding
* facilitated student choice of subject/content within the structure of the task
* had a clear purpose and well-defined boundaries/outcomes allowing for more insightful and in-depth analysis.

The less successful responses commonly:

* required students to research historical events, or social issues that did not involve change or the exploration and discovery of new ideas
* answered questions that were based on personal opinions and not the research of experts
* required students to respond to prescriptive, highly scaffolded tasks which did not allow for student choice in content or form of response and limited depth of response (e.g. short answer tests)
* had an over-reliance on essay style assessments and this lack of choice disadvantaged students
* required students to address too many assessment design criteria in one task
* relied on personal experiences or viewpoints rather than analysing well-substantiated research from experts and primary sources to inform opinions and draw conclusions
* focused more on description than analysis and did not draw conclusions about the issue
* inadequately acknowledged sources by omitting or incorrectly referencing, and/or not providing a comprehensive bibliography
* used information that was out-dated.

Assessment Type 2: Interaction (20%)

There are two components for the Interaction: Oral and Social Action. Again, students did well this year to cope with the limitations due to the pandemic, which could have impacted the assessment types. Schools successfully conducted group interactions involving practical and significant social action and found ways to conduct orals that took advantage of technology to compensate for limited in-person interaction.

The more successful responses commonly:

* presented a range of evidence relevant to the task (e.g. photographs to depict collaboration and the nature of the social action, and including annotations in group research to show analysis)
* provided a folio of evidence that clearly identified the contributions of each group member (e.g. record sheets, journals, notes, transcripts of collaborative group evaluations, de-brief, good quality recordings of round table discussions)
* demonstrated substantial evidence of knowledge and understanding based on research into a relevant social issue
* used video and multimedia creatively to advocate or support a viewpoint on a social issue and cleverly embedded persuasive techniques (ethos, pathos, logos) as a call to action to the audience
* included good quality recordings of oral presentations with an accompanying script that included referencing and a comprehensive bibliography
* explored the impact of the Social Action.

The less successful responses commonly:

* provided insufficient evidence of group collaboration and/or did not clearly identify how each student contributed to the group outcome
* restricted social action to a simple task for which it was difficult to measure the impact (e.g. constructing a poster, performing a role play)
* contained basic analysis that restrict students from demonstrating achievement in the Investigation and Analysis and Knowledge and Understanding criteria
* took the form of a PowerPoint presentation to an unspecified audience, limiting the opportunity to evaluate its impact on a target audience or audiences
* did not provide video/audio evidence of oral presentations
* inadequately acknowledged sources by omitting or incorrectly referencing, and/or not providing a comprehensive bibliography.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Investigation (30%)

The range of topics was excellent, and the research methods were impressive, especially given the limitations on face-to-face contact. Most students showed the ability to gather and understand information and process it meaningfully. Responses from students demonstrated a mastery of the subject matter. Overall, the investigations were of a good standard with interesting local topics where students were able to gather primary first-hand information and analyse it well (e.g. Stigma of Mental Health and Plastic Pollution). Other contemporary issues provided for analysis and discussion (e.g. Islamophobia in Australia and Domestic Violence due to COVID Restrictions). The investigations were generally pertinent, thorough, using thoughtful approaches with a clear structure and varied sources.

The more successful responses commonly:

* used appropriate primary sources and credible, contemporary secondary sources
* reflected well on a chosen contemporary social or cultural topic and offered recommendations in the conclusion
* had a set of focused questions used to specifically address social change that set clear boundaries to limit the breadth of the investigation
* used a range of strategies to structure the investigation clearly and logically (e.g. guiding questions, hypotheses, appropriate headings and topic sentences)
* used relevant experts as primary sources and integrated quotes from primary sources and interviews fluently within the discussion
* analysed and evaluated various perspectives on their chosen issue rather than summarising collected information from secondary sources
* cross-referenced primary and secondary sources with one another and synthesised information
* explicitly pointed out the local context of an issue, as well as the broader state, national or international aspects
* used different ways to demonstrate information and findings (e.g. tables, graphs and images)
* showed a good understanding of the mechanisms of change and the implications (KU2) and demonstrated effective use of reliable, valid and relevant sources, and contrasting opinions (EC1)
* synthesised the material to provide their authentic voice rather than a compilation of other’s opinions
* presented or summarised research findings and discussed the findings, showing an ability to pick up on differences in opinion, unexpected results and/or gaps in the research
* approached the chosen topic with an open mind and were prepared to discuss and accept unexpected findings
* reflected on their research and evaluated its effectiveness as well as the usefulness of their sources and suggested alternative approaches and sources as well as possible future action.

The less successful responses commonly:

* relied too heavily on description and recounted findings rather than analysis
* spent too much word count describing the research methodology
* had broad or generic questions lacking in a clearly defined purpose that became a challenge to answer in 2000 words or explore them locally, nationally and or internationally
* included graphics, diagrams, tables, graphs and surveys but did not analyse them within the body of the investigation
* focused on ‘the what’ and definitions of terminology which at times used inappropriate or dated terminology (e.g. ‘Aboriginals’, ‘Aborigines’, ‘Indians’ and ‘Gypsies’). At times key definitions were gathered from simple sources that undermined the entire investigation. For example a dictionary website, Wikipedia
* were over-scaffolded, limiting adequate flexibility to address the topic in the way best suited to it
* did not adequately address the assessment design criteria especially social change (e.g. topic selected were more suited to Health and Psychology investigations with little references to social or cultural issues)
* relied heavily on personal experience and opinion and lacked in expert primary sources
* used primary data that was irrelevant to the discussion or the line of inquiry, or was from an inexpert source (e.g. interviewing friends or surveying the class)
* did not evaluate different sources and opinions (EC1)
* provided responses that were too biased to one perspective and lacking thorough analysis of the different parts of the issue
* selected topics with a preconceived idea about the answer and therefore overlooked a range of perspectives and sources leading to a biased report
* used readily available, but not always reliable, online sources without questioning its authenticity
* inadequately acknowledged sources by omitting or incorrectly referencing, and/or not providing a comprehensive bibliography.