

Community Studies

2014 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: Contract of Work

Planning and Organisation Assessment Design Criterion

The contract template introduced in 2013 once again supported students to present detailed contracts. It was evident that many teachers guided students in the identification of existing knowledge and skills, the development of new knowledge and skills (including specific literacy and numeracy skills), and the selection of an appropriate capability. Students who detailed the steps they would undertake to carry out their community activity and who broke down their actions and strategies into specific, short-term tasks were able to check their progress effectively. This also enabled them to regularly reflect on the development of specific knowledge and skills and their ongoing progress and choices made. Where students chose to investigate, create, or undertake a community activity that was of personal interest to them, the final contract yielded more positive results against the performance standards. In contrast, where students submitted the same group activity, they were often limited in their ability to effectively display individual skills, learning, and unique growth and originality.

A wide range of activities were undertaken in each area of study of Community Studies. A non-verbal film clip with a background of music and vibrant, visual images teaching the skills of surfing was but one example of an individual and innovative community activity. Other students with activities from the Arts and the Community area of study provided creative examples including inventive, high-end garbage-bag dresses, and designing and crafting a wedding dress and clothing from the 1920s flapper era and the swinging 1960s. Mosaics were used ingeniously in many community activities, and shell jewellery and skateboard designs also featured. In the Science, Technology and the Community area of study, one student constructed funky but practical furniture using pallets, while another undertook a project that upcycled furniture. One student identified and catalogued plants in a scrub area. There was also a novel analysis of the use of small appliances. An example of work completed in Health, Recreation, and Community was the regeneration of plants on a golf course. In Communication and the Community, examples included the design and creation of an orientation booklet for reception students, and an informative school-leavers’ guide that included banking information and cooking tips. One student set up a women’s shed and another created a detailed Auslan language booklet. Gluten-free recipes and adaptations of recipes were some examples of activities in Foods and the Community. Practical ideas about developing essential work-ready skills and running a small business were strong examples of quality contract detail in Work and Community.

Communication and Interaction Assessment Design Criterion

Folios demonstrated the extensive work completed along the students’ Community Studies journeys. Those who regularly reflected on their progress in their folio had more positive outcomes.

Many students outlined why they had chosen their particular community expert and they regularly communicated with them. Evidence of this communication was presented in a variety of ways in the folios. Students included copies of telephone call logs, emails, and SMS messages; links to YouTube videos; and screen shots from Skype, Facebook, FaceTime, and other electronic media. Feedback received was then used to improve work, with the student outlining the choices they made as a result of the feedback. These ongoing reflections also highlighted how students identified and solved problems that arose. Some students used coloured paper to clearly identify communication with their expert and their responses to feedback.

In most instances, students thoughtfully considered how numeracy and literacy were used in their research. Specific examples of numeracy applications included: the use of measurement in clothing design; producing budget spreadsheets to cost events; costing jewellery items for sale; monitoring the weight loss of a horse; the timing of events in a program; and comparing the cost, time taken, and quality of making an item compared to a store-bought item. Literacy examples were clearly evident in recipe books, children’s stories, and information guides, as well as the wide variety of written, verbal, oral, and aural communication used.

Many students were able to reflect on the development of one or more capabilities. Where students focused on one main capability, they were able to reflect extensively and in depth in an ongoing manner on their development in this particular area, considering their progress and growth over the time of their contract.

Final presentations were well prepared and orchestrated by the more successful students. The actual format varied, with many opting for an in-school delivery, either to the class or as an expo, but a few students had public openings in parks, at community events, online, or as a multimodal presentation. Several successful students planned their presentations to include an assessment of the space to be used, especially when the presentation was recorded or photographed, therefore resulting in clearer visuals with less distraction. Many students also chose to invite their expert, reflecting the support and appreciation for the advice and guidance provided by these community people. Evidence provided included the recorded speech, palm cards and supporting PowerPoint, annotated photos of the delivery, and feedback from the audience, often with a reflective summary of the whole production.

Fulfilment of Contract of Work Assessment Design Criterion

Fulfilment of the contract of work was demonstrated by the evidence provided in the students’ folios with reference to the detailed list of actions and strategies provided in the contract.

Most students selected a variety of appropriate primary and secondary sources. Material in the folio may indicate the breadth of students’ research; however, the relevance of the selected material needs to be demonstrated. It should be clear what the students have gained from this research and how they will use it. Annotations in the form of Post-it notes, short summaries, or short reflections are effective ways of highlighting what students have learnt from their research.

In instances where changes were made to the initial signed contract, students indicated the changes on their original contract and showed where a task of similar time value was substituted. Their record of evidence in the folio then provided the justification for the changes and the consultation with teachers or outside expert which occurred.

More students used multimodal work in their submission to illustrate their independent work, especially the inclusion of annotated photographs which told the story of a student’s chosen investigation with reflective learning. Should students be involved in a joint venture with others, their specific roles, responsibilities, tasks, reflections, and feedback from community experts and personal presentations need to be clearly identified.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 2: Reflection

In this introductory year, the 200-word summary was effectively used to set the context for the student’s unit of work. In most cases, students provided details of the final outcome of the community activity, the processes used to undertake the activity, and an overview of the final presentation. The summary replaced the inclusion of contracts which previously provided moderators with details of the community activity.

Moderators found it useful when students made a clear distinction between the 200‑word summary and the reflection, giving each a separate word-count. For a 20‑credit subject, the 200-word summary is in addition to the 1000-word reflection. Similarly, a 10‑credit subject has a 200‑word summary in addition to the 500‑word reflection. The summary enabled students to achieve a more insightful level of evaluation in the reflection because they did not need to recount what they had done within the reflection’s word-limit. Students who specifically addressed the assessment design criteria were more successful. This included reflecting on the development of knowledge and skills, including the selected capability or capabilities, and their application to the community activity (specific feature R2), and reflecting on the value of the community activity to themselves and to others (R3).

In some cases, guiding questions provided to students by teachers were not directly related to the performance standards and therefore did not enhance student performance. Too much scaffolding also had the potential to restrict students in achieving the higher grade bands where insightful, independent reflection upon student learning is expected.

Greater depth and reflection on achievements was evident when fewer capabilities were selected by students. With multiple capabilities, the result was often token explanations, which lacked depth and/or elaboration.

The more successful students consistently referred to literacy and numeracy. These students provided specific examples of their learning which was clear, detailed, and insightful, outlining how and why they could apply these skills in the future. Many students provided solid evidence of literacy development but only minimal evidence of a similar improvement in numeracy. It was evident that the majority of students gained a great deal of new learning, providing specific examples of newly acquired skills gained through the completion of their project.

Reflection on the value of the community to self was generally well explained, with students detailing the benefits they gained from their personal research and involvement in their chosen activity. Those students actively involved in producing or making a task or project for the wider community were better equipped to make connections relating to the benefits to the community and to others. However, writing about a project and the possible benefit to others needs a stronger focus by the majority of students. Examples of community involvement by students included seeing people’s art, being in an audience, or publishing a book for the school community, which all demonstrated active involvement.

Students who were involved in a class contract, often lacked the necessary individual component and personal reflections based upon their own individual role and responsibilities within the group. Students who were originally enrolled in other subjects and were using work from these subjects did less well, indicating unfamiliarity with the performance standards.

Where students provided a multimodal response, for example, with a 1.5-minute summary and a 6-minute reflection, the need to plan and practise was evident. While a form of scaffolding by teachers is acceptable, the presentation delivery needs to be by the student, rather than a teacher leading the discussion, which may preclude students achieving a higher grade.

## 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.

Inclusion of the assessment group program planner is essential, as it provides detail about the students, their specific learning needs, and the specific, ongoing strategies employed by the teacher to support each student. Simply stating that a student is on a negotiated education plan (NEP) is too broad. For example, a specific comment such as: ‘requires reading-age-appropriate material and support to refine the selection of Internet sources’, provides the moderators with a clearer picture.

Most of the materials submitted were well labelled, but presentation varied. Soft-covered folders were generally used, although a simple trio of rings enabled plastic sleeves to be turned easily. It is important to note that all work to be read or moderated must be visible as the folio pages are turned. Several important pieces of student work grouped in the one sleeve are not easily detectable, and bull-clipped folio work is cumbersome. It was evident that schools had read the advice regarding multimodal presentation of materials. In the majority of instances, the recordings or presentations had been checked by teachers before packaging, and in a format recommended by the SACE Board. USB drives were increasingly the chosen means of submission compared to CD or DVD presentations.

The majority of schools were also vigilant in de-identifying materials for external marking and had understood that contracts did not have to be submitted this year. All student materials for external assessment had the required cover sheet.

## General Comments

Each year, some students begin studying another SACE subject and then convert the learning from that subject to Community Studies. Depending on when this decision is made, a student can gain credit for the work undertaken in the initial subject through an exit assessment. The student may then choose to undertake a separate 10‑credit Community Studies subject. If a student wishes to use the learning from the subject from which they have withdrawn, they can only include the sections from that subject that are related to their newly chosen Community Studies activity. ‘Using Materials from Another Subject’ is an advice document, which is available on the Community Studies minisite. For example, a student initially enrolled in Modern History used the hours spent on studying the Great Depression to then investigate a typical diet and foods during this era in a Foods and the Community unit of work. Students are strongly advised to begin their Community Studies early if they are withdrawing from another subject, thus enabling them to gain grades commensurate with their abilities.

Students undertaking VET studies need to clearly delineate this work from their chosen community activity.

Teachers are strongly encouraged to visit the Community Studies minisite for support materials. In 2015, a video will be available, which provides some useful material to support teachers to guide their students in the successful completion of a Community Studies subject.

A breakdown of enrolments in 2014 is shown in the table below. 20‑credit subjects have continued to represent the majority of enrolments, with Work and the Community; Health, Recreation, and the Community; and Arts and the Community continuing to be the most popular choices for area of study.

|  | | **Gender** | | **Grand** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code** | **Subject** | **F** | **M** | **Total** |
| 2AAY10 | Arts and the Community | 9 | 8 | 17 |
| 2AAY20 | Arts and the Community | 160 | 90 | 250 |
| 2CAY10 | Communication and the Community | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| 2CAY20 | Communication and the Community | 58 | 79 | 137 |
| 2FAY10 | Foods and the Community | 9 | 4 | 13 |
| 2FAY20 | Foods and the Community | 78 | 66 | 144 |
| 2HAY10 | Health, Recreation, and the Community | 7 | 8 | 15 |
| 2HAY20 | Health, Recreation, and the Community | 95 | 167 | 262 |
| 2NAY10 | Science, Technology, and the Community | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 2NAY20 | Science, Technology, and the Community | 26 | 100 | 126 |
| 2WAY10 | Work and the Community | 14 | 6 | 20 |
| 2WAY20 | Work and the Community | 148 | 172 | 320 |

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