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Society and Culture

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.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Moderators commented that work submitted for this assessment type was generally of a high standard, with many teachers developing interesting and diverse tasks to suit their own students. Most students presented four written responses for the folio component, although moderators noted that there were some good examples of oral and multimodal responses undertaken by students.

Task design remains pivotal to the success of students; tasks which were differentiated to accommodate individual student interests and abilities and to provide choices — for example, allowing students to select issues to explore — clearly advantaged students and promoted authentic engagement with a wide range of contemporary social and cultural issues.

**The more successful responses**

* completed tasks which had clear guidelines without being overly scaffolded
* responded to open questions which invited critical analysis and consideration of a broad range of aspects and issues
* demonstrated a high level of student interest and engagement with contemporary issues
* responded to specific questions which related to the performance standards; for example: ‘How are power structures both a part of the problem and the solution to the issue?’ ‘How could individuals and groups effect social change in response to the issue?’
* provided clear evidence of social inquiry in the form of primary research; for example, by undertaking surveys and interviews
* used a wide range of well-chosen secondary sources to support their analysis
* compared, contrasted, and evaluated the data obtained from primary and secondary sources in their analysis
* considered the underlying causes of issues, how issues impact on stakeholders, and suggested strategies for social change
* addressed the ways in which the actions of individuals and groups are connected and interdependent.

**The less successful responses**

* tended to write about or describe issues rather than demonstrate in-depth analysis
* did not address a broad range of aspects, perspectives, complexities, and subtleties of issues in their analysis
* completed tasks which had overly restrictive word-limits, limiting an in-depth response
* did not specifically address social change in their responses
* did not consider how individuals and groups are interconnected.

**General information**

Popular topics included Youth Culture, Cultural Diversity, Social Ethics, A Question of Rights, and Globalisation. There was a positive trend of students examining interesting perspectives related to contemporary issues and a use of current examples, with very few examples of outdated tasks still being used.

Most students adhered to the required word-limit and used a consistent in-text referencing system to acknowledge their sources.

A small number of students who did not demonstrate successful achievement in this assessment type typically did not complete the required tasks. Teachers are reminded that where a student has not submitted any work for an assessment type, an I (incomplete) result should be entered on the result sheet. It is also extremely important that teachers complete a Variations — Moderation Materials form when work is missing for one or more students, stating the reason for the missing work and the penalty applied.

Assessment Type 2: Interaction

**The more successful responses**

* provided clear evidence in the form of a transcript or filmed recording of student oral presentations
* depicted meaningful social action which had occurred beyond the classroom; for example, within the whole school community, or with organisations and/or other groups in the broader community
* included social action that incorporated an awareness-raising component.
* contained comprehensive evidence of the social action undertaken, including but not limited to: records of meetings, photographs, transcripts or filmed recordings of collaborative evaluations, and an individual student reflection on the social action
* contained collaborative evaluations which evaluated the success of the social action.

**The less successful responses**

* provided limited or no evidence of the oral presentation
* involved oral presentations undertaken as a group, which tended to limit opportunities for individuals to demonstrate achievement in the higher grade bands
* provided limited or no evidence of the social action undertaken
* depicted evidence of ‘simple’ forms of social action only, such as giving a presentation to their own class or placing posters around a school
* focused mainly on raising money without linking this to an issue or cause
* contained collaborative evaluations which focused only on the group processes and did not specifically evaluate the social action.

**General information**

The most popular topics for the interaction tasks were Social Ethics and A Question of Rights. The majority of student packages contained well-organised and accessible evidence of both the oral activity and the group activity. Moderators commented that a lack of evidence, particularly of the nature of the social action itself in the group activity, was the most significant factor affecting their ability to confirm assessment decisions.

Moderators also commented that there were several instances where the oral presentation had exceeded the 5-minute time-limit.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

The overall standard of investigations in 2016 was very good, with students clearly enjoying the opportunity to research a wide-ranging variety of contemporary social issues.

**The more successful responses**

* focused on current and controversial social issues, and topics that were clearly defined and recently in public debate, such as:
* social media and its impact on academic performance, social relationships, body shaming, etc.
* illicit drug use, especially the so-called ice epidemic
* the legalisation of medical marijuana
* depression and anxiety
* domestic violence
* multiculturalism or migration issues
* gay marriage
* online gambling and video games
* analysed and evaluated evidence from a range of sources and perspectives
* followed the structure suggested in the course outline, choosing a clearly worded guiding question or hypothesis and presenting their investigation as a critical analysis in answer to three (or four, at most) focus questions
* used expert primary sources and synthesised information from both primary and secondary sources
* incorporated survey results into the body of their text, rather than as an appendix
* found additional ways to present evidence, such as photographs, graphs, flow charts, etc., and included these as part of the analysis, not as mere illustration
* showed a clear understanding of social change and both its causes and implications, and analysis of the connection and interdependence of societies and cultures
* addressed bias in sources and limitations of the research
* were carefully drafted and edited to ensure the effective communication of ideas, knowledge, analysis, and conclusions
* used a consistent referencing system and attached a bibliography or reference list.

**The less successful responses**

* did not adhere to the specified word-limit of 2000 words
* relied on a teacher-generated formula
* featured ‘closed’ focus questions which elicited definitions rather than leading to analysis
* relied on outdated data
* used data in a very superficial way, often from only one source, to simply create a narrative or to recount findings, rather than to synthesise and evaluate information from a variety of voices or sources
* were based on secondary sources only
* used their own experiences as the sole basis of an ‘investigation’
* provided no or very limited options for bringing about social change
* addressed topics outside the scope of the subject
* did not use a consistent referencing system.

**General information**

Most students included a range of sources in their research; although teachers are reminded that over-reliance on easily accessible sources limits students in achieving at the highest levels. Guiding students to choose appropriate and expert interview subjects will allow them to gain authoritative evidence from which to draw insightful conclusions.

## 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.

Moderators commented on the overall very high standard of packaging of student materials this year. Features appreciated by moderators included:

* a teacher materials folder which contained an approved learning and assessment plan (LAP), with alterations clearly indicated in an addendum
* a Variations — Moderation Materials form to explain missing work and the penalty applied
* student work which contained both names and SACE registration numbers
* teacher feedback on assessment sheets
* student work with task sheets attached
* grade summary sheets
* minimal use of plastic sleeves within student packages.

There were isolated incidences of teacher grades on student work not corresponding to the grade awarded on the result sheet. Teachers are reminded to be careful when entering results and to award an I (incomplete) when work has not been submitted, not an E grade.

Markers were also impressed with the overall standard of presentation of external investigations in 2016. Most students adhered to the specified word-limit.

Some students included interview transcripts, copies of survey questions, etc. as appendices. These are not necessary and are not taken into consideration by markers. Students are better advised to incorporate evidence from primary source research into the text of their report.

Teachers are also reminded to take care that students do not identify themselves or their schools in the external investigation.

## General Comments

The overall quality of student responses across all assessment components was excellent and it was clear to markers and moderators that most students had engaged with the course and enjoyed many aspects of the topics studied.

Teachers who have participated in marking and/or moderation commented on the benefits of the experience and the professional development they gained. All teachers are strongly encouraged to register their interest in joining one of the assessment panels for this subject.

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