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English as Second Language Studies

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: Issue Analysis

**The more successful responses**

* balanced a range of analysis of the issue, research process, and sources across the written and oral responses
* followed a clear structure (often indicated by headings) and addressed aspects of the issue and the research process in the written response
* included in-text referencing and a reference list in the written response
* were based on specific and probing questions from the teacher to encourage detailed and spontaneous responses in the oral response.

**The less successful responses**

* repeated the same information and language across the oral and written responses
* focused on presenting information without including analysis of the issue; such analysis could have been comparing supporting and opposing arguments, or evaluating different points of view
* described the research processes without including critique or evaluation of research sources
* presented facts and opinion without reference to sources in the written response
* were based on reading or reciting prepared answers to pre-determined questions throughout the oral response.

**General information**

Although this task will not continue in the same form in the Stage 2 English as an Additional Language subject from 2017, researching an issue and analysing the content as well as the sources may still be a valuable task. Teachers may include similar tasks to the written and/or oral responses in the responses to texts assessment type, particularly in responding to an issue or theme, or analysing a persuasive text. In this case, the task design, text type, and assessment conditions for an oral or written analytical response would be determined by the teacher to suit the class context.

Assessment Type 2: Text Production

**The more successful responses**

* were based on a specific essay type, for example, a discussion essay, comparison essay, or argument essay, selected to most effectively address the question
* linked specific examples or quotes from the stimulus text to address the essay question in detail
* included a focus on how particular language features can be used for clarity and detail in descriptive, emotive, or creative expression in the creative writing task
* used a range of vocabulary and written expression to demonstrate imagination, creativity, and personal perspective.

**The less successful responses**

* used the same text for both the essay and creative writing, which limited the depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding, analysis, and application.
* recounted events or reported information from the stimulus text without building a clear argument or specific response to the question
* recounted events from the stimulus text without adding personal or creative details.

**General information**

It is helpful in text production tasks to specify the text type students should produce and the structure and language features to be included.

From 2017 in Stage 2 English as an Additional Language, similar tasks to text production may be included in the responses to texts assessment type. Current tasks may be adapted to meet the requirements for a response to a literary text, a response to an issue or theme, or a creative response to texts. There are opportunities to adapt current tasks to include multimodal or oral responses.

In contrast to Stage 2 English as Second Language Studies, there is no limitation on using the same focus or stimulus text for more than one response in the Stage 2 English as an Additional Language subject outline. In this case, it may be valuable to respond to different aspects of the same text in order to build in-depth understanding of the text. For example, in one task, students might analyse the emotive language of a creative text, and in a separate task, write an imaginative response based on the themes of that text.

Word-limits are important in allowing students to achieve at high levels within the task requirements. In designing responses to texts tasks for the 2017 Stage 2 English as an Additional Language course, it will be important to consider how word and time limits will allow students to demonstrate their learning according to the task requirements and performance standards, and how the allowable word and time allocation will be spread across four or more tasks.

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

**The more successful responses**

* were based on a question or topic that required analysis, such as evaluation of consequences or solutions, or comparison of different viewpoints, in order to reach a conclusion
* included analysis of the research topic in order to address knowledge and understanding, and analysis in sophisticated and in-depth ways
* used a logical structure in the written report, often organised under specific headings, to present information and analysis in order to build an argument or explicitly address the question posed
* included purposeful discussion of the issue investigated in the tutorial, such as connecting the issue to personal experience, expression and justification of opinion, or evaluation of alternative perspectives by the tutorial group.

**The less successful responses**

* reported and explained factual information with limited analysis of different perspectives, consequences, or solutions related to the issue
* presented discrete sections of information in the written presentation, rather than using the text as a whole to develop a coherent argument or discussion of the issue
* presented information without involving the group members in active discussion of the issue in the tutorial.

**General information**

From 2017 in Stage 2 English as an Additional Language, the investigation can be adapted to meet the requirements of the academic literacy study assessment type. In designing these tasks, teachers can consider how students could include a range of types of evidence in their written report, for example, through elements in addition to a basic report structure, such as an abstract, description of methodology, annotated bibliography, or reflection, to explicitly demonstrate aspects of comprehension and application.

In the oral interaction component of the academic literacy study, the focus is on spontaneous language for interaction rather than lecture-style presentation of information. It will be important to consider how students can most effectively engage in purposeful interaction with their class or a small group of students. Elements of tasks from the English as Second Language Studies course may be incorporated successfully into the academic literacy study oral interaction. These could include questions and answers, or group discussions as in the investigation tutorial, or a version of the issue analysis discussion adapted to a group context.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Examination

There were 1140 students enrolled in English as Second Language Studies in 2016. Student responses demonstrated a sound understanding of the expectations required of them and students were generally able to manage their time and complete all sections of the examination.

**Section 1: Listening Comprehension** (Questions 1 to 8)

**Part A**

Part A of the listening comprehension requires students to listen and complete their written responses. They need to structure their answers based on the questions. While students are not marked on their spelling and grammar, their answers must show understanding of the words being used and be recognisable.

For Questions 1 and 2, most students were able to answer with the correct numbers. There was a range of acceptable ways for the numbers to be written.

For Question 3, students correctly identified the key benefits of learning a second language as being a more valued employee with increased job opportunities, being better able to compete with other job seekers, and financial reward.

For Question 4, the better answers included the idea that speaking the local language helps when conducting business in another country through developing understanding of other cultures, showing respect, and helping develop productive business relationships.

In response to Question 5, successful students commonly identified that language benefits the brain by making learners smarter, more decisive, able to cope with complexity, and better at remembering.

**Part B**

Part B of the listening comprehension requires students to demonstrate their understanding and interpretation of the information heard and construct their answers appropriately, which students generally find more difficult than Part A.

This part requires students to answer with extended responses. The more successful students had clear topic sentences, with paragraphs that developed logically and with obvious connections between sentences. As students are not being marked for complexity of language, they are recommended to focus on meaning and on structuring a clear response. Students are also not required to paraphrase material from the listening passages for their responses and can write answers incorporating material exactly as they hear it.

For Question 6, which asked how language has helped humans, students were generally able to find many of the points. However, the ideas were spread throughout the text and some students found it difficult to find the information about language helping human expression. Discussions centred on how language helped human survival, the development of societies, culture, and language, and improving our ability to express our emotions and ideas.

For Question 7, most students were able to find the different stages of learning a language and explain the learning that occurs. However, there was some difficulty with spelling certain terms, and some students were unable to show their understanding of the information.

Students found the final question (Question 8) in this part quite difficult, as they needed to understand some of the technical language used and then show their understanding of these terms in their responses. The most successful answers included a discussion of the rules about the sounds and grammar, the logical structure, and how sounds are combined to make meaning.

**Section 2: Written Paper** (Questions 9 to 11)

**Part A**

Part A of the written paper (Question 9) requires students to argue either for or against a given question. Students provide evidence of their learning in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* knowledge and understanding (specific features KU1, KU3, and KU4)
* analysis (An2)
* application (Ap1, Ap3, and Ap4)
* communication (C1, C2, and C3).

Students who successfully argued a positive position that wearable technology is improving people’s lives included a discussion of the benefits of social connections made through the technology, and improvements to people’s lifestyles and society.

Students who successfully argued a negative position that wearable technology is not improving people’s lives discussed reasons such as the economic costs involved, the negative or distorted impact that technology is having on our way of life or culture, and the possible negative health issues, such as technology addiction and eye strain.

Referencing is an area where some students’ marks were affected due to the impact it has on analysis (specific feature An1). While most students were able to demonstrate understanding about referencing, there were a number of essays where students did not refer to the texts or authors. Students are expected to follow consistent referencing conventions throughout their essay. The more successful students chose a referencing style like the Harvard (author–year) referencing conventions and applied it consistently where appropriate. Students following this style referenced the texts using:

* Text 1 — (Reddy 2016)
* Text 2 — (Shou 2015)
* Text 3 — (Watkins 2016)

Students were also able to show a greater understanding of referencing by using a range of referencing approaches within their chosen style. Rather than using only brackets at the end of a sentence, students were able to show a greater understanding of the evidence being used by carefully considering the best referencing approach. For example, a range of approaches used might include:

* Wearable technologies have changed society (Reddy 2016).
* Reddy (2016) argues that wearable technologies have changed society.
* Further elaborating upon the benefit of wearable technologies, Reddy (2016) argues that they have changed society.
* There are some benefits that wearable technologies have created, but as they ‘become more embedded in our lives’ problems will increase (Reddy 2016 p2).

An understanding about referencing is also needed to determine when it is appropriate. Some students referenced too much, as every sentence in their arguments referred to a text. The better essays were careful not to over-reference, as referencing is unnecessary when exploring general points. These essays elaborated upon the evidence from the texts or showed how the information connected to support their position, which also does not require referencing.

**Part B**

Part B of the written paper (Questions 10 and 11) requires students to write a letter in response to a short text. More students chose to respond to Question 11, and the mean mark for this question was slightly higher than for Question 10. For Question 10, some students responded to a single word or were unable to show their understanding about what they had read.

Students provide evidence of their learning in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* knowledge and understanding (specific features KU1 and KU4)
* application (Ap2 and Ap3)
* communication (C1, C2, and C3).

## 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.
* Where two or more classes combine into one moderation group, it is vital that teachers moderate the sets of work before submitting grades to the SACE Board. It is recommended that teachers collaborate through the year at different points of planning and assessment to ensure consistency of assessment standards across the entire moderation group.
* Providing copies of task sheets which include task requirements, assessment conditions, and the specific features allocated to each task is helpful to moderators in reviewing student work and the assessments of the teacher.
* Make sure that the names and numbers on the documents are consistent. For example, it is important to use SACE registration numbers rather than school identification numbers, and students’ official names rather than nicknames.
* Please ensure that all required audio and video recordings are included in the moderation materials. Recordings should be checked to ensure that they play on a standard Windows computer, and are of sufficient quality for moderators to understand. If recordings cannot be included or the quality is particularly poor, please note this on the Variations — Moderation Materials form.

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