

Information Processing and Publishing

2013 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

INFORMATION PROCESSING AND PUBLISHING

2013 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

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: Practical Skills

Task design needs to ensure that students have opportunities to demonstrate design and layout of text. Practical tasks should equate to eight A4 pages of product with sufficient text for a 20-credit subject and five A4 pages of product with sufficient text for a 10-credit subject. Students who used insufficient text in the final products were unable to be assessed to the highest levels of the performance standards. It was also noted at moderation that it was better for students to complete five quality tasks rather than to complete six tasks that do not provide them with the opportunity to adequately demonstrate the 'development and application' assessment design criterion. Regardless of the focus areas undertaken there must be evidence of adequate text in all practical skills tasks.

Many teachers did not send in material evidence of students' responses for the practical skills assessment type that allowed for the assessment of specific feature AE2 (Evaluation of text-based products and the design principles used). In demonstrating AE2 there is no need for students to replicate documentation that will be undertaken in the external assessment (i.e. the product and documentation). Students could demonstrate their evidence of specific feature AE2 by annotating one of their products and discussing the process used to produce the final product, or by writing a short evaluation. Evidence of specific feature AE2 is not required to be demonstrated in each practical skills task; however, if the opportunity for the assessment of this specific feature is only provided once it is recommended that students have an opportunity to receive feedback on a formative piece of work assessing this feature prior to its summative assessment. Teachers should ensure that the materials submitted for moderation provide appropriate evidence of specific feature AE2 as indicated on their approved learning and assessment plan.

Thematic tasks restrict development and application of specific feature DA3 (Application of layout and design principles to the production of text-based documents or presentations). Thematic tasks within this assessment type restricted students' ability to demonstrate their development and application of practical skills. In many cases the same design was used for all practical skills tasks, with little additional content being added. Students may be disadvantaged if opportunities for new design are not available in each task.

There is no requirement for students to replicate documentation that will be undertaken in the external assessment. If specific feature DA4 is assessed in a practical skills task, evidence in the form of design plans or work in progress must be evident, otherwise its assessment should be documented by teacher notes that are provided for moderation to assist in confirming the assessment decisions.

Moderation materials that were submitted with a graded and shaded performance standard sheet for each assessment supported the moderation team in confirming teacher assessments.

It is advisable that practical skills tasks focus on the geographical location of the area of the school rather than on a geographical location that is far away. The target audience for all products should be identified in the task. The choice of images/text must be appropriate for this audience, and for the school setting in which they are developed.

Business document tasks need to ensure that the postcode is included as part of the address. The focus areas of business documents, personal documents, and desktop publishing should have printed final products, as these are print-based focus areas. Students who achieved at the higher grade levels demonstrated the correct formatting of business documents.

Students who performed at the A grade level in the area of development and application manipulated graphics, demonstrating a highly proficient use of software. Their folios also provided evidence that they were given practical tasks that increased in complexity and difficulty over the course of the year. Students should avoid using pixelated graphics.

Scrapbooking enhancers such as ribbons or embossed paper are distractors and not taken into consideration by moderators when affirming grades. The use of background images present contrast issues, making it difficult to read text.

Electronic Publishing

Websites in which images were not appropriately managed in the files resulted in missing images in the website product. This and other poor file management processes impacted on the quality of products.

Electronic content should be created within the website. External sites that generate html coding when creating content need the Internet for this content to be viewed. It is strongly recommended that students avoid embedding this generated code into their websites, as this restricts their ability to demonstrate the application of layout and design principles in the production of text-based products.

It is recommended that skill development in the electronic focus area should be focused on one software package, for example, Dreamweaver. This allows skills development to be shown over the series of assessments for this focus area. The development of skills using different packages (e.g. one PowerPoint task and one Dreamweaver task) limits students' ability to show development of more sophisticated skills. Design and layout should reflect the use of columns, not continuous writing from left to right of the site. Use of columns demonstrates consistent and thoughtful application of layout and design principles in the area of electronic publishing.

Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis

Issues responses that achieved at the higher grade levels addressed the original scenario wherever relevant. In responses where the original scenario was referred to rarely or not at all, highest-level assessment against the performance standards was limited. Written tasks should not exceed the prescribed word-count, as moderators do not read past the word-count and students who exceed this may be disadvantaged. Students should clearly indicate word-counts on each task, as this helps moderators affirm the prescribed word-count.

Good task design provides opportunities for analysis and evaluation as well as opportunities to address social, legal, and or ethical issues. When discussing legal issues it is best to cite Australian examples and legislation. Social, legal, and/or ethical issues should be explicitly mentioned within the body of a report, not just alluded to. Students can address social, legal, and/or ethical issues in both the issues analysis task and the technical and operational understanding tasks, or in only one of the assessments.

It is important to remember that the word-count for the technical and operational understanding task is now 1000 words. Technical and operational understanding responses must include a technical discussion analysing hardware features. A table of comparisons without analysis is not sufficient; the information presented in the table must be analysed. Hardware investigated must be of a comparable price to facilitate analysing and evaluating similar hardware.

Students who submitted issues analysis tasks that were presented in two assessments of 600 words rather than one assessment of 1200 words were less able to perform at the highest levels against the performance standards. The reduced word-count for two assessments limited the opportunities for depth of analysis.

Within this assessment component, evidence must be presented to support analysis and evaluation in the written or oral presentation. This can be achieved by providing appendices, tables, and diagrams that are referred to within the body of the presentation. Appendices are to be labelled and placed last in a presentation following the bibliography. A glossary (explanation of technical terms) should be included in the appendices — if included in the written presentation (even within a table) it is considered to be a part of the word-count.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Product and Documentation

To assist external markers, the product and documentation task should be presented in an A4 display folder divided into sections clearly marked with the following headings: investigating, devising, producing, evaluation, and bibliography. Three-ring folders are not to be used as they are bulky and heavy. Lever arch folders and manila folders should not be used either as they often come undone during the packaging and marking of the materials. The binding of documentation should be avoided as inadequate margins have often been left, and binding may cut off part of the final product. For further information refer to the 2014 Information Processing and Publishing subject operational information document. Due to the significant amount of handling of external assessments, it is imperative that students place their SACE and school registration numbers on every page of the documentation including any

labelled CDs. This allows identification of the materials and enables them to be returned to the correct folder in the event that they become separated. Teachers are also reminded that their marks sheets should not be included in the submitted work.

A support document for the assessment of the product and documentation is available on the Stage 2 Information Processing and Publishing minisite. This document, titled 'Product and Documentation Assessment Support', is available in the Support Materials section of the minisite, under Subject Advice and Strategies. It is highly recommended that teachers access and use this template as a guideline for marking the product and documentation assessments.

Identifying information should not be included on the submitted assessments, including the final product, surveys, or anything that the marker will see. The school number and students' SACE registration numbers must be used instead of school and student names. When packaging work, teachers should ensure that the external product cover sheet has been used, and that the student's SACE number and the word-counts for both the product and the documentation components have been clearly indicated. The External Assessment Cover Sheet — Product and Documentation can be found under the Forms section of the minisite.

When evaluating the final product, students are encouraged to use the design principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity in the evaluation summary. The maximum word-count for all three summaries (investigating, devising, and evaluation) should be a total of 1500 words for a 20-credit subject and 800 words for a 10-credit subject. These summaries should be clearly indicated by headings and the word-count for each summary should be clearly indicated on the page. Annotations and other supporting documentation are not included in the word-count.

There must be sufficient text in the final product to demonstrate the use of design elements. The text may be given to, or generated by, the student and should be approximately 900 words for a 10-credit subject and approximately 1500 words for a 20-credit subject. Many products were significantly under the word-count. Students who achieved in the higher grade bands were closer to the prescribed product word-count. To assist external markers to verify product word-counts, it is recommended that a word dump with the total word-count be included in the producing section of the documentation.

Students have greater opportunities to achieve at the higher grade levels when they are given a choice about the genre of the product, the images to be used, and the possibility of selecting their own text (where appropriate). In assessments where there was evidence of limited choice by the students, the assessment of specific feature DA3 was impacted upon.

Print focus areas of desktop publishing, business documents, and personal documents should not select websites to annotate. These samples will not reflect the product that will be produced. Students whose final product is a website should be the only ones using samples of websites to annotate. Items such as school websites or school stationery that may identify the school should not be used when collecting samples for annotation.

In the investigation section, the samples selected for annotation must reflect the product that will be produced. If a student is creating a fashion magazine they should collect and annotate samples from fashion magazines. Sample annotations must be undertaken for each type of page in the product, such as a magazine cover, a contents page, or a letter to the editor. As a general rule no more than ten pages of

annotations are needed to show that the student understands the design principles. Each page of the sample should cover all four of the design principles (contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity). The assessments that achieved in the higher grade bands had annotated each sample with comments that addressed each of the design principles, and had also commented on the student's own thoughts about the sample. It was clear that the concept of proximity is generally not understood by students and needs to be further addressed in the teaching and learning of the subject.

Annotation samples should be at least A5 in size when printed, as thumbnail images of samples are too small for the external marker to see the elements of the design that are referred to in the annotations.

Formatting of text must clearly indicate the start and finish of paragraphs. Long slabs of text without formatting are not easy for the reader to follow.

The devising section should include a detailed design plan for each page of the final product. Design plans can be hand drawn or computer generated; each plan is to be A4 size to enable external markers to check specifications indicated on each plan. One design plan for each page of the product is thought to be sufficient. There is no need for two design plans for each page of the product, with students then choosing which design plan will be followed.

Students must list their selected hardware and software and state the intended use of these at school and at home. This should be followed up in the final evaluation summary in the discussion of hardware and software that was selected for use, their suitability for the task, and the reasons for this.

Assessments that achieved in the higher grade bands had utilised tools that checked spelling and grammar of written information in both the documentation and product prior to submission of the final copy. Documentation must clearly identify the design process of investigating, devising, producing, and evaluating. It was pleasing to see that many students clearly identified the final product in their assessments, as it is often hard to distinguish the final product from the work-in-progress drafts.

External products from the business and personal documents focus areas must set out business letters according to the conventions used in business. Image manipulation must be more than resizing the graphic. There must be clear evidence of image manipulation in the devising section of the documentation. This could include changing colours, backgrounds, cropping the image, or using different effects on the image.

Adequate time must be given to students to complete the product and documentation task. It was evident that some students had only been given 2–3 weeks for the whole task. Teachers are disadvantaging their students if they do this when other teachers are giving their students 8–10 weeks to complete the task.

Final products need to reflect the authenticity of the final product's intended purpose. If a form is produced ready to be filled in, it should not be laminated as it does not fit the purpose. When students produce brochures or business cards they must be folded or cut out as required, not just presented on an A4 page. Brochures that need to be folded must be printed back-to-back and folded appropriately. Business cards that have a front and back should be printed back-to-back and cut down to size. If products are to be printed back-to-back and there is no access to a duplex printer, it is better to modify the task, removing the need for back-to-back printing. The final

product should never be glued together or have elements of scrapbooking such as ribbons.

The target audience for all products should be identified in the task. The choice of images/text must be appropriate for this audience, and for the school setting in which they are developed. Inappropriate topics and sexually explicit images were evident in some of the assessments during the external marking process. These should be identified by the teacher, who should ask the student to replace them with more appropriate material. Thematic tasks limit the development of evidence in the assessment of specific features DA2 and DA3. Thematic tasks lock students into repeating the same design, and in most cases this disadvantages the student.

Teachers and students need to be reminded that screen shots of a step-by-step process are not necessary in the devising section of the documentation. Three or four samples of work in progress using the design principles to explain changes are sufficient.

Coloured paper should not be used when printing the final product. Coloured paper is a distractor which often affects the quality of the product. If a background colour is needed it must be computer generated as part of the design. Scrapbooking items such as glitter and lace are considered distractors and not part of the design when marking. All elements that are part of the design must be computer generated.

Final products from all focus areas including electronic publishing should avoid the use of centre aligned text. Students who achieved at the higher levels did not use clip art but manipulated graphics and in some cases created their own.

Electronic Publishing

Template pages should be avoided as they do not provide students with scope or allow for an extension of the skills that are assessed within specific feature DA3.

Individual discs should have no identifying features on them such as school logos or student names. Teacher mark sheets should not be included on the disc submitted with the final product.

When marking electronic products, the external marker must be able to clearly identify the location of the index page. If this is not the case it is evidence of poor file management.

Students must have screen dumps of the final website in the producing section of their documentation. Screen dumps provide evidence of a fully functioning site and may need to be referred to if there are some elements of the site that are not functioning when it is marked. Some students included screen captures that created a movie file of them navigating through the website. This was further evidence of a fully functional website.

Graphics must be inserted into the website and not be hosted on the Internet as a link. Electronic content should be created within the website. External sites that generate html links, such as YouTube, need Internet connectivity. It is strongly recommended that students avoid embedding this generated code into their websites, as this restricts the ability for demonstration of the application of layout and design principles in the production of text based products. It is better if content is downloaded and inserted rather than reliant on Internet connectivity.

If creating text in Photoshop (e.g. as part of an advertisement) it is a good idea to check resolution and ensure that text is clear and sharp, not blurry. Students are advised to avoid the use of frames and div layers unless they are fixed in place. When setting up websites it is important to ensure that the site can be properly viewed on every screen rather than only on a fixed resolution screen. To help external markers in marking electronic products we ask that teachers check the CDs that contain student products to ensure that all relevant files have been included and that the websites function as expected. This would provide another check point for ensuring functionality of electronic files.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

When electronic files are supplied for moderation, it is best that each student's materials are presented on an individual disc. Where this is not possible, two copies of the teacher's disc are required so that moderators are able to carry out the moderation simultaneously. To help external markers in marking electronic products we ask that teachers check the CDs that contain student products to ensure that all relevant files have been included. This would provide another check point for ensuring functionality of electronic files.

Student work sent to moderation is easiest to access when displayed in a soft covered A4 display folder with a cover sheet indicating the student's name and SACE registration number. Each student folder should also include the assessment sheet of the student's grade for each task. It is not necessary for a teacher to staple the annotated performance standards sheet indicating the assessment of the product to the practical work, as it makes it difficult for the moderator to access work.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Subjects in which the assessments were balanced between the two focus areas enabled students to better develop and display their skills in both areas. The use of performance standards as outlined in the subject outline has helped teachers to clearly assess students' levels of achievement in the areas of development and application, and analysis and evaluation.

The teacher folder submitted for end-of-year moderation should include the approved LAP, an addendum indicating any amendments that have been made to assessments that were originally outlined in the school component of the LAP, task sheets, and a Variations — Moderation materials form if the sample differs from that requested. Student work should be submitted in individual A4 soft covered folders. A cover sheet including the student's name and SACE registration number is required, to ensure easy identification of the sample submitted for moderation.

It is evident that some teachers are struggling with performance standards. If the majority of a grade sits in one particular band, with some in another, for example, mostly in the A grade with some B, then the result is an A–.

As a guide to evidence of calculating grades this example has been given:

- specific features predominantly in the C grade with evidence of some B: result is C+
- specific features predominantly in the C grade: result is C
- specific features predominantly in the C grade with evidence of some D: result is C–.

Assessment components should be considered as a whole; tasks should not have individual weightings.

Each student should have their own A4 display folder that contains all work, associated task and assessment sheets with shaded performance standards, and a clearly identified grade. It is not necessary for a teacher to staple the annotated performance standards sheet indicating the assessment of the product to the practical work as this makes it difficult for the moderator to access work. Some teachers sent student work grouped by tasks for the entire class rather than by individual student. This made the moderation process very difficult.

Information Processing and Publishing
Chief Assessor