2021 Language 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: Text Analysis

Students prepare a response or responses in the target language and/or English to a range of short texts or an extended text in the target language. Students are required to analyse linguistic, cultural and stylistic features, interpret meaning, and reflect on the ways in which culture is created, expressed, and communicated.

Students provide evidence of their learning primarily in relation to the assessment design criteria — knowledge and understanding, and analysis and reflection.

As noted in last year’s advice, the more successful responses commonly:

* addressed aspects of culture and language to greater depth
* demonstrated understanding of particular features of language in the text
* expressed well-informed understanding of communication across cultural boundaries
* included those where students compared short texts
* allowed students to elaborate and reflect personal understandings.

As noted in last year’s advice, the less successful responses commonly:

* were brief responses to more literal questions related to features of language or meaning of the content of the text rather than open ended questions allowing for expansion of ideas
* focused either exclusively on language or on culture but not both
* needed to demonstrate personal reflection or opinions related to identity
* required tasks to be developed that allow students to demonstrate their understanding to the highest level. This means making sure there are questions requiring higher order or critical thinking.

Assessment Type 2: Interaction

Students interact with others to exchange information, ideas, opinions, and/or experiences in the target language in spoken form.

Students provide evidence of their learning primarily in relation to the assessment design criteria — knowledge and understanding, and ideas and expression.

As noted in last year’s advice, the more successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated spontaneity in interaction and answers to questions
* included extended responses to questions showing good command of language with a confident use of more complex structures and a wide vocabulary
* communicated well prepared ideas in a coherent manner
* included reflection on personal culture and language in the community and the Australian context.

As noted in last year’s advice, the less successful responses commonly:

* featured in group settings dominated by one or two individuals thus preventing expression to the highest level
* demonstrated difficulty in maintaining a conversation beyond short expressions
* expressed limited personal opinions or reflection on their linguistic and cultural situation
* indicated a lack of preparation and a lack of accuracy in communicating desired ideas
* in 2020, featured students reading their responses thereby no spontaneity in the interaction.

Assessment Type 3: Text Production

Students create written texts in the target language in which they express information, ideas, opinions, and/or experiences.

Students provide evidence of their learning primarily in relation to the assessment design criteria — knowledge and understanding, and ideas and expression.

As noted in last year’s advice, the more successful responses commonly:

* employed a wide variety of structures, expressions and vocabulary
* expressed ideas in depth on a topic allowing for a wide understanding of cultural life, personal views and interests
* utilised a narrative or story form in the target language to convey ideas and information
* showed a cohesive understanding of comparative cultural settings.

As noted in last year’s advice, the less successful responses commonly:

* expressed limited ideas in language often with errors obscuring meaning
* were sometimes incomplete e.g. a letter without a formal ending
* communicated a narrow scope of knowledge e.g. a formal letter, rather than a topic allowing for greater breadth to demonstrate ideas and expression.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Investigation

Students interact with members of a target language-speaking community to write a report in English that investigates linguistic and cultural background and how this shapes personal identity in the Australian context. Students explore how people move between languages and cultures, and how they sustain the language and culture of their own background.

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

* knowledge and understanding — at least one specific feature
* analysis and reflection — AR2 and AR3
* ideas and expression — IE2 and IE3.

It is pleasing to note that the nature of high order investigations continues to grow.

The more successful responses commonly:

* had an appropriate question to maintain focus. For example, ‘How has the (country) language and culture changed over time in Australia?’
* were based on a focus question that allowed for comparison between the student’s cultural background and language and the Australian culture and language. Here are a few examples of clear focus questions used this year and over the last couple of years:
* Nepali language culture for the new generation – How can we influence the new generation to continue to grow Nepali culture and language?
* How can the Bhutanese preserve their language and culture living in Australia?
* How has the raising of children in the Somali culture changed since their migration to Australia?
* How do Burundians maintain their language and culture throughout the community and South Australia?
* How has the diversity of Ukrainian traditional costumes been a unifying factor for Ukrainians in Australia?
* dealt with both *language* and *culture* with insightful knowledge of both in different contexts
* provided an explanation of the investigation process, included a survey and/or interview(s) and results. In some investigations primary sourcing of information was done via phone/emails given COVID-19 social distancing restrictions
* were systematically, coherently and logically constructed
* provided a personal voice expressing values, beliefs and ideas
* reflected on changing personal identity or community identity
* used up to date sources to support points of view or facts through referencing and including interviews, observations, readings listed in a bibliography
* featured a clear introduction and conclusion to the research
* reflected on personal values, beliefs, ideas and practices, and what was learnt by undertaking the investigation.

The less successful responses commonly:

* focussed exclusively on the culture, history or politics of a country. This did not allow for any consideration of changes in the community and in the Australian context nor mention of language in different contexts
* required analysis of language and its changes in different cultural contexts
* needed to show attempts to use a survey and/or interviews with community members to support their views
* used data from Canada or the United States to validate the Australian context
* gave little or no consideration to a discussion/reflection on the changing identity in the Australian context
* listed irrelevant internet website
* needed to provide personal reflection on values, beliefs, ideas and practices about the topic.

Please note that teachers need to guide students early in the nature of the investigation and make sure that it is indeed an investigation and not simply a review or a commentary on a theme. Teachers must ensure students are focused on the concept of changing identities and the Australian context, not an investigation on a topic of historical or cultural interest exclusively based on the country of origin.