# Stage 1 English as an Additional Language

# Subject assessment report 2017

## Overview

At Stage 1 the English and mathematics subjects and the Personal Learning Plan are moderated. For most schools, only the C and D grades are moderated, as the C grade represents the minimum grade required for SACE completion.

Stage 1 assessment reports give an overview of how students performed at the   
C and D grades in their school assessments, relative to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outlines. They provide information and advice on: teacher engagement and student engagement with the assessment types, including task design; the application of the performance standards in school assessments; and the quality of student performance.

Assessment Type 1: Responding to Texts

In this assessment type students read and view a variety of texts, including one literary text ([Suggested text list](https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/web/english-as-an-additional-language/stage-1/support-materials/suggested-text-lists)), to stimulate their creative thinking in both written and oral modes. The subject outline specifies that for a 10-credit subject, students complete one written response to texts (maximum of 600 words) and one oral response to texts (maximum of 5 minutes). It is expected that in responding to texts, students refer to, or directly relate to, the original text/s. Most schools weighted this assessment type at 50%.

Successful achievement at the C grade

* At the C grade, students demonstrated appropriate use of language features and conventions when interpreting information, ideas, and opinions in texts for different audiences and purposes.
* Students wrote and spoke in a generally clear and coherent manner using references from a range of sources to support a point of view.
* When evidence and examples from texts were specific and interwoven in the responses, students were able to achieve at the C grade (or higher). Moderators noted that the few grammatical errors made did not impede the flow or general meaning of the information, ideas, and opinions expressed in texts.
* The [suggested text list](https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/web/english-as-an-additional-language/stage-1/support-materials/suggested-text-lists) is a *guide only*. It is important that the variety of texts selected is done in consultation with students to better enable their engagement.
* It was clear where students made personal connections with a text, they were able to articulate their responses both in a written and oral format at the C grade or better.

Examples of texts studied include Genevieve Bailey’s *When I was 11*; Shaun Tan’s *The Lost Thing, The Rabbits;* Film: *What’s Eating Gilbert Grape;* selections from Alice Pung’s *Growing up in Australia.* For international students in particular, moderators noted *When I was 11* allowed them to connect with experiences from their own country. A strategy used by many schools is the shared text approach – a text is read/viewed and discussed by the whole class. This supported both student engagement and success.

* Formats of evidence presented varied from written responses such as the creative text and the review, to oral responses including the multimodal media of PowerPoint, and the vlog (video blog). The latter mode enabled students to articulate their understanding by blogging through the medium of video with supporting texts and images.
* The more successful oral presentations used close to the maximum time limit of 5 minutes, which gave students more opportunity to meet the performance standards at the C grade or higher.
* Students were limited in achieving higher grades if their oral presentation was only 2−3 minutes long. A balance of both written and oral forms of evidence were provided at moderation.

Application of the performance standards

For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning *primarily* in relation to the assessment design criteria of communication, comprehension and application. Students’ ability to make strong connections with texts studied provided them with more successful opportunities to demonstrate evidence of their learning of these criteria.

When teachers explicitly taught the language features and conventions of different text types and how they were appropriate to different audiences and purposes, e.g. comprehension and application skills, students were successful at demonstrating evidence of those performance standards. For example, teaching the language features of a narrative gives students the opportunity to write an alternative ending to a story. Interrelated with this strategy is providing students with the learning platform to select appropriate vocabulary to support their logical sequencing of ideas when writing and speaking.

A strategy to support students’ understanding of the specific features of the assessment design criteria, used by a growing number of teachers, is to provide students with prompted guiding questions relevant to the specific feature being assessed in a task. For example, *Retell or transform a selected short story or section of the story into a written newspaper article, using an appropriate structure that includes all the text features of a feature article*:

* Cp1 – ‘Comprehension and interpretation of information, ideas, and opinions in texts’
* Have you included ideas gained from the visual images/text?
* Have you made it clear *what* is happening in the story?
* Have you incorporated *the main idea* *or opinion* that is being presented into the story?
* C1 – ‘Clarity and coherence of written expression, using appropriate vocabulary’
* Is your writing in clear paragraphs?
* Have you used interesting and diverse words?
* C2 – ‘Demonstration of grammatical control and complexity
* Is there a variety of different sentence structures to keep the writing interesting?

Task design

In its second year of this new subject outline, most schools have continued to take advantage of adopting or adapting the tasks described in the set of pre-approved learning and assessment plans available on the subject minisite. A few innovative tasks however, were noted by moderators. For example, changing a fairy-tale story into a newspaper article, e.g. *Cinderella interviewed after the death of her stepmother about her life before marrying Prince Charming*; listening to a ted-talk and writing a newspaper report/magazine article in response; a focus on cultural symbols to create meaning after reading of Lily Chan’s *Take Me Away, Please*; Oliver Phommavanh’s, *Hot and Spicy*, *or Chinese Lessons* by Ivy Tseng; and *The Relative Advantages of Learning my Language* by Amy Choi. It is expected that as teachers/schools become more confident with their planning, that learning and assessment plans will be more creative in design.

It is important for teachers to be upfront and clear about the specific features of the assessment design criteria being assessed. When instructions in tasks strategically selected specific features of criteria to be assessed, students were more likely to demonstrate literacy skills at the C grade or higher. However, including too many specific features of the assessment design criteria limited student opportunity to show understanding within 600 words or a 5-minute oral. In addition, providing scaffolding for assessment tasks supported students to be successful. For example, providing a structure for reflective writing/speaking outlining what students need to do to produce a discussion or a recording of a documentary. However, in some cases over-scaffolding resulted in almost identical, formulaic responses (e.g. same topic sentences, same supporting information), which limited creativity.

Assessment Type 2: Interactive Study

Students completed either an interview or a discussion for this assessment type. To support students, tasks were designed with either the interview or the discussion as a focus for the whole class. The interview tended to be the most popular presented at moderation. Most schools weighted this assessment type at 25%.

Successful achievement at the C grade

As with Assessment Type 1, at the C grade students’ demonstrated appropriate use of language features and conventions when interpreting information, ideas, and opinions in the written report for the interview or texts studied for the discussion.

* Students were generally able to write and speak in a clear and coherent manner, quoting information gathered from the interviewee or references from the two or more texts studied to support a point of view. Moderators noted that the few grammatical errors did not impede the flow or general meaning of the information, ideas, and opinions.
* Students also demonstrated some analysis of their personal, social, and cultural perspectives in interviews and discussions, taking into account their particular audience.
* Students should be provided with the opportunity to undertake some interview work prior to this assessment task in order to better prepare them for the confidence to conduct and reflect on an interview. Interviews held with a person known to the student, such as a parent or teacher provided successful achievement at the C grade. However, it was interviews held with a person relatively unknown to them which tended to be more thorough in their preparation and more focused in the interview and hence of a higher standard.
* The more successful responses in the discussion were those for which the teacher and/or other students asked open-ended questions that required extended responses and spontaneous use of language.
* It is important that the student leads the discussion. In some instances evidence at the C grade was limited by over-scaffolded questions and over-scripted discussions.
* Open-ended questions beginning with, for example, ‘discuss’, ‘explain’, ‘justify’, and ‘what do you think’, supported students to show clear evidence of the assessment design criteria for this assessment type.
* Where using group discussions, it is important for each student to be clearly identified and provided with equal discussion time of a maximum of 5 minutes.

Application of the performance standards

While students provided evidence of their learning *primarily* in relation to the Communication, Comprehension, and Application assessment design criteria, this does not preclude teachers from providing opportunities for students to demonstrate evidence of the Analysis criterion. Moderators noted some tasks which provided opportunities for students to analyse when reflecting on the interview held or when discussing ideas, opinions, or perspectives discovered while exploring at least two different texts for the discussion. This provided students with greater confidence to address the Analysis criterion in Assessment Type 3: Language Study, where it is required.

When reflecting on communication skills in the written report, students were able to critique the types of questions they asked in the interview, analyse their use of non-verbal cues, and assess their ability to sustain a conversation. In so doing, they provided evidence of Ap1 – ‘Use of language features and conventions for different purposes and audiences’ and An2 – ‘Analysis of ways in which texts are created for specific purposes and audiences’. Students must go beyond simply recounting what they did or found out. When students are able to provide justifications for their actions (in both preparing for and carrying out the activity), as well as contemplate how they could have done things differently, they were clearly able to achieve at the C grade or higher against the performance standards. In comprehending structure and language features for the interview (Cp2 – ‘Understanding of the purpose, structure, and language features of texts’), it is important that students clearly understand the purpose of this activity.

Task design

The subject outline stipulates that the interview must be conducted in English and presented as a written 800-word report. In designing the task for this assessment type, teachers took advantage of adopting and/or adapting exemplar tasks available on the subject minisite. These provided a scaffolded approach for directing students to address specific aspects of the assessment design criteria.

It is important to note that the interview report is of two parts – key findings of the interview *and* reflection on the communication skills and strategies used in the planning and conducting of the interview. A balance between these two components should be evident. The latter component tended to be limited in focus or not addressed. The more successful responses were authentic and specific when reflecting on communication skills and strategies. Examples of topics to engage student interest in selecting an appropriate person to interview:

* How has Australian society changed since you were a child?
* Do you think the education system is better/worse that it was when you were young?
* What changes would you like to see in Australian society?
* What changes have you seen in the world of work since you started a job?

The discussion is a presentation of a maximum of 5 minutes. It provides an opportunity for students to choose an idea, opinion, or perspective that arises in at least two texts. They present, explain, and discuss with their teacher and/or a small group of students the idea, opinion, or perspective they have studied. As the discussion is generated from at least two texts studied, students must reference key parts of the texts in order to address the Application assessment design criterion. The more successful discussions used close to the maximum time of 5 minutes.

The challenge of this assessment type is to design a task to ensure that students are provided with the opportunity to *interact*. In some cases, the evidence presented tended to heavily researched and limited student opportunity to reflect on the interview or discuss the idea, opinion or perspective studied with reference to texts.

Where an interview task is designed, it is important that the task provides students with the opportunity to address both requirements of the task, e.g. key findings of the interview *and* reflection on the communication skills and strategies used in the planning and conducting of the interview. In some cases, tasks were submitted without the component of reflection.

Assessment Type 3: Language Study

Successful achievement at the C grade

This assessment type is designed for students to identify and analyse aspects of language used in one or more texts.

Evidence of learning was reflective of appropriate comprehension and interpretation of information, ideas, and opinions expressed in the language study where they understood the general purpose, structure, and language features of the text type studied. Some analysis of personal, social and cultural perspectives in texts was identified together with some description of the intended purpose and audience. Students referred to specific sections of the text/s when analysing these perspectives. For example, specific language in a political speech used to persuade others. Students used vocabulary appropriate to the source of the language study and generally wrote and/or spoke in a clear and coherent manner.

Achievement at the C grade or higher was evident when students had been taught to distinguish between the purpose of informative and persuasive language; the language of comparing and contrasting (however, neither, both), the language of similarity and difference (the same, alike, unlike, different from, similar to). For most schools, the language study focussed on language used to persuade others, such as the language of advertising and marketing.

Application of the performance standards

Students provided evidence of their learning *primarily* in relation to the Communication, Comprehension, and Analysis assessment design criteria. Some analysis of perspectives in texts, together with some description of ways that texts were created for specific purposes and audiences, supported students to demonstrate learning at the C grade.

At the highest level of the performance standards, texts were considered simultaneously rather than consecutively.

Task design

Clear structure was noted as a good feature of task design for this assessment type. It assisted students in their understanding of the task requirements and helped them provide evidence at the C grade or higher. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the maximum 800 words or 5 minutes of oral evidence, or the equivalent in multimodal form, to adequately address the assessment design criteria.

Students, in the main, presented their language study as a report or multi-modal presentation enriched with images. An interesting language study, Vietnam prior and post war compared two national anthems. Another was a role play in which the managing director of a company used the language of persuasion through advertising to sell the company.

Preparation and packaging of student materials

Student materials were generally packed in accordance with the information sheet — *The preparation and packaging of materials for Stage 1 Moderation* and teachers provided a copy of their current approved learning and assessment plan. Variations to tasks stated in the learning and assessment plans were noted on the addendum. In some instances; however, schools sent more samples than were necessary, including more than three C grade samples or A and B samples together with C and D grade evidence. Where C and/or D sets of evidence are prepared and packaged together with sets of evidence prepared and packaged at the A and/or B grades, the A and or/B grades are not moderated. Where possible, moderators noted the submission of material electronically on two USBs allowed for a more efficient way of reviewing student materials.

Assessment at Stage 1 is 100% school assessed; tasks are set and marked by the teacher. Moderation seeks to confirm teacher assessment grades. Teachers are encouraged to complete a performance standard record for each task completed by a student and include in each folio an overall performance standard record indicating the overall grade for the set of tasks completed (or details about how the grade was determined e.g. results by assessment type).

Teachers are asked to check that all work on discs and other electronic media has successfully been copied and will be accessible to the moderators. Where recordings are submitted for moderation, teachers are asked to check the quality of the recordings for clarity, as background noise, at times, made it difficult for moderators to hear the student voice. It is important that all electronic media is clearly labelled, and, if the work of more than one student is on a disc or USB drive, that each student is identified by their SACE registration number. One way of ensuring correct identification is to include, in the order in which they appear in the recording, a list of students, their SACE registration numbers, and the name of the assessment type. Teachers should submit work in accordance with the Submission of Electronic Files (document) or Preparation of Non-written Materials and Submission of Electronic Files (video).

The majority of samples viewed were pending completion of the final task. *Stage 1 Information and Guidelines* give more information about selecting a representative sample for moderation.

General Comments

Teachers are encouraged to access the online clarifying and benchmarking activities on the English as an Additional Language minisite (Stage 1 > Support materials*)* to help them interpret and consistently apply the performance standards to student work. Once teachers submit their assessment decisions on the provided samples of work, annotated versions of the student responses can be downloaded and viewed.

When providing feedback to students, the feedback should be directed related to the performance standards and provide students with suggestions for improvements. At times teacher comments were distracting to moderators as they focussed on areas outside of the performance standards. For example, *a well written piece; a great interview, good content*.

Teachers are encouraged to support students to reach both maximum word counts and oral lengths to provide them with the scope in which to demonstrate achievement of the performance standards at the C grade or higher.