

English as Second Language Studies

2014 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

This assessment type is an ideal opportunity to assess analysis (both specific features An1 and An2) in both the written and oral assessment, interpersonal communication (C4) in the oral assessment, as well as a range of other specific features. The issue analysis was the assessment type which saw the highest number of moderation adjustments for this subject in 2014. Teachers should pay particular attention to the specifications in the subject outline when they assess student evidence of learning.

The most successful issue analysis tasks were designed to address a controversial issue, included opportunities for students to analyse both the issue and the texts used, and elicited genuine spontaneous language in the oral discussion.

Successful issue analysis tasks addressed an issue which was specific, current, controversial, examined in some depth and relevant to student interests. Examples of issues which allowed in-depth analysis included the way climate change is addressed in the media, or the way in which ‘fair trade’ practices might advantage or disadvantage both producers and consumers. Other issues were related to social justice, health, and the environment. Unsuccessful topics included uncontested factual topics. Careful choice by the teacher of the issue and appropriate texts presenting different points of view allowed students to analyse different perspectives and subsequently form and justify an opinion. As this assessment type focuses on analysis rather than research, the careful choice, either solely by the teacher or by both teacher and student, of several (for example, two to five) texts representing different text types and perspectives may support students to develop a focused analysis.

The subject outline states that students should address an aspect of the issue in the written response. In many cases, a successful approach was to choose a broad issue for the class and allow students to focus individually on a particular context or aspect of that issue. To illustrate how this might work, if the broad issue was ethical consumption, the class could examine one or two shared texts about principles of fair trade and a range of economic and social effects on producers and consumers. To develop focus on a particular aspect of this issue, one student might examine two or three short texts about the production of smartphones at a particular factory, while another student might analyse industry and consumer statements about free-range eggs in Australia.

The issue analysis assessment type is a key opportunity for students to demonstrate their analysis of both ideas and the language and structure of texts. Analysis of ideas, information, and opinions (An2) was demonstrated most successfully when students articulated their opinion on the issue and explained how this opinion was formed with reference to key ideas from the texts they had studied. Some students discussed how specific arguments influenced their thinking, or how they reacted to particular ideas. Recount or explanation of facts related to the issue could only provide evidence of location and recording of ideas and information, which links to the lower grade bands for An2.

Analysis of the relationship between the purpose, structure, and the language features of the text (An1) was achieved at higher levels when students specifically wrote or spoke about a range of features of the texts they had studied. Features of texts addressed in in-depth analyses could include (but are not limited to) the author’s intention, types of information that may be included or excluded, the way in which language emphasises or obscures personal opinion, the accessibility of language for the audience, and differences between the content and language of texts from different perspectives. These analysis specific features can be addressed in one or both of the written response or the oral discussion. In some cases, explicit questioning by the teacher to elicit additional detail in the evaluation of texts or justification of opinion was a successful approach in providing evidence in the higher grade bands for analysis.

The key to success in the oral discussion component of the issue analysis is elicitation of spontaneous language from the student by the teacher. As described in the subject outline, the oral task is an interactive discussion between the teacher and the individual student. Rehearsed presentations given in front of an audience do not meet the criteria for this task. High achievement in this task requires spontaneous, as opposed to rehearsed or polished, oral responses by the student. Students who were able to achieve at a high level gave responses structured with a clear opening and closing, directly addressed the question, and referred to texts in their responses. However, it should be noted that even students achieving at the highest levels showed features of natural speech such as occasional lapses in fluency, expression, or structure. Strategies such as asking for clarification or recasting the question to allow some thinking time were considered evidence of successful interpersonal language for sustaining interaction (C4), as well as appropriate language features for the text type of an oral discussion (Ap2, Ap3).

In successful examples of this task, although the students did most of the talking, the teacher directed the discussion. This allowed the teacher to ensure that students did not limit their achievement by presenting only rehearsed responses to expected questions. Questions which were specific to the student’s focus, relevant to the assessment design criteria, and open enough to allow an extended answer were able to elicit valuable student evidence. In addition, teacher questions which responded to and built on student answers could encourage students to provide additional evidence in knowledge and understanding, analysis, or application.

Consideration should also be given to the resources that students bring to their discussion. Successful examples of discussions showed students referring to an image or graph, brief note cards, or short excerpts from texts. These resources acted as memory prompters to support students to compose spontaneous responses to specific questions. In contrast, the use of scripts or detailed notes appeared to limit students’ achievement in spontaneous and responsive interaction. The presentation of slide shows seen in a small number of cases significantly limited the evidence of interactive discussion.

Assessment Type 2: Text Production

The text production assessment saw a range of successful approaches and questions for both the essay and creative writing tasks. The most successful tasks for the essay asked a clear and answerable question about an issue in the text, and gave clear directions to students about the purpose and structure of the essay required to address the question, for example an argument or discussion essay. The most successful questions focused on an issue arising from the stimulus text(s), which allowed students to develop a clear position or discuss different perspectives, demonstrating aspects of analysis and application. Examples of question types that may encourage analysis include ‘to what extent does’, ‘should’, ‘what is the effect of, ‘compare and contrast’, and ‘why’

The degree of scaffolding affects the achievement of students in the essay task. It was evident that appropriate scaffolding of essays allowed students to structure their writing clearly, and to incorporate evidence from texts. Although there is some risk of repetitiveness or unoriginality within a class, this strategy might support less proficient students to improve their achievement, particularly in knowledge and understanding or application. Students achieving in the higher grade bands for the essay demonstrated perceptive analysis, a broader range of more sophisticated expression, and clear logical connections between ideas in ways which demonstrated greater depth of thought and originality.

High achievement in creative writing was supported by well-defined tasks with a clear structure, audience, and purpose, as well as attention to creative and descriptive language. Successful tasks took into consideration the intended purpose and audience of the task, and were set in a context where sophisticated and descriptive language would be appropriate, which can enable achievement in Ap2, Ap3, C1, and C2. In contrast, where students were writing for a young reader or a loosely defined purpose, there was less scope to demonstrate a range of complex language. Frequently set target texts of a formal letter, diary entry, or recount allowed a range of achievement, but some more specific text types did allow students to demonstrate aspects of all assessment design criteria (such as KU2, KU3, An1, Ap2, Ap3, C1, C2) at a higher level. Such text types included online reviews, news reports, short interview transcripts, or celebrity gossip columns.

A range of fiction and non-fiction texts including films, short stories, novels, and documentaries were used in the text production tasks. Some of the texts used as stimulus for essays or creative writing included *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Contagion*, *The Divine Wind*, *Gattaca*, *Gran Turino*, *The Help*, *Life of Pi*, *Mao’s Last Dancer*, *Patch Adams*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. As stated in the subject outline, the text used for the essay must be different from that used for the creative writing task.

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

The investigation assessment type addresses the full range of assessment design criteria in the written presentation and tutorial. Teachers are able to select the combination of specific features for each task in order to give students the best opportunity to demonstrate their achievement. Successful investigations incorporated well-considered and focused research questions, clearly structured academic written presentations, and tutorials which included genuine student-led discussion.

The most successful investigations addressed a clearly defined question or hypothesis. It is suggested that teachers support students in developing a question that is appropriate in scope for this assessment type. Issues that were more academic, tied to a local, state or national context, and of current interest tended to produce more successful investigations compared to very personal, obscure, or occult issues. Successful investigations addressed an issue that was specific, controversial, and current, and were relevant to the investigator as well as to the tutorial audience. Issues of relevance to the student cohort tended to elicit genuine engagement and interaction during the tutorial, improving achievement in application and communication. It may be necessary to adjust questions during the course of the investigation task in response to the direction of the research.

In general, written presentations addressed the subject outline and assessment design criteria successfully, incorporating logical structure, academic language, consistent academic referencing, and appropriate level of detail for the word-limit. Abstracts were largely written appropriately, summarising key findings in an academic manner, rather than reflecting on process or evaluating sources. As stated in the subject outline, the question or hypothesis needs to be directly addressed in the introduction and conclusion of the written presentation. This was demonstrated appropriately when the introduction stated and explained the question or hypothesis, and the conclusion succinctly evaluated arguments and summarised the answer or resolution.

Many investigations drew on survey findings or other primary research. Students who did this most successfully incorporated survey results throughout the written presentation, by including relevant findings in prose or as tables or graphs in the relevant paragraphs or sections. This allowed high achievement in An2 and Ap4 in particular. It was less effective for students to write a stand-alone section or paragraph detailing the primary research process and results.

Certain aspects of the tutorial were consistently addressed appropriately in task design. The majority of students were able to demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding, along with some analysis, application, and communication, by explaining findings from their tutorial through an oral presentation and visual aids. Answering questions from the audience is a valued part of a tutorial, demonstrating knowledge and understanding in particular, but generally provides only limited evidence of achievement in application and communication. In particular, where audience members appear to be reading questions rather than asking genuinely, there is limited evidence that the presenter has successfully communicated knowledge and understanding or considered the audience and purpose of the tutorial.

The most significant marker of high achievement in the investigation tutorial was the success of the student-led group discussion. To achieve at the high grade levels in the tutorial overall, a purposeful and interactive discussion was required. This should be initiated and managed by the student presenter. In the more effective discussion activities, the presenter posed questions or scenarios which required audience members to give and justify opinions, rather than to recall facts. Presenters could demonstrate further achievement by recasting, summarising, or responding to their audience’s input. Students who performed well in the interactive discussion could demonstrate high achievement of specific features such as KU2, KU3, Ap2, Ap3, and C4.

A variety of structures enabled students to achieve well in the tutorial. In some cases, students gave a short presentation of their key findings, answered questions from the audience, and then conducted a discussion activity with the class. Another effective approach was to begin with a short discussion to engage the audience with the topic, then present key findings in small sections, each followed by a brief discussion exploring any changes in opinion or knowledge of the audience. It is acknowledged that leading a discussion may pose a challenge to the communication and confidence of many students, so the opportunity to practise different styles of discussion before undertaking the investigation supports student achievement in this task.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Examination

There were 1581 students enrolled in English as Second Language Studies in 2014. The examination required students to demonstrate a range of skills and allowed them to show achievement against the performance standards. Most students were effectively able to manage their time and complete all parts of the examination. Section 1: Listening Comprehension allowed students to achieve across the grade range and most responses were of a good standard. While Section 2: Written Paper does require a greater range of skills, it was also completed to a good standard, with most students able to demonstrate satisfactory achievement against the performance standards. Students were generally familiar with the topics and most were able to demonstrate good understanding; however, some struggled to focus these ideas and explore the specific issues presented in the examination.

Section 1: Listening Comprehension

Overall, students achieved a higher standard in the listening comprehension than in the written paper. The mean average for Section 1 was 63.29%, which was about 1% or 2% higher than the other parts of the examination. However, there were a lot more students who achieved in the E range for the Listening Comprehension than the other sections, which shows that this is still an area that needs further improvement for some students.

Part A

Part A required students to respond to six questions and demonstrate their understanding of the text through short answers. The specific features that the markers looked for in Part A included KU1 and KU4 (knowledge and understanding), and C1 and C2 (communication). Therefore, students were required to show their understanding of the text and appropriately communicate this information in their responses. The more successful students considered what an appropriate response was and carefully read the instructions at the beginning of the paper about complete sentence answers. Also, those that read the questions carefully and ensured that they used information throughout the text in their response tended to achieve at a higher standard.

Question 1 was sometimes confused with Question 3, with identical information used to answer them both. However, if students were able to distinguish and explore their answer, they were not penalised for similar information. Also, as there were many technical words in this response, recognisable spelling was acceptable and markers were looking for meaning, not exact phrases. The criteria for superfoods that the examiners were looking for were:

* rich in vitamins and minerals
* high ratio of nutrients
* minimally processed
* low in saturated fats and sugars.

Question 2was successfully answered by most students.. The answer to this question was: ‘It is increasing by 19% per year.’

Question 3 required students to focus on the labelling requirements of a superfood and not the more general criteria, as in Question 1. Again markers were looking for meaning, and recognisable spelling was accepted. The two requirements that were needed in the answer were that:

* they must be recognised by the Health Association
* claims must be supported by research.

Question 4also allowed most students to be successful, with the answers being:

1. 60%
2. increase brain power.

Question 5was a more difficult question and required students to use information from throughout the entire text. There were nine different points that were able to be used as answers, with students receiving half a mark per point. If students were able to convey the intended meaning of a point and their spelling was recognisable, they were given the half-mark.

Question 6was also generally completed well, with students carefully reading the question and answering in a complete sentence. The answer the markers sought was ‘Superfoods should be only used as a supplement and combined with a healthy diet and exercise,’ or something very similar.

Part B

Students generally find Part B more difficult than Part A. Part B requires students to provide their answers as extended responses incorporating paragraphs. This means that students need to organise their responses so that their paragraphs have a clear topic sentence and use cohesive devices to connect sentences, while also showing their understanding about what they have heard. Part B focuses on the performance standards for the knowledge and understanding (KU1, KU4), analysis (An2), and communication (C1, C3) assessment design criteria.

Some students struggled with the topic of Part B, as all students bring their own understanding about happiness. However, the successful students focused on the information in the text and structured their responses using only information that they had heard.

Question 7was generally done well, with most students being able to achieve some marks. While not ideal, a one-sentence paragraph was acceptable for this response. There were three points that were able to be used in the response, but students only needed two to receive full marks. Examiners were looking for students to convey the ideas that happiness is difficult to define because:

* it is complex
* it is different in every country or culture
* it is made up of many interrelated parts.

Question 8was one of the most difficult questions in this paper and required students to use a lot of information and then demonstrate their understanding about how it is related and contradicts itself. Students received 2 marks for finding the two different points and showing their understanding about the contradiction. The other mark was for a clear topic sentence and structure.

Question 9had lots of detail spread throughout the text and required students to find at least twelve points. They then needed to organise these ideas, which generally meant dividing them into two or three paragraphs. Students were given 6 marks for finding twelve points, 1 mark for clear topic sentences and organised paragraphs, and 1 mark for language and cohesion.

Section 2: Written Paper

Part A

Part A of the written paper focused on the following specific features of the assessment design criteria:

*Knowledge and Understanding*

KU1 Knowledge and understanding of the ideas, concepts, and issues in texts.

* Do the students show that they have understood what they have read?
* Do they understand the ideas they are using in their essays?

KU3 Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which texts [in this case, an essay] are composed for specific purposes and audiences.

* Suggested structure (students must take a clear position):
  + introduction (general statement, clear statement of position, preview of arguments)
  + body (topic sentences, elaboration/evidence with in-text referencing)
  + conclusion (restatement of position, short summary of argument, general statement).
* Understanding of academic language.

KU4 Knowledge and understanding of context-specific or technical vocabulary.

* Are they able to use language relevant to the topic? (technical language)
* Are they able to use language relevant to this type of essay? (argumentative language)

*Analysis*

An2 Location, recording, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of ideas, information, and opinions from a range of texts.

* Finding and correctly referencing information.
* Ability to join ideas from different texts into one argument (they must take a position).
* Ability to paraphrase the information.

*Application*

Ap1 Selection and use of information from a range of sources [in this case, all three texts].

Ap3 Use of text-appropriate language features to make meaning.

Ap4 Use of evidence from a range of sources to build logical and coherent texts or arguments.

* Development of ideas.
* Connection between paragraphs.
* Connection between ideas and sentences within paragraphs.

*Communication*

C1 Clarity and coherence in written and spoken communication [in this case, written only], using appropriate vocabulary.

C2 Demonstration of grammatical control and complexity.

C3 Use of formal and objective language.

Part A of the written paper was designed so that arguments were balanced throughout and both sides could be argued with an equal amount of either positive or negative points. However, the vast majority of students argued that tourism to Antarctica should not continue. This was generally done quite well, with the mean average being 61.79%, which is slightly lower than the mean achieved in the listening comprehension.

The question for the essay (Question 10) was generally on a familiar topic to students, but it was apparent that the specific issue was a new concept for most. The wording of the question was quite open and enabled students to interpret it in a number of different ways and still be able to effectively argue their position. Some of the positive interpretations were that tourism should be encouraged and also that it is important. As the majority of students argued against tourism, there were a lot more interpretations, but some of the more common interpretations for the negative argument were that tourism should be stopped, it is negative, it should be discouraged, and it is unacceptable. The more successful students were able to clearly and consistently present their position throughout their essay. When students attempted to present both sides of the argument, their essays often lacked depth and they were often unable to effectively demonstrate their position.

The amount of information students are using to write the essays is considerable and there are a number of different points that can be found throughout the three sources. As there is only limited time, some students found relevant points, organised them into paragraphs, and then copied the information into their essays. While all students will copy some key words and phrases as part of their answer, the amount of direct copying ought be kept to a minimum. When entire sentences or consecutive phrases were found to be directly copied from the texts, this had an impact on a student’s grade. The more successful students were able to combine ideas from different texts, while changing the structure and language from the original phrases.

While student referencing has improved over the last few years, it is a still an area that needs continued focus. Markers were generally happy with the approach to academic referencing, but students were more successful when they used a consistent and considered approach. Students were not specifically penalised for a minor referencing error, but when an inconsistent approach was used throughout, it impacted on the performance standards of knowledge and understanding, analysis, and application. The correct referencing using the suggested Harvard referencing style is the author’s last name and the year of publication. For the three texts in the examination this was:

Text 1: Budiawan 2014 *or* continentfacts 2014

Text 2: Lee 2013

Text 3: Clifford 2014  
 Zhang *or* Bellman n.d. / 2014  
 ‘Did you know?’ n.d. / 2014

Also, students are encouraged to try using a range of ways to incorporate referencing. The more successful students considered the evidence they wanted to use and the most appropriate way to reference it. Some of the different ways that students used included:

* *Evidence* (*author* *year*).
* *Author* (*year*) argues that *evidence*.
* According to *author* (*year*), *evidence*.
* Both *author* (*year*) and *author* (*year*) argue that *evidence*.

The aim of this essay is to present an argument and clearly demonstrate a position throughout the essay. It is not just to list evidence from the texts, but to use the texts to argue the question. The more successful students were able to use argumentative language to strongly present their opinion about tourism in an academic manner. Some of the less successful students were personalising their argument and using language to explore what ‘I believe’ and ‘I think’. Students are encouraged to use more academic and formal language to present their ideas.

With the increased use of technology, handwriting is an often neglected area of examination preparation by many students. Handwriting is an area that needs continued focus, as some students had grades reduced because letters were not formed correctly and some words were unreadable. Students are reminded that even when running out of time they need to write carefully and neatly.

Part B

Part B of the written paper focused on the following specific features of the assessment design criteria:

*Knowledge and Understanding*

KU1 Knowledge and understanding of the ideas, concepts, and issues in texts.

* Do the students respond to the text?
* How much understanding do they show about the issue?
* Do the ideas develop logically?
* Do they show a connection between the ideas in each paragraph?

KU3 Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which texts are composed for specific purposes and audiences.

* Have they used formal language?
* Do their word choices fit who they are and who they are writing to?

*Application*

Ap2 Meaning that is conveyed and exchanged in familiar and unfamiliar contexts.

* Can the ideas be understood?
* Is meaning conveyed appropriately for the letter?

Ap3 Use of text-appropriate language features to make meaning.

* Have they followed the correct conventions?

Writer’s address (in Australia or elsewhere; anywhere above the letter)  
Date (anywhere above the letter)  
Receiver’s address (to the left)

Dear Mr X  
Paragraphs (clear purpose in each)  
Concluding paragraph (recommendation/solution/action/thank you/etc.)

Yours sincerely (name known) *or* Yours faithfully (name unknown)  
Name written

*Communication*

C1 Clarity and coherence in written and spoken communication [in this case, written only], using appropriate vocabulary.

* Are the sentences connected?
* Are the paragraphs connected?
* Do they express their ideas clearly?

C2 Demonstration of grammatical control and complexity.

C3 Use of formal and objective language.

The topics for the formal letter were familiar to most students and allowed a range of different responses. About 1000 students chose to respond to Question 11 and 500 chose Question 12. The mean average for Part B was 62.64%, which was higher than for the essay. Both questions allowed students to be successful and demonstrate their ability against the performance standards. The more successful students were able to take the ideas presented in the text and develop them further. The weaker responses copied slabs of text and simply transformed the given information into a letter.

As Question 11 and 12 were quite open, there were a range of different responses. Some of the more common responses included letters to the editor, letters requesting more information, letters of thanks, and letters of complaint. Whichever type of letter students chose to write, they needed to ensure that it was clear why they were writing a particular type of letter and why they were writing to a particular person. It was often unclear why students had chosen to write to the editor and sometimes it was unclear what the purpose of the letter was.

Structure is another area that needs continued focus. While this structure (formal letter) is generally understood quite well, the better letters showed a consistent approach to the formal letter conventions including addresses, date, salutation, and ending. The more successful students had a clear purpose in the opening paragraph and it was clear why they had chosen the particular type of letter. They then developed these ideas further in the subsequent paragraphs and had a concluding paragraph that brought their letter to a close. The aim of the letter is to demonstrate a range of language use which is different from the essay, as the letter has a different audience and purpose. Therefore, students were more successful when they did not structure the letter as an essay and avoided the structural elements required for Part A, such as ‘firstly’, ‘secondly’, and ‘in conclusion’.

The language used in the formal letters needs to be polite, with a consideration of purpose and audience. Some of the better letters were able to either convey a strong argument or use very emotional language but in a very polite and formal way. It is not appropriate in a formal letter to demand immediate action of the person you are writing to or to be too direct.

Most students chose to respond to Question 11 and demonstrated experience of this topic. The better responses were able to personalise the issue and develop it beyond the examination text. Many students chose to write to the editor and present an opposite point of view to the one presented by Tony Lu. These were generally done quite well. Some of the weaker responses chose to write to Tony Lu and try to convince him not to change the driving laws, which showed a misunderstanding about the text. Students are reminded to carefully read the information and consider its purpose. They also need to think about who the people mentioned in the text are and their control of the situation.

Question 12 was more open than Question 11 and had a greater range of responses. Some students wrote to their local council, their local minister, the gym organisers, or school principals. As long as the responses had a clear purpose that connected closely with the text, they were able to be successful. Students had to be careful that they were responding to the text and did not just have a loose connection at the end of their letters. Some of the weaker responses focused on junk food or another loosely connected issue and did not closely respond to the information given. Students are encouraged to develop their ideas using the information in the examination text and ensure that throughout their letters there is connection back to the text.

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.

The paperwork included in moderation packages provides valuable information for moderators. The approved learning and assessment plan (LAP) shows how the design of each task fits the criteria set in the subject outline. For any changes to the LAP, the addendum must be completed and included in the moderation sample so that moderators can understand the tasks set and the specific features assessed. A Variations — Moderation Materials form must be used to account for any missing samples or variations in tasks or assessment conditions, so that moderators are fully informed about any inconsistencies in student evidence. Letters to moderators or other information outside of these official documents cannot be considered during the moderation process.

Task sheets and an indication of the performance standards used are also helpful to moderators when included with the moderation package. Summaries of student grades for each task and assessment type can be useful for moderators, and must be consistent with the final marks submitted to the SACE Board. Adherence to the word-counts and time-limits set out in the subject outline is vital, as this ensures that all student work can be considered in moderation. These limits ensure fairness across schools and are linked to the standard expected of students to express ideas of the appropriate depth in a clear and concise manner. Evidence which falls outside of the set limit cannot be considered by moderators. In oral tasks, any preamble such as greetings or stating SACE numbers is not counted as part of the set time-limit. Teachers should note that digital video or audio files for the investigation tutorial or issue analysis discussion need to be unedited, live recordings of the task.

Electronic files, whether submitted on CD, DVD, or USB drive, must be clearly labelled with the student's SACE number or official name. A printed list of files is appreciated by moderators, especially where the work of multiple students is included on one disc. Before submission, files need to be checked to ensure that they will play on a standard Windows computer.

When multiple classes are combined into a single assessment group, it is in the best interests of students and teachers that, prior to submitting results sheets to the SACE Board, teachers work together to establish a shared understanding of the assessment standard and agreement on the marks being submitted. This ensures fairness for all students in the moderation and marking process.

General Comments

The key indicators of higher achievement across the school-assessed tasks this year included the interpersonal communication in the issue analysis interactive discussion and the investigation tutorial. In addition, where analysis of ideas and texts was specifically supported in task design, students were able to achieve higher grades. The most successful tasks were those where the question, texts, and specific features were matched to the task and to student strengths. Even where grades were confirmed, it is worth considering how small adjustments to task design might further advantage students in assessment and moderation.

One consideration is the choice of topics or texts across all three assessment types. The same texts should not be used for more than one task, and nor should topics be repeated. A variety of topics, sources, and text types is valuable not only in engaging students with a range of ideas and perspectives, but also in developing the broad repertoire of English language skills supported by this subject.

Teachers are encouraged to participate in the valuable professional learning offered by the SACE Board. Clarifying forums are an important opportunity to see samples of student work at the moderated standard in each grade band. Participation in marking and moderation panels provides worthwhile professional learning about assessment processes and standards. These activities also afford teachers the chance to consider a range of different task designs which give students the opportunity to demonstrate achievement at higher grade bands.

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