2019 Outdoor Education Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the previous year’s 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.

Good task design is critical in providing opportunities for students to achieve at the highest level. It is important to develop tasks with the class cohort in mind, rather than use task exemplars that may not fit the experiences and backgrounds of each school and student context.

Student responses to appropriate tasks displayed a depth of reflection and analysis that was relevant and displayed genuine cognitive and emotional attachment to their experiences. Tailoring activities that connect students to the outdoor environment will enhance opportunity for success.

Less successful responses across the assessment types:

* reflected limited connection to their experiences
* demonstrated recounts in a journal or diary type response
* included assessment design criteria not required or assessment design criteria features not relevant to the particular assessment type/task.

Learning and Assessment plans are the pivotal framework around which tasks are formulated. Such plans should be developed with the student cohort foremost in mind then developed to match school resources and experiences within the means of the student cohort.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Folio

This assessment type provides students the opportunity to complete tasks in a range of assessment modes such as written tasks, multimedia and oral presentation, and each folio assessment should cover a different topic. One folio assessment task must relate to each of the four topics; Environmental Studies, Sustainable Parks, Planning and Management Practices, and Leadership and Planning.

The range of folio tasks should allow for students to address the relevant assessment design criteria as required by the Subject Outline; demonstrating practical knowledge and skills, investigation and critical analysis of the concepts as well as communication of ideas, opinions and information in a variety of ways.

The more successful responses commonly:

* were based on tasks that were linked to practical experiences and enabled more insightful and informed responses
* questions directed students to address the appropriate assessment design criteria
* used photos, annotations and evidence of experiences
* supported reflections and observations with secondary research from credible sources
* identified, analysed and critiqued management strategies in natural environments
* provided synthesis and new ideas in the assessment of the Investigation and Critical Analysis assessment design criteria
* allowed students to use a variety of presentation modes.

The less successful responses commonly:

* included non-relevant features from the Practical Knowledge and Skills assessment design criteria
* lacked in-depth investigation and critical analysis, i.e. included only descriptions or recounts of experiences
* included minimal reference to practical experiences
* were limited by tasks that lacked the opportunity to cover stated assessment design criteria
* relied on tasks/tests and first aid courses with insufficient rigor
* included elements that should be assessed in other Assessment Types, e.g. the planning for a self-reliant journey should be assessed in Assessment Type 3: Self Reliant Practical, rather than in Assessment Type 1: Folio.

Assessment Type 2: Group Practical

In this assessment type, students undertook two different types of outdoor journeys of a minimum of 3 days each (or a journey and an activity) and provided the opportunity for students to demonstrate their practical outdoor skills. They should have had the opportunity to investigate, analyse, reflect and evaluate on their experience during one or both of the journeys, and analyse and investigate strategies for sustainable use of natural environments. They should also analyse environmental issues or experiences during the journeys, reflect on their personal responses to the journey and their relationship with the natural environments experienced, and/or evaluate risk and safety management practices.

The checklists available on the SACE website must be used in assessing the practical knowledge and skills of the group practical.

The more successful responses commonly:

* were supported through diligent use of checklist criteria, including detailed comments from the teacher to justify the performance of each student
* provided clear evidence of relevant features of the assessment design criteria; reflection and evaluation and investigation and critical analysis that was related to the journey, and demonstrated personal enrichment as a result of their outdoor experiences
* demonstrated comprehensive planning and sophisticated evaluation of risk management practices.

The less successful responses commonly:

* lacked evidence of planning when ‘Practical Knowledge and Skills, specific feature 4’ was indicated as being assessed
* lacked evidence of the teacher’s assessment of student’s practical knowledge and skill using the approved checklists with detailed comments
* provided a recount of what the group did, rather than a personal reflection e.g. diary entries of what happened with little or no analysis
* did not include evidence of Investigation and Critical Analysis.

Assessment Type 3: Self Reliant Practical

The self-reliant expedition must be a minimum of 3 days and involve lightweight travelling under indirect supervision. As far as possible, it should be planned, organised, and conducted by the students themselves.

There are three parts to the self-reliant practical:

* planning the self-reliant expedition
* conducting the expedition itself
* writing a report.

The checklists must be used in assessing the ‘practical knowledge and skills’ demonstrated in the self-reliant practical.

The planning and the final report provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate investigation, critical analysis, reflection, and evaluation and communication skills.

The more successful responses commonly:

* included clear evidence of the contribution made by individual students in group planning for the journey
* demonstrated individual connection to the location, historical and indigenous perspectives in the reflection
* displayed a depth of evaluation of individual and group skills prior to and after completing the journey
* provided detailed critical analysis of the planning, risk management, and running of the expedition
* used a variety of presentation formats, using appropriate language
* included personal photos from outdoor experiences to support their reflections or analysis.

The less successful responses commonly:

* showed little relationship to addressing the criteria being assessed
* assessed against too many specific features
* lacked clear, fluent and logical structure
* lacked evidence of student emotional response to the outdoor experience
* noted a lack of previous opportunity for experience in the outdoor activity being undertaken during the self‑reliant practical
* lacked evidence of background research in the planning documentation
* included only ‘common planning’ information rather than clear evidence of each student’s contribution to the planning process.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Investigation

The environmental investigation requires the student to identify an environmental issue and explore the impacts on themselves and others. As such, environmental issues require strong personal connection that enable a student to collect primary data, this is somewhat different to an investigation of a topic that may use only secondary sources. Topics such as fishing, climate change and deforestation are examples that may not allow collection of primary data and therefore not recommended, whereas topics such as sand dune devastation at a local beach provides better scope to address the performance standards.

The performance standard of RE2 needs to be developed by the student through continued personal engagement of the natural environmental issue. Those that offered insightful observations had re-visited the site over a period. ICA allows the student to deepen their understanding of the issue and its direct impact on themselves.

The more successful responses commonly:

* attended to all of the prescribed performance standards
* used and recorded observations to explain and understand their relationship with the environment
* based their investigation on aspects of a journey or place they had regularly visited including their emotional connection to environment and solutions to issues
* used a wide range of sources including primary sources
* chose relevant environmental issues which could be observed and photographed
* discussed ‘why’ the issue was a problem in the chosen environment, linking back to the impact on the ecosystem and sustainability
* included analysis of the strategies to overcome or mitigate the environmental issue, with discussion on whether they were effective or not
* provided evidence of obvious personal connection to the issue with discussion around observations made from experience
* was directly connected to an expedition or Outdoor Education experience which allowed for more personal connection, observation and reflection
* required students to collect their own primary data rather than use class field trip data
* displayed good critical analysis of findings and observations made in the field
* included critical analysis followed up with in-depth and appropriate management strategies showing the students’ knowledge and understanding
* reflected and discussed personal connections and beliefs about strategies and suggested solutions
* gave evidence from personal experiences with discussion and analysis of their own data or observations
* insightful annotations on images/diagrams/tables to highlight observations made in the field
* demonstrated evidence of considering their own management strategies
* gave insightful suggestions for the future.

The less successful responses commonly:

* lacked evidence of discussion of the student’s emotional responses to the environment and impact of the issue
* lacked evidence of recording, personal observations
* utilised a small range of sources and often not acknowledged by referencing
* focused more on tourism, geography, risk management, agriculture or economy rather than the significance of the issue on environment and therefore did not display their depth of knowledge in ecology and resource management
* relied heavily on secondary data and did not present students own knowledge and understanding of their primary observations
* lacked language of ecology
* did not present management strategies
* lacked flow and did not address the issue they were investigating
* used statistics, quotes and secondary sources, however did not make any personal connections or reflections
* did not answer environmental question posed, or question was too broad
* lacked analysis of strategies only listing what was done
* did not link issues back to the ecosystem they were investigating
* used excessive collaboration within the student cohort
* lacked referencing.