

Assessment and Reporting Guidelines

These guidelines describe the processes for using grades and performance standards to assess and report student achievement in SACE subjects at Stage 1 and Stage 2.

They outline:

- the relationship between grades and performance standards
- how performance standards are used in the assessment process
- the role of teachers in assessing and reporting student achievement at Stage 1 and Stage 2
- the SACE Board's role in confirming standards and reporting results
- how school assessment and external assessment are combined in Stage 2 subjects
- what happens when evidence of a student's learning in a Stage 1 or Stage 2 subject is missing or insufficient
- what happens when a student's achievement in a Stage 1 or Stage 2 subject is variable and difficult to assess
- what happens when a breach of rules has been verified
- how to focus on evidence when assessing student learning.

Final subject grades

To report the final subject grades at Stage 1, the SACE Board uses grades from A to E. At Stage 2, the Board uses grade levels from A+ to E-. The subject grades for both stages are based on the performance standards described in each subject outline.

Assessment decisions about individual tasks should be made with reference to the performance standards.

At Stage 1, the SACE Board provides a school assessment grade calculator that teachers may use, to combine the grades (A to E) for the assessment types (according to weightings set by the school) to produce a student's final subject grade.

At Stage 2, the SACE Board combines the grades for each of the school assessment types with the grade for the external assessment component to produce a student's final subject grade.

The use of performance standards in the assessment process

Descriptions of each grade level are included in each subject outline and are called 'performance standards'. The performance standards describe five levels of achievement, A to E.

Teachers and assessors use the performance standards to decide how well a student has demonstrated his or her learning. Each grade corresponds to a level of the performance standards.

Performance standards are more than a tool for assigning grades. They also offer opportunities for teachers and students to improve the quality of their teaching and learning.

Teachers refer to the performance standards to:

- show each student what is needed to be successful in his or her learning
- design assessment tasks that help students to demonstrate their learning at the highest possible level of achievement
- make decisions about the quality of learning.

Students can also refer to the performance standards to:

- show their learning in ways most appropriate to them
- monitor their progress
- understand what is expected at the end of a learning program

Assessment and Reporting of Student Achievement at Stage 1

The role of the SACE Board

The SACE Board acknowledges and values its partnership with the school in ensuring the quality of SACE assessment. It particularly values the important role that teachers' assessment of their students' learning plays in SACE subjects.

To support the role of teachers in assessment and reporting at Stage 1, the SACE Board:

- provides exemplars of learning and assessment plans for each subject
- works with teachers to develop and publish online exemplars of assessment tasks and the use of performance standards
- provides the school assessment grade calculator to help teachers to determine a final grade for the assessment types in Stage 1 subjects
- makes available planning and clarifying support for Stage 1 English and mathematics subjects and Exploring Identities and Futures
- confirms school decisions at the C grade level for Stage 1 English and mathematics subjects and Exploring Identities and Futures through a process of moderation and review of samples of student work
 - the process of front-loaded moderation is used for Exploring identities and Futures
- reports each subject with a grade in the range A to E on a student's Record of Achievement.

The role of the teacher

The assessment of student learning in Stage 1 subjects is based wholly on teachers' judgments, which the SACE Board supports through its quality assurance activities.

To ensure that this partnership works effectively, teachers are asked to carry out the following tasks in the Stage 1 assessment and reporting process:

1. *Select or develop a learning and assessment plan for the subject.* The learning and assessment plan describes the number and nature of the assessment tasks (for example, presentations or essays) for the assessment types (these vary from subject to subject and may include folios, investigations, etc.), aligned to the requirements of the subject outline. The learning and assessment plan is approved and retained by the school.

At Stage 1 schools have the option of using or adapting pre-approved learning and assessment plans, developing their own learning and assessment plans (school-developed), or using a combination of those two options. (see [Learning and assessment plans – Stage 1 and Stage 2, Information sheet 57](#))

2. *Decide on the relative weightings of the assessment types in the subject.* The minimum weighting for any assessment type is 20%. Decisions will be influenced by the focus of the learning program, and the needs, aspirations, and abilities of the students.
3. *Design assessment tasks, using the assessment design criteria and specific features, so that students can provide evidence of the quality of their learning, to the highest level of the performance standards.*

4. *Make clear on the task sheet which specific features are the focus of each assessment.* Specific features of the assessment design criteria are selected to assess evidence of the quality of students' learning in an assessment task or assessment type. Each subject outline lists specific features for each of the assessment design criteria.
5. *Record student achievement for each assessment task and assessment type, using either grades or scores that are referenced to the performance standards.* Individual assessment task and assessment type results are recorded and kept at the school, and are not reported to the SACE Board.
6. *Combine the student's results for each assessment type in a subject to determine a final subject grade in the range A to E.* Decide on the subject grade, taking into account the respective weightings of the assessment types in the approved learning and assessment plan. The SACE Board's school assessment grade calculator is designed to help teachers in this process. Teachers enter the weightings and grades for the assessment types for each subject and for each student. The calculator combines these and converts them into a final subject grade for each student. This grade must reflect the student's achievement in the subject with reference to the performance standards.
The [grade calculator for school assessment](#) is available on the SACE website.
7. *If a student does not complete an individual assessment task, consider the extent to which other assessment tasks undertaken provide evidence of the student's learning in the context of the subject's learning requirements.* Decide on a subject grade that is consistent with the performance standards. If appropriate, consider using the addendum to amend the learning and assessment plan for individual students (if there is a valid reason – not when a student has simply failed to complete a task; see below for more information).
8. *If a student provides insufficient evidence of learning in an assessment type, amend the subject grade according to the weighting allocated to the assessment type.* The teacher's professional judgment should be used to determine the amended subject grade with reference to the performance standards.
9. If missing or insufficient evidence of learning may prevent a student from gaining a C grade in Exploring Identities and Futures, or in an English or mathematics subject designed to meet the literacy or numeracy requirements of the SACE, the school may consider recording the designation 'P' (Pending) until the student is able to provide evidence of his or her learning at the C grade level. This strategy encourages the student to complete these compulsory requirements of the SACE without repeating a semester of study.

Missing or insufficient evidence of learning

In a number of cases in a Stage 1 subject there may be missing or insufficient evidence of a student's learning in, for example:

- an assessment task for an assessment type
- an assessment type.

The following advice deals with each of these examples. Note that it does not apply when a student is eligible for special provisions in assessment.

Missing or insufficient evidence in an assessment task for an assessment type

An assessment type consists of one or more assessment tasks. How teachers deal with missing evidence in an assessment task will vary from subject to subject, depending on the number and nature of the assessment tasks for an assessment type, as specified in the subject outline.

If a student does not provide evidence for an assessment task within an assessment type, the teacher must determine the extent to which the evidence provided in the other assessment tasks meets the performance standards for that assessment type.

The student's final subject grade must reflect the performance standards.

Missing or insufficient evidence in an assessment type

When a student does not provide any evidence for an assessment type, the designation 'I' (for Insufficient Evidence) is recorded for that assessment type.

When there is insufficient evidence in every assessment type, an overall 'N' (No Result) is given for the subject.

Variable achievement

Sometimes the level of achievement demonstrated by a student may vary:

- across the assessment tasks for an assessment type
- within a single assessment task.

In such situations teachers should adopt a 'best-fit' model as outlined in the following sections.

Variable achievement across the assessment tasks for an assessment type

An assessment type may consist of more than one task. Sometimes a student's evidence of learning may demonstrate achievement of the same assessment design criteria and/or specific features at higher grade bands in some tasks and lower grade bands in other tasks for an assessment type.

How teachers deal with variable achievement when there are multiple tasks in an assessment type will depend on the assessment design criteria and specific features assessed in each task and the number of assessment tasks in the assessment type.

For example, if a student's evidence of learning for an assessment type demonstrates a particular assessment design criterion at the C grade level on one task but demonstrates the same assessment design criterion at the B grade level on subsequent tasks for the assessment type, the teacher needs to consider this variability in performance when determining the final result for the assessment type. For instance, in this example the teacher might decide that, for this particular assessment design criterion, the B grade descriptor is the 'best fit' description for the performance demonstrated by the student across the assessment tasks for the assessment type.

In determining the final grade for the assessment type, the teacher would need to balance the student's evidence of learning for each of the assessment design criteria across the set of tasks for the assessment type in a similar way.

In this scenario the teacher is making an 'on-balance' assessment decision by seeking a 'best fit' between the student's evidence of learning and the levels of achievement described in the performance standards.

Variable achievement within a single assessment task

Sometimes a student's evidence of learning for a single assessment task seems to fall between two descriptions for the same specific feature, only partially fulfilling the requirements of each descriptor. Where there are multiple assessment tasks in an assessment type, teachers should consider this variability in relation to other evidence of learning for the same specific feature demonstrated in other tasks for the assessment type. However, when the assessment type consists of one task only, or the particular specific feature is not assessed in other tasks for the assessment type, the teacher should choose the descriptor that is a 'best fit' for the performance demonstrated by the student in this single task.

Verified breach of rules

A breach of rules occurs when a student has not abided by the rules for undertaking SACE assessments, or when a teacher is unable to verify that work submitted is the student's own.

Schools are responsible for:

- ensuring that students are aware of what constitutes a breach of rules in assessments that are directly supervised and those that are indirectly supervised

- investigating, documenting, determining, and imposing any penalty to be applied if a breach of rules occurs in Stage 1 school assessments.

Advice on applying penalties can be found in [Breach of rules, Information sheet 03](#).

Focusing on evidence when assessing

In assessing evidence of student learning, teachers' decisions are based on the specific features of the performance standards that students have demonstrated in that assessment type. Teachers recognise evidence of the specific features of the performance standards that they expect to see in each task (i.e. the specific features the task was designed to elicit), but also take into account evidence of the specific features across the set of tasks that make up the assessment type, when deciding on a grade for that type.

The following guidelines can help teachers to look for and assess evidence of student learning:

- Focus on the evidence that is presented in the task, and avoid focusing on what is not there (e.g. one incomplete section of a task does not mean that the student has failed to demonstrate evidence of the specific features elsewhere). Refer to missing or insufficient evidence of learning.
- Avoid distractors and evidence that is not relevant to the performance standards (e.g. effort, neatness, presentation, first impressions, previous performance).

Assessment and Reporting of Student Achievement at Stage 2

The role of the SACE Board

The partnership between the SACE Board and the school is critically important for Stage 2 subjects.

The SACE Board is responsible for the quality assurance process for the 70% school assessment component in each subject that is based on teachers' assessment of students' learning against the performance standards. It is also responsible for managing the 30% external assessment component, combining the results for both assessment components, and reporting students' results in the subject.

To support the role of teachers in assessment and reporting at Stage 2, the SACE Board:

- provides exemplars of learning and assessment plans for each subject
- works with teachers to develop and publish online exemplars of assessment tasks, assessment types, and the use of performance standards
- provides the school assessment grade calculator, which incorporates the weightings for the school assessment types specified in each Stage 2 subject outline
- makes available planning and clarifying support for Stage 2 subjects
- confirms, through moderation, school decisions in all subjects across all grade levels from A+ to E– at the level of the grade for the assessment type
 - the process of front-loaded moderation is used for Assessment Type 1: Portfolio in Activating Identities and Futures
- combines the grades for each of the assessment types with the grade for the external assessment component to produce a final subject grade
- reports each subject with a grade level in the range A+ to E– on a student's Record of Achievement
- informs students, on request, of their grade for each assessment type and their moderated school assessment grade for each subject.

The role of the teacher in the school assessment component

To ensure an effective assessment partnership between the school and the SACE Board, teachers are asked to carry out the following tasks in the Stage 2 assessment and reporting process:

1. *Develop a learning and assessment plan for the subject.* The learning and assessment plan describes the number and nature of the assessment tasks (for example, presentations or essays) for the assessment types (these vary from subject to subject and may include folios, investigations, etc.), aligned to the requirements of the subject outline.

At Stage 2 schools have the option of using or adapting pre-approved learning and assessment plans, developing their own learning and assessment plans (school-developed), or using a combination of those two options. (see [Learning and assessment plans – Stage 1 and Stage 2, Information sheet 57](#)).

2. *Design assessment tasks, using the assessment design criteria and specific features, so that students can provide evidence of the quality of their learning, to the highest level of the performance standards.*
3. *Make clear on the task sheet which specific features will be the focus of each of the assessment tasks or assessment types.* Specific features of the assessment design criteria are selected to assess evidence of the quality of students' learning in an assessment task or assessment type. Each subject outline lists specific features for each of the assessment design criteria.
4. *Decide whether to use grades or scores for assessment tasks in an assessment type.*
5. *Record student achievement for each assessment task and assessment type, using either grades or scores that are referenced to the performance standards.* Individual assessment task results are recorded and kept at the school, and are not reported to the SACE Board. The weightings of the assessment types are described in each Stage 2 subject outline and show the relative contribution of each assessment type to the school assessment component.
6. *Use grades from A+ to E– to record student achievement in each assessment type.* Teachers consider students' achievements in individual assessment tasks to assign an overall grade for each assessment type that reflects the performance standards. Grade levels (+, mid-grade, –) are determined by considering whether evidence of learning for the assessment type demonstrates specific features predominantly:
 - within a particular grade band (mid-grade)
 - at one grade but with some specific features at a higher grade band(s) (+)
 - at one grade but with some specific features at a lower grade band(s) (–).

The A+ grade level can be assigned when evidence for the assessment type, taken as a whole, demonstrates sustained achievement at the upper A grade level.

7. *Report the grades (A+ to E–) and shade the Performance Standards Record (PSR) for each assessment type in the school assessment to the SACE Board, ensuring the shading in the PSR reflects the final grade level awarded.* This information is used in the Stage 2 moderation process.

The online results sheets automatically combine the grades (A+ to E–) for each assessment type and ensure the consistent application of the weightings for each assessment type. This combined grade is the school assessment grade (A+ to E–) for the subject.

Combining the school assessment grade and the external assessment grade

The weighting of the grades for the school assessment component is 70% and the weighting of the grade for the external assessment component is 30%.

The combined grades for each school assessment type and the external assessment grade are combined to produce a subject grade (on the scale from A+ to E–).

Missing or insufficient evidence of learning

In a number of cases in a Stage 2 subject there may be missing or insufficient evidence of a student's learning in, for example:

- an assessment task for an assessment type
- an assessment type
- the school assessment component or the external assessment component.

The following advice deals with each of these examples. Note that it does not apply when a student is eligible for special provisions in assessment.

Missing or insufficient evidence in an assessment task for an assessment type

An assessment type consists of one or more assessment tasks. How teachers deal with missing evidence in an assessment task will vary from subject to subject, depending on the number and nature of the assessment tasks for an assessment type, as specified in the subject outline.

If a student does not provide evidence for an assessment task within an assessment type, the teacher must determine the extent to which the evidence provided in the other assessment tasks meets the performance standards for that assessment type.

The student's grade for the assessment type must reflect the performance standards.

Missing or insufficient evidence in an assessment type

When a student does not provide any evidence for an assessment type, the designation 'I' (for Insufficient Evidence) is recorded for that assessment type.

This is automatically taken into account in calculating a school assessment grade.

When there is insufficient evidence in every assessment type or component, an overall 'N' (No Result) is given for the subject.

Students who present only one assessment component

Students are expected to undertake both the school assessment component and the external assessment component in a Stage 2 subject.

If the external assessment component is an examination, a student who does not attempt the examination will receive a zero for the external assessment component, and a scaled score of zero for the subject.

If the external assessment component is an investigation and there is no work for the investigation, teachers should select 'W' (Withdrawn) on the investigation online results sheet. A student who is withdrawn from the external assessment component will receive a zero for the component and a scaled score of zero for the subject.

Selecting 'W' (Withdrawn) for the school assessment component will withdraw the student from the entire subject enrolment.

In the exceptional circumstance where a student does not submit work for the school assessment component, but does submit work for the external assessment component, teachers should select 'W' (Withdrawn) on the school assessment online results sheet and contact Assessment Operations at the SACE Board. Assessment Operations will then retain the student's enrolment in the subject.

Students' achievements are reported on a scale of A+ to E-. Students who do not undertake any of the assessment types for the school assessment component will receive an 'N' (No Result) for that component.

Students who gain an overall subject grade of E- or above are still able to gain credits for the subject.

Variable achievement

Sometimes the level of achievement demonstrated by a student may vary:

- across the assessment tasks for an assessment type
- within a single assessment task.

In such situations teachers should adopt a 'best-fit' model as outlined below.

Variable achievement across the assessment tasks for an assessment type

An assessment type may consist of more than one task. Sometimes a student's evidence of learning may demonstrate achievement of the same assessment design criteria and/or specific features at higher grade bands in some tasks and lower grade bands in other tasks for an assessment type. How teachers deal with variable achievement when there are multiple tasks in an assessment type will depend on the assessment design criteria and specific features assessed in each task and the number of assessment tasks in the assessment type.

For example, if a student's evidence of learning for an assessment type demonstrates a particular assessment design criterion at the C grade level on one task but demonstrates the same assessment design criterion at the B grade level on subsequent tasks for the assessment type, the teacher needs to consider this variability in performance when determining the final result for the assessment type. For instance, in this example the teacher might decide that, for this particular assessment design criterion, the B grade descriptor is the 'best fit' description for the performance demonstrated by the student across the assessment tasks for the assessment type.

In determining the final grade for the assessment type, the teacher would need to balance the student's evidence of learning for each of the assessment design criteria across the set of tasks for the assessment type in a similar way.

For example, if a student's evidence of learning for other assessment design criteria in the assessment type is consistently in the B grade, the teacher might decide to award a final result of B for the assessment type. However, if this student's evidence of learning for the other assessment design criteria in the assessment type also demonstrated achievement mostly at the B level but with some specific features at the C level, the teacher might decide to award a final result of B– for the assessment type. Finally, if this student's evidence of learning for the other assessment design criteria in the assessment type demonstrated achievement mostly at the C level, the teacher might decide to award a final result of C+ for the assessment type. In this last situation the teacher takes into account that, although the evidence demonstrated by this student for the assessment type was mostly in the C grade band, evidence for one of the assessment design criteria was mostly in the B band.

In each of these scenarios the teacher is making an 'on-balance' assessment decision by seeking a 'best fit' between the student's evidence of learning and the levels of achievement described in the performance standards.

Variable achievement within a single assessment task

Sometimes a student's evidence of learning for a single assessment task seems to fall between two descriptions for the same specific feature, only partially fulfilling the requirements of each descriptor. Where there are multiple assessment tasks in an assessment type, teachers should consider this variability in relation to other evidence of learning for the same specific feature demonstrated in other tasks for the assessment type. However, when the assessment type consists of one task only, or the particular specific feature is not assessed in other tasks for the assessment type, the teacher should choose the descriptor that is a 'best fit' for the performance demonstrated by the student in this single task.

Verified breach of rules

A breach of rules occurs when a student has not abided by the rules for undertaking SACE assessments, or when a teacher is unable to verify that work submitted is the student's own.

Schools are responsible for:

- ensuring that students are aware of what constitutes a breach of rules in assessments that are directly supervised and those that are indirectly supervised
- investigating, documenting, and notifying the SACE Board of any potential breaches of rule for Stage 2 external assessments
- investigating, documenting, determining, and imposing any penalty to be applied if a breach of rules occurs in Stage 2 school assessments.

Advice on applying penalties can be found in [Breach of rules, Information sheet 03](#).

Focusing on evidence when assessing

In assessing evidence of student learning, teachers' decisions are based on the specific features of the performance standards that students have demonstrated in that assessment type. Teachers recognise evidence of the specific features of the performance standards that they expect to see in each task (i.e. the specific features the task was designed to elicit), but also take into account evidence of the specific features across the set of tasks that make up the assessment type, when deciding on a grade for that type.

The following guidelines can help teachers to look for and assess evidence of student learning:

- Focus on the evidence that is presented in the task, and avoid focusing on what is not there (e.g. one incomplete section of a task does not mean that the student has failed to demonstrate evidence of the specific features elsewhere). Refer to missing or insufficient evidence of learning.
- Avoid distractors and evidence that is not relevant to the performance standards (e.g. effort, neatness, presentation, first impressions, previous performance).