

Accounting

2016 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: Skills and Applications Tasks

The skills and applications tasks provide an opportunity for all learning requirements from the subject outline to be explored throughout the year, with varying assessment design criteria and specific features included in each task. External moderation for this year showed a continued commitment by the vast majority of teachers to providing high-quality and varied tasks that allowed students to display their knowledge and skills and perform at all levels of the performance standards.

**The more successful responses**

* displayed an ability to apply knowledge within a specified task and to a particular situation. Students benefited from tasks that included a practical aspect that was accompanied by theory questions directly related to the practical component. These tasks also provided good practice for the final examination, as they were consistent in design to examination-style questions.
* showed achievement across the performance standards within an individual task. Tasks that enabled students to answer straightforward questions initially and then build on those answers to make astute and insightful comments were highly regarded.
* involved students showing understanding of the full accounting process. Evidence of this included the regular use of general ledgers across a variety of tasks, allowing students multiple opportunities to show application, rather than restricting a general ledger to a single task for the year.

**The less successful responses**

* were focused on one particular assessment design criterion. This was most evident in tasks that were heavily weighted towards or solely comprised of practical tasks. Tasks that did not include some theoretical component related to the practical limited the students’ ability to perform at the higher levels of the performance standards.
* involved students attempting to respond to overly complex questions. These types of questions did not provide the full range of students with sufficient opportunities to demonstrate their performance, particularly at the lower levels of the performance standards. As a result, student responses were either seen at a high level or with little to no achievement.
* included tasks comprised of multiple-choice questions. While this type of assessment can be a useful formative tool, multiple-choice questions limited student opportunities to demonstrate evidence across the performance standards, and often limited their ability to achieve at the higher levels.
* occurred when students provided responses to questions outside of the scope of the subject outline. Examples included recording of the sale or disposal of non-current assets. While these topics can be of interest to students, inclusion of these tasks with materials for moderation means that the evidence provided in the tasks cannot be considered.

**General information**

Moderators were able to support the decisions of teachers most easily when clear annotations were made on student work. These annotations directed moderators to the evidence upon which the teachers had based their assessment decision, making confirmation of grades a straightforward task.

Tasks that included clear indication of the assessment design criteria and specific features to be assessed in each task were highly regarded by moderators.

Assessment Type 2: Report

The report, as a piece of school-based assessment, has now become an integral part of the continuous assessment of Accounting, and teachers continue to develop interesting and well-designed questions for their students. An increasing number of reports were produced in word-processed form and this is encouraged where it is appropriate, taking into account resources available and student skill levels.

**The more successful responses**

* reported on the financial records of a sole trader or partnership
* involved discussion of a limited number of ratios (5 or 6), as this allowed time for more detailed interpretation or discussion of other relevant information
* displayed both knowledge and interpretation by clearly defining the items that had been analysed and then correctly interpreting what the results of the analysis meant in the particular scenario
* included discussion beyond the size and direction of the movement of ratios
* commented on additional information provided in the scenario and made clear recommendations.

**The less successful responses**

* tried to discuss an excessive number of ratios that had been analysed, limiting the time and ability to display performance at higher levels of the performance standards
* included the analysis of figures within the main body of the report; analysis of ratios should ideally be completed first, with the focus of the report on the interpretation of that analysis
* were seen where students were provided with an overly simple scenario which limited their ability to make astute or insightful comments.

**General information**

It was noted in moderation that some scenarios, while providing interesting and detailed information to discuss, would have required a significant amount of the maximum 60 minutes allowed to read in full. The tasks that were most highly regarded by moderators included brief and easily read scenarios that still included a significant event or similar material that provided students something to discuss in their reports.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Students undertake one 2-hour written examination.

The 2016 examination was formatted with four questions following feedback from teachers that the previous year’s examination appeared longer with a fifth question to complete. While the overall content level has remained relatively constant over the past several years, the organisation of material was adjusted to try to ensure that students found it a manageable and accessible examination. On the whole, this appears to have been successful, with students performing at or slightly above the levels achieved in 2015.

*Question 1*

The first question of the examination provided the lowest average mark of the four questions in the examination. While there was achievement from students across all the possible levels, there was a greater concentration of students at the lower end than in the other three questions.

**The more successful responses**

* correctly recorded information into the ledger accounts, using the proper account names for each transaction
* were able to balance the accounting equation by correctly indicating the size and direction of the movement in the relevant accounts
* completed the income statement using the information from the perpetual inventory system
* gave specific examples related to the hardware store when discussing inventory.

**The less successful responses**

* did not fully complete the process of formally balancing ledger accounts
* were not able to correctly label the relevant transactions in the ledgers
* used generic examples or answered generally when asked for specific examples related to inventory valuation.

*Question 2*

The second question of the examination was the most successfully answered. A large number of students were very successful, achieving scores of 20 or more out of the possible 25.

**The more successful responses**

* linked their answers in the written sections to the scenario and their calculations
* provided answers that showed a clear understanding of the relationships between the break-even figures and levels of sales.

**The less successful responses**

* included non-cash items in the budget calculations
* did not answer the specific questions asked, instead talking generally about the topic
* left out key pieces of information, including not indicating debit or credit balances in the bank reconciliation.

*Question 3*

The third question of the examination was the second least successfully answered, but only very slightly below the average scores for Questions 2 and 4. There was a fairly even spread of performance across all levels of the performance standards.

**The more successful responses**

* followed the process for cash flows correctly
* correctly identified the key items in the scenario and provided thoughtful commentary on those items
* gave full answers and responded appropriately when asked to explain or discuss, rather than state or list.

**The less successful responses**

* did not relate their responses back to the facts of the question or the calculations performed
* were unable to give specific examples from the question, instead providing broad definitions
* only identified the entity in question but did not go on to explain why that identification was appropriate.

*Question 4*

The final question of the examination was the second best answered, which was pleasing to see as, in the past, the last question of the examination has generally been poorly attempted. While a small number of students were unable to finish this question, the majority of students made a genuine attempt to or did successfully complete the full paper.

**The more successful responses**

* correctly identified the time frame for the question and adjusted their calculations appropriately
* carefully and correctly classified the items in the reports
* were able to make the link between the profit calculation in the balance sheet and the income statement
* provided good reasons for selecting a depreciation method and also for the choice of investment.

**The less successful responses**

* were not able to select the appropriate figures for the ratio calculation
* did not classify the report items correctly, in particular those related to selling expenses
* were unable to adequately explain the effect of adjustments on the balance sheet
* confused social and ethical issues.

## 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 work assessed by the school.

Other suggestions from moderators regarding school-assessed tasks included:

* clear identification of student names, as well as SACE registration numbers, on student work assists in locating materials for moderation
* inclusion of a task sheet and mark allocation for each task is critical, along with a clear identification of the assessment design criteria and specific features being assessed in a particular task
* simple packaging of student materials in the plastic sleeves provided is helpful.

## General Comments

Feedback from both the examination marking and moderation process was similar to previous years in that the experience was a valuable and enjoyable opportunity for markers and moderators. While limited places are available on both panels, teachers are encouraged to register their interest, as efforts are made to provide as many teachers with the opportunity as possible. Previous markers and moderators have commented that involvement in these processes has enabled them to have a greater appreciation of what is required to best prepare their students. Moderators also noted that the opportunity to view a broad variety of tasks submitted for moderation inspired them to continuously improve and redesign interesting and engaging tasks for their own students.

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Chief Assessor