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Outdoor Education

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.

Seventy-one schools offered Stage 2 Outdoor Education in 2016, with an enrolment of 820 students. The subject provides opportunities for students to develop skills such as leadership, group cooperation, organisation, and self-reliance within an environmental context.

Schools continue to use available natural environments to assist in developing worthwhile practical skills and learning.

It is important that all Outdoor Education teachers understand the learning requirements, specific features, and assessment design criteria of the Outdoor Education subject outline. Clarifying forums are an excellent opportunity for teachers to share their ideas and work under the guidance of a subject expert. Such interaction assists in the correct interpretation of the subject outline and provides an excellent resource for all teachers. The Outdoor Educators’ Association of South Australia (OEASA) has also been very proactive in delivering sessions about the Year 11 and Year 12 courses.

Teachers should refer to the subject operational information available on the Outdoor Education minisite.

It was evident that students who performed well clearly displayed a depth of analysis and reflection in their responses. Such responses were encouraged by better task design which required students to provide genuine emotional and cognitive responses to their environmental experiences.

Short responses that are heavily based on secondary sources, or diary or journal-type entries that do not address the assessment design criteria should be discouraged.

The content of this report can be clarified by referring to information on the SACE website, where exemplars of learning and assessment plans, coursework exemplars, annotated work samples, and practical skills checklists are available.

## 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, tests, and video, multimedia, and oral presentations.

Each folio assessment should cover a different topic. One folio assessment must relate to the topic Environmental Studies. The focus of the other folio topics should relate to the topics Planning and Management Practices, and Leadership and Planning.

**The more successful responses**

* displayed critical analysis of effective strategies for the sustainable use of natural environments
* displayed critical analysis of environmental issues
* effectively explained the technical, interpersonal, and risk and safety management skills needed for an outdoor journey
* included environmental language
* included personal photos from outdoor experiences and were able to explain in detail the importance of their observations
* displayed information in a variety of ways
* accessed relevant data
* sought expert opinions.

**The less successful responses**

* focused heavily on information from secondary sources
* demonstrated little investigation or critical analysis
* showed little relation to their outdoor experiences
* had minimal outdoor observations and recordings
* demonstrated only superficial analysis of environmental issues, risk management, and sustainable management practices.

**General information**

Good task designs enabled students to display investigation skills, critical analysis, knowledge, and communication. It was evident that those students who achieved in the higher grade bands had clear specific features to address for each piece of work.

It was pleasing to see that most tasks were given suitable word-limits without restricting the students’ ability to demonstrate depth of learning. It is reasonable to expect that students could display evidence of a depth of practical knowledge and skills, investigation and critical analysis, and communication in less than 1500 words in folio tasks.

It was sometimes difficult to see from the task design how evidence for the nominated specific features was assessed. Tasks such as navigation and weather tests are not appropriate. First aid courses need to be supported with outdoor scenarios so that students can demonstrate investigation and critical analysis, and communication specific features.

It also should be noted that students are not permitted to present the same task in a different assessment type. Reflections from group practicals or risk-management plans that have been assessed in practical performances associated with the outdoor journey or self-reliant expedition components cannot be used for the folio.

If oral presentations or multimedia presentations are being submitted, it is important that these are filmed or taped for presentation at final moderation in a way that is readily accessible to moderators (e.g. by using AVI files) and that there is evidence of assessment using the relevant assessment design criteria. Before submitting these presentations, the teacher should check each one to determine that it is playable.

Assessment Type 2: Group Practical

The outdoor journeys of the group practical are the foundation of Outdoor Education subjects.

Students generally score well in this component of the subject, as its practical nature meets the needs of most of the students. It was pleasing to see a wide range of journeys and locations used, with students enjoying worthwhile and rewarding experiences which were linked to coursework.

**The more successful responses**

* showed critical analysis of what happened within the group practical
* demonstrated astute risk-management planning
* showed sophisticated evaluation of risk management
* showed comprehensive planning.

**The less successful responses**

* provided diary entries of what happened on the trip with little analysis
* showed little relationship to addressing the criteria being assessed.

**General information**

At least one of the expeditions must be a lightweight expedition using human power to move from different campsites. It is good teaching practice to involve the students as much as possible in the planning of these journeys as preparation for their self-reliant expedition.

It is helpful for moderators to know what planning individual students were involved in before the trip (e.g. the risk management, and the location and the route followed), and this information needs to be included in the moderation materials.

Teachers must use the skills checklists available as support materials on the SACE website to assess the practical skills component of this assessment type. Teachers are encouraged to write detailed comments on these checklists in order to provide feedback to the student and to allow the moderating team to gain a better understanding of the depth of learning of the student.

Evidence of learning for this assessment type should be in the form of skills checklists (to assess practical knowledge and skills) and could also include a multimedia presentation, oral presentation, or written response (to assess investigation and critical analysis, and reflection and evaluation). At least one specific feature from each of the investigation and critical analysis, and reflection and evaluation assessment design criteria needs to be assessed in the group practical. Each of these needs to be assessed at least once.

Teachers should use the performance standards to indicate the depth of student learning in investigation and critical analysis, and reflection and evaluation.

**Assessment Type 3: Self-reliant Practical**

This assessment task should allow students to plan and conduct an expedition in a self-reliant manner with minimal input from the teacher.

**The more successful responses**

* displayed a depth of reflection and evaluation, with good emotional and cognitive responses
* displayed reflection and evaluation focused on critical analysis of the planning, risk management, and running of the expedition
* showed sophisticated expression of ideas and opinions in a variety of forms using appropriate language
* included personal photos from outdoor experiences and were able to explain in detail the importance of their observations.

**The less successful responses**

* provided diary entries of what happened on the trip with little analysis
* showed little relationship to addressing the criteria being assessed.

**General information**

Good task design requires students to document all aspects of their planning thoroughly. This planning folio is then submitted as evidence of student learning at final moderation. Where required, the original work of the student should be clearly indicated.

As with the group practical, it is important that teachers use the self-reliant practical skills checklist. Teachers are encouraged to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the student.

A performance standards sheet should be used to indicate the final assessment of the student for the self-reliant practical. Prescribed percentages should not be allocated to planning, completing the journey, and reflecting. The assessment decision should be made holistically.

Teachers need to shadow their students while they complete the self-reliant practical and use checkpoints, meeting points, and communication systems to ensure safety of their students. Such practice also allows teachers to validate their grading of each student’s journey.

All self-reliant trips need to be lightweight and using human power to move to different campsites.

As safety is a priority, students must have previously experienced the chosen activity in the group practical or in previous years.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Investigation

**The more successful responses**

* displayed a range of primary data sources (including observations and photos taken while on the expedition) which were then used as the foundation of their report
* used expert material from appropriate and relevant sources and clearly linked their findings to secondary data
* considered a range of perspectives and management strategies while examining these critically
* addressed the specific features using appropriate language to discuss ecological and sustainable management
* clearly articulated genuine emotional and cognitive responses and made a genuine connection to the issue and to the environment they travelled through
* provided analysis from the field and did not get caught up in overusing secondary data
* included tables, images, graphs, and visual materials, which were used effectively and were usually referenced
* included subheadings to define the topic being discussed, a clearly stated investigation strategy, and continual use of referencing either from expert opinions or secondary data
* used consistent referencing
* adhered to the word-limit
* were carefully drafted and edited to ensure the effective communication of ideas, knowledge, analysis, and conclusions.

**The less successful responses**

* drifted off topic and discussed economic and tourist information
* chose a topic that limited addressing all specific features in the task design
* included few observations from the outdoor experience
* included brief personal responses from their outdoor experience, without broader investigation
* were superficial reflections on their understanding of the environment
* contained few opinions gathered from experts
* had no personal photos, tables, or maps
* demonstrated a limited recording of planning and data.

**General information**

Good task designs encouraged students to clearly identify an issue that created debate and was directly related to an expedition. It is strongly recommended that students and teachers work closely in selecting an investigation topic that allows the student to meet all the designated specific features of the assessment design criteria. It is also important to understand the difference between writing an investigation based on an environmental issue and a research project.

Although it is encouraged that each student has his or her own particular question to investigate, students can have related topics. It is imperative that the issue revolves around a journey with photos taken by the student. It is important for students to clearly indicate which photos are taken by the student and which ones are obtained from a secondary source.

The generic cover sheet found on the SACE website should be used. A word-count should be included. Any words over the limit are not assessed.

## 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. Teachers should:

* include task sheets for each piece of student work, which give moderators an understanding of what the task involves and how it is being assessed against the relevant assessment design criteria
* include the learning and assessment plan (LAP), and a marks scheme for each task (it also helps when tasks are clearly labelled and not just called ‘task 1’, ‘task 2’, etc.)
* ensure that a complete set of summative tasks for each of the students identified in the sample is included — by not including all work, teachers take the risk of their students being disadvantaged
* ensure that all specific features assessed in each task correlate with the LAP (or its addendum, where applicable)
* ensure that moderation materials for each student are easily identifiable to assist in the moderation process
* ensure that packaged work has the student’s name and SACE number clearly printed on the outside of the plastic sleeve.

## General Comments

Where a LAP is amended, the addendum section needs to be completed and submitted to show course changes.

A Variations — Moderation Materials form needs to be included if a student’s work is subject to special provisions or variations, or has incomplete materials for final moderation. The SACE Curriculum Officer can provide advice.

The investigation should have no reference to the school.

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