

Aboriginal Studies

2015 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.

While the number of schools teaching Stage 2 Aboriginal Studies across South Australia and the Northern Territory has remained stable, there has been a marked increase in the number of students completing the subject, a 50% increase on those in 2014. As in previous years, both the moderators and the external markers noted students’ continued interest and engagement in the course. Students achieved at comparable levels for both the school and external assessments with 92% of students achieving a C– grade or better in the school assessment and 86% achieving a C– grade or better in the external assessment.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Response

The three assessment design criteria to be assessed in Assessment Type 1: Response are knowledge and understanding, reflection, and communication. The subject outline requires students to undertake at least two responses for this assessment type: one response involves ‘a reflection on what students have learnt about intercultural communication from two or more sources’. As in previous years, all four topics were represented, with Topic 2: Aboriginal Cultures and Identities (46%), Topic 1: Histories (31%), and Topic 4: Aboriginal Arts (15%) being the most popular topics.

The moderators noted that, where assessment tasks provided several response options for students to select from, most students, particularly those with developing literacy skills, were generally able to show evidence of their knowledge and understanding. This was particularly noted where options such as creative, oral, or multimodal responses were provided as assessment modes in relation to Topic 1: Histories. However, the moderators recommend that whatever the options provided to students as the mode of response, given the nature of this subject, teachers should include discussion regarding bias and reliability in their teaching.

As in previous years, the moderators noted that when the assessment task appropriately matches the assessment design criteria, students achieve at a higher standard. The moderators particularly noted this in relation to the reflection and communication criteria, which lend themselves to some forms of assessment tasks and not to others. It is important that task sheets clearly indicate the specific features being assessed, as this ensures that students know what they are being assessed on and it is also useful for moderators.

Assessment Type 2: Report

The three assessment design criteria to be assessed in Assessment Type 2: Report are knowledge and understanding, reflection, and communication. As in previous years, in 2015 students continued to interact with a variety of Aboriginal communities throughout South Australia and the Northern Territory to complete the report. It was noted by moderators that in 2015 more students visited communities than organisations, including Camp Coorong and the Tjilkaba Community. This goes against the trend from 2013 and 2014 which saw an increase in the number of organisations being visited by students to complete Assessment Type 2.

Students generally met the knowledge and understanding criterion to a high degree. In 2015 the moderators were pleased to note that there continued to be an improvement in the way in which students addressed the reflection criterion. An increasing number of students incorporated their reflections on their learning about intercultural communication and understanding from Aboriginal people throughout the report, rather than addressing it in a standalone paragraph at the end. Better responses incorporated an Aboriginal ‘voice’ through the use of quotations from the people with whom the students had interacted, and from whom they had learnt. These responses achieved highly against the reflection criterion and the report avoided becoming a narrative of events and activities.

Successful reports continue to be enhanced with the inclusion of clearly labelled and annotated visual images such as maps, photographs, and diagrams. The moderators were pleased to note a continued increase in the clear acknowledgment of the Aboriginal people with whom students had interacted, through the use of attributed quotations in the report as well as acknowledgment in accompanying bibliographies.

Assessment Type 3: Text Production

The three assessment design criteria to be assessed in Assessment Type 3: Text Production are knowledge and understanding, analysis and evaluation, and communication. The subject outline requires students to undertake at least one text production for this assessment type. Generally, two text productions were completed by students across the four topics, with Topic 3: Contemporary Issues (46%) continuing to be the most popular choice. Again, the moderators noted that the careful selection of the specific features to be assessed against the design and intention of the task allowed students to successfully demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

A variety of assessment modes continue to be used in this assessment type and the moderators were pleased to note an increase in the number of innovative multimodal tasks presented by students to demonstrate their learning. It is recommended that oral presentations using PowerPoint are recorded; however, if this is not possible, students should provide either a script or make use of the notes features of PowerPoint.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Investigation

In 2015, 86% of students gained a C– or better for Assessment Type 4: Investigation. A breakdown of the results indicates 16% of students in the A band, including one student who received an A+, 33% in the B band, and 37% in the C band. The choice of topic/issue and question design were key factors in the success of students who submitted an investigation. Generic topics (e.g. sport or music) without guiding questions usually produced narrative-style responses and made it difficult for students to achieve highly against the analysis and evaluation criterion (specific feature AE2). The better responses used specific questions to guide the topic/issue and these questions provided organisation and structure, allowing for greater analysis and exploration of the topic/issue.

This year saw a range of topics chosen by students, including language preservation, loss of traditional knowledge, closure of remote communities, institutional racism and the legal system, the Basics Card, the impact of a Western diet, substance abuse, the growing emergence of Aboriginal artists in mainstream television, and racism in sport (with particular reference to Adam Goodes).

It was pleasing to see such a wide variety of topics chosen by students in 2015: however, markers noted that some responses investigated issues from a ‘deficit model’. In these responses the Aboriginal voice was passive, or in some cases not present, and the focus was largely on negative things being ‘done to’ Aboriginal people. It is recommended that students investigate their issues with the understanding that there has been an enormous amount of successful and innovative work by Aboriginal people in the areas of healing, restoration, and activism. Students are actively encouraged to deliberately seek out information on the relevant Aboriginal people, organisations, and strategies in order to give a culturally relevant lens and to privilege Aboriginal voices.

In a small number of responses, it was noted by the markers that some topics/issues and research for these topics/issues were out-of-date, such as petrol sniffing and Aboriginal representation on television. While these are still contemporary issues, some responses did not make reference to significant recent developments in these areas. For example, responses that stated ‘no representation on television’ did not take into account the recent emergence of contemporary Aboriginal programming such as *Black Comedy*, *The Gods of Wheat Street*, and *Redfern Now*. Mostly, however, it was pleasing to see that students had designed specific questions in relation to what has been happening during 2015.

While most responses met specific feature C1, ‘communication of informed ideas for different purposes’, successfully and were written in a clear and structured manner, it is highly recommended that teachers spend time modelling how to meet specific feature C2, ‘use of evidence and acknowledgment of sources’. In general, the knowledge and understanding specific features were met successfully, though teachers are reminded to indicate on the cover sheet which of the three specific features of the knowledge and understanding criterion that the investigation is focused on. Moving from a narrative and descriptive style to analysis and evaluation (specific feature AE2) is key to the success of the investigation. The appropriate referencing of research materials is a key factor in the final grade. Students are also encouraged to ensure that their resources are relevant: for example, evaluating whether a general community survey is going to provide insight into the issue, or whether a different, more specific source is needed in relation to their chosen topic.

The markers noted that some responses used up words to describe the methodologies and aims of the research. These are not necessary nor are they assessed aspects of the investigation, and their inclusion should be considered against the requirement to keep within the 2000-word limit.

## 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. Teacher comments are also helpful.

A teacher folder with a complete set of task sheets and an approved learning and assessment plan, with an addendum if applicable, should be included along with the materials submitted for moderation. Teachers are reminded to complete and submit Variations — Moderation Materials forms for any materials missing from the nominated student sample. The use of a cover sheet with each set of student materials, identifying the completed assessments and grade level achieved, is very useful for moderators.

As in previous years, the moderators noted that the use of too many specific features for any particular task disadvantages students who are unable to cover all of the specific features in depth. The moderators also noted that the communication criterion continues to be used on the majority of tasks and its specific features were not always relevant to the task design. It is recommended that teachers reconsider their use of the communication criterion when developing their tasks, in particular the use of evidence and acknowledgment of sources (specific feature C2). It is also recommended that teachers clearly indicate the assessment conditions, such as word-count and form of student response (i.e. written, multimodal, oral), on the assessment cover sheet. When submitting a multimodal or oral task, it is recommended that a written back-up, such as PowerPoint slides and notes, a script, or cue cards, be included. Tasks submitted on USB drives or DVDs should also be clearly labelled as to the task type.

In relation to Assessment Type 4: Investigation, teachers are reminded to ensure that the appropriate and specific knowledge and understanding specific features addressed by students are clearly indicated on each student’s investigation cover sheet and that the word-count is also indicated. It is important to ensure that there are no student identifiers and/or marks and comments on the investigation before submission to the SACE Board.

## General Comments

Teachers are encouraged to look at the exemplars of annotated student work on the Aboriginal Studies minisite and to deconstruct these with their students in considering what makes a good student response.

All teachers are actively encouraged to attend clarifying forums in 2016, as this is a worthwhile opportunity for teachers to recalibrate and realign their assessment decisions with the state-wide application of the performance standards.

Teachers are reminded to follow the advice on submission dates and the preparation of student materials for moderation and the external assessment as outlined in the subject operational information.

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