

Aboriginal Studies

2016 Chief Assessor’s Report

# Aboriginal Studies

# 2016 Chief Assessor’s Report

## 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 consistent, 2016 saw a decrease in the number of students studying the subject from the number who completed Aboriginal Studies in 2015. As in previous years, both the moderators and the external markers noted students’ continued interest and engagement in the course. The performance levels of students in the school assessment continues to be reflected in the external assessment — 93% of students achieved a C– grade or higher in the school assessment while 100% of students achieved a C– grade or higher in the external assessment.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Response

All four topics were represented, with Topic 2: Aboriginal Cultures and Identities (46%), Topic 1: Histories (23%), and Topic 4: Aboriginal Arts (23%) being the most popular topics in Assessment Type 1.

**The more successful responses**

* were seen in tasks that provided several options for students to select, such as a creative, oral, or multimodal response, as alternative assessment modes to the more traditional essay
* involved tasks that clearly indicated the specific features being assessed
* occurred when tasks did not assess too many specific features in a single task
* exhibited an understanding of bias and reliability in their responses
* adhered to designated word-limits and time-limits.

**The less successful responses**

* were for tasks that did not provide options for responses for students to select from
* occurred when tasks had too many or inappropriately selected specific features in a single task, which resulted in student responses lacking depth
* resulted when task design did not provide students with a clear understanding of the requirements in relation to the word-limit or time-limit.

**General information**

As in previous years, it was noted by moderators that the reflection and communication assessment design criteria lend themselves to some forms of assessment tasks and not to others.

Assessment Type 2: Report

The three assessment design criteria to be assessed in Assessment Type 2: Report are knowledge and understanding, reflection, and communication. In 2016, students interacted with a variety of Aboriginal communities and organisations throughout South Australia and the Northern Territory, including visits to Alukura Women’s Health Service in Alice Springs, the Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service, Camp Coorong, Uluru and Mutitjulu, and Murwangi in East Arnhem Land.

**The more successful responses**

* clearly identified and addressed their chosen knowledge and understanding specific features
* included clearly labelled, annotated, and relevant visual images ,such as maps, photographs, and diagrams
* incorporated reflections on their own learning about intercultural communication and understanding from Aboriginal people throughout their report
* incorporated an Aboriginal voice through the use of quotations from the people with whom the student had interacted, and from whom they had learnt
* clearly acknowledged the Aboriginal people with whom students had interacted, through the use of attributed quotations in the report, as well as acknowledgment in accompanying bibliographies.

**The less successful responses**

* contained unsubstantiated statements
* did not clearly address the chosen knowledge and understanding specific features
* addressed reflection as a stand-alone paragraph at the end of their report or not at all
* did not acknowledge the Aboriginal people whom they had interacted with, either in the body of their report or as part of a bibliography, and relied too heavily on background research rather than interaction with Aboriginal people.

**General information**

It was noted that some students were addressing three knowledge and understanding specific features, which often made it difficult for them to provide in‑depth evidence of their learning.

Assessment Type 3: Text Production

The subject outline requires students to undertake at least one text production for this assessment type. Generally, students undertook two text productions across the four topics, with Topic 3: Contemporary Issues (42%) continuing to be the most popular choice, followed by Topic 1: Histories (25%) and Topic 4: Aboriginal Arts (25%).

**The more successful responses**

* resulted when tasks clearly indicated the specific features being assessed
* occurred when tasks enabled students to analyse and evaluate issues
* successfully demonstrated knowledge and understanding through innovative multimodal tasks
* were seen when tasks were designed around local issues, or in relation to specific films or other media, allowing students to successfully demonstrate their knowledge and understanding
* submitted all evidence (including, for example, scripts and speech notes) for multimodal tasks.

**The less successful responses**

* had too many specific features for students to address as part of the task
* were seen when tasks did not provide students with options to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the topic
* occurred when tasks were unclear in the specific features being assessed or the required word-limit or time-limit
* arose when tasks lacked opportunities for students to analyse and evaluate issues.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Investigation

Continuing the trend from previous years, 74% of students gained a B– or better. Every student who submitted an investigation achieved a passing result: 23% of students achieved a result in the A band, 51% in the B band, and 26% in the C band.

The overall standard of investigations in 2016 was pleasing, with most covering contemporary topics of relevance to Aboriginal communities, and featuring analysis of multiple sources. Most investigations included a form of referencing.

**The more successful responses**

* used personal areas of interest or their own Aboriginal experience
* featured analysis of expert sources, both primary and secondary
* focused on contemporary topics or included sources that were recent and up to date
* were on topics of importance to Aboriginal communities that are yet to receive attention in mainstream Australia; examples included:
* historical and landmark contributions of Indigenous people to cricket
* lack of knowledge about Aboriginal history in South Australia
* language and cultural knowledge preservation
* used consistent referencing, both in-text referencing and as a bibliography
* included multiple, varying perspectives of Aboriginal peoples
* integrated clearly referenced quotes into the larger discussion
* were carefully drafted and edited to ensure effective communication
* had a clear, tightly worded topic or guiding question
* contained insightful analysis of sources, and a conclusion
* adhered to the word-limit or time-limit.

**The less successful responses**

* lacked a specific focus and were broad topics
* included evidence from sources of limited relevance to the topic
* did not use consistent or detailed referencing
* did not acknowledge the expertise of their sources
* incorporated lengthy quotes that were not analysed or not used as part of a discussion
* did not feature Aboriginal perspectives or voice
* expressed personal opinions using emotive language
* included features which were not required for this task; for example, a contents page or a section on research methodology.

**General information**

Teachers and students are reminded to clearly identify on the investigation cover sheet which knowledge and understanding specific feature or features are the focus of the investigation.

## 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.

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 a Variations — Moderation Materials form for any materials missing from the nominated student sample. Letters regarding the class group are not required.

Moderators noted that in some instances the following details were not provided: the student’s name or registration number, the assessment type or specific topic, and the student’s achievement against the specific features of the assessment design criteria that were assessed, or the grade awarded. Teachers are reminded to ensure that the SACE registration numbers on student work are correct and to ensure that student names are clearly written on each task.

It is important to note that assessing a large number of specific features for any particular task disadvantages students who are unable to cover the specific features in depth. The moderators noted that the communication criterion tended to be used on the majority of tasks and its specific features were not always relevant to the intent of the task. It is recommended that teachers reconsider their use of thecommunication criterion in developing their tasks, in particular the use of evidence and acknowledgment of sources, specific feature C2.

The moderators also recommend that where oral presentations using PowerPoint presentations are not recorded, students should either provide a script or make use of the notes features of PowerPoint. Multimodal tasks, such as movies, should be checked before submission to ensure that they have been uploaded correctly and are fully viewable.

## General Comments

While student work in both the school-assessed component and the externally assessed component of Aboriginal Studies continues to reflect a range of interests and classroom activities, 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.

The moderators noted that, on occasions, too many specific features were being assessed in single tasks.

Teachers are encouraged to remind students to have evidence for their statements, as this is the best way to challenge widely held assumptions that sometimes make their way into student work. Teachers are also encouraged to actively discourage the use of terms such as ‘the white man’ when describing Europeans, and instead refer to ‘government’, ‘missionaries’, ‘colonisers’, ‘non-Aboriginal Australians’, or other specific terms.

The moderators were pleased to see the many meaningful tasks that allowed students to learn from Elders.

Aboriginal Studies

Chief Assessor