2021 Ancient Studies Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the previous year’s assessment cycle, gives 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, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Skills and Applications

Students produce at least four skills and applications tasks, with at least two of the tasks completed under supervised conditions. These tasks, taken together, comprise a maximum of 4000 words, or equivalent in oral or multimodal form. Students should use a variety of forms to present evidence of their learning.

Students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of texts, artefacts, ideas, events, and/or people while reflecting on the political, social, cultural, and/or economic diversity within the ancient world.

The more successful responses commonly:

* were more concept-driven or utilised themes to explore ideas from the ancient world. This helped students address KU2 and KU3 in a more authentic manner
* utilised primary and secondary source material to support analysis and develop ideas
* made use of structured arguments to explore ideas and concepts using academic-style writing (A2)
* utilised both in-text references and a reference list to support depth of research
* examined a range of primary sources to support arguments and conclusions. Students considered both written and archaeological sources in their responses
* analysed and evaluated primary sources throughout their responses, including the nature of these sources as evidence
* used subject-specific language, including correct terminology for literary, historical and/or archaeological concepts
* had comprehensive knowledge and understanding across all KU standards – KU1 was particularly strong.

The less successful responses commonly:

* provided subject specific terminology, i.e., *nostos, hubris* with limited engagement with what the term means in context to what the student was studying. Sometimes these terms were applied incorrectly
* provided a range of quotes from ancient writers and literature without any critique of the nature of sources (A3) or authentic application in context. These quotes appeared in assessment work as knowledge but without understanding or discussion of relevance or context
* relied on the dot pointing of information in PowerPoints, focused mostly on providing information over analytical discussion
* when studying specific drama texts, did not provide direct quotes from the text or references to sections of the play studied
* had a heavy reliance on secondary sources with little, to no, synthesis of evidence from primary sources
* did not include any referencing/bibliography, or there were inconsistencies in referencing style
* did not communicate their points clearly throughout their responses
* did not consider the quality of secondary sources they were using in their responses. Websites such as Grade Saver were used for analysis of drama or other literary texts which limited the students’ own authentic engagement with the text and highlighted that the student may not have even read the text they were analysing
* relied on ‘Modern History’ style source analysis timed responses that asked for short responses to set questions which when done poorly resulted in a simple recounting of information from the source material provided.

Assessment Type 2: Connections

Students produce at least two connections tasks, exploring connections between different ancient societies, between an ancient society and a contemporary society, between an ancient society and another society, or within an ancient society. All tasks together comprise a maximum of 2000 words, or equivalent in oral or multimodal form, and at least one task should focus on the ideas and/or innovations that emerged from the ancient world and include consideration of their influence.

2021 saw a marked improvement in the AT2 assessment type with students undertaking deep and authentic exploration of ideas or innovations. This led to a more sophisticated application of RA2 in a range of approaches as students took the opportunity to explore ideas and innovations within a specific culture or across different cultures and time.

The more successful responses commonly:

* explored concepts or ideas in detail without trying to cover multiple aspects of comparison
* were explicit in the connections being made in the work and explored these with some depth
* directly addressed the influence of ideas or innovations from the ancient world, avoiding broad sweeping generalisations
* moved beyond just examining the similarities and differences between societies and there was evidence of insightful analysis and evaluation of the connections between or within societies
* utilised and synthesised a range of diverse sources, both primary and secondary, to support analysis
* fluently embedded evidence from sources
* consistently and appropriately acknowledged sources, with evidence of extensive research demonstrated through the range of high-quality sources acknowledged in the bibliography
* persuasively communicated points and ideas using subject-specific language throughout their responses
* examined both written and archaeological sources to support their analysis.

The less successful responses commonly:

* made loose links to pop culture without showing a detailed knowledge or understanding of the ancient original or context
* did not provide evidence from original texts or other secondary source analysis to support student interpretations
* missed opportunities for A3 discussions on the nature of sources
* relied on recounts of popular movies or TV shows
* provided noticeable formulaic or set phrases that appeared across multiple assessments for the sample indicating a lack of authentic student engagement with the task – or over scaffolding/editing of ideas/ work by teachers
* focused solely on similarities and differences when drawing connections between or within societies which prevented students from making the leap to discussing ideas, concepts or innovations in depth
* did not consider the **influence** of the ideas or innovations and forced a connection in a superficial way, unsupported by evidence
* dealt with societies separately despite being asked to compare which resulted in an unbalanced discussion
* did not acknowledge sources or there was a limited use of sources and research to develop ideas
* relied heavily on secondary sources with little to no analysis and evaluation of primary sources to support conclusions
* did not fully utilise the allocated word count for the assessment type which limited the ability to expand in a meaningful way on ideas.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Inquiry

Students produce one literary, societal, or historical inquiry, which is presented as an informed and persuasive argument. The inquiry gives students an opportunity to explore an area of specialisation of individual interest where they propose and develop a particular point of view about an issue, as negotiated with their teacher.

Students may produce their informed and persuasive argument in the form of a written essay to a maximum of 2000 words, or in multimodal or oral form to a maximum of 12 minutes or equivalent. All features of the assessment design criteria for this subject are assessed in the inquiry.

The more successful responses commonly:

* had a specific and achievable topic which invited a discussion of the historiography
* demonstrated a sound grasp of KU1 and KU2
* made use of high-quality primary and secondary sources
* made a genuine attempt to address RA2 in their work. It was clear that teachers were better directing students in how to meet RA2, with responses inviting more discussion about ideas or innovations, and considering their influence within and across different societies
* had well-formulated and specific inquiry questions/topics that allowed students to develop a worthwhile response. Students and teachers are encouraged to work closely with one another at the question design stage
* were prepared to do comparative studies across cultures and historical periods
* considered the perspective of the primary sources being used when integrating them into their response
* synthesised evidence and appropriately acknowledged all sources, providing evidence of extensive research
* spent considerable time evaluating the nature of sources as evidence while still maintaining balance in their argument. Inquiries that balanced source credibility, content and argument were best placed to present a synthesised response that fully answered the question
* paid attention to a range of sources, with some inquiries also making use of visual material and drawing on archaeological evidence to support arguments. Most inquiries provided both primary and secondary sources demonstrating a genuine effort by students to research widely and provide evidence of this via both intext referencing and by supplying a bibliography

The less successful responses commonly:

* had poorly formulated questions or no specific question at all. These questions did not invite a reasoned historical argument and often led to historical recount of events
* had questions that lacked clarity which led to confusing, vague, and incoherent discussions
* had a topic so broad in scope it made it difficult for students to develop a worthwhile response
* were overly ambitious in completing comparative studies that covered a large period and did not allow students to develop depth in their analysis and arguments
* lacked depth in their understanding of literary, historical and/or archaeological concepts
* presented secondary source material as primary sources
* quoted primary source material but did not consider that a primary source may give a particular perspective
* did not evaluate the nature of sources and evidence in their response.

General comments or observations

* many courses continue to utilise traditional ‘Classical Studies’ type topics from the Roman and Greek world
* the quality of analysis was high across the student samples. More attention is being paid to the nature of source material and concepts and it is making for more analytical discussion in student work in the higher grade-bands
* teachers are encouraged to guide students in authentically using primary source material and to take every opportunity to consider A3 when utilising ancient and modern source material
* teachers are encouraged to be more selective in the sources they provide to students for timed ‘source analysis style’ assessments. Some tasks had 2-4 full pages of sources for students to refer to while asking them to examine different source material for each question and only one extended response to support development of a sustained interaction with sources or ideas. If not carefully constructed this approach can lead to a disjointed application of understanding and limits the students’ abilities to engage in a meaningful way with source material to provide a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the ancient world
* the more successful timed responses enabled students to critically analyse material, not just simply recount information. Task design that encouraged one or two sentence answers in response to a set source, included multiple choice questions or asked students to respond briefly to extensive text, limited their ability to engage in detail with the material and demonstrate in-depth and critical understanding
* task design is critical to ensure students are achieving across the full range of performance standards selected by the teacher. In AT2, successful responses were commonly found in tasks where students were asked to specifically address the RA2 performance standard in the assessment design
* teachers are continuing to put in work at the A+ that is not supported by evidence, or the evidence provided does not reflect the calibration A+ on Plato. Teachers are encouraged to re-visit this example before deciding to award the A+. This applies to both AT1 and AT2
* teachers need to ensure that audio files/recordings are audible before uploading to Schools Online. Where no written support material was also provided, it was difficult to identify evidence of students’ achievements against the standards.

For further support on unpacking the Assessment Design Criteria, please see the following links:

* Understanding the ADC – Knowledge and Understanding <https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/documents/652891/1c90fca3-c7b3-5a89-ad51-cbf42684b3cb>
* Understanding the ADC – Research and Analysis <https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/documents/652891/03a916d0-e787-c120-96b1-65c1dad7d453>
* Understanding the ADC – Application <https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/documents/652891/ba9e5ade-bc39-0a0e-02cd-69b96ac88c22>