

Research Project

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
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RESEARCH PROJECT

2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessor's reports give an overview of how students performed in the 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.

Choice of Topic for Research Project

It was pleasing to see a broader range of topics this year. Topics on vocations, health issues, personal development, career interests, sport, body image, 'how to', fitness plans, holiday plans, humanities, and football were the most popular. It was apparent that most students positively embraced the Research Project, and they frequently mentioned their satisfaction and enjoyment in completing their research, alongside frustrations and unexpected challenges.

Topic choice continues to be of paramount importance as, in many ways, it determines the capacity of the students for achievement in all assessment types, either enhancing or restricting it.

The types of topics that allowed students to achieve at the highest levels tended to:

- be framed as a question, which helped define the research and assisted students in writing their outcome by providing a focus and frame for exploring the key ideas investigated
- ask 'Why?', which invited the exploration of perspectives or viewpoints rather than just fact-finding
- have personal relevance to the student, which seemed to extend the research scope and outcome
- be derived either from political, social, or environmental issues, or from genuine scientific, practical, or technical challenges, which provided a greater capacity for real research to be undertaken, invited the consideration of different perspectives, and facilitated the provision of more in-depth insight in all assessment types
- be manageable and researchable
- involve the discovery of 'new knowledge' or 'proof'.

The types of topics that limited students' capacity to achieve at the highest levels were generally:

- self-evident, for example, 'How to become a ____' or 'What are the different types of ____?'
- too broad, which led to brief coverage of many areas
- too simple, which hindered in-depth research

- confirmations of students' prior knowledge and/or existing perceptions
- phrased as a subject (e.g. Epilepsy), which led to an 'all you can find out' research project.

Some topics were not ethically appropriate, mainly due to safety and legal issues or because they dealt with offensive material. It is recommended that topics should reflect the values of the student's school and be appropriate for a SACE Stage 2 subject.

Choice of Capability

Many markers reported that there still appeared to be some confusion over the capability requirement of the subject. Some students chose two capabilities, and the capability for learning was often chosen. It is important to stress that students should choose only one capability as the focus for the research project, and that learning cannot be chosen since it is integral to the subject for all students.

In the more successful projects, the chosen capability was the 'lens' through which all activities undertaken were filtered, helping to refine and/or maintain the focus of the topic.

Although the chosen capability is assessed only in Assessment Type 3: Evaluation, students should provide evidence of their engagement with it in Assessment Type 1: Folio.

Ethics

More students referred to ethics in their research project this year. The more effective responses went beyond the recognition that privacy, respect, and confidentiality are important factors to consider deeper issues related to safety (physical, moral, psychological), the impact on the environment, and cost (both in terms of finances and time).

The less effective responses superficially hinted at an aspect of ethics in students' research but then ignored it in pursuing an area of personal interest, without considering the research that students were undertaking.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Folio

Teachers base a student's *grade* on the whole folio, but the confirmation of *standards* of the folio is based on 10 pages selected from the whole folio. While the selection does not need to include the proposal, the chosen 10 pages should reflect the performance standards for all the specific features of the Planning and Application assessment design criteria. This 10-page snapshot should also reflect the complexity of the entire research project.

Moderators reported that, in general, the 10 pages were chosen more wisely than in previous years, and a number of practices assisted the moderation process:

- folios that were well organised, readable and clearly printed, including clear photocopies or printouts of material such as slides of multimedia presentations, with overlaid, accompanying, or highlighted text
- folios that included the proposal, which often provided moderators the best opportunity to understand the scope of the student's research and planning.

However, less effective selections sometimes made it more difficult for moderators to confirm standards, including:

- pages reduced in photocopying, which made evidence hard to read
- injudicious selections of downloaded pages from the Internet, representing a collection of information only (D band for Application)
- an imbalance of evidence against the specific features, for example, too many pages reflecting evidence of Planning, and not enough pages demonstrating Application
- repeated examples of the same type of evidence that did not reflect all the specific features, for example, too many journal entries, pages of highlighted downloads, or survey results
- unclear differentiation between student commentary and information copied from the Internet
- space wasted on pages by only including a few lines on some pages
- more than 10 pages (in some cases up to 30 pages) included in the sample; moderators were instructed to read only the first 10 pages
- narrow templates used, which reduced the opportunity for in-depth analysis, for example, what did you read, was it reliable, or what did you learn?
- large A3 format scrap books submitted rather than ten A4 pages
- a folio that only contained a proposal and discussion.

Planning (P1, P2)

Moderators reported that Planning (P1 and P2) was generally done well, with evidence of the necessary skills being 'taught'.

Consideration and identification of a research topic (P1)

Students successfully showed a 'thorough' consideration of the topic in a variety of ways, such as using various brainstorming tools (mind maps, lotus diagrams, and/or work-breakdown structures) or offering exploration in the proposal.

While the level of refinement of the topic was critical to the success of the folio, the timing of refinements was of less importance. What was vital, however, was that the evidence selected highlighted that refinement had taken place. Students did well to provide a written reflection that detailed the change in topic, followed by a brainstorm or lotus diagram to help flesh out key areas to be investigated. Further, in the more successful folios, the refinement of the topic resulted in the identification of a precise context, for example, in terms of place (geographical); a particular phase during a specified time period; certain individuals in a movement; a specific age group; or an aspect of the topic. The topics of less effective folios tended to remain broad, or encompassed unmanageable dimensions, such as the whole world or an entire century.

Planning of research processes appropriate to the research topic (P2)

At the highest level, convincing evidence of the 'thorough planning' of research processes involved an assessment of the appropriateness of various proposed research processes in terms of the validity, manageability, and sound ethics of the proposed research. This prompted students' final selection of 'highly appropriate' research processes, which were then documented in a detailed timeline or work schedule.

Less successful folios tended to be much briefer and listed all activities to be undertaken for the research project, including brainstorming, drafting, compiling the folio, and printing.

Another feature of the more successful folios was their sustained evidence of students' engagement with the specific features of Planning through the folio. This comprised consistent reflections on the topic and how the research was assisting in addressing or refining their research (P1). Some folios displayed how the student had managed their time throughout the investigative journey, in the form of time-logs, photographic evidence of a student undertaking practical work, or critical reflections that included a breakdown of how a student would handle the next part of the research (P2).

Application (A1, A2, A3)

Development of the research (A1)

In the more effective responses, 'resourceful' development of the research was shown in a number of ways, which went beyond downloads. These included:

- conducting interviews by phone or email, or in person
- finding other documents or material (e.g. books, magazines) that could extend the research and/or offer other perspectives
- attending workshops or classes
- observing individuals or groups
- conducting field trips and visiting places of interest
- conducting surveys
- completing online tutorials to develop a skill base
- experimenting with their chosen medium
- reflecting on why things went wrong, setbacks, challenges, people's lack of availability, opportunities taken or missed
- documenting how one part of the research naturally led to the 'next step', for example, a written or oral reflection
- annotating a list of references to demonstrate the scope of the research.

Less effective ways of showing development of the research tended to:

- rely on one source of information (e.g. the Internet)
- access only a narrow range of sites, which led to a series of downloads (included in the 10-page selection from the folio).

The Internet may be used effectively as a starting point or gateway into the research, as a vast amount of information is available online, but it is recommended that students consider:

- how best to locate a greater depth of information through accessing a range of other sources
- how to validate the information they have been reading on the Internet using another source.

Analysis of information and exploration of ideas (A2)

The most effective responses went beyond summaries of sources and processes, but also engaged with how the information might be useful to:

- develop, shape, understand, or refine the topic
- link with other parts of the research already undertaken or confirm findings from another part of the research
- lead to the 'next step' and explain why that 'next step' needed to be undertaken
- explain in what ways the information provided new directions.

These responses also evaluated the validity and reliability of the information accessed, and used language and phrasing specific to the research rather than including general statements such as 'This interview has really helped'.

In more effective responses, students analysed the success or otherwise of interview responses and survey results, and looked at how and why the information gathered might or might not be useful in furthering the research, shaping its direction, enabling refinement of the topic, or in another purpose. In other, less effective responses, however, questions and answers from an interview or survey were included, without further comment.

Many folios this year did not go beyond 'collection' and highlighting, and students are reminded that the inclusion of photocopied or downloaded pages with highlighted sections is not sufficient to provide evidence of analysis. Highlighted material should be supported by in-depth comments in the student's own words.

Application of knowledge and skills (A3)

Moderators reported that this was generally sound and overall students applied many 'generic' research skills.

Folios that demonstrated a highly effective application of knowledge and skills specific to their research topic did so explicitly, including:

- source analysis showing an understanding of how source type influences the student's understanding
- photographic evidence of experimentation processes (with an explanation of what is being displayed), for example, building a surfboard or a print screen of online tutorials being conducted; this included what worked and what did not work, and therefore what needed to be considered for future research

- critical reflection of how a particular aspect of the research already undertaken (that is, material gained from an interview) led to another path, and how the interview influenced the new avenue of research
- critical reflection at significant stages, pulling the threads of research together, identifying growth in knowledge from the initial concept, and explaining how the cross-checking of information in order to validate their research led to new insights and the refinement of the topic.

Many folios did not include evidence of this application specific feature (A3).

Discussion

The discussion, which may be submitted in either hard or electronic copy, is a requirement of the subject. If the discussion is not included, this limits the student's ability to provide evidence against the performance standards. This year, it proved difficult to verify grades where no discussion was provided.

Moderators reported that better evidence against all the specific features was provided in discussions that:

- were conducted in the middle or towards the end of the material, which gave the students more to talk about
- consisted of open questions, which provided opportunities for students to elaborate
- included questions enabling discussion related to all specific features
- included questions tailor-made for the student's specific research project
- included
 - consideration of ethics and safety issues
 - sophisticated analysis of capabilities
 - evidence of planning and application
 - details of challenges faced and solutions found
 - exploration of a variety of research methodologies
 - identification of future directions for research (refining the topic as it approached the outcome).

Less effective evidence was contained in discussions that included:

- closed questions that did not invite articulation of the research that had been conducted
- generic questions that were not relevant to all of the student's research.

Assessment Type 2: Research Outcome

It was positive to see the use of a variety of modes for the presentation of the outcome. Although the majority of students chose to present their outcome in written form, moderators noted increased use of multimedia presentations. If a product was made, it was advantageous to at least include a photograph of what was created (e.g. a surfboard, a gown).

The most successful responses provided evidence of very high achievement against all specific features of the assessment design criterion Synthesis. These research outcomes were logically structured and fluently expressed, skilfully brought together (e.g. 'synthesis'),

with the key findings of the research clearly evident and supported with evidence and examples.

Synthesis (S1, S2, S3)

Production of the research outcome (S1)

At the highest level, 'insightful synthesis' requires students to pull the threads of the research together to reveal new-found understanding and awareness of the chosen topic that have emerged from the research a student conducted.

Research outcomes that clearly stated the key findings of the research and systematically explored these with evidence, tended to achieve higher results. These key findings were explicitly identified, using well-signposted language, for example, 'One of the key findings of the research was that...', 'Another major finding was...', 'The most significant...' Evidence of insightful synthesis of key ideas, knowledge, and skills was most effectively shown when the rationale for the selected ideas, knowledge, and/or skills was made clear. In many of the most effective responses, an idea or finding had evidently become a key finding of the research as it emerged from several different processes and/or sources, as opposed to one of many findings, ideas, or skills, each of which emerged only once.

Insightful synthesis was also shown through the incorporation of the author's name in the text as part of the writer's own words. This highlighted that the ideas represented the views of certain researchers or authorities and were one of several ways of seeing the issue. It also helped to demonstrate students' understanding that there are multiple ways of approaching an issue, and that the research conducted forms part of the body of knowledge about the topic, but is not the definitive answer.

In less successful responses, students presented a torrent of information. In such cases, there was little evidence of synthesis of the *main* findings from all the research conducted and rather a summary or recount of *all* the information deriving from the student's research, without recognition of the varying degrees of importance of different pieces of knowledge, skills, or ideas. Some outcomes were not topic-specific and drifted away from the main idea.

Substantiation of key findings (S2)

Substantiation requires students to support the key findings they present. If a student makes a statement, they should provide evidence to support it.

The most successful responses featured high-level substantiation. Evidence included the clear articulation of the *key* findings (as opposed to any findings) and the use of well-chosen quotes and examples drawn from the student's research to justify or demonstrate the key findings. Such evidence was often drawn from, or reference made to, views deriving from more than one source or process. This approach tended to correlate with the level of resourceful development of the research conducted. If the research development was limited, the substantiation of the findings tended to follow suit. In research outcomes that comprised a product, effective substantiation was often provided in the form of both written and oral explanations.

Students who identified the source's author or provenance in the text of the research outcome, using a consistent system of referencing or footnotes, provided the most effective

evidence of substantiation. Providing multiple sources of support for a key idea also helped to show thorough substantiation of the most important findings (that is, those that were central), as did providing more than one reason, example, or explanation to illustrate the significance of the key finding.

Moderators reported that less effective responses provided little evidence of substantiation, apart from a bibliography. This was particularly noticeable in some research outcomes that included a product (e.g. a film, brief novel, photo-story, multimodal presentation) without any explicit evidence of substantiation or synthesis.

Moderators note that, in an oral or multimodal research outcome, it is still possible to have effective substantiation. Instead of footnoting or referencing (which could still be evident in a multimodal presentation), it is expressed in the phrasing a student uses. For example:

- 'From having spoken to ____ it is evident that...'
- 'Feedback from ____ and ____ highlights that...'
- 'From experimenting with ____ and achieving the results of ____'.

It is also possible to achieve a solid result through carefully integrating substantiation into the 'script' when creating an oral presentation. It is important to note that the assessment is based on the actual presentation (oral or multimodal) and not on the written script that may be submitted in support of the outcome.

While scaffolds (for example, those that pose generic questions to be answered) can support students to structure their findings, in some instances they can be limiting and prevent the full delivery of research findings, and they may not be tailor-made to all types of research outcomes.

Expression of ideas (S3)

It was pleasing to note that almost all responses provided evidence of sufficient clarity of expression to reach the C standard. In many cases the evidence presented against this specific feature was considerably higher than against other features and propelled the work to a higher grade. This suggested that much attention is being paid to careful planning, editing, and proofreading.

The most effective responses included the use of an appropriately formal tone. Coherence was demonstrated by the use of a logical structure, both in terms of the order of paragraphs and the delivery of information in each paragraph. The use of a conclusion also helped, as it clearly synthesised the information for the last time. In addition to this, the use of qualifiers and hedgers, such as 'probably', 'possibly', 'maybe', and 'it seems', led to the formation of more measured statements, which allowed students to express themselves more accurately and avoided a dogmatic approach. It also highlighted the writer's recognition of the complexity of the issues and debates being discussed.

In less effective responses, the language used tended to lack the formality required, or used slang and contractions (such as 'aren't'). Students often generalised in such responses, presenting assertions as facts. For example, in the statement 'Adolescent boys are uninteresting', the use of the word 'are' makes it sound as though the claim is the absolute truth rather than an opinion. This type of language also hindered the capacity to present 'insightful' evidence.

Word counts and/or times needed to be clearly indicated for the research outcome; more often than not, students did not do this. Some students ignored the word-limit, which placed them at a disadvantage as moderators are instructed to read only the first 1500 words.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Evaluation

Markers reported that there was an overall improvement in the standard achieved in the evaluation this year.

It was noted that the use of headings and subheadings that related to the performance standards helped to ensure that student responses were directed towards discussion of matters that provided relevant evidence for the specific features being assessed. Subheadings that did not directly relate to the specific features tended to sidetrack students into less relevant discussion. Markers also commented that, where subheadings were not used at all, the responses tended to repetition and/or less effective structuring, with elements of the evaluation often intermixed. This limited students' range of achievement against the specific feature Expression of ideas (S3).

Most students adhered to the word-limit, and more responses fell short than exceeded it. The short responses tended to lack depth and detail. Markers also commented that some students needed to pay more attention to the readability of their work, suggesting that much wider margins, the use of a larger font size (at least 11 pt), and clearer paragraph delineation (for example, the use of double spacing), would have helped at times.

Synthesis

Expression of ideas (S3)

Markers reported favourably that the general level of Expression of ideas (S3) was reasonably sound. Better responses were clearly structured and included headings related to the specific features (e.g. evaluation of research processes, reflection on the chosen capability and its relevance, reflection on the research outcome and its value). Some even went further with S2 and S3, breaking them into subheadings such as 'reflection on the personal relevance of the capability', 'reflection on the relevance of the capability to the research project', 'reflection on the value of the research to myself', 'reflection on the value of the research outcome to others', and so on.

The most effective responses also complied with academic conventions, correctly referencing a specific source used in their discussion in both the text and the references list. The remarks made about this specific feature for the research outcome also apply here.

That said, most work in the lower B and C range needed more careful editing. The incorrect use of 'bias' when 'biased' was intended was endemic. The meaning of 'although' and 'however' was confused, as were 'definitely' and 'defiantly'. Students are reminded that S3 contributes to the overall grade and they should edit and proofread their work carefully before submission.

Some markers commented that students mentioned people by name in their evaluation, often criticising them for not responding to a request in connection to the research project. At times, these individuals were then unfairly blamed for the student's performance. Students should consider that they should avoid naming people who were too busy to respond or failed to reply since it is undiplomatic to do so.

Evaluation (E1, E2, E3)

Evaluation of research processes (E1)

In the folio, students are required to select research processes which are believed to be appropriate. This part of the evaluation requires students to evaluate the processes they have used.

The most effective responses had a clear understanding of 'research processes', focusing their discussion on critical judgment of the effectiveness of the activities they undertook to locate information. Successful responses briefly stated the process and how and why it was done. They then commented on the reliability, credibility, validity, and limitations of the method, and backed up these judgments. Less successful responses, however, focused more broadly on the overall process of doing the research project, engaging in considerable self-criticism.

While many responses incorporated some judgment, meaning they were in at least the C range, a number of things distinguished the highly effective responses from the less effective.

For example, effective judgments were backed up with reasons that went beyond information about the process or its ease of use. Instead, judgments were applied to the validity of the respective processes in terms of their appropriateness to the specific topic or project chosen. In such responses, the use of qualifiers conveyed the level of effectiveness and/or usefulness of a process, for example, '*relatively* useful', '*vital*ly important', '*of critical* importance', '*mostly* not useful', '*most* valuable'.

Effective judgments displayed a sophisticated awareness that the validity of the process was dependent on the nature of the research and the topic being studied. At the 'A' level, the evidence pointed to a complex understanding of the problematic and context-driven specificity of this. For example, a student might recognise that a government-sponsored site may be highly valid, fit for purpose, or appropriate for gauging views about the management of the River Murray, but the same site might not be valid for a study about the perspectives of the people who live on the river.

Effective judgments also offered an examination of the reliability of the process for providing accurate information for the project. Such responses considered the source of the information, how it was obtained, the purpose of communication (e.g. to give accurate and objective information, or biased and selective information to persuade), the writer's level of expertise, and so on.

These judgments also tended to be balanced, considering the positives as well as the limitations of the research processes on each of the points mentioned here. The students considered how their research processes could have been improved, without going into too much detail about what they did not do. They offered a critical look at the way ethical

processes were followed or not, and commented on the integral importance of the processes to the development of their thinking and to the subsequent direction taken. Lastly, they made some general judgments about which process was more useful, and explained why.

Less effective responses tended to focus on a description of what was done, including brainstorming or lengthy and superfluous narratives about how they chose topics, their false starts and topic changes, the practical organisation of the material into particular folders, or their failures in time management. These topics limited the student's capacity to show insight and were of little value against E1.

Less effective responses based judgments on the ease of obtaining the information, and offered mainly concrete and absolute judgments, frequently making sweeping statements and generalisations, which were not backed up. These students made assumptions on the basis of limited understanding of what constitutes valid and/or reliable evidence. Many responses identified sources as being reliable or biased but could not explain why, nor did they give the impression of detailed understanding of these terms.

A number of responses made baseless observations about information being reliable simply because it was 'published'; material that came from a friend was said to be reliable, even though the student observed soon afterwards that this friend might be unreliable. There was also some cross-referencing of sources without real understanding of the fact that false or unreliable information can spread into multiple sources, especially on the Internet.

Less effective responses described research processes (surveys in particular) that clearly lacked validity for the chosen topic, with students sometimes expressing disappointment or surprise about the result. Often, such responses would observe that responses were not useful, that questions had been worded poorly in the survey, or that the responses did not answer the question posed.

Some responses offered only recount, most often because the student had completed mainly Internet-based searches for the answers to topics that were too broad or simple. In such responses, students often described the steps involved in arriving at an answer or outcome in the research processes used, and only occasionally used evaluative language (e.g. 'useful', 'helpful', 'confusing', 'useless').

Topics that afforded students the scope to discover a range of kinds of evidence — often contradictory and of varying levels of credibility and reliability — increased their capacity for high achievement against the performance standards, as the process itself yielded more material for the student to evaluate in an insightful way.

Reflection on the chosen capability and its relevance to the students themselves and the research project (E2)

This part requires a reflection on the relevance of the capability both at a personal level and to the student's chosen research project. At the highest level, it is expected that a student will provide reflection that shows insight into the conceptual level of the capability. The better responses did all three of these things, while less effective responses ignored some aspects or undertook them in a somewhat superficial manner.

With respect to reflecting on the relevance of the capability to the student's research project, the better responses went beyond the illustrations in the subject outline and based their choice on a deeper understanding of the capability.

It appeared that those students who had chosen a capability that was inherently relevant to the topic or question of their research project had greater capacity for high achievement than those who chose a capability that had relevance to the subject in general, as opposed to their topic. In the less successful responses, for example, personal development or communication was often said to be relevant because it was necessary to complete the research project. This tended to limit students to making clichéd, self-evident remarks about the capability's relevance to the project, which severely limited their capacity to show insight. These students tended to cut and paste phrases from the subject outline into their reflection, with varying degrees of success and skill in drawing personal examples from their particular project to back up their claims.

In higher level responses, the thinking that had gone into the student's choice of capability extended beyond the suggestions made in the subject outline. Some topic choices included:

Personal development: These responses, for example, examined the most significant motivating factors for individuals who complete a marathon. The reason given for its relevance was that motivation is all about finding resources within and overcoming perceived or real obstacles to fulfil an individual's potential.

Citizenship: These responses explored the arguments for and against restrictions on Internet piracy. The reasons given included that research into this topic involves an examination of the violation of basic human rights and stifling of human creativity as well as economic benefits and drawbacks for sectors of our community. These issues were described as social, ethical, economic, and political concerns relevant to our entire community.

Communication: These responses looked at, for example, how a children's author can most effectively present a story and message to a particular age group. Reasons for this choice included the way the research topic required the investigation of the complex art of communication; how a message is communicated between sender and receiver; how the use of various techniques shapes the form of the communication and the way it is received; how the way the message is sent and received depends on the context of both participants in the communication.

In the better responses, students' explanation of the relevance of the capability was well substantiated, offering reasons and examples highly specific to the topic chosen.

In reflecting on why the capability was personally relevant, the more effective responses provided evidence of this both in terms of how they may have developed in the capability as a result of undertaking the particular project, or how it related to their own personality. The highest achieving responses and examples contained an explanation of how the chosen capability was highly significant in their development as individuals in some way, giving specific examples to substantiate this claim. Many provided a number of examples of how they felt they had 'matured' or 'grown' in a way that was relevant to the capability through completing the research project, referring to benefits which included social, academic, and/or skills development.

In their discussion of these matters, the most effective responses engaged with the *nature* of the capability by tackling conceptual insights they gained about the capability. In these responses, phrases such as ‘I now understand that citizenship is _____’ or ‘When I think about communication now, I realise that _____’, or ‘Looking back, I realise that personal development is not just about _____, but also means _____’.

Less effective responses demonstrated a very limited understanding of what was required, and resorted to repeating or listing phrases from the subject outline about the capability, rather than making it personal to their research project. When two or more capabilities were chosen, very little was said about the individual capabilities, and this clearly undermined students’ capacity to show insight on the chosen capability. This was also true of those students who wrote about learning as their chosen capability.

Students who generalised tended to produce less effective responses. For example, in reference to the capability for personal development, they might state that their organisational skills were developed but offer no further substantiation. If they then said that they had kept a journal of appointment times or had folders for different aspects of data, or made notes when interviewing, this would have better supported that claim. Students are reminded of the importance of providing some discussion or examples to support this kind of claim.

The overwhelming majority of students stated the capability and described how it improved over the project, with some examples. This could, at best, receive a C grade.

Reflection on the research outcome and its value to the students themselves and, where applicable, to others (E3)

At the highest level, responses provided coverage all of these areas. Markers reported that most effective responses first acknowledged the key findings that emerged from their research. They referred to a number of ways in which the research outcome had been of value to them in terms of the new knowledge, skills, understandings, or insights gained. The provision of a number of reasons or examples indicated that this evidence was ‘well considered’. Where a topic had been chosen with which the student had a deep personal connection it appeared to increase the scope for the outcome to have profound personal significance, thus giving a greater opportunity for a high level of insight here.

In terms of the value of their research outcome to others, the highest achieving responses showed an understanding of the scope of their research and findings in the sense of its contribution to the existing field of knowledge of the area (e.g. how it contributes or how it is limited, and possible implications for future research). The better responses also reflected meaningfully on the significance of the key findings based on how it compared to research completed previously.

In many responses, students attempted to explain how their findings could be related to others, or used specific examples of interest groups that had already received a copy of their project, viewing it positively. In some cases, feedback on the research outcome was from others in the school or community, which provided something to say about its value to others, although its value depended on the depth of thinking that went into the responses.

This part was probably the weakest aspect of many students' evaluations, as many did not look at the limitations of their research and made only basic comments about its success without extending their observations. Most stated how research could be furthered, but many did not demonstrate that they had put much thought into this. The less successful responses shared the following common features.

Reflection focused on the personal value of the research project as a whole rather than the research outcome. Discussion was then often confined to what skills had been developed.

In endeavouring to be frank about the shortcomings and limitations of the outcome, too much emphasis was given to what was not achieved. This was particularly unhelpful when a student wrote 10 lines or more, repeating material from what they wrote about their research processes.

Students asserted the value of the research outcome or findings to themselves, and often to others, without stating what the outcome or findings were; these students often did not include detail of how their report was made available to others.

Some students highlighted new ideas or understandings that arose from their research outcome without supporting their claims or assertions, describing their changed thinking and new ideas in isolation from the research outcome.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

School Assessment

Moderators reported that, in the school assessment:

- most students and teachers presented clearly labelled and organised materials
- it helped them to confirm teachers' assessment decisions when a shaded performance standards sheet was attached to the folio and outcome, along with a grade and teacher comments; this also allowed moderators to give more specific feedback when grade changes were required
- it was distracting when teachers made too many comments on the research outcome, as this made it hard to locate the student evidence against the specific features
- teachers should check that the grade on the student work matches the grade listed on the School Assessment Results Sheet
- teachers should use the official forms, not notes, to notify moderators of particular information, for example, a 'Variations — Moderation Materials' form (if applicable)
- student names and/or SACE numbers should be clearly included on all work
- CDs and DVDs should be formatted correctly, to allow moderators to access material
- all material should be double-checked as being present in a student's package; this year, material was missing for some students (i.e. the research outcome or discussion). If material is missing, the appropriate forms must be completed.

For the evaluation, markers noted that:

- it is important that all marks or references to the identity of the student or the school are removed

- the performance standards sheet or teacher comments should not be submitted with the evaluation.

Assessment Groups

When a whole-school cohort forms one assessment group, it is assumed that there has been a significant amount of 'in-house' moderation and that there is consistency in the school's application of the performance standards. Some students can be disadvantaged if a school has not undertaken this before materials are submitted. If the evidence of one or two students is appropriate to the assigned grade level but that of the rest of the group sampled is not (especially students assigned to the A+ level), the whole grade level is affected because all results in that grade are moderated down.

This year, student results from schools that undertook 'in-house' moderation of standards of the different assessment types across the classes in the school were much more uniform.

Research Project
Chief Assessor