2020 Society and Culture Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2020 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: Folio (50%)

Student work for this assessment type was generally of a high standard. The majority of students completed four written responses, and there were some good examples of multimodal tasks undertaken by students. Students were more easily able to achieve at the high levels of the performance standards when completing tasks that allowed them to develop and demonstrate skills of social inquiry and include evidence from both primary and secondary sources in their responses.

The more successful responses commonly:

* undertook a variety of task, response types and used various text types to demonstrate knowledge and understanding in creative ways
* identified and understood the nature and causes of social change in relation to contemporary issues and recognised similarities and differences over time (e.g. in their consideration of the experiences of different generations)
* considered the interactions between different groups within societies and the interconnections between different societies and cultures
* used terminologies such as interdependence, power structures and social change to demonstrate understanding and achievement at higher grade bands
* analysed information from a wide range of primary and secondary sources and perspectives and provided an insightful evaluation of this evidence
* used a wide variety of relevant primary and secondary sources within work that demonstrated multiple viewpoints of the issued
* included images of their work as evidence and further articulate ideas to enhance the quality of their work
* shown more creativity in undertaking social actions by creating well-edited video presentations
* provided with well-designed task sheets that gave an appropriate structure for responses while still allowing for student choice of subject/content (e.g. tasks have a clear purpose and well-defined boundaries/outcomes allowing for more insightful and in-depth analysis)

The less successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated a lack of insightful analysis which limited achievement in the higher-grade band of the Investigation and Analysis assessment design criteria
* had limited task design that prevented students from achieving higher grade bands (e.g. tasks that required students to research historical events, complete short answer tests and tasks which were overly scaffolded or addressed too many assessment design criteria)
* had thesis statements, inquiry questions and positions on issues already established by the task that left not much of exploration and discovery of new ideas
* were provided with either insufficient or overt scaffolding or structure (e.g. too prescriptive and did not allow for student choice in content or form of response)
* had an over-reliance on personal experiences or viewpoints rather than using well-substantiated research
* did not correctly reference sources, or provided too little evidence of their sources
* had an over-reliance on essay style assessments and this lack of framework disadvantaged weaker students
* had issues with referencing.

Assessment Type 2: Interaction (20%)

There are two components for the Interaction: Oral and Social Action. Students did well this year to cope with the limitations due to the pandemic, which could have impacted the assessment types. Schools successfully conducted group interactions involving practical and significant social action and found ways to conduct orals that took advantage of technology to make up for in-person interaction.

The more successful responses commonly:

* utilised the task as a method of research that improved the quality of the work and the depth of knowledge demonstrated within the assessments
* presented a range of evidence (as necessary) especially in the group task which included annotations
* provided photographs that depicted the nature of the social action
* provided evidence (e.g. good quality recordings) that clearly outlined the contributions of each group member (e.g. record sheets, journals, notes, transcripts of collaborative group evaluations, de-brief, round table discussions)
* demonstrated substantial evidence that showed, knowledge, understanding and inquiry into a relevant social issue
* used video and multimedia creatively to advocate or support a viewpoint on a social issue and cleverly embedded persuasive techniques (ethos, pathos, logos) as a call to action to the audience.

The less successful responses commonly:

* provided insufficient evidence of group collaboration
* restricted social action (e.g. constructing a poster) which at times questioned if any social action had occurred
* contained basic discussion (e.g. role plays) that tended to restrict students from demonstrating achievement in the Investigation and Analysis and Knowledge and Understanding criteria in the higher-grade bands
* chose a PowerPoint presentation that was delivered to an unspecified audience with little consideration or evaluation given to the types of audiences that were targeted
* demonstrated little evidence of rehearsal (e.g. video files of students reading scripts to a camera which detracted from the overall message of the social action).

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

The range of topics was remarkable, and the research methods were impressive. Most students showed the ability to gather and understand information and process it meaningfully. Responses from students demonstrated a mastery of the subject matter Overall the investigations were of a good standard with interesting local topics where students were able to gather primary first-hand information and analyse it well (e.g. rural communities, marginalisation of elderly Australians). Other contemporary issues provided an in‑depth analysis and discussion (e.g. the Black Lives Matter protests, increases in university fees for arts and humanities degrees, a continuation of NAPLAN, impact of legalising euthanasia). The investigations were generally pertinent, thorough, using thoughtful approaches with a clear structure and varied sources.

The more successful responses:

* used appropriate primary sources and up-to-date credible secondary sources
* reflected on a chosen issue (e.g. contemporary social and cultural topics) well and offered recommendations in the conclusion
* had a set of focused questions used to specifically address social change that set clear boundaries to limit the broadness of the investigation
* had a clear, logical structure (e.g. guiding questions, clear hypothesis, appropriate headings, topic sentences to structure the investigation)
* used relevant experts as primary sources and integrated quotes from primary sources and interviews fluently within the discussion
* analysed and evaluated various perspectives on their chosen issue rather than summarising collected information from secondary sources
* proofread thoroughly for spelling, grammar and syntax and kept to the recommended word limit
* primary and secondary sources were cross-referenced with one another and information synthesised
* explicitly pointed out the local context of an issue, as well as the broader state, national or international aspects
* used different ways to demonstrate information and findings (e.g. tables, graphs, images)
* showed a good understanding of the mechanisms of change and the implications (KU2) and demonstrated effective use of reliable, valid and relevant sources, and contrasting opinions (EC1)
* synthesised the material to provide their authentic voice rather than a compilation of other’s opinions
* presented or summarised research findings and discussed the findings, showing an ability to pick up on differences in opinion, unexpected results, gaps in the research
* approached the chosen topic with an open mind and were prepared to discuss and accept unexpected findings
* reflected on their research and evaluated its effectiveness as well as the usefulness of their sources and suggested alternative approaches and sources as well as possible future action.

The less successful responses commonly:

* had broad or generic questions and lacking in clearly defined purpose that became a challenge to answer in 2000 words or explore them locally, nationally and or internationally
* used of graphics, diagrams, tables, graphs and surveys did not forward the analysis
* focused on “the what” and definitions of terminology which at times used inappropriate or dated terminology to discuss minority or marginalised groups, such as ‘Aboriginals’, ‘Aborigines’, ‘Indians’ and ‘Gypsies’. At times key definitions were gathered from simple sources (e.g. dictionary, Wiki) that underpinned the entire investigation, where more complex definitions would be more appropriate at a Stage 2 level
* overtly scaffolded that does not allow adequate flexibility to address the topic in the way best suited to it
* did not adequately address the assessment design criteria especially social change (e.g. topic selected were more suited to Health and Psychology investigations with little references to social or cultural issues)
* overt reliance on personal experience and opinion and lacking in expert primary sources (e.g. merely ‘interviewing’ friends or surveying the class)
* did not include a bibliography
* used primary data collected from surveys that were irrelevant to the discussion or the line of inquiry
* did not fully address performance standard EC1, where the evaluation of different sources and opinions did not take place
* provided responses that were too biased to one perspective and lacking thorough analysis of the different parts of the issue (lacked in the evaluation of personal research process or interrogation of bias that coloured judgement)
* recounted findings rather than analysis
* selected topics with a preconceived idea about the answer and therefore overlooked a range of perspectives and sources leading to a biased report
* used readily available and not always reliable online sources without questioning its authenticity.