

Stage 1 English Pathways

Subject Assessment Report 2013



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Stage 1 English Pathways Subject Assessment Report

Overview

At Stage 1, a number of subjects are moderated: the English subjects, the mathematics subjects, and the Personal Learning Plan. For most schools, only the C and D grades are moderated as the C grade represents the minimum grade required for SACE completion.

Stage 1 assessment reports give an overview of how students performed at the C and D grades in their school assessments relative to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outlines. They provide information and advice on: teacher engagement and student engagement with the assessment types, including task design; the application of the performance standards in school assessments; and the quality of student performance.

Assessment Type 1: Text Analysis

Successful Achievement at the C Grade

In this assessment type, students analyse a range of texts with different audiences and purposes to demonstrate their learning against the performance standards. A range of texts was evident including novels, short stories, plays, films, television shows, comedy-based texts, and instructional videos. Students were also given opportunities to analyse media texts; for example, newspaper reports, magazine articles, advertisements, and online texts.

Students achieved at the C standard when they were able to respond to a range of texts from social, vocational, and different cultural settings; make connections between the texts studied and their own personal experiences; and explore ways in which texts engage, inform, instruct, and connect readers. It was also important if students could show knowledge and understanding of the structural features of a text type; and had been exposed to a range of texts that held interest, were challenging, and gave them the opportunity to understand the need to create texts for different purposes and audiences.

Application of the Performance Standards

Students performed well against the performance standards when they were able to engage with a wide range of texts that were challenging and maintained their interest. It was difficult for students to achieve at higher levels if they were responding to a limited range of familiar texts; for example, instructive/procedural texts.

Moderators noted that in some tasks a large number of specific features from each of the assessment design criteria were being assessed. This made the task more complex and the demonstration of evidence of learning more difficult at the C grade.

It is recommended that fewer specific features be assessed in each task to allow students a greater opportunity for success.

Many teachers included a performance standards sheet with the relevant grade highlighted for each assessment task. This assisted moderators in confirming schools' assessment decisions and understanding the rationale behind the assessment decisions.

Task Design

It was noted that teachers had specifically developed a range of tasks to address the varying needs of the student cohorts. This allowed students to present their personal experiences, ideas, and beliefs through exploration of the texts (An1).

Texts included film review/analysis, magazine articles, novels, short stories, and advertisements. Teachers should support students in recognising the difference between a film analysis and a film review: the former being an analysis of character, theme, and/or techniques and the latter being an evaluation of the film. Moderators noted that, in some instances, the conventions of the text type were not clearly reflected in the task design. This limited students' ability to achieve to the C standard.

Effective tasks allowed students to show how language promotes good communication: both through specific language techniques, and particular roles in society and culture. Students achieved at higher grades when they could use specific and appropriate language to analyse various techniques; for example, in the context of a film analysis discuss the way that the director uses camera angles, music, set design, and lighting.

Moderators identified several tasks that were designed to assess analysis (An1, An2). However, the tasks did not provide explicit instructions for students to analyse; rather, they just instructed the students to identify and describe. This precluded students from discussing complex connections and limited their ability to achieve at the C level for An2 (descriptive analysis).

The better designed tasks were clearly structured, designed to cater for the particular needs of the student cohort, and allowed students to connect personally to their experiences, ideas, and values. They also provided students with choice — such as alternative responses and modes of presentation — and were linked to, and used, the language of the assessment design criteria. In addition, well-designed tasks gave students the opportunity to study texts in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts.

Assessment Type 2: Text Production

Successful Achievement at the C Grade

A range of texts was produced for different purposes and audiences; these included written, oral, and multimodal texts.

Students tended to be more successful in this assessment type, usually achieving the C standard in most tasks.

Students were particularly successful when they were able to use language to convey meaning in a range of contexts and engage and inform a target audience about a range of activities; for example, how to change the engine oil in a car, and how to create a podcast ('application'). A strong sense of personal engagement when recounting their own stories and an ability to produce familiar texts in different formats also facilitated success in this assessment type. It was noted that students achieved at the C grade when they understood the conventions, structures, and features of the text type they were composing and showed variety in their communication skills and an ability to use a range of language choices to complete text productions.

Most students were able to use language techniques to convey their thoughts and ideas in familiar contexts and had appropriate language skills. Samples showed generally fluent and precise communication.

Application of the Performance Standards

Moderators observed a consistent interpretation of the performance standards at the C standard across schools. Communication was generally fluent and precise with students able to use appropriate styles and structures for familiar audiences and contexts.

It is recommended that teachers explicitly address the 'knowledge and understanding' assessment design criterion with students; particularly in relation to audience and purpose of text production (KU3).

Task Design

Moderators noted that students produced a range of texts, including recounts, narratives, expository texts, instructional texts, persuasive writing, narrative poetry, advertisements, photo stories, letters, web page creations, and PowerPoint presentations. Some interesting text production tasks gave students the opportunity to create an instructional video showing how to operate technical machinery, develop a Facebook template to introduce themselves, and produce a sports commentary. Teachers are reminded that texts have a maximum length of 800 words for a written presentation, 5 minutes for an oral, or the equivalent for a multimodal response. Moderators will only consider evidence of achievement up to the word/time limit.

Generally, tasks allowed students to demonstrate the C standard or higher. The better designed tasks were well structured, allowed for student choice, catered to the needs of the differing student cohorts, and used the words of the performance standards. Procedural tasks worked well when presented in an oral form.

Moderators noted that some tasks elicited simplistic responses from students, such as basic text types and forms, and did not allow students to show higher levels of achievement beyond a C standard. Creating texts with minimal language choices — such as emails — limited students' ability to show a comprehensive range of language skills. Simple instructional tasks such as changing engine oil in a car sometimes resulted in responses heavily dependent on internet sources. Students showed greater success when they were able to use a wide range of language choices in their text productions.

Preparation and Packaging of Student Materials

Student materials were predominately packaged following the guidance provided in the information sheet — The Preparation and Packing of Materials for Stage 1 Moderation. The work could be quickly accessed and processed when teachers included a summary sheet indicating the individual student's results for each assessment type as well as the student's name and/or SACE registration number. It is important that the grade assigned to the student work matches the one written on the Moderation Sample form submitted with the materials; some discrepancies were observed. Moderators are advised to assume that the grade on the signed Moderation Sample form is correct, and moderate accordingly.

Teachers are reminded to select and submit samples according to the instructions outlined in the *Stage 1 Information and Guidelines*, which indicate a *maximum* of three sets of evidence representative of each of the available C, C*, D*, and D grade levels (an asterisk indicates a borderline result). A maximum quota of 12 samples is required, regardless of the number of English Pathways classes in the school. In some instances this quota was exceeded and schools provided more than three sets of evidence for the respective grade levels. Schools are asked only to provide samples of adjacent grades (for example, the B grade) if there are no C or D grades available.

Moderation at Stage 1 occurs when a full set of evidence (or pending the completion of a final task) — as outlined in the approved learning and assessment plan — is provided. When schools submitted student work that was missing more than one task, moderation was unable to proceed.

It was easier for moderators to see evidence of teachers' assessment decisions when student materials were clearly labelled, and a teacher pack (containing the approved learning and assessment plan, task sheets, and marking schemes and/or guidelines) were provided.

Student evidence in the form of a recording or transcript should be included for oral and/or multi-modal presentations. Teachers should refer to the Submission of Electronic files (document) or Preparation of Non-written Materials and Submission of Electronic Files (videos) and submit work in accordance with these instructions. CDs/DVDs should be checked to make sure that evidence is able to be accessed.

General Comments

Teachers are encouraged to access the interactive clarifying activities on the Stage 1 English Pathways minisite (Support Materials > Clarifying Activities) to help them interpret and consistently apply the performance standards to student work. Once teachers submit their assessment decisions on the provided samples of work, the annotated versions and assessment decision regarding the student responses can be downloaded and viewed.

The quality of the assessment tasks and the evidence of student learning was generally well supplied across a variety of formats. However, word counts for some tasks, e.g. 250–300, restricted the depth of student responses and stopped students from achieving at a higher standard.

Moderators noticed that the addendum was not used consistently. The addendum should be completed and included in the sample where tasks are missing or have been changed since the original learning and assessment plan was devised.