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English as a Second Language

2016 Chief Assessor’s Report

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## 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.

2016 was the last year of teaching English as a Second Language at Stage 2. English as an Additional Language will be taught for the first time in 2017.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Communication Study

This assessment type is designed for students to explore the language used in contexts beyond the classroom and the relationship between purpose, text organisation, and audience. Students undertake one oral assessment and one written assessment.

Oral Assessment

**The more successful responses**

* demonstrated an understanding of how content can be complemented by appropriate conventions and props and visuals
* had an understanding of the language and structure of the chosen text type, such as an instructional oral presentation or a television report
* used prepared scripts and edited segments of videos to fulfil their purpose and meet expectations of their audience
* made use of the 6 minutes available for the oral component to demonstrate competence across the specific features, but did not exceed the time-limit, as work over the 6-minute limit is not assessed
* explored language used outside the classroom, either real or implied, to construct their presentations to align with the delivery of the categories listed in the subject outline.

**The less successful responses**

* were oral presentations or demonstrations that focused on conveying visual meaning but did not allow students to demonstrate the communication and application specific features due to reduced or limited spoken language
* may have been presented live in front of a class, such as a cooking demonstration, where students were not able to interact as they would in a kitchen, or edit their final production to make best use of their time.

Written Assessment

**The more successful responses**

* produced one of the specified written categories, such as a newspaper article or a pamphlet, with the conventional layout and structure that would be found in the text type
* constructed a commentary or analysis with a focus on how the purpose of the written text influenced its organisation, formality, and language features
* demonstrated an understanding of the purpose of the text
* showed that they had a particular audience in mind when constructing the text, an idea of the requirements and expectations of this audience, and the effect this might have on language and structure
* were scaffolded appropriately, but not over-scaffolded in such a way as to limit the originality or achievement at higher levels
* commented on how the text was structured or set out, by considering conventions such as paragraphing, headings, titles, subtitles, and placement and size of visuals
* considered their use of language to indicate the social distance or relationship between writer and reader, by referring to formal elements such as objectivity, salutations, slang, acronyms, and emoticons
* demonstrated an understanding of grammatical and syntactical elements, by referring to their use of language features such as noun groups, nominalisation, modals, dependent clauses, and conjunctions.

**The less successful responses**

* were formulaic, with little reference to the student’s own text, and did not allow students to demonstrate understanding by relating the commentary to their own writing.

Assessment Type 2: Text Production

This assessment type requires students to respond to texts they have read or viewed, and to express their opinion on an issue raised in the text. It is expected that the responses refer to, or be directly related to, the original text and demonstrate an understanding of how the issue is approached in the text. Students undertake one oral assessment and one written assessment. The oral and written assessments must respond to different texts.

The analysis assessment design criterion is not required in this assessment type.

Oral Assessment

The oral assessment can be presented as a presentation to the class, or as a discussion between the student and the teacher.

**The more successful responses**

* presented a clear opinion on the issue, spoke of why they had formed the opinion, and supported this with evidence from the text
* focused on spontaneity rather than a highly scripted question-and-answer presentation
* were from students who developed a detailed understanding of their text and formulated their own opinion.

**The less successful responses**

* focused on reviewing the issue, rather than discussing the issue.

Written Assessment

**The more successful responses**

* were based on a shared specific text, the task was clearly explained, and the teacher had explicitly taught the language and structure of the target genre, allowing more comprehensive modelling and scaffolding
* were about modern or contemporary texts that students could engage with at a meaningful level, rather than texts that did not connect with the student context or were outside the range of student experience.

**The less successful responses**

* were over-scaffolded, resulting in almost identical formulaic responses (e.g. the same topic sentences, same supporting information), which limited the student’s ability to achieve in the higher grade bands.

Assessment Type 3: Language Application

In this assessment type students produce one oral report and one written evaluation based on either an interview with an individual, or a mentoring activity.

**The more successful responses**

* included thorough preparation before conducting the interview or carrying out the mentoring activity
* had a clear purpose
* were not mentoring activities conducted with peers
* were interviews with a person relatively unknown to the student (rather than a family member, teacher, or friend), which led to the student preparing more thoroughly and the interview had a better focus.

Oral Report

The oral report, which is a maximum of 6 minutes long, includes a:

* profile of the person or group
* description of the process used in organising the activity
* summary of the content, giving an account of the mentoring activity or of information gained from the interview, significant or surprising things that happened, or key understandings gained.

**The more successful responses**

* provided a brief (up to a minute) profile, then spent at least half of the remaining time describing the processes of organisation such as:
* planning (e.g. talked to teachers/adults, brainstormed, chose interviewee/group, decided topic/purpose of interview/activity)
* preparation (e.g. researched, wrote questions, edited questions, created instructions, practised demonstration, hired/borrowed equipment, rehearsed)
* negotiation (e.g. discussed, emailed, phoned/texted, asked, changed time/location, requested)
* organisation (e.g. arranged time/place, recorded, travelled, planned).
* kept evaluation to a minimum to avoid overlap with the written task.

Written Evaluation

The written evaluation, which is a maximum of 500 words long, includes:

* the purpose of the activity
* reflection on, and evaluation of, the activity
* analysis of how structure and language features were used to achieve the purpose.

**The more successful responses**

* demonstrated that students clearly understood the three components of the written evaluation
* were clear about the purpose, and therefore had a firm basis for evaluating the activity
* analysed how the interview was structured and used language features to elicit the information needed to achieve the purpose, or analysed their use of the language of instruction and their structuring of the mentoring activity
* provided justification for actions (in both preparing for and carrying out the activity), assessed the success or otherwise of what they did, reflected on their feelings and on what they learnt from the activity, and contemplated how they could have done things differently.

**The less successful responses**

* relied on a simple recount of what they did.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Investigation

Students are required to choose a contemporary issue that reflects their knowledge or interests and to independently carry out an investigation. Their findings are written in a report of up to 900 words, and in a discussion with the teacher, they record an oral reflection of up to 6 minutes on the investigation process and findings.

Written Report

**The more successful responses**

* identified a manageable issue and were clear about the focus of the investigation
* met the knowledge and understanding specific features by demonstrating knowledge about the issue in a report with a clear purpose
* provided evidence (such as examples, figures, expert opinion) to support statements
* synthesised information which acknowledged differing viewpoints, from a range of sources referenced in the text
* included a correctly presented reference list
* used charts and diagrams to support ideas and opinions being expressed in the report.

**The less successful responses**

* used many long quotations or relied on one source only
* included student surveys of such a small scale that they were of little relevance, and often were ‘tacked on’, rather than synthesised with credible information
* were in noted dot-point form rather than continuous prose that restricted the chance for students to demonstrate their ability to use text-appropriate language features to make meaning, and show grammatical control and complexity.

Oral Reflection

As the oral reflection is a discussion in which students demonstrate their ability to use spontaneous language in appropriate responses to open-ended questions, teachers have an important role in facilitating the demonstration. Students were given more opportunity to demonstrate achievement when teachers engaged with the issue that the student was talking about. These teachers asked questions which challenged or followed up what the student said. Other questions encouraged the student to elaborate, reflect on, and evaluate their planning processes; expand on their answers; and demonstrate their knowledge.

The oral reflection with the teacher can be recorded either as an audio or video. Teachers should be mindful of what is recorded within the camera view when using a video camera to record an audio.

**The more successful responses**

* were encouraged by teacher questions that were clear and explicit, rather than convoluted or double-barrelled
* were in response to teacher expectations that encouraged students to speak spontaneously (although often supported by notes to which they could refer), and to discuss and reflect.

**The less successful responses**

* were scripted, with prepared questions and answers, which made it more difficult for students to demonstrate fluency, their ability to sustain a discussion, and their oral language skills (in relation to specific features Ap2, Ap4, C1, and C4). Such scripted answers often became generic across a class, with little reference to a student’s own experience of doing 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 against the performance standards.

If a student has not submitted work, this should be indicated with an I (insufficient evidence), not an E, on the results sheet. The E and D grades are an achievement against the task and this achievement cannot be evidenced if no work has been completed. When one task in an assessment type has not been completed, applicable performance standards can be used to measure achievement in the other task. However, those performance standards which have not been achieved because of the missing task must be taken into account when determining the grade.

It is important for teachers to retain all student work with backup copies to reduce potential loss of work.

When submitting work for moderation and external marking, teachers are reminded to refer to ‘Advice on Preparing Stage 2 Materials’ on the SACE website.

## General Comments

Overall, a good percentage of students had an understanding of assessment requirements and some work of high standard was presented. However, there were some classes where the students appeared to have been given incorrect information about requirements. If teachers are not sure about what is expected, they are advised to contact the SACE Officer with responsibility for English as an Additional Language. A clarifying forum is held early in the year and this can help to clarify requirements and set assessment standards.

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Chief Assessor