

Language and Culture

2014 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.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Text Analysis

For this assessment type, students are required to respond to texts in the target language. The responses can be in English, the target language, or a combination of the two, and require students to analyse linguistic, cultural, and stylistic features, interpret meaning, and reflect on the ways in which culture is created, expressed, and communicated.

The most successful responses were those in which students were able to demonstrate the assessment design criteria of knowledge and understanding, and analysis and reflection in one or both tasks. Where questions were open ended and allowed students to explain in their own words their understanding, they achieved a high standard. Where questions required brief answers (one or two words, or a sentence) of a translation or comprehension kind, students were not given the opportunity to achieve a high standard.

Texts which asked students to discuss features of the culture as well as language allowed students to do very well. There were perhaps more questions about language than those based on cultural reflection and analysis. On the whole, students benefited when they were given task sheets that specified the specific features of the assessment design criteria being assessed.

Some well-selected texts allowed students to discuss language and culture in different contexts, and/or compare the influence of traditions in a personal or Australian context. In instances where students were asked to respond in English, then they should still expect questions relating to the target language.

Many themes were covered in the texts given to students. It is advisable for teachers to consider suitable lengths of texts to meet the needs of their classes.

Assessment Type 2: Interaction

For this assessment type, students are required to interact with others to exchange information, ideas, opinions, and/or experiences in the target language in spoken form. Interacting, asking, and responding to questions in English is not permitted in the specifications of the subject outline for this assessment.

Again, the students who performed at the highest achievement standard were those who were given an opportunity to express themselves at some length but spontaneously. If students were required to consider the use of language as well as cultural matters, then they were able to demonstrate a depth of ideas and a variety of experiences in a natural manner.

In some cases, students must be given practice before recording their responses so that they can get used to a microphone, so that they can adequately prepare vocabulary and expressions to demonstrate knowledge, and so that the teacher can avoid asking too many leading questions and thereby dominate the conversation.

Students who were given clear specific features being assessed performed better; for example, by demonstrating greater complexity and depth of ideas, fluency and correct register, and insightful knowledge of language and culture. Students who could show evidence from their prior research rather than just discussing family or their own life did very well.

Assessment Type 3: Text Production

For this assessment type, students are required to create written texts in the target language in which they express information, ideas, opinions, and/or experiences. Creating written texts in English is not permitted in the specifications of the subject outline for this assessment.

On the whole, this assessment type was handled better than the previous two. Highly successful responses demonstrated a high level of language use, and offered cultural comparisons. A variety of themes featured in the student texts, including migration experiences, tourism, the role of women, and the impact of digital technology on families.

The less successful responses were those where knowledge and accuracy of the target language was poor, and who could not offer detailed and well-supported ideas to discuss their chosen topic.

The creative writing tended to be of the narrative or report type, while the assessment offers scope for articles, diary entries, essays, brochures, and short stories, among others.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 4: Investigation

The external assessment requires students to write a report in English on their investigation, reflecting on their experience and interview findings in terms of their insights into linguistic and cultural identity.

A breadth of topics may be covered, and students are encouraged to pursue their individual interest, provided it falls within the assessment guidelines. Topics for the investigation may include cultural traditions, the roles of men and women, gender and cultural identity, the impact of immigration on values and customs across the generations, the value of maintaining the language in the Australian context, impacts of changing diets and health, dealing with Australian cultural norms, and so on.

Successful investigations were those that:

* clearly outlined the research method and showed evidence of it
* referred to a number of resources, including interviews, observations, and readings listed in their bibliography
* provided clear evidence for the information and a conclusion to the research
* discussed cultural and linguistic changes within the student’s community
* discussed changing identity within the contexts of Australian culture and the student’s personal cultural background
* reflected on personal values and what the student had learnt by doing the investigation.

Responses that only included some of the above features were less successful. Similarly, responses that discussed topics that focused exclusively on the student’s country of origin were not able to demonstrate an understanding of how personal identity is shaped in the Australian context.

Teachers are advised to give students specific assessment design criteria from knowledge and understanding (KU1, KU2, or KU3) and ideas and expression (IE2 and/or IE3) so that they have every opportunity to achieve the highest performance standard.

Similarly, teachers should discourage students from quoting too much from Internet or other textual resources, but rather encourage students to express ideas in their own words.

## 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.

The student work presented to the moderators was generally well organised. Moderators found it difficult, however, to deal with audio recordings that did not clearly indicate the student’s SACE registration number.

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