

Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan

Subject Assessment Report 2013

Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan 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: Folio

In general, students achieved success with the folio and the evidence showed that they engaged with the tasks. Students can undertake two or three tasks for a folio; many schools designed three tasks for students because this range of tasks helped them to meet the assessment design criteria 'understanding the capabilities' and 'developing personal and learning goals'.

Successful Achievement at the C Grade

The assessment design criteria for the capabilities were well addressed; typically, tasks allowed students to give some explanation of the five capabilities with brief examples. A number of schools also provided additional activities so students could give detailed or insightful examples relating to their personal experiences in relation to a range of capabilities, whether it was one capability, some, or all five. This also helped to prepare students for the reflection assessment task.

Many schools used templates to give a structure to student evidence. When these templates included headers, and gave 'starter' examples, it helped students to achieve the C grade. When templates were worksheets and asked a series of closed questions with no supporting examples, they tended to elicit limited (sometimes one word) student responses. Word processed evidence sometimes made it difficult to discern teacher worksheet questions from student responses.

Those students who found it difficult to engage through writing could still achieve the C grade by presenting multimodal forms of evidence. A number of schools encouraged students to create PowerPoint presentations that combined brief written examples with pictorial references. These enabled students to show different aspects of their chosen capability and to place it in a personal, local, and/or global context.

Similarly, students who used collages of arranged images to depict an exploration of self (including personal strengths and interests) showed a clearer understanding of

how to identify, explore, and develop personal and learning goals. This preliminary folio activity clearly engaged students and it was evident that the pictorial representation was also used to support reflective activities later in the program.

Many schools gave students the opportunity to interact with a range of other people and places, such as visiting industry, hearing from guest speakers, and asking questions of family and/or friends. Typically, borderline C or D grade student evidence rarely gave indications of connecting changes or refinements to goals as a result of interacting with others.

Application of the Performance Standards

When teachers designed tasks that included terminology of the performance standards, it was easier for students to present evidence of learning according to the assessment design criteria. Including performance standards with the assessment tasks generally helped students to be more successful because it was clear what they had to achieve. However, some inconsistencies were noted in the application of the 'understanding the capabilities' assessment design criterion.

Task Design

Creativity, clarity, and structure were three noticeable features of good task design. Where students used personal experience to inform the tasks, showed the ability to choose from a range of activities, and followed clearly defined steps, they were able to demonstrate both their learning and their engagement with the task. Tasks that incorporated the language of the performance standards (for example, for 'citizenship', terms such as community support, resident, social responsibility, local, global) tended to elicit responses in similar language. This enabled students to provide evidence that demonstrated a higher level of achievement.

Many schools gave students tasks that relied on them having satisfactorily completed self-exploration before they started to research their career interests. Schools successfully used a range of commercially designed goal-setting programs that helped students to develop strategies and achieve outcomes through self-exploration. Tasks which incorporated a range of activities and approaches enabled students to successfully incorporate one or more capabilities into their strategic goal/s.

Students who more easily demonstrated an ability to explore how the capability was relevant to themselves and set goals — as well as being able to develop strategies to achieve their goals — were given a mix of short, structured activities within the task.

Some tasks included a flowchart/checklist in the task design so that students could clearly see what steps to follow and evidence to provide. The task asked open-ended questions so as not to limit each student's responses. It was clear that while students had been well supported with examples in class discussions, this had not hindered their ability to develop and state their individual goals, and explore possible strategies to achieve them.

Many student samples at the C*, D*, and D grade levels often provided little or limited evidence in relation to specific feature DP 3 — 'interacts with others to identify and make some refinement to goals' (an asterisk indicates a borderline result). Even

when students had successfully undertaken work experience in relation to their personal goals, it was difficult to see this reflected in their thinking. Task sheets that provided a structure and guiding questions as to how to interact with others and how this helps learning or refining goals — particularly in reference to DP3 — gave students the greatest opportunity to provide evidence that met the C standard.

Assessment Type 2: Reflection

In general, the reflection activities were well executed. Many schools designed different types of discussions, or students made written statements following discussions. Folio tasks also provided opportunities for students to document their thoughts and provide reflective evidence to meet the assessment criteria for the 'reflection on learning' task/s.

The reflection may occur at different stages of the planning process. Students can choose to refine their personal and learning goals as part of their reflection. If students use journal entries as part of their reflection, they should ensure that their comments address the relevant specific features of the assessment design criteria, rather than just recall events.

Successful Achievement at the C Grade

Students were able to achieve successfully at the C grade when they could reflect on how their personal learning plan or experience had developed and how it could be improved in the future. This involved observing what they had planned to happen, what actually occurred, and whether these developments affected the way they would think and plan in the future. It also involved students looking at how their chosen capability/capabilities connected with their plan and how the capability/capabilities supported or strengthened their experience/project.

RL1 — reflecting on personal and learning goals and the effectiveness of strategies to achieve them

An important aspect of the program was for students to understand and explain the connections between aspects of their experience/plan and their selected capability/capabilities; for example, to show the link between study skills and the capability for learning.

RL2 — reflecting on the development of the selected capability or capabilities, and how this helps to achieve their goals

Effective round table discussions allowed students to show how well their communication skills had developed and to describe their interaction with others. Students reflected on their subsequent learning and skills acquisition, and also had the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding and development in their chosen capability/capabilities.

Those teachers who asked open-ended questions in the discussion allowed students to show their depth of understanding. Unfortunately, there were still a few schools that did not provide evidence of the student discussions (for example, a digital voice recording, notes of conversation) which made it difficult for moderators to confirm the school's assessment decision.

Teachers should ensure that they meet the SACE requirements for submitting electronic files so that recordings are accessible and moderators can identify students quickly and easily. Some schools addressed this issue in recordings by having students identify themselves when they began speaking.

Application of the Performance Standards

Most schools were well able to apply the performance standards for 'understanding the capabilities' and 'developing personal and learning goals', but found the 'reflection on learning' assessment design criterion more problematic. There were many occasions when the evidence in the folio was of a higher standard than the assessment grade given by the teacher. Many workplace journals contained valuable insights that could be used as evidence in the reflection task, as it is not commonly assessed in the folio. Observations or insights noted in folio tasks could also be used as supporting evidence to build the reflective conversation.

Task Design

When students were preparing/writing their reflections, teachers equipped them for success if they provided an appropriate structure which met the specific features of the 'reflecting on learning' criterion. However, some reflection questions did not adequately address the specific features of the assessment design criteria, especially RL2 — 'reflecting on the development of the selected capability or capabilities'. This resulted in students not showing how the capabilities had helped them to achieve their goals, which affected their grade. Students frequently overlooked the need to refer to the chosen capability, restricting themselves to a recount approach that was less likely to meet the assessment requirements. While most reflections were written, some students submitted multimodal work — this was most effective when provided in an audiovisual format, using common software programs. For assessment processes, hard copies were provided to support the students' evidence of learning.

Some worksheets only gave students a small amount of space (e.g. two lines) to write comments. This limited student responses and often meant that they did not provide enough evidence to meet the C standard. Student evidence also needed to give some form of post-work experience reflection or round-table discussion. Students at risk of not achieving a C grade or higher generally provided a lot of recount evidence which only had vague links to their goals.

Effectively designed tasks were those that incorporated sentence starters that worked through various levels of questioning; for example, moving from knowledge (what I knew), to application (what I did and what happened), and to higher-order thinking (what else could have happened or what would I change to have a different outcome). It was evident that when students participated in reflective questioning across the program, their chances of achieving higher grades were greatly increased.

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. When teachers included a summary sheet indicating the individual students' results for each assessment type as well as the student's name and/or SACE registration number, it allowed the work to be quickly accessed and processed. 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 to 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 C, C*, D*, and D grade levels if available (an asterisk indicates a borderline result). A maximum of 12 samples is required for the subject, regardless of the number of Personal Learning Plan classes in the school. In some instances more than three sets of evidence for the respective grade levels were provided. Schools are asked only to provide samples of adjacent grades (e.g. B grade) if no C or D grades are present in the school for the subject.

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 work that was missing more than one task, moderation was unable to proceed.

In some cases oral presentations were assigned a grade but there was no evidence to support the assessment decision (for example, a script or teacher mark sheet with notes relating to the performance standards) and DVDs were supplied which could not be accessed because the requested file format had not been supplied.

Teachers are encouraged to submit CDs/ DVDs when students have prepared and presented oral and/or multimodal evidence of learning. This provides additional supporting evidence to cue cards and transcripts when moderators are reviewing students' evidence of learning. A teacher's checklist of an oral is not enough evidence to support assessment decisions for such tasks in the absence of a student's own work. On the whole, evidence presented in audiovisual form was clear. Before sending audiovisual material for moderation, teachers are encouraged to check that it complies with the SACE Board's preparation of non-written material and submission of electronic files support document.

General Comments

Teachers are encouraged to access the interactive clarifying activities on the Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan 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.