

Community Studies

2013 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

COMMUNITY STUDIES

2013 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

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: Contract of Work

Assessment Design Criteria

Planning and Organisation

Specific features:

- PO1: planning, exploration, and development of a contract of work with challenging and achievable individual goals, and clear strategies for completing the contract
- PO2: identification of existing knowledge and skills, including literacy and numeracy skills, and new knowledge and skills to be developed
- PO3: exploration of relevant capabilities and identification of one or more capability for focused development.

PO1

Overall, students submitted contracts that were significantly more detailed and individual than in previous years. This year a more structured contract was available, which directed students to the explicit requirements of the planning and organisation criterion. Better outcomes were achieved when students wrote their contracts to be personally challenging and they displayed a thirst to acquire new skills and knowledge in a field about which they were passionate. Many students built on existing interests; others became involved with totally new ones. It was evident that teachers allocated class time to provide constructive scaffolding. In particular, students were guided to include informative detail and to divide large tasks into smaller increments. Students also displayed a willingness to accurately document any modifications to their contracts, giving clear reasons and justifications for changes, and substituting equivalent tasks.

PO2

Thoughtful consideration was given to literacy and numeracy components. For example, 'spatial awareness' was outlined as part of the development of new numeracy skills for several students in the creative and physical arts. These students considered, for example, angles for stage lighting, maths involved in specific aspects of sport, and the rule of thirds in photography. Other examples of numeracy included budgets, costing sheets, and distances for tourist walks. Similarly many students

thought carefully about the specific forms of literacy they would need to write a formal letter, a bibliography, or a journal. Other literacy skills considered included annotating photographs, writing a forward for a storybook, creating a cook-book or formally addressing an audience. Some students created tables to highlight the growth of specific literacy and numeracy skills during their investigations.

PO3

Literacy and numeracy skills were frequently referred to over the course of the investigation by high-achieving students. While many capabilities had components that may have been relevant to a student's investigation, the more successful learners selected a focus capability to develop.

Communication and Interaction

Specific features:

- C11: interaction with community contact(s) which includes inviting and responding to feedback
- C12: presentation of a record of evidence, including reporting on the progress of the community activity against individual goals, and development of one or more relevant capabilities
- C13: presentation of the community activity and its outcome to a community audience, using relevant knowledge and skills.

C11

Highly successful students demonstrated that interaction with their community contact was most effective and productive when it was continuous. Students acted on constructive feedback provided, thus enhancing and enriching their learning. Feedback often encouraged students to review and make appropriate changes to develop improved communication and interaction. Students were interactive in their use of technology for immediate feedback, and used phone, email, and Skype as well as social media outlets like Facebook. In addition these technologies enabled students to access the wider community, which was particularly beneficial for students in smaller or remote communities.

C12

Regular, detailed records of evidence were a mark of successful students. These students did not restrict themselves to recounts of their daily progress but rather were quite strategic in reporting against chosen goals. These students gave reasons for their choice of goals, analysed impediments, worked through solutions, and reported on significant developments on the achievement of challenging goals. Successful students were also very strategic in providing evidence that signposted the development of the chosen capability or capabilities. It was clear that proactive teachers gave ongoing, regular feedback to students or provided templates that guided students to report on what they have learnt and what they plan to do next to further develop their goals and capabilities.

C13

The format of presentations to a community audience varied widely. Many students presented either to a nominated group of interested peers or through an expo-type event. Feedback from the audience was mostly in a written format; however, those who worked with young children found innovative ways to gain visual feedback and to record the children's reactions. Higher-performing students invited their expert to attend the presentation and provide further feedback that the student could use in their reflection. Students must include clear evidence of the preparation, execution, and feedback from the presentation in their folios. This evidence may comprise

formal invitations to the audience, palm notes for the speech, drafts, proof of room bookings, or screen shots of a PowerPoint presentation.

Fulfilment of Contract of Work

Specific features:

- FC1: completion of work in a contract
- FC2: practical action in the local or wider community
- FC3: selection of different sources and application of ideas and information relevant to the community activity
- FC4: development and use of specific knowledge, skills, and capabilities to complete work in the contract
- FC5: independent work and, where relevant, contributions to shared learning situations.

FC1 and FC2

Tasks outlined in the contract needed to be documented in the folio. All elements of the contract need to be completed to ensure higher outcomes. Students were innovative in their interaction with the local or wider community. Some of the projects included:

- public performances
- wedding planning
- volunteering at a soup kitchen
- running a radio program
- designing plaques for a tourist area
- creating a book on mythology
- art therapy
- creating 'memory tiles' with young children
- designing a website
- creating a memories collage reflecting the lifetime achievements of the elderly
- practical handbook designs
- interviewing a refugee and writing their biography
- creating an art piece for a specific room used by children who have autism spectrum disorder
- fundraising for a wide variety of charities and organisations
- creating a finely detailed mosaic table for a public park.

Proof of this involvement in the wider community was demonstrated through well-annotated photos, emails, programs, and screen shots. Many students also included proof of email contact, minutes of meetings attended, and even features from local papers as proof of their community involvement.

FC3

Students used a range of sources to gain extra ideas or information. These included books, articles, internet downloads, YouTube, and interviews. When utilised, these were included in the final folio, with successful students clearly annotating important sections and documenting why and how the information within the sources would be useful for their investigation, product, or event. The less successful students included quantities of downloads without explaining their usefulness or significance.

FC4

Photo technology was again used extensively by students to demonstrate community involvement and acquisition of new skills. Subsequently, regular references to the acquisition of new knowledge and skills and the chosen capability or capabilities

were a feature of successful students. The development of new literacy and numeracy skills needs explicit documentation. Examples included contacting an expert, viewing a relevant YouTube video, or coordinating the choreography for a performance (spatial awareness).

FC5

The majority of successful students selected a unique and individual area for their research. This enabled them to plan the detail for each section and be responsible for the research, implementation, and completion of their chosen product. Contracts that were group oriented tended to provide less opportunity for showing individuality or independent learning. However, where students chose a shared learning experience, each participant needed to have identified a unique role and responsibility. In some instances, students were disadvantaged if their group numbers reduced, if the workload was not evenly allocated, or if they had little personal choice in the investigation topic.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 2: Reflection

Assessment Design Criteria

Reflection

Specific features:

- R2: reflection on the development of knowledge and skills, including the selected capability or capabilities, and their application to the community activity
- R3: reflection on the value of the community activity to the student and to others.

R2

A particularly strong correlation existed between successful students and well-structured contracts of work. When students detailed a final outcome, capabilities, community involvement, and new learning in literacy and numeracy in a clear format, they were able to write successful reflections. Some of the least successful reflections were a superficial recount providing minimal insight into the student's new level of skills and knowledge.

Higher-achieving students outlined new skills and provide examples and justifications of their new learning. These students also discussed how their new learning was relevant post-SACE. The capabilities selected as a student focus throughout the unit of study need to be analysed in the reflection. Students need to reflect on the development of literacy and numeracy skills as they outlined in their contract of work. An example of how a student might address literacy development could be reflecting on the acquisition of specific skills such as the application of short story conventions, journal writing, and interview techniques. Examples of how students developed their numeracy skills include budgeting activities, drawing models to scale in order to understand landscaping or construction plans, and creating and analysing graphical information.

It was evident that many students were provided with useful materials including examples from the SACE website to guide them in writing their reflection. However, in some instances it was clear that students were simply responding to a list of questions that invited brief, shallow responses that did not always address assessment design criteria.

R3

Most students provided clear detail of the benefit of their community activity to themselves, but less successful students were unable to reflect on the benefits to the wider community. Higher-achieving students utilised local community spaces such as community libraries and local art galleries to host exhibitions, gather information, and connect with community mentors. Students who adhered to the 1000 word limit (20-credit subject) or 500 word limit (10-credit subject) were significantly more successful at achieving R3 than students whose final analysis was in excess of this word-count. To maximise student achievement potential, it is recommended that teachers and students refer to current exemplars of student work and relevant task sheets on the Stage 2 Community Studies minisite, which have been designed in line with the performance standards.

Some students submitted multimodal reflections. These reflections were well structured and were provided in an accessible format, as described in the documents and video about preparing non-written materials and submitting electronic files on the Stage 2 Community Studies minisite.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

The presentation of folios for moderation varied quite widely. Many students submitted folders with external covers that were clearly labelled with both their name and SACE number. Inside, clear divisions for each section and the marked performance standards for these specific pieces enabled supporting evidence to be readily located. By including work in single plastic sleeves, tasks were clearly positioned and in sequential order. The original contract, signed and dated by both student and teacher, must be included in the Assessment Type I section as part of the proof of the student's community activity.

It was evident that teachers encouraged students to undertake the process of planning, drafting, and writing the reflection early. This allowed sufficient time for the reflection to be marked and collected as per courier schedule. A small number of students were disadvantaged by this section being set as a timed piece under examination conditions and therefore submitting a piece at first draft standard. Most students recorded their correct SACE number and accurate word-count or a time length for multimodal submissions on their reflections.

Where a student creates a breakable item, this needs to be securely packaged to avoid damage. However, a preferable option is for the student to submit clear, annotated photographic evidence of the product. In a few instances, students submitted a copy of their external reflection with their school based folio material, which is not required.

Teachers made nominations for outstanding achievement thoughtfully. This level is at a significantly higher standard overall, compared with the A level, and the exceptional standard needed to be consistent in all areas, including the externally assessed reflection.

Generally, the Assessment Group Program Plan was completed with accurate detail, outlining an individual teacher's cohort and method of delivering the subject, and providing an insightful awareness of the needs of specific students, which resulted in a program that was tailored to the needs of individuals. The Cohort/Context

Summary provided information for moderators to understand how challenging and achievable the goals were for individual students.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Recent trends for students who elected to undertake 20-credit investigations continued to increase in 2013, with 97% choosing this option. The most popular areas of study undertaken in 2013 were Work and the Community (22%), Health, Recreation and the Community (17%), and Arts and the Community (14%). Where students selected their investigation based on an interest the students were more successful. Students achieved less successful outcomes when their investigations were group-based, school interest-driven programs that were recycled by the school each year. Some pre-existing programs lacked student choice and did not allow students to obtain performance standards at the highest level thus disadvantaging students.

It was evident that many teachers and students are regularly visiting the Stage 2 Community Studies minisite for exemplification of the performance standards and a variety of resources and forms. Advice provided in the 2012 Chief Assessor's Report has been used by both teachers and students to maximise the quality of individual outcomes.

When school personnel recognise that a student will not be successful in a Tertiary Education Subject (TAS) subject and they are withdrawn from that subject, the student may use related work completed to undertake a Community Studies course. For example, a student withdrawing from tourism may include the eco-tourism hours and investigation to design educational plaques for a local environmental bushwalk project. There needs to be an explicit link between the original learning and the new activity. The number of hours and specific pieces of work from the previous subject may be included if they are directly relevant to the Community Studies activity. When using materials from another subject, the timing of commencement influences the quality of the work submitted and, ultimately, the student's success. It is evident that the earlier in the year a student enrolls in Community Studies, the greater the student's opportunity to fulfil the performance standards requirements, which include a detailed contract, record of evidence, activity or performance, presentation, and feedback from a community contact. Consequently, significant structure is needed to support a student and ensure the community involvement is fulfilled.

In many instances students, in consultation with school staff, have a number of options to contemplate when withdrawing from a subject in which they are enrolled. These choices are explicitly outlined on the SACE Board website.

Teachers of Community Studies are encouraged to be involved in the moderation or marking processes. A new moderator commented that, "it was the best and most informative form of in-service as it generated ideas, firmed knowledge to take back to my school and created contacts with other practitioners".