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Information Processing and Publishing

2015 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: Practical Skills

It is important that teachers refer on a regular basis to their learning and assessment plans (LAPs). It was evident that some sets of assessments provided to students for Assessment Type 1: Practical Skills did not meet course requirements of producing the specified number of pages with sufficient text. In a 20-credit subject, there must be evidence of at least eight A4 pages with sufficient text, and in a 10-credit subject, five A4 pages with sufficient text.

It was a concern that some classes provided no evidence against specific feature AE2 (evaluation of text-based products and the design process used) in the practical skills materials, even though it had been documented in the LAP. The approved LAP should be revisited by teachers to ensure that they are providing appropriate tasks that guide students to provide evidence in an appropriate way for the assessment of AE2 in tasks which have AE2 indicated as being assessed. Evidence of AE2 can be provided in a variety of ways, such as annotating progressive print-outs and evaluating changes that are made in arriving at the final product, or writing an evaluation of the final product and the design process used. Students need to explicitly use the design language when annotating or discussing their product and the design process to achieve to the highest levels of assessment in AE2.

It is important to note that assessment of AE2 is not required in every practical skills assessment, as this would make each of these assessments a mini product and documentation and would place undue pressure on the students. It is recommended that it is assessed in one or two practical skills tasks. If the opportunity for the assessment of AE2 is only provided once in the practical skills assessments, formative practice and feedback should be provided to students prior to the summative task.

Actual text needs to be used in products, not filler text such as ‘Lorem ipsum’. The use of filler text does not allow students to achieve in the higher levels against specific feature DA3 or provide evidence of specific features DA1 or DA2. It is impossible to check for spelling and grammatical errors when filler text has been used. Text can be provided to students, or they can access text from appropriate documents.

Task design needs to ensure opportunities are available for students to demonstrate design and layout of text. A class provided with tasks that do not require use of adequate text over the set of assessments are disadvantaged. In instances where an extra task is provided to try to ensure that there is enough text, the students are often disadvantaged by the extra pressure of trying to produce another product (quite often at the expense of quality across the products due to the decreased time allowed to complete them). It is better to have five quality tasks than pressure the students with six tasks with less text.

Students who demonstrated at the A grade band in the area of development and application manipulated graphics, demonstrating a highly proficient use of software. Students who achieved within the A grade band were given practical tasks that increased in complexity and difficulty over the course of the year. The use of pixelated graphics should be avoided.

Business document tasks that focused on business letters need to adhere to the correct letter formatting and punctuation styles. Incorrect formatting and punctuation styles impacted on the ability of students to perform at the higher grades.

Thematic tasks restricted evidence of development and application of specific feature DA3 (application of layout and design principles to the production of text-based documents or presentations). Thematic tasks within this assessment type restricted students in their ability to demonstrate their development and application of practical skills. In many cases the same design was used for all practical skills tasks with little additional content being added. Students can be disadvantaged if opportunities for new design are not available in each task.

Electronic Publishing

Skill development in the Electronic Publishing focus area is most evident when students are provided assessments using the same software (e.g. Dreamweaver) to allow the students to show progression in the development of their skills, rather than tasks using different software (e.g. one PowerPoint task and one Dreamweaver task). Design and layout should reflect the use of columns, not continuous writing from left to right of the site, demonstrating consistent and thoughtful application of layout and design principles in the area of Electronic Publishing.

Evidence of poor file management resulted in missing graphics that were not in the source folder. If files are initially located on the network, students need to ensure that they are placed into the images folder of the website. Images located on the network and not in the images folder do not appear when viewed off the network. Another issue was where graphics were copied and pasted. These graphics did not appear when viewed.

Electronic content should be created within the website. External sites that generate HTML coding when creating content need the Internet for it to be viewed. Students should avoid embedding this generated code into their websites, as it restricts the ability for students to demonstrate the application of layout and design principles in the production of text-based products. It is strongly recommended that such embedding is avoided.

Electronic tasks in the practical skills that demonstrated achievement at the higher grade bands showed evidence of working with a variety of software to produce enhancers, such as Flash animations and video lightboxes.

When creating an online web form, it is important that the form fields within Dreamweaver are used. When moderating, moderators check the functionality of the form. If images are used to produce a web form, there is no functionality.

The creation of e-publications was an area of growth in Electronic Publishing. Many students created documents in software such as Adobe Photoshop and inserted them directly into web-authoring software. This led to the text being pixelated and hard to read. Some of the following characteristics of e-publications were not evident in the e-publications viewed at moderation:

* interactivity
* ability to zoom in and out
* printing
* searchability within the e-publication
* interactive table of contents
* ease of navigation
* sharing
* audio
* links
* thumbnails
* page numbers.

The lack of some or all of these characteristics meant that the final e-publication product became a Desktop Publishing task inserted into web-authoring software. It is strongly recommended that there should be greater research and understanding of what an e-publication is before a task is started. Evidence of the documents created before the final publishing of the e-publication helped the moderators to confirm the teacher’s assessment decision.

It was evident that some teachers required students to carry out a practical skills assessment under test conditions. Test conditions are not recommended for the production of practical skills assessments, as they do not provide students with the time to develop their products.

Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis

Good task design provides opportunities for analysis and evaluation, as well as opportunities to discuss social, legal, and/or ethical issues. When discussing legal issues, it is best to cite Australian examples and legislation. Social, legal, and/or ethical issues can be assessed in both the issues analysis task and the technical and operational understanding task, or only in one of these. When creating these assessments, it needs to be ensured that at least one of these assessments will provide appropriate opportunities for students to address a social, legal, and/or ethical issue relating to the focus of the task.

In addressing social, legal, and/or ethical issues, students need to explicitly address them. Alluding to them only shows understanding at the lower grade levels. One strategy is to have subheadings for the relevant categories of issues. A task does not have to cover all three categories — it may only address two of the three categories, for example, social and ethical issues.

Students who achieved at the higher grade levels referred back to the scenario, addressing it wherever relevant. Many students did not refer back to the scenario at all.

Word-counts need to be indicated for each of the assessments in this assessment type. It is important that students do not go over the word-limits, as moderators do not read past the word-limit. Exceeding the word-limit may disadvantage students.

Technical and operational understanding responses must include technical discussion analysing hardware or software features. A table of comparisons without analysis is not sufficient. Hardware investigated should be of a comparable price to facilitate appropriate comparisons. Assessment of specific feature U1 (understanding of appropriate hardware and software for the completion of text-based communication tasks) should be included in the assessed specific features in the technical and operational understanding task.

Current technology should be used, thus making the task relevant to students.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Product and Documentation

All external assessments should have the SACE Board external assessment cover sheet as the first page of the documentation, clearly indicating product and documentation word-counts, student SACE registration number, and school number. A task sheet should be included with the materials for each student to ensure that markers know what was required of the students, including what the final product should be.

It is important to remember that the external markers should not be exposed to any information that would identify a school or a student, or indicate a teacher’s assessment decision for individual samples of work. In some cases, student folders contained marked performance standards and grades. These were removed and destroyed to ensure that the marker was not influenced by a teacher’s assessment decisions. Please ensure that the assessment decisions are not packaged and submitted with the materials.

Due to the significant amount of handling that the external assessments undergo in the marking process, it is imperative that students place their SACE registration and school numbers on CDs and USB drives, and that they are secured appropriately to the student materials. It is also important that the pages of the documentation include this information throughout. Poorly secured items may become loose causing them to fall out of folders or plastic pockets, so appropriate identification makes it easier for the materials to be returned to the correct folder.

The product and documentation task should be presented in a soft-covered A4 display folder, divided into sections clearly marked with the headings of: investigating, devising, producing, evaluation, and bibliography. Three-ring folders and other large folders are not to be used, as they are bulky and heavy to manage, and manila folders tend to allow the work to fall out. Please avoid the use of A3 folders also. The binding of documentation should be avoided, as often adequate margins have not been left, thus cutting off text and part of the final product. The subject operational information document for the subject provides clear advice on the product and documentation presentation and submission.

Summaries of investigating, devising, and evaluation were often not clearly labelled, making it hard for the marker to identify them. At the end of each summary the word-count should be provided. The documentation needs to make it clear what the products are going to be.

The design principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity (CRAP) are the design principles that the Information Processing and Publishing subject focuses on. These design principles should be the main ones discussed in the documentation at all times. Students who did not annotate, evaluate, or discuss work in progress using these design principles were disadvantaged.

With regard to the annotations of the design principles, it is clear that the concept of proximity is generally not understood, as some students did not annotate it at all. It is important that students demonstrate their understanding of all four design principles.

Students who annotated only one or two samples in their investigating section were disadvantaged, as they were not able to demonstrate at the higher levels of the performance standards of AE2. It is recommended that approximately ten samples be annotated, reflecting the different sections of the final product. Samples annotated should reflect the genre of their final products. When annotating samples, students must discuss and give specific examples of each of the CRAP design principles found in the samples when annotating.

Many products were significantly under the approximate word-count prescribed in the subject outline. A number of markers also had difficulties determining whether students had met the product word-counts. It is imperative that students write their total word-counts on the SACE cover sheet, and include a word dump of the text in the product in the producing section of the documentation. Students who achieved in the higher grade bands were closer to the prescribed product word-count.

The investigation summary should include some evaluation of the samples annotated. There was an increasing trend to include evaluation of samples after the annotations. Unfortunately, these evaluations became part of the word-count and were unable to be read if the sum total of these, when added to the summaries, exceeded the word-count. The investigating summary should also include product specifications, time constraints, target audience, and hardware/software. Many students did not discuss these and only included their reflection of the design principles from the samples they annotated.

When annotating samples, students should provide specific examples of the design principles evident rather than definitions of the design principles. Design plans should provide enough detail to enable someone who is not familiar with the work to reproduce the final products. One design plan per product is sufficient. Design plans can be hand drawn or computer generated; each plan is to be of an A4 size, enabling external markers to check specifications indicated on each plan. Art work and sketches are not design plans, as they lack information regarding font styles, colours, and so on.

The devising summary needs to document and justify reasons for the choices that have been made concerning the design and layout of each page of the products. At all times, students should use the design principles when discussing choices and selections, annotations, and so on. This shows the deeper level of understanding.

Students who achieved in the higher levels showed evidence of AE2 by annotating their own final products using the CRAP design principles and discussing the design process undertaken in creating the final products. This was done in the evaluation summary.

Students who constructed the evaluation by writing and answering questions were limited. It is better to use continuous prose rather than question and answer. Some students used dot points when writing each of the three summaries. Again, continuous prose is recommended.

Greater opportunities for students to achieve in the higher grade levels are possible if students are given a choice about the genre, text, and images used in their product, rather than the teacher prescribing the topic, text, and images to be used. This can hinder the application of specific feature DA3. Poor task design did not provide opportunities for students to demonstrate DA3 sufficiently. In a 20‑credit subject, the task design should encourage students to create a product with approximately 1500 words in the final product.

Image manipulation must be more than resizing the graphic. There must be clear evidence of image manipulation in the devising section of the documentation, that is, before and after. This manipulation could include changing colours or backgrounds, cropping the image, using different effects on the image, and so on. When manipulating images for any of the print focus areas, image resolution should be set at 300 dpi, rather than leaving resolution at the default setting of 72 dpi.

Students who take their own photographs need to ensure that the images are of a high quality if they intend using them in their products. It is better to download high-quality images and manipulate those rather than use poor-quality photographs. Dark images need to be lightened. WordArt and clip art should be avoided. Students who achieved at the higher levels did not use clip art but manipulated graphics and in some cases created their own.

Final products need to reflect the authenticity of what they are. For example, brochures or business cards should be folded and cut to size and not just presented as an A4 page. Brochures that need to be folded must be printed back to back and folded appropriately. Business cards that have a front and back should be printed back to back and cut down to size.

All information, images, and other items need to be placed in the section that they refer to. Some students placed them in an appendix, making it difficult for markers to find the evidence. All summaries should be placed under the relevant section of the design process.

In both print and electronic publishing, justification of text and centre alignment should be avoided, especially for long text passages. This often resulted in widows and orphans. Text should be formatted to include paragraphs. It is important that spelling and grammar checks be undertaken, and students should not rely solely on such checks being carried out by software. Hyphenation needs to be turned off. Names should not be split over two lines but kept together. There needs to be a greater focus on the correct formatting of text.

Electronic Publishing

Adobe Muse was made available through the introduction of Creative Cloud; however, as it is the equivalent of a template, it should not be used in the creation of electronic documents in this subject. Its drag-and-drop functionality limits students’ ability to achieve at the higher grade levels of DA3. Muse has pre-built drag-and-drop widgets, such as accordion menus, dropdown navigation, slideshows, and lightboxes that can be dragged and dropped onto pages. The code generated by Muse is harder to understand and edit. This also applies to the use of Muse in the practical skills.

If a site is not working, markers look for evidence in screen dumps, so it is important for students to include screen dumps in the producing section of the documentation. Screen dumps provide evidence of a fully functioning site and may need to be referred to if there are some elements of the site that are not functioning when it is marked. Some students included screen captures that created a movie file with them navigating through the website. This was further evidence of a fully functional website. When marking electronic products, the external marker must be able to clearly identify the location of the index page. If the index page cannot easily be found, it is evidence of poor file management. To assist in the marking of electronic products, teachers are asked to check CD-R, DVD–/+R, or USB devices that electronic products are submitted on to ensure that all relevant files have been included. This also provides a final checkpoint for ensuring functionality of electronic files prior to submission of external materials.

Graphics must be inserted into the website and not be hosted on the Internet as a link. Electronic content should be created within the website. External sites that generate HTML links, such as YouTube, need Internet connectivity which is not available for the marking process. Students should avoid embedding this generated code into their websites, as this restricts the ability for students to demonstrate the application of layout and design principles in the production of text-based products. It is strongly recommended that this embedding is avoided. It is better for content to be downloaded and inserted rather than relying on Internet connectivity.

## 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.

Packaging of student materials for final moderation must include all tasks from Assessment Type 1: Practical Skills and Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis. If a full set of student materials for moderation is not available, then the teacher should fill out the Variations — Moderation Materials form. There may be variations in the materials provided for the sample for final moderation when:

* special provisions have been granted by the school to a student or students
* a breach of rules in an assessment type or types has been identified in the work of any student
* student materials for the nominated sample are missing after they have been assessed by the teacher.

When submitting the student materials for the nominated sample, teachers must also include in a teacher folder:

* an approved LAP, and an addendum, if applicable
* a complete set of task sheets for Assessment Type 1: Practical Skills and Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis, according to the approved LAP
* a Variations — Moderation Materials form, if applicable.

For moderation, teachers should ensure that each student has an individual A4 display folder containing all work that the student completed for the school assessment, with teachers providing associated shaded-in performance standards with a clearly identified grade.

Student folders should be clearly marked with SACE registration numbers. A labelled CD, DVD, or USB drive of student work containing all electronic products should be included if Electronic Publishing is one of the focus areas.

When submitting grades online, it is important to double-check grades entered. It was apparent in some cases that grades entered online differed from actual grades given. Moderators cannot amend incorrect grades at moderation.

## General Comments

Courses in which assessments were balanced between the two focus areas enabled students to better develop and display their skills in both areas.

Teachers need to be commended in their continuing work in understanding and applying the performance standards. It is important to remember that if the majority of a grade sits in one particular band, with some in another, for example, mostly A with some B, then the result is an A–. As a guide to evidence for calculating grades, the following example is provided:

C+ specific features predominantly in the C grade with evidence of some B

C specific features predominantly in the C grade

C– specific features predominantly in the C grade with evidence of some D.

Clarifying forums will be held in 2016 for those who need support using the performance standards in making assessment decisions and in designing assessment tasks.

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