

Information Processing and Publishing

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
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INFORMATION PROCESSING AND PUBLISHING

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OVERVIEW

Chief Assessors' reports give an overview of how students performed in the 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

Practical skills tasks should total a minimum of 8 A4 pages for a 20-credit subject and a minimum of 5 A4 pages for a 10-credit subject. Task design should allow for sufficient text to give students the opportunity to maximise potential layout (whether text is provided by the teacher or sourced by the student). Students were disadvantaged when insufficient text was used in the products created. For example, a task that includes a business card and a with-compliments slip does not allow for sufficient text; however, adding a business letter or flyer to the task would substantially increase the amount of text used and therefore the opportunity to display good design skills.

Courses that balanced assessments between the two focus areas allowed students to develop and display their skills in both areas, and to demonstrate at the higher levels of the performance standards for the development and application assessment design criterion.

It was evident that the assessment of AE2 (Evaluation of text-based products against design principles) required further clarification in the practical skills assessment type.

The assessment of AE2 needs to be included in at least one practical skills task, and evidence must be submitted with the materials for moderation. Requiring students to use the design principles to annotate the finished practical product for one of their assessments enables them to provide evidence for the assessment of this specific feature. The evaluation must be of the student's own work, not samples downloaded from the Internet. Students demonstrate their understanding by writing about the design principles and process, and how they were used in the development of their final product. Note that, from 2013, the wording of AE2 has been changed to 'Evaluation of text-based products and the design process used'.

During moderation there was evidence that some students had been required to undertake a 'mini' product and documentation task for one or more of the practical skills assessments. This is unnecessary, and places undue stress on students. In demonstrating the evaluation of text-based products against design principles there is no need for students to replicate documentation that will be undertaken in the external assessment.

If students do not have access to borderless printing, there is no need to trim white edges from their work. It is preferable to leave the white edge, as untidy cut edges may detract from the final product. Important information was sometimes trimmed away. If duplex printing is

not available, it is strongly recommended that pages are not glued back to back. It is better to print each page individually or redesign tasks so that duplex printing is not required.

There should be no evidence of scrapbooking (e.g. ribbons, stickers, glitter) in the production of final practical tasks. Final products that are not A4 in size should be cut or folded to the appropriate size (e.g. business cards) and presented in the format that a client would expect. The use of templates and automated publishing software restricted students from achieving the highest level of performance in the understanding and the development and application assessment design criteria.

It is advisable that practical skills tasks based on a geographical location focus on a place that is close to the school, and therefore familiar or accessible to the students. Many voucher books focused on locations about which students had little information or knowledge.

Themes that extend across a number of practical tasks may give students limited opportunities to demonstrate to the A grade level of the performance standards. As an example, students who achieve a C grade for a logo or a banner that will be used in more than one practical task for the particular focus area may be disadvantaged in all the following assessments.

The students of teachers who continued to use past criteria marking sheets instead of the performance standards were disadvantaged as they did not necessarily have opportunities to demonstrate each of the specific features as outlined in the performance standards by the completion of study of the subject.

Students who performed at the higher levels demonstrated an excellent understanding of the appropriate formatting of text in documents such as business letters and business cards. Teachers help to develop these formatting skills by explicitly teaching document set-up to students. This enables students to make the appropriate settings for the product required, instead of taking the default software settings. By doing this, students are able to achieve at the higher level of DA2 (Application of manipulative and organisational skills in the use of information-processing technology).

Students who achieved at the A grade level in development and application manipulated graphics, demonstrating a highly proficient use of software. Students who achieved at this level were given practical tasks that increased in complexity during the year. Students must take care that, when graphics dominate a design, enough room is left for an appropriate amount of text. Limited text may disadvantage a student.

Student work that was presented with the performance standards, showing students' achievement for each task, helped the moderators to understand how the teacher had arrived at an overall assessment for each student in this assessment type. Assessment of each task against the performance standards was also a very good way of giving feedback to students on their level of achievement.

Electronic Publishing

There is a trend in electronic publishing for students to focus on the animation of images without sufficient accompanying text in the final electronic publishing products. Students who did not provide sufficient text were disadvantaged.

Another area of concern was the embedding of html-generated links as seen with You Tube clips. Content should be generated within a site rather than through connectivity to the Internet. Students who achieved at the higher levels in this focus area did not rely on content

created by other online sites, but created their own content, which did not have to be connected to the Internet in order to be viewed.

When teachers are marking student work in Electronic Publishing, file management must be considered. Work-in-progress files, such as Photoshop files, should not be included as they impact on the download time of a site. File names should be in lower case with no spaces; spaces, if needed, are to be indicated with an underscore. All files that are part of the file management of the site are those that are being used in the site, hence work in progress should not be included in the final submission. The file management of the final website should be of a standard that enables it to be uploaded to the Internet, demonstrating good download time, no missing images, and the home page labelled as index (not home).

Design and layout in web design 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 Electronic Publishing.

The creation of e-publications was an area of growth in Electronic Publishing. Unfortunately many students created documents in software such as Adobe Photoshop and inserted them directly into web authoring software. Often text was pixelated and hard to read. Some of the following characteristics of e-publications were not evident in the e-publication and in reality the final product became a Desktop Publishing task inserted into web authoring software:

- 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.

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.

Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis

Written or oral tasks should not exceed the prescribed word count or prescribed time, as content that exceeds the specification is not assessed or moderated. Good task design presented clear opportunities for analysis and evaluation. Tasks that require students to make comparisons that follow through to a recommendation for a particular brand of equipment, such as a printer, offer better opportunities when a price range is stipulated. This enables students to make more appropriate comparisons. It is recommended that general issues are avoided when tasks are designed.

Specific scenarios give better opportunities for students to analyse and evaluate. Students should refer back to the initial scenario in their response, addressing it whenever relevant, and particularly in the conclusion. Moderators were concerned about the number of student responses that included no reference to the original scenario.

The report/oral presentation of students who demonstrated at the A grade level for the understanding and the analysis and evaluation assessment design criteria specifically addressed the specific features. Social, legal, and/or ethical issues should be explicitly mentioned in the body of the report, not just alluded to, or included in the appendices. Social, legal, and/or ethical issues can be addressed in both the issues task and the technical and operational task or in only one of these assessments, depending on the focus of the tasks. It is recommended that any legal implications cited are based on South Australian/Northern Territory law, making the recommendation authentic.

Some teachers are opting for students to undertake two 600-word issues analysis tasks rather than one issues analysis with a maximum of 1200 words. This may disadvantage students as there are not sufficient words to thoroughly analyse and evaluate the issues being investigated. Students are encouraged to clearly display the word count on all assessments for this assessment type.

Comparisons are easier to make if technical specifications are included in a table with analysis and evaluation directly under the table it is related to. It is important that tasks reflect current technologies. For example, asking students to investigate and compare floppy disks with other external storage devices is no longer relevant as this technology is not current.

Appendices are to be labelled and should be referred to in the response. Appendices are placed last in a report, and preceded by a bibliography. A glossary (explanation of technical terms) forms an appendix and is not part of the report. If an appendix, table, or diagram is used, it should be clearly labelled and referred to in the essay/report/presentation.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 3: Product and Documentation

It is recommended that the product and documentation are left until as late as possible in the school year to allow students to develop their practical skills. However, teachers also need to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for students to be successful in the external assessment. In planning, sufficient time should be set aside for this task: a minimum of 6 weeks is recommended. It may be helpful for teachers to create a schedule of due dates for each section of the design process.

For the submission of the product and documentation, printed student materials must be A4 size (refer to the subject operational information on the SACE website). A task sheet included with each individual response enables the external marker to clearly understand what the product should be. It is recommended that students submit their work in a lightweight A4 display folder divided into sections clearly marked: investigating, devising, producing, final product, evaluating, and bibliography. Materials should not be submitted as loose pages or stapled documents.

As there is a substantial amount of handling involved in the marking process for external assessments, it is essential that the school number and the student's SACE registration number are placed on every page of the documentation. As a result of handling, pages may become loose and fall out of folders or plastic pockets. If there is no identification it may be difficult to return work to the correct folders. Nothing in the final documentation should identify the student or the school by name (e.g. photocopies of magazines with the school stamp).

In packaging student work it is important that students complete the external assessment cover sheet (available on the SACE website) and use it as the front cover for the assignment. The focus area of the external assignment must be clearly indicated on this sheet. Individual external assessment sheets showing the class teacher's assessment (i.e. the performance standards shaded to indicate assessments for individual students) and names of students should not be included in the final product. Student folders should be checked before submission to ensure that the teacher's marks sheet is not included. It is highly recommended that every teacher uses the guidelines for marking the external assessment (available on the SACE website).

To help external markers to identify summaries, each part of the documentation should be clearly labelled, including summaries. Successful students clearly displayed the word count in each section of the documentation, after each of the three summaries (investigating, devising, and evaluating). Teachers need to be aware that the total word count for the summaries in the documentation should be a maximum of 1500 words for a 20-credit subject and a maximum of 800 words for a 10-credit subject. Students should be encouraged to evaluate the use and appropriateness of hardware and software used in the devising and the evaluating parts of the documentation.

The approximate word count of the text used in the final product must be clearly identified. This was done successfully by including a word dump of the text in the product in the producing part of the documentation, clearly indicating the word count below. Students who achieved in the higher grade bands adhered closely to the recommended word count for the product. Unfortunately, many products were significantly below the recommended word count. Students should aim to have a final product with approximately 900 words for a 10-credit subject and approximately 1500 words for a 20-credit subject.

Final products that are not A4 in size need to be cut or folded to the size of the product (e.g. business cards). Final products should be presented in the format that a client would expect. Some products such as business cards were far too large to fit into a wallet or purse. Documents that need folding should be folded so that markers can check alignment. It is important for copyright reasons that the names of actual magazines are not used by students for their final product. A fictitious name should be used.

Handwritten annotations in the investigating section of the documentation were at times difficult to read. Students are encouraged to type annotations whenever possible. It is important to emphasise to students that, when annotating samples, they should use the design principles of contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. It was difficult for external markers to follow the use, in annotations, of colour-coded keys representing the four design principles as they continually needed to refer back to the colour key. An alternative system is to place the sample on an A4 page, and write the four design principles, and appropriate annotations for each, directly beneath the image.

Samples that are being annotated in the investigating part must be large enough to enable the external marker to clearly see what the student is referring to. One image per page with annotations is recommended. Samples to be annotated must be appropriate to the genre of the final product and to a school environment.

Most tasks required students to produce multiple pages (magazine cover, contents page, letter to editor, etc.). It is important that samples to be annotated are relevant to the final product. It is strongly recommended that teachers do not give students the samples for annotation. As part of the investigating process, students must find and annotate their own relevant examples. Students who achieved in the higher levels of the performance standards for AE2 gave specific examples of the design principles from the samples. In general it was evident that there was a lack of understanding of proximity. Proximity is more than white

space. Students who achieved in the lower levels of the performance standards did not give specific examples from the samples annotated and it sometimes appeared that annotations had been copied and pasted from one sample to the next.

A detailed design plan should be included in the devising part for each page of the final product. Design plans can be hand drawn or computer generated. Each plan should be A4 size, enabling external markers to check specifications indicated on each plan, and to gain a better understanding of the intended product. It is necessary to produce only one detailed design plan for each page of the final product. The devising part of the design process documentation should include a devising summary, detailed design plans, samples of colour schemes, images to be used, and so on. This part focuses on decisions that the student has made and his or her justification for choosing these elements (e.g. why certain colour schemes have been chosen).

Examples of documentation at the A level included the original images selected and the manipulated image. It is important that teachers encourage students to select high-resolution images to manipulate. This will ensure that the images will be clear and not pixelated once printed. Higher-achieving students also demonstrated an understanding of appropriate terminology, for example, referring to 'images' instead of 'pictures'.

As part of the producing stage students are expected to do print runs of work in progress. The use of sticky notes placed on the work in progress, noting changes in relation to the design principles, is sufficient. A number of students discussed work in progress in relation to the software techniques needed to achieve the final products rather than focusing on changes made in relation to the design principles. It is not necessary to include numerous examples of work in progress; four or five examples are sufficient.

Bibliographies must be formatted correctly, and include the date when websites were accessed. Documentation and final products should be checked for spelling and grammatical errors before submission.

Some students were asked by the teacher to create two or three variations of the same product. This was not of any benefit to the students, and significantly increased their workload.

In assessing specific feature U1, which assesses the selection of appropriate hardware and software, it is important that software is used for its intended purpose (e.g. PowerPoint is a presentation software package and is not recommended for word processing or creating magazine covers).

The Business Documents focus area must reflect material that is acceptable in the business world. The focus is on appropriate layouts and formatting of business documents, including appropriate letter styles, size of fonts, and paper. High-gloss photographic paper is inappropriate for a business letter.

Feedback from a representative of the intended audience should be sought once the product is completed, and included and referred to in the evaluating summary.

In the Electronic Publishing focus area, good file management and a clearly labelled index file enabled the marker to immediately find the website. Untitled pages were an area where students could improve their work. It is recommended that every electronic task has a screen dump of each page under producing in the document folder. This helps the marker to match each student to the correct website and, if the digital work is lost or the school's system goes down, is evidence that the student completed the task. A number of students undertook the production of e-publications. This is a new but growing area. It is recommended that

annotated samples should be of online e-publications, not printed magazines, as the format changes considerably from one medium to the other. Refer to the comments on e-publications in the practical skills section at the beginning of this report.

To help external markers in marking electronic products, teachers should check burnt CDs with student products to ensure that all relevant files have been included. This would provide another check point to ensure the functionality of electronic files.

Electronic content should be created within the website. External sites that generate html links such as You Tube need Internet connectivity. Students should avoid embedding this generated code into their websites as it restricts their ability to demonstrate the application of layout and design principles in the production of text-based products. It is preferable to download and insert content rather than rely on Internet connectivity.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

To help moderators to affirm teachers' grades a teacher's folder containing the following documents should be submitted for the moderation of school assessment materials: a copy of the learning and assessment plan, including a signed addendum indicating any changes; a signed Variations — Moderation Materials form if applicable; and a copy of all tasks for Assessment Types 1 and 2.

For moderation it is advisable for each student to have his or her own A4 display folder containing all work and associated marks sheets with performance standards shaded and a clearly identified grade. Some teachers submitted student work grouped by task instead of by student. It helps moderators to affirm grades if each student's work is placed in an A4 display folder. Student folders should be clearly marked with SACE registration numbers. It is not necessary for a teacher to staple the marks sheet to the practical work as this makes it difficult for the moderator to access work. A labelled CD of student work containing all electronic products should be included if Electronic Publishing is one of the focus areas. This CD should have the student's SACE registration number and school number clearly printed on it.

The selected student samples must be included in the moderation sample. If there is a deviation to this sample, a completed Variations — Moderation Materials form must be included in the teacher's folder to identify the missing assessments, and the reason for their absence.

In helping students to achieve their highest result, teachers should give them task sheets with appropriate instructions, including specifications such as maximum word counts as prescribed in the subject outline.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The use of templates and automated publishing software restricted students in achieving the highest level of performance. Thematic tasks often restricted students' 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 designs are not available in each task.

Assessing student work against criteria sheets that were produced before 2011 is not appropriate as the course has changed considerably. The 2013 performance standards must be used to ensure that students are not disadvantaged, and to ensure that the specific

features indicated on the learning and assessment plan as being assessed against a specific task *are* assessed. It helps students if the performance standards table is attached to the task, and specific features that are not being assessed are shaded, enabling students to see clearly what they *are* being assessed on.

It is important that enhancements are digitally created, enabling students to demonstrate the development and application assessment design criterion within tasks. This is a text-based subject; images are an enhancement and should not compromise the amount of text included in a task. In creating tasks it is important that the subject outline is followed, to ensure that performance standards from the appropriate assessment design criteria are addressed within each assessment type.

The quality and creativity of students' products affirm that, in the second year of the new SACE, teachers have continued to develop resources and inspire a passion for the subject. This report has been prepared in the hope that more students will rise to the A level of the performance standards. Teachers are to be commended for their continual professional development, which they use to help students to move to the higher levels. The hard work and dedication of teachers are evident in the excellent assessment results achieved by students.

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