

Integrated Learning

2009 ASSESSMENT REPORT

Flexible Learning Programs



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

INTEGRATED LEARNING

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Introduction

Integrated Learning has become a popular choice for students seeking alternative ways to complete their SACE.

This year, mostly 2-unit versions of Stage 2 Integrated Learning were undertaken. Over 100 classes were formed in 65 schools, with just under 1000 students achieving a result. Of the two 2-unit versions, the group 2 (mathematics, science, technology) version was by far the most popular choice.

This year, the Integrated Learning support moderation process had greater success with many more teachers seeking information and advice about assessment. It was noted, however, that a significant number of teachers did not take advantage of the support moderation process. Teachers are advised to submit assessment plans and task designs early in the program of work. Feedback will be provided so that adjustments can be made to plans and tasks. Later in the program of work, teachers submit marked student work for feedback on marking standards.

Program Focus

The focus of the programs this year was similar to previous years and provided 'real' learning opportunities for students. Integrated Learning aims to bring together aspects of students' lives to enable them to learn actively, both individually and through collaboration, in a variety of contexts. Many programs were planned to meet the particular needs of a group of students or in some cases a single student.

Examples of 2009 program focuses were:

- school trips and camps (overseas and local)
- career programs (especially in trade areas)
- environmental/conservation programs
- film-making, animation, and digital media projects
- writing and authorship programs (e.g. school year books)
- school and community sporting programs
- community dance competitions and events
- school performing arts events
- school broadcasting programs
- school and local visual arts events
- health and well-being programs (e.g. family services)
- food and hospitality programs
- peer mentoring programs (e.g. maths tutoring in the junior school)
- enterprise programs
- design and construction projects (e.g. boat building)
- driver education programs
- agricultural and aquacultural programs
- cultural programs (e.g. Indigenous).

Many programs this year were designed to offer alternative options for students in particular subject areas.

Subjects adapted or converted into an Integrated Learning subject in 2009 were:

- Physical Education
- Psychology
- Food and Hospitality Studies
- Early Childhood Studies
- Design and Technology
- English Communications
- Languages
- Art
- Outdoor Education
- History
- Drama
- Mathematical Applications
- Music
- Nutrition.

The practice of adapting or converting existing subjects to meet the requirements of Integrated Learning was in some cases completed very early in the year (or planned for in the previous year), and was often a very successful venture.

Students involved in 'conversions' were more successful when they became immersed in the philosophy of Integrated Learning. The use of the Key Area(s) (chosen from Using Knowledge and Making Meaning, Well-being, Analysis and Problem-solving, and Cultural Dimensions), embedded in each assessment task in an obvious way, helped with student transition to a new subject.

This year, a significant number of late 'conversions' took place, some resulting in low student achievement. Changing an enrolment from another subject to Integrated Learning late in a program of work should be considered very carefully. The teacher and students need to be fully cognisant of the nature of the Integrated Learning assessment components, the learning outcomes, the criteria for judging performance, and the assessment processes. Any work previously marked according to the criteria of the original subject needs to be re-marked using the Integrated Learning criteria for judging performance.

Coherent Programs of Work

Students are not required to complete the four assessment components in the order presented in the curriculum statement.

This year, some assessment plans featured a logical sequencing of assessment tasks, which potentially helped students to understand the links between the tasks and to make connections to their lives and learning.

A coherent 2-unit program of work may have three or four Situated Learning Tasks spread throughout the year and delivered between or concurrently with other tasks. Some programs commenced with the Collaborative Activity and Decision-making component, which then informed at least one of the Situated Learning Tasks. Some effectively designed Negotiated Tasks were conceived from student involvement in earlier tasks, and often ran concurrently with other tasks. Most teachers concluded programs with the 'discussion' part of Assessment Component 3: Portfolio and Discussion. The portfolio was maintained throughout the program of work and then used to assist students to verify and illustrate their explanations of learning during the discussion.

Teachers are reminded that 2-unit programs should include six to eight tasks. The Negotiated Task and the Portfolio and Discussion are both designed to be single task

components. This means that a minimum of four tasks need to come from the Situated Learning Task and Collaborative Activity and Decision-making components. It was noted this year that some programs featured two Collaborative Activity and Decision-making tasks which, when presented for final moderation, were in fact two different forms of student evidence of learning for the one task. These programs, therefore, comprised only five tasks which, sometimes, did not constitute a full year's assessment.

Presenting Student Evidence of Learning for Moderation

The task of the Moderation Panel is to validate teacher marking standards consistently and fairly. Moderators need to find evidence of student learning for each of the four assessment components efficiently, in order to complete their task effectively. The increasing number of teachers presenting evidence of each student's learning in a clear and logical manner is appreciated.

Instances of good practice featured all of the following:

- inclusion of a clean copy of the latest version of the assessment plan
- a package for each student in the required sample, which displayed evidence of learning in each of the four components, separated and labelled so that moderators could easily identify evidence for each component
- task designs with completed mark schemes for each task and each student, with comments that addressed the criteria for judging performance or the performance standards to support marks awarded
- labels on items such as student folders or recordings that provided collective evidence of learning, so that individual student contributions and learning were clearly identified.

The Moderation Panel is pleased to report that many teachers were well organised in the way they presented material for moderation. However, the panel appeals to all to thoroughly check their clerical processes to make sure no mistakes are made with each student's final mark. The panel suggests:

- teachers generate mark schemes that are the same as, or can be easily converted to, the component weightings
- teachers double-check the transferral of marks from tasks to component level and then to results sheets
- results sheets include whole marks only and, if working in decimals, round up from 0.5
- teachers double-check calculations when adding component scores to form a mark out of 100, and then reducing to a mark out of 20.

Task Design

Task design is central to the learning and assessment process. An effective task design assists students to meet all criteria for judging performance and consequently to achieve the associated learning outcomes of the subject. A well-constructed task design provides opportunities for students to meet the 'A' qualities indicated on the performance standards.

It was evident this year that when the teacher took the opportunity to seek feedback on task designs from a support moderator, and acted on the feedback provided, student evidence of learning more clearly reflected the criteria for judging performance.

The moderation team agreed that the best task designs this year assisted students to 'unpack' criteria related to higher order thinking skills and were closely related to the performance standard indicators. Teachers, however, should be wary of providing subtitles for students to write to or talk about which directly reflect the names of criteria. While this practice ensures that all criteria for a component are addressed, it could lead

to 'formula-driven' outcomes for students which may inhibit student individuality and quest for the highest achievement possible.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 1: SITUATED LEARNING TASK

In many cases, the materials presented at moderation for this component showed that students both enjoyed and appreciated the practical and real-life aspects of the designed tasks.

Approximately one third of programs this year focused on physical education or sport and students were often guided through three situated learning tasks all based on different sports or physical activities. It was noted that approved Physical Education practical checklists were again used as evidence of student learning with little or no reference, sometimes, to Integrated Learning assessment criteria. Teachers are reminded that such checklists do need to be adapted to suit the criteria of *quality of outcome; knowledge, skills, and understanding; and analysis and application*. Checklists and competency-based assessment and certification were also used as evidence in other focus areas, including food and hospitality, and the trades.

Skills checklists and certification should not be used as evidence in isolation. The moderation team encourages the use of student written or oral (recorded) analysis of students' skills, knowledge and understanding and how they applied this to the real-life situation. Some students did provide quite extensive journals, logs or detailed reflective pieces of writing as evidence. The Moderation Panel believes that some shorter written or recorded oral comments which address the *analysis and application* criterion are more appropriate, reserving continuing journal/log entries for evidence of progress and processes in learning for the Portfolio and Discussion task.

Students provided evidence of their learning in a range of forms to address the criteria for judging performance. Methods included:

- the use of photographs, supported by annotations
- some audiovisual recordings
- photographs of created products
- publications presented in their original form
- feedback from tutors, mentors or community members.

The Moderation Panel had difficulty validating teacher marks for some classes that did not provide any evidence of learning for the Situated Learning Task.

The most successful students, regardless of the focus of the program, were those who provided authentic evidence of practical involvement, accompanied with some recorded or written information which explained their contribution to the task, their application of the skills, knowledge and understanding, and an analysis of their learning.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 2: COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY AND DECISION-MAKING

This component is designed to assess each student's ability to work collaboratively and make decisions in a team situation, and to reflect on and evaluate collaborative processes and outcomes.

Some programs used the Collaborative Activity and Decision-making task to plan, monitor and evaluate one or more of the Situated Learning Tasks.

This year, minutes of meetings proved a popular method of providing evidence of learning for groups of students. The more successful students provided copies of minutes with highlighted indications of their contributions and detailed answers to questions provided by teachers which directly addressed the performance standards.

Some teachers designed performance checklists which featured the *collaboration* and *decision-making* criteria. These checklists provided useful evidence for the moderation team. Other teachers encouraged students to write journals or reflective pieces relating to meetings, discussions and events. This was an effective form of evidence if the questions addressed in the journals/reflective writing related to the criteria for judging performance. The most successful students provided both teacher checklists and their own evidence of collaboration and decision-making.

This year, students were more successful in providing evidence of the *reflection and evaluation*. Many students understood the importance of process above product for this component criteria. While some students still over-used recount to describe events and accomplishments, this was often concluded with useful evaluative comments about team processes. Some students evaluated personal accomplishments and skills gained and excluded team processes and outcomes. As a result, these students were not so successful in meeting the criterion.

A small number of classes were involved in providing peer assessments for others in their group to assist in providing evidence of collaboration skills. Teachers should consider using this practice as an additional tool for providing authentic evidence.

Some highly successful students were able to establish understanding of collaborative learning in theory, apply this to their practical experiences, and then reflect on the process of applying theory to practice.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 3: PORTFOLIO AND DISCUSSION

The concept of a round-table discussion in which students respond to questions from the teacher and use their portfolios to help inform and verify their responses is now generally well understood. Some teachers still incorrectly interpret 'discussion' to mean a written discussion of the students' learning journey.

Task designs should make the purpose and contents of the portfolio very clear. This year, there were still many instances of the portfolio being interpreted as purely a collection of material resulting from the Situated Learning Task, Collaborative Activity and Decision-making and the Negotiated Task. This meant that teachers and students were expecting additional marks for already marked work.

The interpretation of what should be included in portfolios is still unclear to some teachers and students.

This year the best portfolios included all of the following:

- formative work students completed that prepared them for, or led up to, summative tasks
- collections of materials (e.g. downloads, brochures, flyers, observational notes, plans and ideas, annotated photographs, newspaper articles) which were additional to the evidence required for the other assessment components. In some cases, teachers set students a small focused research task as part of the portfolio. By adding another learning context, students were able to consider a new dimension to their learning experiences
- materials with annotated evaluative comments from students

- journal type reflective entries which record both process and progress, including problems and their solutions, throughout the program of work.

The curriculum statement says 'In developing the portfolio, students should reflect on the program and include materials that demonstrate significant personal learning'. This year, some portfolios comprised only a focused research task and, while this was often completed successfully by students, not all criteria were fully addressed.

Evidence of discussions was provided in one of two ways: audiovisual recordings, often with good quality sound and vision; or on the discussion skills teacher checklist provided by the support moderation team.

It was pleasing to see far more audiovisual recordings well managed by teachers, with students clearly identified and good use of microphones to ensure clarity of sound.

Questioning techniques by teachers varied. The most successful students tended to be asked open questions that enabled them to critically reflect on their learning in specific areas of the program and on their understanding of their learning, both as an individual and as part of a team. These students often referred to their portfolios to back up what they were saying.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 4: NEGOTIATED TASK

The Negotiated Task component was a significant and sometimes defining part of the program for some students but, for others, it appeared to be simply another task that had to be completed towards the end of the program.

The moderation team would like to remind teachers that the curriculum statement describes the Negotiated Task as an individual task with 30% weighting. Students should negotiate the topic and/or the style of task and the method of presenting the outcome. Many students provided very little evidence of time and investment in an area of interest for them or of meeting all criteria. The criteria of *connectedness* and *self-awareness* were often disregarded by students. In some cases, students researched material or conducted practical approaches to learning, which resulted in demonstrating high levels of *quality of outcome*, yet *connectedness* and/or *self-awareness* were not implicit or explained.

This was particularly evident in some programs of work which were 'conversions' from other subjects. When an investigation or a practical task from another subject is used as the Negotiated Task, it is vital that teachers adapt or add to the task to ensure all four Integrated Learning criteria are explicitly addressed by students.

Some students provided an introduction for their Negotiated Task which helped the moderation team understand the starting points of the student so that *growth in learning* could be assessed. Students who negotiated the method of presentation that best demonstrated their learning often met the *quality of outcome* and *self-awareness* criteria well.

The most successful students were those who:

- negotiated a task that was either practical or research-based (or both) and which reflected an interest area connected to other parts of the course and/or their lives
- were often working on the Negotiated Task concurrently with other tasks
- were well informed and monitored by their teachers, who provided a structure for the task which allowed students to branch out into their preferred areas of interest but which explicitly addressed the criteria for judging performance

- were able to demonstrate their growth in learning either by providing information about their starting points in knowledge, understanding and skills, or by providing evidence of a particularly significant final outcome
- provided evidence of products, publication, events, or significant outcomes that were a result of their efforts. These helped to address the criteria of *quality of outcome* and *growth in learning* that written papers could not always provide
- produced a conclusion (written or recorded oral) and/or a folio showing the process and drafts of work, which helped to address, in particular, the criteria of *connectedness* and *self-awareness*.

The highly successful students were able to benefit from good task design by the teacher as this provided a sound basis from which to work. These students then often deviated from the directions provided by the teacher and were able to achieve interpretations of the learning outcomes that were unique to them. Their work demonstrated understanding of themselves as learners and this was articulated in depth. These students also demonstrated their understanding of the significance of their achievements in the Negotiated Task and how these achievements connected with other aspects of the program of work and affected their lives, their culture, and their future.

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