

Integrated Learning

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
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INTEGRATED LEARNING

2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessor's 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.

The flexibility of the Integrated Learning subject outline enabled schools to cover a wide range of topics within the key areas of study. Much of the evidence provided indicated that students enjoyed this diversity. Topics included art, photography, food preparation, marine biology, environmental activities, agricultural activities, various sports, fitness, nutrition, and religion. Other activities which provided a focus for programs were volunteering with charity groups, organising events, developing appropriate career skills, electronic skills, child rearing activities and welfare.

All SACE subjects are required to guide students to develop their capabilities in Citizenship, Communication, Learning, Personal Development and Work. However, Integrated Learning is one of the few subjects which requires students to choose one, two or more of these as key areas of study. Not all courses incorporated this aspect sufficiently and consequently disadvantaged some students. As the students were required to provide evidence of their understanding and development in the chosen capability, if the tasks set for them did not address this aspect of the course they were not able to provide evidence to meet the relevant performance standards to a high level.

SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT

The school assessment component is subject to a moderation process.

Assessment Type 1: Practical

In general, the practical section of the course was done well and evidence from students indicated that they enjoyed these activities. Most schools usually undertook three practical tasks for a 20-credit course and one task for a 10-credit course.

This assessment type requires students to provide evidence for four of the assessment design criteria. In general, the specific features relating to 'application' were well addressed, with students providing a wide range of evidence demonstrating the development and application of knowledge, concepts, and skills in the focus area. This took a variety of forms including written, oral, and multimedia. Teachers should make students aware that any photographs they use as evidence need to be annotated; similarly, if they are using video, it needs to be accompanied by a commentary or supplementary notes.

Tasks that were designed to include opportunities for students to investigate and analyse provided a solid framework through which students could give evidence of their learning to a high level.

Most students answered the 'reflection and evaluation' criterion in the form of journals or by responding to a specific reflection task. Students using journals need to ensure that their comments address the relevant specific features, rather than just recall events. Teachers and students should be aware that students need to undertake peer- and self-assessment to meet the criteria.

Generally, students met the 'understanding' criterion well when tasks were structured in a way that showed they had the relevant capabilities. However, if the capabilities were not addressed, it was difficult for moderators to support the teacher's assessment decision and this often meant a lowering of the grade level.

For the many schools with a sports or physical education focus for this subject, it was important that teachers and students ensured there was sufficient student evidence of achievement in line with the Integrated Learning performance standards. Some schools were using teacher checklists from other subjects which had completely different assessment design criteria; consequently, they could not get the appropriate evidence to meet the required standards. This also applies if students are studying an external or online course as a practical activity. Teachers need to check that the evidence provided is addressing the specific features for Integrated Learning and is also assessed by the appropriate teacher from the school.

Students who were most successful in the practical activity provided individual evidence of their development and ability to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills in their focus area. This was then verified, analysed and supported by a variety of evidence from different sources. Additionally, students who were most successful were able to reflect on and evaluate their learning, using feedback from a number of sources, as well as comment on the effectiveness of their practical and relate it to an understanding of their chosen capabilities.

Assessment Type 2: Group Activity

This assessment type is designed to assess each student's ability to work collaboratively in a group to plan, organise, and implement a practical and/or theoretical task or project. There must be opportunities for all students to collaborate in the decision-making process and to share responsibilities in the planning, organising, and running of an activity. Students should also have the opportunity to participate in peer- and self-assessment.

Students are required to provide individual evidence of their involvement in the group activity, and of their contribution to any final product. This aspect of reporting could be simplified if, during the planning stage, each student is made responsible for one aspect or section of the product. Successful students included a written individual reflection outlining their participation and contribution to both the planning and the running of the activity.

Many schools offering the 20-credit course offered two group activities, whereas for the 10-credit course they offered only one. When students had a wide range of activities to choose from, it gave them the opportunity to take skills and knowledge

learnt from their practical tasks to provide a service or activity to others with great success.

As with the individual practical, students met the 'application' criterion well, and were able to provide evidence of successful activities where they had applied the skills, concepts and knowledge developed during their group practical.

Students who achieved to a higher standard were able to demonstrate their investigative and analytical skills by learning all they could about the group or organisation. This included investigating and analysing issues such as team work, the ways in which people learn, behaviour management, communication, public-speaking skills, teaching skills, and coaching skills. Teachers need to make sure that the criterion of 'investigation and analysis' is incorporated into the task design and into students' evidence of learning.

Of all the criteria, the evidence for students' 'communication and collaboration' skills was the least convincing. Although students had obviously developed these skills in order to implement the activities, many found it difficult to demonstrate how well this had been achieved. The group activity provides a perfect opportunity for peer- and self-assessment; students can provide evidence about their planning and decision-making during the task and show how well they cooperated with each other. Teachers need to ensure when they assess students that they provide evidence as to how the grade was awarded and why, to support any student evidence supplied.

Those students who met the 'evaluation and reflection' criterion to the highest level tended to provide evidence of a number of factors: by summarising their planning process, describing their activity and its effectiveness, and outlining their individual contribution to the group activity. They also provided their response to the peer assessment and any lessons learned for future reference. Many students were able to include and comment on feedback received from the community with whom they were involved.

Assessment Type 3: Folio and Discussion

The folio and discussion are assessed together, so students need to make sure that their portfolio supports the information they give in the discussion. Schools who developed a task to guide students as to what they should include in the folio and focus on during the discussion generally achieved success; this helped students to demonstrate the depth and extent of their learning. The majority of schools offering either 10-credit or 20-credit courses provided one assessment for this assessment type.

Good roundtable discussions allowed students to show how well their communication skills had developed and describe their collaborative work with others. The discussion was also an opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding and development in the chosen capabilities, particularly where evidence had been limited in the folio.

In developing the folio, teachers should encourage students to select work which best shows the development of their learning; this can include formative work from the other three assessment types, and refer to other tasks, but the evidence provided for other assessment types cannot be re-submitted.

Evidence of the discussion needs to be submitted for moderation, usually through a recording or video. Teachers should ensure that they meet the SACE requirements for submitting electronic files so that recordings are accessible and moderators can find and select students quickly. Some schools addressed this issue in recordings by a visual prompt of the student's name or an oral one where the student identified themselves.

Students are allowed up to a maximum of 10 minutes for the discussion, and those schools that grouped four or five students together and gave each an appropriate amount of air-time generally gave students the best chance of success. Those who just read a prepared statement — or gave a presentation rather than taking part in a conversation with their teacher — generally did not address the criteria to the required depth. Those teachers who asked open-ended questions in the discussion gave students an opportunity to show their depth of understanding. Unfortunately, there were still a few schools that did not provide evidence of the student discussions which made it difficult for moderators to support the teacher's assessment decision. This often meant a lowering of the grade level.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Project

The external assessment was an opportunity for students to explore an aspect of the program and/or capability relating to the overall Integrated Learning focus, and to understand the connections between the program focus and the capability. Students completed tasks covering a wide range of topics including agriculture, volunteering, work, sport, religion, information technology and ethics. When students were given opportunities to complete highly personalised and individual responses, performance standards were often met to a high standard.

As with the other assessment types, when students were asked to show their ability to apply their knowledge they usually did so successfully. A well-designed and well-formulated guiding question allowed students to show clearly how they had developed and applied their skills. Those tasks that encouraged students to connect an area of research with personal knowledge for a specific purpose often meant that they achieved to a high standard; for example, using technology to design a website or create animation. In these cases, diagrams or photographs supported by a written description of the student's process of learning and developing understanding usually led to success.

To show their investigative and analytical skills, when students were able to include both primary and secondary sources they could show a more thorough investigation than information based solely on internet research. This included speaking to community members and completing interviews or surveys which were then combined with internet research. Bibliographies are recommended as a way of encouraging students both to use a variety of sources and to confirm their validity. The analysis of concepts, ideas and skill development from different perspectives again posed problems for some students. Those who completed volunteering, ethics, or training programs often had the opportunity to look at different perspectives in depth; for example, analysing the need for training programs to be developed for a range of ages, and for varying levels of health and skill.

When tasks were well-structured, they allowed students to show their ability to communicate ideas successfully and provide informed opinions. However, if students

were not encouraged to do more than recount their personal experiences, they did not usually give enough breadth and depth of thought or ideas to achieve to a high standard.

An important aspect of the course is for students to understand and explain the connections between the program focus and the capability in each chosen key area; for example, to show the link between study skills and the capability for learning. Some students did this well; however, the majority either did not address their capability, or did so to only a competent level. To meet performance standards to a high level, it is recommended that students present the project in two parts: a project outcome and an explanation of the connections between program and capability. It is critical that students show a clear understanding of their chosen capabilities and how they connected with their task. Well-designed task sheets are vital to ensure student understanding and development of capabilities.

Teachers should also ensure that students adhere to word limits and time restrictions.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Schools were allowed to reuse learning and assessment plans which had been approved last year this year with any alterations being noted in the addendum. Despite this, many schools still submitted new plans. When preparing their plans, teachers should keep in mind the following issues:

- ensure that the key areas of study are identified and clearly stated
- clarify which tasks in the practical and group activity will give students opportunities for peer- and self-assessment
- indicate clearly what students need to include as evidence for each assessment type, so evidence is not duplicated
- give a clear focus for the folio and discussion, so students know how they will be assessed
- indicate that there will be a group discussion and how student evidence will be provided
- assess the folio and discussion as a single task, not split into two
- ensure that the chosen capabilities are addressed in the tasks which assess understanding
- refer to the subject outline to ensure that the tasks in each assessment type address the appropriate assessment design criteria across the range of tasks.

2012 was the first year that the subject outline and operational information was available only on the SACE website and not delivered to schools in hard copy. Some teachers were not aware of this until later in the year; it is essential that all teachers have this information so that they use the most up-to-date version of the subject outline as their teaching reference. The website gives the relevant information for the subject and incorporates all the key dates for the year. It also supplies information about assessment plans, preparing, collecting and submitting the materials for moderation and the external assessment component.

When packaging the materials for moderation, teachers need to ensure they follow the correct processes. Teachers should include the approved assessment plan — with an addendum if any changes have been made since the plan was approved — a complete set of tasks, the complete set of work for the selected students in the sample, and the 'Variations – Moderation Materials' form if any work is missing. Many

schools omitted this form, so it was assumed that if work was missing then it had not been attempted, which was not always the case. Each student's work is to be packaged in a clear plastic bag, with tasks grouped together by assessment type. There should be some indication as to how the final grade level for each of the assessment types has been awarded. Moderators appreciated schools that included performance standards indicating the grade for the relevant specific features being assessed.

It is essential that all schools abide by the requirements for submitting electronic materials for moderation and reference the information sheet so that they are provided in an accessible format. Teachers should follow the guidelines regarding the labelling of student materials for the project, which are different from the presentation for other assessment types.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The number of schools offering Integrated Learning increased in 2012, as did the number of students studying the subject. In fact, 374 students in 28 classes from 12 schools studied the 10-credit course, while 1468 students in 168 classes from 94 schools studied the 20-credit option. Several schools had multiple classes of the same course, while many other schools offered the course more than once but had a different focus. The subject outline for Integrated Learning has proven to be quite flexible and allowed a range of different emphases, although a significant number of schools are using a sports/physical education focus. The practical application and group activity are ideal for a variety of topics, and the structure of the subject suits the preferred learning style of many students.

Several schools had contacted the SACE Board and requested that students be able to study up to 40 credits of Integrated Learning as is available in some other subjects. This has been approved and details are available on the SACE Board website for commencement in 2013, although only 20 credits can be used towards the ATAR.

In conclusion, Integrated Learning has proved to be a very versatile and flexible option for many schools and students. Providing the tasks are well-designed so that students are very clear about the evidence they need to provide to address the performance standards to the highest level, the possibilities for this subject are endless.

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Chief Assessor