

Language and Culture

2012 Chief Assessor's Report



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LANGUAGE AND CULTURE 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.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Text Analysis

For this assessment type students are required to respond to texts in the target language. The responses can be in English, the target language or a combination of the two and require students to analyse linguistic, cultural, and stylistic features, interpret meaning, and reflect on the ways in which culture is created, expressed, and communicated.

Well-designed tasks allow students to focus on demonstrating their *Knowledge and Understanding* in one task and *Analysis and Reflection* in the second. In general tasks are designed well, however text selection is critical to student achievement at the higher levels.

Well-selected texts allow students to discuss language and culture in different contexts and provide opportunities to explain the development of the target language. Students who achieve at the higher levels are able to consider the audience, compare and contrast the language used in the texts and analyse some of the global influences on the language.

Tasks that solely seek responses from students to interpret and explain meaning in the text limit students' opportunity for success. This often results in basic translation/comprehension responses that restrict evidence of student learning against the performance standards.

The more successful responses are to topics that are challenging, engaging and relevant to student interests. For example, culturally specific traditions are popular, such as marriage, faith, food and music and allow students to reflect on the ways culture is created and expressed in texts and also contrast how these traditions develop in a personal and/or Australian context.

Assessment Type 2: Interaction

For this assessment type students are required to interact with others to exchange information, ideas, opinions, and/or experiences in the target language in spoken form. Interacting, asking and responding to questions in English are not permitted in the specifications of the subject outline for this assessment type.

Student evidence of learning can be presented in a variety of forms including conversations, discussions, interviews and giving presentations. However, all successful assessments have a specific context, purpose and audience.

Students are able to demonstrate their full range and accuracy of expression when given the opportunity to interact both informally, for example when interviewing a community member, and also formally when presenting to the class. Strategic and targeted questions by the teacher can support some of the students to demonstrate their ideas and expression and this strategy is encouraged.

Successful responses discuss issues that allow opportunities for depth of discussion and elicit responses that have a level of complexity. In these cases students can gather a range of information on their issue and provide opinions that are supported by some research (both primary and secondary).

Students are limited by interaction tasks that require them to only discuss themselves and their family. Similarly, students are restricted from demonstrating evidence of the assessment design criteria at the higher level when their responses lack evidence of research and discussions remain on topics that are basic and familiar.

Assessment Type 3: Text Production

For this assessment type students are required to create written texts in the target language in which they express information, ideas, opinions, and/or experiences. Creating written texts in English is not permitted in the specification of the subject outline for this assessment type.

There is opportunity to produce a wide variety of text types including articles, brochures, diary entries, essays, letters, and short stories. Students generally perform quite strongly in this assessment type and when given the opportunity are able to demonstrate their range of production skills in a variety of writing styles. The most popular forms are formal letters, newspaper articles and information pieces. Some of the more complex issues addressed by students may include topics such as the role of women, immigration and the impact of tourism.

High achieving students are able to explore in some depth these issues and also demonstrate insightful understanding of how these issues are connected in different contexts (such as the target culture and Australian culture).

Some students take advantage of the flexibility to be able to submit a number of shorter pieces as one of their assessment tasks (such as a series of letters or a number of short articles on the same topic) and moderators encourage this option if it suits the nature of the learning program.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Investigation

The external assessment requires students to write a report in English on their investigation, reflecting on their experience and interview findings in terms of their insights into linguistic and cultural identity.

A breadth of topics may be covered; however it is advisable that students are given the opportunity to pursue areas of individual interest. Some of the topics for investigation may include cultural wedding ceremonies, the changing nature of family relationships, gender and cultural identity and the impact of immigration on values and customs across generations.

Successful students are able to incorporate evidence from a range of sources in their research, to explore how people move between languages and cultures, and also discuss their own perspective of their chosen issue in an Australian context. It is important to have a high level of community interaction involved in the investigation with a good balance of formal interviews, informal observation and participation in community events.

In general, students who do not demonstrate evidence against the higher performance standards tend to make observations and conclusions that are not supported by evidence from their research. In some case students have a substantial bibliography, but fail to make any reference to these sources to support arguments in the body of their investigation. Other investigations lack reflection and allow the research to stand alone rather than supporting the information with some reflection on personal values and sense of identity.

Teachers are advised to carefully consider which of the specific features from the Knowledge and Understanding assessment design criteria they select for assessment. The subject outline specifies that for Assessment Type 4: Investigation, teachers must include at least one of KU1, KU2, and KU3 with the other criteria specified to be assessed. Each of the three specific features has a different focus and teachers are advised to select the specific feature/s that best suit the task design.

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