

Women's Studies

2010 ASSESSMENT REPORT

Society and Environment Learning Area



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

WOMEN'S STUDIES

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GENERAL COMMENTS

Women's Studies saw an increase in the number of students this year. This included a number of male students who performed well in both assessment components.

The submitted work demonstrates that students enjoy the broad choices offered by the curriculum statement and that they engage with the subject as it has relevance to their lives. The growth in students' knowledge and understanding over the year is evident in the excellent quality of the work produced.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 1: COURSE WORK

The moderation of the course work component highlighted the interesting range of assessment tasks available to students. It was pleasing to see opportunities for students to select from a range of topics and assessment options, allowing students to focus on areas of personal interest and areas of strength.

It is important that teachers do not attempt to cover too many criteria in a single task, as this makes it difficult for students to provide evidence within the word-count or time limit dictated by the task. Students perform best when tasks are closely linked to the criteria for assessment and include key directing words from the clarifying questions so that students frame their responses according to the criteria. It is also important that students receive a breakdown of marks for assessment tasks so that they know not only the weighting of the task, but the marks allocated to the criteria.

Although it is pleasing to see the provision of choice for students, tasks with very broad parameters require skilful scaffolding to ensure that the choice made by the student allows them to meet the demands of the assessment criteria. Tasks should not limit students and should allow them to demonstrate their skills and understandings at the highest level. Where students are provided with the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding in an imaginative task, it is important that sources be acknowledged and that the links to the criteria for assessment are very clear. Although many students were provided with a range of assessment options, few chose to demonstrate their understanding through oral examination or in multimodal form.

There was improvement in the acknowledgement of sources, with relevant and consistent referencing applied by most students. There was also more evidence of the assured use of the language of the subject and the tools of gender analysis.

Although most students avoided narrative responses to tasks, this was not always the case and there were several biographies of pure narrative that led students away from the gender analysis required to address the criteria for assessment of the particular task.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT 2: ISSUES ANALYSIS

Students' performance in the issues analysis reflects their understanding of all learning outcomes and their ability to apply the tools of gender analysis to their chosen topic. It was very pleasing to see a wide range of interesting topics from the personal to the political — from menstruation to Julia Gillard — and some interesting analyses of the experiences of refugee women.

Topic selection and the development of a question or proposal are vitally important in empowering the student to use the tools of gender analysis to identify the women's issues within the topic. Some topic wordings lead the students away from gender analysis into a health or sociological analysis, resulting in essays that do not address the criteria for assessment and are narrative in form or lacking in analysis. Such was the case this year with some investigations on topics such as body image, eating disorders, and female genital mutilation. It is imperative that students use the tools of gender analysis to identify the women's issues within the topic. For example, the topic 'Anorexics are empowered by the media's construction of femininity' directs the student to analysis, whereas 'The impact of anorexia' may lead the student towards a narrative. Students need to seek guidance from their teacher in the choice and development of their topic.

It was pleasing to see some very well-researched investigations making reference to a wide range of resources and identifying a range of perspectives linked to the issue. Markers noted that some research lacked depth and variety in the selection of resources, with students relying on one or two resources. Students need to be guided in the selection and evaluation of appropriate resources to ensure that they explore a range of perspectives. It was pleasing to see evidence of good use of primary sources, such as interviews and surveys, that provided valuable insights and the perspectives of women on key issues supporting the student's argument. This was particularly useful in providing evidence and examples to explain the diversity of women's experiences and the ideas and perspectives of women. Markers also commented that some students made little or no reference to feminist sources in their discussions, which highlights the fact that they may need teacher guidance in the identification and selection of feminist resources.

Markers commented that there were many excellent issues analyses which demonstrated high levels of knowledge and analysis. Students who performed well against these criteria applied selected tools of gender analysis in a highly skilled manner. There was a tendency among the less successful students to make generalisations and unsubstantiated comments. Students need to ensure that their argument is supported by carefully selected evidence. On the other hand, some students overused quotations to the point where there was little analysis in their own words. Descriptive approaches leave little room for analysis, and students who engage in too much narrative find it difficult to gain high achievement against the knowledge and analysis criteria. Such approaches are often the result of an inappropriate choice of topic or the lack of clear identification of the women's issues within a topic. Students need to analyse and use the language of gender analysis to develop their investigation. The diversity of women's experiences and the ideas and perspectives of women were two areas in which some students lacked sufficient evidence.

It was pleasing to see many students performing well against the communication criteria. Most essays were clear and concise, with evidence of careful editing. Although most students applied a referencing system and included a bibliography, many students struggled with in-text referencing, suggesting that they require more guidance and instruction in this area.

Chief Assessor
Women's Studies