

Women's Studies

2013 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

WOMEN'S STUDIES

2013 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

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

There was a decrease in student numbers in Women's Studies this year. However, on the whole, the standard of work in all the assessment types was very good and a wide range of topics and issues were covered. Most students incorporated the language of gender in their work and demonstrated a sound understanding of gender construction across time, cultures, and contexts. Most students took an analytical approach, rather than a narrative one.

The design of tasks is extremely important and must allow students to achieve at an A level in the performance standards. As in previous years, this was a concern in all assessment types. Teachers need to set tasks that enable students to meet the assessment design criteria and the specific features to be assessed, supported by detailed scaffolding. Best-practice task designs allowed for analysis and evaluation, not just description.

Specific features IE2, from the investigation and evaluation assessment design criterion, and GA3, from the gender analysis assessment design criterion, were commonly misinterpreted or marked generously. Although most task sheets were well constructed, it would have been helpful to see more feedback from teachers to students on their achievement in specific features.

Word count issues were a concern in all assessment types. Students and teachers must be aware of the SACE word count policy and students' tasks must not exceed the maximum length specified in the subject outline. The word count should be stated on the assignment and students should put the word count on each task. Words over the limit cannot be included in the assessment of the task.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Text Analysis

Teachers set a wide range of engaging and challenging tasks. They included an analysis of various text types — film, print media, lyrics, fairy stories, art, anime, and video games. These readily allowed for an analysis of gender bias and stereotyping. Text analysis tasks on films and music clips were well structured and offered diverse opportunities for students to engage with the texts. Furthermore, some assignments allowed for student choice in both texts and presentation. This approach generally produced a higher standard of work. Students must be encouraged to focus on a range/diversity of women. The better students explicitly incorporated the construction

of gender in the context of the texts studied and analysed gender relations and the power imbalance presented.

Teachers are reminded that the word count and the number of tasks for this assessment type changed in 2013. The text analysis is now one task of 2000 words (if written) or two tasks, each of 1000 words (if written).

Assessment Type 2: Essay

Variation in the quality of students' essays was evident. Tasks that did not support an argumentative piece limited the opportunity for students to develop skills in the genre of persuasive writing, and often resulted in students writing narratives. A focused question that gives scope for analysis and strong viewpoints allows students to better meet the performance standards at an A level. Specific teaching of persuasive techniques would help students learn how to meet the performance standards at the highest level.

Most students acknowledged their sources and used clear communication and appropriate forms. Social, cultural, and economic practices were popular issues in generally well-written essays. The use of individual women's accounts, followed by analysis, allowed students to address the diversity of women's experiences and the various ways in which they were disempowered.

Assessment Type 3: Folio

The range of tasks and topics in the folio were diverse and catered for varying student interests; this clearly helped to involve them on a number of levels. It was clear that students were personally challenged and engaged by issues involving women in different cultures, times, and contexts, or issues they could relate to.

Many students again struggled with specific feature IE2. Students must evaluate strategies for empowerment by analysing the strategies and actions, successes or failures, in both the short term and the long term, rather than simply state what they were.

Tasks included oral/multimedia presentations, newspaper articles, reports on excursions, short-answer questions on articles, and biographical speeches of women who had made a difference in the society in which they lived.

Once completed, all three tasks should be assessed together against the performance standards, to derive an overall grade level for the folio.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Issues Analysis

Students chose a wide range of interesting and challenging issues to explore and analyse. Topics included: female jockeys with primary sources used to support the comments; female boxers; the concept of curative rape or correctional rape; African women in Australia as victims of domestic violence; Julia Gillard and misogyny; cultural sensitivity and genital mutilation; informative studies on the rape of lesbian women in South Africa; and various body modifications across time, cultures, and contexts.

The standard of this task was very mixed and at times seemed to reflect the teachers skill in directing and supporting students as they developed a framework for the analysis. As a result, there were some excellent groups of essays as well as some less successful ones. Studies that began with a challenging statement to contest and argue against often produced excellent work. The poorest studies consisted of general description with no real interrogation of gender, gender relations, or gender diversity.

Some studies used the formulaic society and culture approach. It was pleasing that some students transferred skills incorporating surveys and interviews into their issues analysis, although gender analysis was sometimes lacking. At best, this use of primary sources added a rich dimension, for example, interviewing Islamic women about identity and gender relations. Some students used the personal voice and, when done well, this was as effective as the third-person point of view.

The importance of the question or statement that demands gender analysis cannot be stressed enough. The use of the language of gender in the wording of the question and a discussion with each student on possible sub-questions for each paragraph can help to structure the work and keep the student focused on the issue from a gender perspective. For example, the statement, 'The systematic sexual assault and disempowerment of lesbian women in South Africa represents patriarchal values which undermine the country's progressive legislation aimed at ending discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation' allowed analysis and provocative study on every level. Some studies, where the main focus was on psychological and hormonal studies, did not allow for a deep enough gender analysis, with little or no investigation of gender implications.

It is important that teachers note changes in the specific features relevant to the assessment types, as some students addressed specific features that are no longer required. Teachers should refer to the subject operational information on the Women's Studies minisite for a listing of the specific features currently assessed in the issues analysis. An over reliance on Wikipedia was evident in many students' work and few used feminist texts. The use of appendices is discouraged as these words add nothing to the word count and are not assessed.

Overall, the issues analyses were well written and referenced, with detailed bibliographies and/or reference lists.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Materials submitted for moderation must be labelled clearly. The assessment type, task sheet, word count, and student SACE registration number must be included. Teachers should take care to be consistent in giving the same grade on the student's work as that recorded on the SACE results sheet; as it is the grade on the results sheet that is used in moderation.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Overall, the standard of work displayed by students showed empathy and understanding of a diverse range of women's experiences across time, culture, and contexts. All assessment types were generally well written, coherent, and fluent. An analytical approach rather than a narrative one resulted in the performance standards being achieved at a much higher level. Those assignments that were supported by scaffolding and directly addressed the relevant specific features also resulted in higher levels of achievement.

Women's Studies
Chief Assessor