

Workplace Practices

2013 Chief Assessor's Report



Government
of South Australia

SACE
Board of SA

WORKPLACE PRACTICES

2012 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.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

In 2013, the school assessment component was subject to a moderation process. The moderation team noted a number of variations to the submission requirements. These included:

- The omission of an approved Learning and Assessment Plan (LAP) from the packaged sample of student work. A number of LAPs were approved subject to changes, but in many cases these changes had not been made. For some classes this meant the application of the wrong assessment design criteria for a particular section or an inappropriate number of assessment tasks – particularly for the performance and reflection assessment types. It is important that any changes to approved LAPs are noted on the addendum sheet.
- A lack of supporting evidence to allow for confirmation of teacher assessment decisions. This evidence included task sheets that provided clear advice to students and clearly articulated which of the assessment design criteria was being assessed. When teacher feedback to students was included, the process of confirming student grades was made far easier.
- Student work missing without the use of the 'Variations – Moderation Materials' form. When work is missing from the student sample with no valid reason, moderators must assume that the work was not completed and adjust assessment decisions accordingly.
- Student work that was assessed using a numerical system rather than the performance standards. It is important that student work for all three assessment types is graded according to the applicable performance standards.
- A number of task sheets included criteria developed by the teacher, or from an old Vocational Studies course. As this did not align with the Workplace Practices performance standards the tasks did not provide students the opportunity to achieve to a satisfactory or higher level.

Assessment Type 1: Folio

There was significant scope in the tasks developed for the folio, and most were derived from the topics described in the subject outline. Many teachers had utilised the task exemplars provided on the SACE minisite and often these had been adapted to the school context. Where the topics from the subject outline (e.g. Area of Study 1, Topic 4: Finding Employment) were used and named accordingly, moderators were able to confirm results more readily.

Some negotiated topics allowed students to address local issues of significance and their own industry specific knowledge. It is important that these topics are significantly different to those listed in the subject outline, and that the topics are assessed against the appropriate assessment design criteria.

The assessment design criterion Application is not specified by the subject outline for folio tasks. Teachers are reminded that it is preferable to focus on the three specified criteria (Knowledge and Understanding, Investigation and Analysis, and Reflection and Evaluation). Reflection must be assessed in the folio, and students who were given tasks that allowed them to reflect on their own learning and evaluate themselves and their workplace or industry, were enabled to achieve at the highest levels. It is recommended that Reflection and Evaluation be assessed more than once in the folio for the 20-credit subject.

Moderators noted that tasks that when tasks were highly scaffolded and over prescriptive students did not have the opportunity to meet the performance standards in a sustained or comprehensive manner.

Teachers are reminded that word or time limits are not assessment conditions for the folio; where work/time limits were low, students did not have the opportunity to effectively demonstrate the performance standards to a high level.

Tasks that were designed to complement the student's workplace experiences provided the most meaningful learning opportunities and allowed students to achieve at the highest levels.

Assessment Type 2: Performance

This assessment type requires three separate forms of evidence.

- The Teacher's Report on Student Performance Vocational Learning / VET
- The Workplace Supervisor's Report (if Vocational Learning)
- Student evidence that demonstrates their Knowledge and Understanding (can be in many forms: journal, photos with explanations, orally)

Forms are available on the Workplace Practices minisite.

Schools that provided all three forms of evidence enabled their students' grades to be more easily confirmed. The Teacher's Report on Student Performance is vital in assisting the moderating team to better understand how and why a grade was assigned.

If the forms of evidence (journal, photographs, etc.) are ticked on the Teacher's Report on Student Performance, they must also be included in the moderation materials.

The students who performed at the highest level for this assessment type were those who were given ample opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge through a variety of means, such as a journal, an oral discussion with the teacher, or photo stories with explanations. Where students provided no evidence of their learning it was difficult to confirm the teacher's assessment decision. Student evidence needs to address the Knowledge and Understanding criteria, and not be a simple recount with a reflection of feelings about their performance on the job each day.

The majority of students undertook either vocational learning in a workplace (using work experience, structured work placement, volunteering, or part-time work and some took part in high-level performance programs), or undertook VET units of competency to focus their performance activity.

Some teachers provided scaffolding in a booklet style for students to use to report on their workplace learning. This can be useful for some students but may also restrict achievement for others, especially if this discourages detailed and informative responses. However, in some instances, VET competencies were the only evidence supplied to support students' evidence of learning. In these instances, there was insufficient evidence of Knowledge and Understanding, as well as Application at the higher grade bands. For example, competency alone does not necessarily demonstrate a student's comprehensive, perceptive, or insightful knowledge and understanding of the vocation.

When student evidence was not provided, the grade recorded is not automatically an 'I' (Incomplete), because the teacher can often assess the Application criterion. In the absence of a Workplace Supervisor's Report, a teacher can support and demonstrate their assessment of Application by interviewing the student and including teacher notes, for example.

If students undertook VET as their entire performance activity (and did not undertake complementary work experience, for example), they also need to address the Knowledge and Understanding criteria through some kind of student voice (journal etc.) of their learning through the various competencies completed.

The occasional use of pre-2011 forms from the Work and Vocational Studies subjects did not allow evidence of student performance to align well with the performance standards in the subject outline. It is important that teachers use the forms provided each year on the Workplace Practices minisite to report on students' work.

Neither of the two reflection tasks can be used as evidence of the students' Knowledge and Understanding in Assessment Type 2: Performance, as well as being assessed in Assessment Type 3: Reflection. A single task used as evidence for performance and reflection resulted in the student grade for one of these assessment types being significantly adjusted as the same evidence cannot be used more than once.

Assessment Type 3: Reflection

For a 20-credit subject, at least two reflections are required. For the 10-credit subject, at least one reflection is required.

Moderators noted that in some instances only one reflection was provided for students undertaking a 20-credit subject, and that it covered a single industry or workplace focus. This disadvantaged some students, as the requirements of the subject outline were not fully met. In these instances, students were not able to demonstrate depth in Knowledge and Understanding or to provide thorough and insightful evidence of Reflection and Evaluation.

When students were encouraged through task design not to just recount their experiences, but to reflect on their choices and their learning, they were enabled to better address the Investigation and Analysis criteria.

It was evident to the moderators that students were able to achieve at higher levels when the reflection tasks were designed to allow them to self-evaluate — not just to evaluate their workplace or industry, but to evaluate themselves and their relationship to that workplace.

For students who undertook the 20-credit subject, those who were most successful in this assessment type were those who reflected on two very different vocational experiences or had two different focuses, such as a personal reflection and a workplace reflection.

It should be noted that word or time limits are not assessment conditions required by the Workplace Practices subject outline for the Reflection. Where work/time limits were low, students did not have the opportunity to effectively demonstrate the performance standards to a high level.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Investigation

This year an increasing number of students chose to utilise multimedia presentations for their investigations – particularly those students who undertook a practical investigation. There were fewer issues investigations undertaken by students across both the 10 and 20- credit subjects, although these still make up a significant proportion of the total number of investigations. Where multimodal presentations were used the students who were the most successful were those who had both written (e.g. PowerPoint, Presi or a script) and an oral component, with a final reflection and evaluation on their learning, rather than a reflection on the style of presentation.

It is important that students adhere to the maximum word/time limit for this assessment type. For a 20-credit subject, the limit is 2000 words and 12 minutes total time for an oral/multimodal presentation. Where students undertake an oral/multimodal investigation they must ensure they incorporate evidence of Investigation and Analysis, and well as Reflection and Evaluation within these limits. Where students completed a 'how to' video or demonstrated a skill for the practical assessment, the tendency was for long, unedited videos that often ran 10 to 15 minutes over the maximum time limit.

It was noted that there were fewer schools providing teacher-marked work or work which identified the student and/or school; however, this is still an area of concern. It is essential that all investigations submitted are completely de-identified with only the student SACE registration number included on each page. Teachers are to provide their grade on the Individual External Assessment Results Sheet, which is provided by the SACE Board; they do not need to attach performance standards or grades to student work.

Investigations where teachers included the External Assessment Cover Sheet (which can be found on the Workplace Practices minisite) were also far easier for the marker to determine the relevance of the issue or practical investigation to the student's undertaking of Workplace Practices.

It was noted by markers that the most successful classes were those where students were allowed the freedom to choose a practical or issues investigation and were supported to define their topic by the teacher. Classes where all students completed the exact same task (e.g. drugs in the workplace or OH&S) were generally overly scaffolded and did not allow students to demonstrate their own learning in a relevant industry context.

Effectively designed investigations that were negotiated and planned by the teacher and student working together offered students the best opportunity for success. Students asked to choose a practical or issues investigation from their chosen industry generally engaged on a more meaningful level with the work and the investigative process.

For the issues investigation, students who were asked to demonstrate their understanding and investigation of an issue important to their chosen career performed far better than students who had no context for their issue study. It was also noted that issues that were worded in a way that demanded debate and a response were generally more successful. For example, 'Does shift work negatively impact on a person's quality of life?' allowed students to demonstrate learning across the assessment design criteria far better than topics such as, for example, 'The pros and cons of shift work'. It is also important to note that topics such as 'How do I become a manager?' or 'Why is this brand so recognisable?' are not issues and do not allow students to effectively address the assessment design criteria, and achieve at the highest level.

Students were also able to meet the performance standards to a high level when their focus was a local, national and/or global issue related to their chosen industry, rather than personal issues related to their life in general.

Task design for the practical investigation was most effective when students were allowed to demonstrate their skills in an individualised task related to their chosen career. Heavily scaffolded practical investigations did not give students the scope to investigate, demonstrate, analyse, evaluate and reflect on their learning. It is also important that students complete a practical investigation around a real product, service or task. Students who imagined how they would plan, make, deliver and evaluate a product or task were unable to demonstrate learning in either Investigation and Analysis, or Reflection and Evaluation. The most successful students provided evidence of their engaging in the process of completing the practical. This included videos, pictures and feedback from relevant people.

The assessment design criteria used for the investigation are Knowledge and Understanding, Investigation and Analysis, and Reflection and Evaluation. These were used in varying degrees depending on the type of task undertaken.

Knowledge and Understanding was generally well-demonstrated for students in both the practical and issues investigation. The most effective responses were from those students who were able to link their practical demonstration or issues investigation to their chosen industry focus. Markers found that students who provided this context more readily met the A and B grade bands of the performance standards for this criterion.

Investigation and Analysis was done with varying levels of success, with the most successful being students who demonstrated the personal relevance of their investigation to their career. In the most effective investigations, students demonstrated investigation from a wide range of sources including secondary (books, journals and internet) and primary sources (such as interviews, surveys, questionnaires and their own experiences). The use of primary sources enabled students to demonstrate insightful analysis as it was based on personally relevant information. When students directly referred to their research, their ability to demonstrate effective Investigation and Analysis was greatly increased (e.g. 'Talking to the manager enabled me to better understand...', 'From my surveys it was clear that...', or 'Source Two clearly demonstrated that...'). With secondary sources, students who presented the information and explained the significance were much more successful than those who simply presented the information as it was found. For example, when using statistics on employment, students were most successful when they demonstrated an understanding about what the statistics meant and how this might impact on their own career.

Students who utilised both primary and secondary sources also performed to a higher level when analysing the relationships between a range of work-related issues, tasks or practices. For example, students undertaking practical investigations demonstrated perceptive and well informed analysis when people related to the task (e.g. employer, trainer, guests) were able to provide operational advice and feedback that could be followed through and analysed. Without this, the student is simply demonstrating a task with no 'Investigation or Analysis' taking place.

An understanding of the 'dynamic nature' of workplace issues, tasks, cultures and environments was problematic for many students undertaking a practical investigation, but was best met when the student completed some initial investigation into their product or service they intended on producing or demonstrating. For the issues investigation, students who used a range of resources to help inform their own decisions were the most successful.

The final assessment design criteria 'Reflection and Evaluation', was noted as the criteria requiring the most work. The most successful students did more than merely summarise their findings and provide a brief reflection on the process or their learning. Practical investigations where students imagined how they would undertake a task, but did not actually complete it, did not provide any opportunity for students to meet this performance standard beyond some cursory reflective description or attempted, imaginary evaluation. The best practical investigations often had students share their product with people involved in their industry to provide feedback and analysis, which they could then use to help evaluate their learning and finished product. Issues investigations where Reflection and Evaluation were incorporated throughout the report were more successful than those who provided a small reflective paragraph at the end of the report or presentation. With issues

investigations, those responses which had industry relevance and that were meaningful to the students provided the best possible opportunity for meaningful reflection and evaluation. Importantly, evidence that incorporates 'self-evaluation' is required for achievement in the higher grade bands.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

The Learning and Assessment Plan (LAP) addendum was used to a greater extent in 2013 to explain and clarify changes made to the initial plan. This helped moderators to understand the work of individual classes or students present in the moderation sample.

More teachers used the Variations to Moderation Materials form in 2013; however, many samples still had missing or incomplete samples with little or no explanation of why. These forms are essential as they provide a personalised context for each student and allow the moderation team to make an informed decision about the performance of students against the performance standards for each assessment type.

For work submitted for moderation, it was noted that a number of teachers submitted work without comments, appropriate forms, or marks against the performance standards. This made it difficult to confirm the student grades. In the school-assessed assessment types of folio, performance, and reflection, teachers can include graded work with comments, ticks, performance standards shaded in etc. – as this can often inform the moderators how a grade was reached. Teachers are reminded that moderators do not mark student work, but rather look to confirm the teacher's assessment decision.

Teachers are encouraged to check the number of times they assess each of the applicable assessment design criteria in each assessment type. It was noted that while some performance standards were ticked on the LAP and were assessed, they were not adequately described in the task outline, meaning students did not have an adequate chance to meet the standard to a high level.

For Assessment Type 2: Performance it is essential that all of the relevant forms are submitted for each student in the sample. The more the teacher is able to provide supporting evidence and comments for the students in the sample, the easier it is for Moderators to confirm assessment decisions. It is also important to note that for students using VET Units of Competency, a Statement of Attainment is not suitable evidence to confirm the grade awarded – students are still required to complete a portfolio of evidence to support their learning. It is also important to note, that where a Statement of Attainment is not available, the school must provide a letter signed by the principal confirming the students' successful completion of each competency and outlining why the Statement of Attainment was not yet available. A DATEX printout does not constitute sufficient evidence.

GENERAL COMMENT

Students who performed the best in Workplace Practices were those who had an industry focus for their studies. These students were able to demonstrate a progression of their learning over time and an understanding and analysis of the skills relevant to their chosen industry.

Students undertaking a VET course demonstrated the most significant learning when they completed some form of workplace learning/experience in conjunction with their VET as part of the performance. It is also important to note that VET units of competency can be used to provide a context for folio tasks, but cannot replace one of the tasks.

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Chief Assessor