2021 Modified Subjects Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2021 assessment cycle, gives an overview of how students performed in their school assessments in relation to the learning requirements and assessment design criteria, set out in the relevant subject outline.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

Considerations when assessing modified subjects

Modified subjects are designed to allow students with significant impairment in intellectual functioning and/or adaptive behaviours to demonstrate their learning in a range of challenging and achievable learning experiences. Setting of appropriate goals is key to ensuring students achieve learning at the highest standard possible. Personal learning goals (PLGs) are negotiated by individual students with teachers and significant others working closely with the student as they know the student well and his/her learning priorities and transition plans. Negotiated PLGs indicate which capabilities require focus.

School assessment

Assessment is school based for modified subjects. Learning and assessment plans (LAPs) are developed by teachers to meet individual student learning needs and approved by the school’s principal (or delegate). Teachers ensure a high-quality curriculum is delivered to students studying modified subjects. The principal or the principal’s delegate ensure plans meet all the requirements listed in the learning and assessment plan checklist.

Teachers assess each student’s evidence of learning in relation to these documented PLGs and capabilities and assign a result of ‘completed’ or ‘not completed’ for the modified subject. For a result of ‘completed’, the student’s evidence of learning demonstrates achievement against:

* the personal learning goals identified for the student
* one or more of the capabilities selected for development in the subject.

It is important that:

* assessment tasks provide the scope and opportunity for students to demonstrate effectively that their learning has been achieved
* the number of assessment tasks match the requirements for a 10 or 20 credit subject.

The required standard to be achieved is set within each students zone of proximal development, which means that it is achievable and represents high achievement for the individual learner. As such students enrolled should not be assigned a ‘not completed’. If a student does not demonstrate learning against the set PLG review the LAP and use the Addendum in the Learning and Assessment Plan form to document

* changing the PLG to sit within the students zone of proximal development
* amend the assessment tasks to better capture learning

If the PLG and assessment tasks are suited the student, but the student was unable to complete the learning assign a ‘pending’ rather than a ‘not completed’. A ‘pending’ can only be assigned against compulsory subjects to allow the student time to complete the learning. If additional time is required for other subjects, then the student should be ‘withdrawn’ from the subject and re-enrolled the following year in which they will be resulted.

Personal learning goal (PLG) development

Effective goal setting is pivotal to successful delivery and assessment of the Modified Subjects. Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time defined (SMART) goals that are set in each student’s zone of proximal development are required to ensure learning in the modified subjects is aligned to identified student learning need. Evidence is collected from assessment tasks undertaken by the student while engaged in learning linked to negotiated PLGs. Evidence of learning directly linked to identified goals and capabilities is needed to confirm a ‘completed’ decision.

The following should be considered to successfully develop and document PLGs:

* consult with the student and key people to identify relevant, achievable and challenging goals
* Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time defined (SMART) goals assist in reviewing, refining, and amending personal learning goals
* Set SMARTAR goals. The ‘AR’ referring to goals that are agreed upon and reviewed further. The addendum section of the LAP provides a place to document reviewed goals
* evidence of learning aligned to SMARTAR goals inform transparent ‘completed’ and ‘not completed’ assessment decisions for teachers.

Less successful goal development and assessment:

* occurred when goals were generic and ambiguous / did not meet the student’s learning needs
* there were too many goals
* failed to specify assessment tasks to provide evidence of learning reflective of documented PLGs
* did not enable sufficient evidence of learning to be collected to substantiate that learning was successful
* used assessment tools not applicable to modified subjects. Grades, performance standards and rubrics with graduated statements indicating how well students met their goals are not required.

Capabilities development

To ensure students are supported to develop individually relevant capabilities teachers are encouraged to have a sharp focus on a few capabilities (one or more) that benefit the student rather than attempting to develop all five in every subject.

Review

The SACE Board, in partnership with schools, undertakes quality assurance of the modified subjects through a review process. The review is designed to ensure that a school’s interpretation and application of ‘completed’ and ‘not completed’ assessment decisions in compulsory modified subjects are consistent with the state-wide interpretation before students receive their final results in the subject.

The modified subjects that are reviewed which allow students to meet the compulsory requirements of the SACE are:

* Stage 1 Personal Learning Plan: Modified
* Stage 1 English: Modified
* Stage 1 Mathematics: Modified
* Stage 2 Research Project: Modified.

In 2021 the review process was undertaken online using Microsoft Teams due to COVID restrictions. This presented some challenges with the submission of materials as a ‘selection of evidence’ was required. To assist the process evidence of student learning needs to be identified with the student’s name and/ or SACE registration number and submitted with the accompanying LAP/ research Project school planner and student descriptions sheets for ease of access.

Schools that have had assessment decisions confirmed in two consecutive years are not required to submit samples the following year. The SACE Board advises schools that are required to participate in the review at the commencement of the school year as a part of the state-wide triennial cycle.

Teachers provide samples of students’ work for the review process in accordance with the requirements in SACE Board guidelines. On a cyclic basis, schools are asked to nominate a teacher to act as reviewer. The SACE Board provides formal feedback to principals regarding the outcomes of the review, and teachers ensure final results reflect the review outcome and recommendations.

Teachers are reminded to include for review:

* a copy of the approved learning and assessment plan (LAP)
* a copy of the Stage 2 Research Project: Modified — school planner, if applicable
* a completed student description sheet(s). This should include their background, adjustments required, learning needs, and the specific PLGs that align with the evidence of learning provided.

Student work samples

For some teachers the request for a ‘selection of evidence’ was a challenge in relation to how much should be included to show sufficient evidence that students had a ‘completed assessment decision. Evidence of learning needs to be aligned with the PLG described in the LAP/ school planner and described in the description sheet and sufficient to show learning has been achieved.

As per previous years evidence for assessment tasks was primary evidence, secondary evidence, or a mixture of both, depending on the student’s or group’s level of development.

* Primary evidence took the form of student work — written, visual, and oral, such as photo boards, self assessment, journals, and reflections.
* Secondary evidence included teacher checklists; written, photographic and video observations documented by teachers/educators, as well as by family and key people from adult agencies; and material prepared by scribes.
* Multimodal evidence such as blogs, videos and ‘live’ examples continue to be used to effectively capture evidence of learning.

Students with higher support needs were necessarily dependent on collection of secondary evidence to document their learning.

Successful student work samples:

• showed evidence of solid and meaningful learning

• matched and were clearly linked to identified PLGs and capabilities

• provided evidence of learning in a range of settings and formats rather than an ‘event’

• showed clear progression of student learning as they worked towards their PLGs.

Successful samples:

* were correctly presented and uploaded, containing:

a completed student description sheet that documents the student’s personal learning goals and chosen capabilities, and outlines the learning context (e.g. student background, adjustments required, and learning priorities) for each student in the review sample

a copy of the relevant approved learning and assessment plan(s)

a copy of the Stage 2 Research Project: Modified — School Planner, if applicable.

* provided insight into all adjustments required in the student description sheet

a detailed student description assisted reviewers to gain a concise understanding of the student’s functional capacity. For example, if a student experiences barriers to learning as a result of limited concentration span, include this rather than a general statement that the student has a mild intellectual disability. This enables reviewers to consider evidence of learning in the correct context. Detailed descriptions made evidence much more powerful as a record of student learning.

* documented adjustments to PLGs in the LAP addendum to describe variations that occurred over the teaching and learning program to individual goals in the LAP
* ensured personal learning goals and capabilities in LAPs (and the LAP addendum) correlate directly with those documented in the student description sheet
* had a range of tasks that enable students to demonstrate learning
* linked described goals and capabilities in the LAP to samples of learning with signposting and annotation
* used technology that could be easily accessed on general IT platforms and followed the SACE guidelines on submission of non-written materials.

When the online submission and presentation of samples followed the guidelines, and were referenced to the learning goals and capabilities, it was straightforward to conduct the review process and to confirm schools’ assessment decisions.

Less successful review samples:

* did not include one or more of the required sample elements, e.g. student description sheet or approved LAP
* did not clearly identify student work with either SACE registration number or name
* identified personal learning goals on the student description sheet that did not correlate to those on an approved LAP and/or addendum or within the student work sample
* confused task completion with learning goal achievement
* assigned school developed performance standards to student work
* did not use the LAP addendum to adjust goals / assessment to reflect student achievement
* provided evidence that that was not accessible by reviewers such as unclear photographs or inaccessible video, PowerPoint, sound bites and other information technology.

General comments

Students who, due to the impact of disability, are unable to access the learning and achievement they need in standard subjects, VET courses, and or community/ industry learning even with special provisions can access Modified Subjects to complete their SACE.

[The standards](https://www.dese.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005) require that learners with disability are consulted to identify the adjustments they need to access a quality education on the same basis as their peers. Agreement with students, where possible, and their families to access Modified Subjects must be documented and kept by the school prior to enrolment in one or more Modified Subjects.

Modified Subjects assess completion against personal learning goals and not achievement standards. Students with disabilities able to access the learning they need in existing SACE subjects and courses should be supported and provided with the adjustments they require to do so as required by the Disability Standards for Education.

Delivery and assessment of Modified Subjects in the SACE requires teachers to be familiar with the Stage 1 and Stage 2 Modified Subjects information and resources. These are available on the SACE Board Modified Subjects minisite.

Teachers delivering, and administrators managing, the delivery of modified subjects are advised to participate in professional development activities organised by the SACE Board. Opportunities for planning and clarifying support are available through the online platform, PLATO and cover topics such as setting personal learning goals, designing assessment tasks and organising student work samples for review. Teachers are advised to seek guidance from the SACE Board prior to developing and delivering learning programs for Modified Subjects.