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Media Studies

2015 Chief Assessor’s Report

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## **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**

Assessment Type 1: Folio

For the folio, students undertake two or three media exploration assessments, and one media interaction study.

Media Exploration

The standard of responses in the folio indicated that this task was generally well addressed. While a range of topics were explored, short films and documentaries were common. Other topics as suggested in the subject outline, or even the development of new topics, should be considered and it is important that the student is provided the opportunity to negotiate choice of topics with the teacher (as stated on page 22).

At the design stage of the learning and assessment plan in this subject, teachers must consider the inclusion of the key media concepts:

* media representations
* media conventions
* media organisations
* media audiences.

These concepts create the theoretical foundation for this subject.

The performance standards for research and analysis place an emphasis on authentic primary sources. Such sources include original surveys, interviews, and research conducted by the student.

As well as using primary sources, the better responses used a variety of sources as the basis for their research and in doing so demonstrated effective and accurate use of relevant media terminology. The better responses acknowledged all sources using appropriate referencing as outlined under the ‘Research Advice’ page on the Media Studies minisite on the SACE website.

Students achieved well against specific feature RA2 (‘Research into and analysis of the ways in which groups and individuals are represented in media’) when they were able to contextually discuss notions of media representations, and the influence of media across gender, race, ethnicity, and age. Students were generally more successful when they were provided with more than one opportunity to show their understandings against a specific feature, and teachers are encouraged to consider this when designing tasks.

A strong understanding of the performance standards assists students to achieve at higher levels. Good task design seeks to make the performance standards explicit. Well-considered task design referenced the performance standards, and embedded these into topic choices that were relevant on a global, national, or local level. When this was the case, students were able to achieve very well against the performance standards and make relevant, considered conclusions about their learning and the media’s role in society.

Word-limits were generally well adhered to but it should be noted that the maximum is 1500 written words for this assessment type, regardless of whether this is presented as two or three tasks. Some student work did exceed this limit.

Media Interaction Study

There are some misinterpretations regarding the requirements of the media interaction task. The media interaction must contain the student’s personal interaction with a media form, activity, or product. This is not another media exploration. There should be a point of difference between the two tasks and teachers are encouraged to mentor the process of personal interaction and reflection. Misunderstanding of this task meant that some students could not achieve well against specific features KU1 and RA3.

There were some outstanding media interactions and, as some of the examples showed, the nature of this task can make a multimodal form of presentation more successful.

Assessment Type 2: Product

Students undertake two media products, each of which is supported by a producer’s statement.

This assessment type is traditionally done well by most students. Evidence continues to suggest that many students choose media studies for the opportunity to create media products and there was generally a more consistent and considered approach by students to this assessment type. It is useful for teachers new to this subject to seek out exemplars of products that were previously graded in the upper bands for a point of comparison, and one way to achieve this is through attendance at clarifying forums.

It was apparent that students were successful when they were engaged with and committed to their work, supported by their teacher, and provided with a range of production skills, techniques, and processes. Students who were the most successful created highly authentic productions that resembled real-world media. Such products sought to encourage students to pursue their interests. Less successful samples displayed a lack of understanding, and limited design and planning, as well as minimal use of production techniques or technologies. These samples were rushed, lacked consistency, and limited the potential for student excellence.

The producer’s statement was used by the most successful students as a contextualising document that effectively provided evidence of their learning and achievements in creating their product. Within the 500-word limit, these students discussed their specific role when working in a small group, the authenticity and success of their product against the conventions of that media type, and the reactions of their target audience.

Needless to say, the less successful samples either omitted the producer’s statement or simply used it as a step-by-step journal of the production, limiting their success when placed against the performance standards.

Teachers should ensure that students complete the producer’s statement in the format described in the subject outline (p. 34) and emphasise the importance of addressing its context.

The 2015 school assessment moderation process overall confirmed that there was consistency, reliability, and validity in the grade levels that teachers had awarded.

## **External Assessment**

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

Slightly more than 93% of students who submitted a media investigation received a result in the C band and higher, with 16% in the A band. This represents an overall increase from last year.

The majority of investigations of current media issues were text-based, but again a variety of visual elements such as graphs, tables, charts, or images were incorporated in many of the investigations. These elements in most cases related directly to the research, but in a few instances these elements seemed to be added to make the presentation simply look more appealing. This approach should be avoided.

An appendix was used by many students to provide evidence of correspondence, questionnaires, and use of other sources, and while the use of appendices may be perceived as a useful strategy, bulky documentation should be kept at the school and only forwarded upon request.

Popular media issues for 2015 included the use of social media by ISIS, media coverage of US police shootings, piracy (especially relating to the *Dallas Buyers Club* case), reaction to the ABC television program *Q&A*, and the representation of LGBTQ people in the media. While the interest that students had in their issue was apparent, they need to be careful not to allow their response to become a platform for their own views.

Most teachers now clearly understand the nature of this task. Certainly, concerns about ‘out of scope’ investigations were allayed this year. However, there were still some issues and focus questions that did not lend themselves to a media investigation and this is where the role of the teacher is important. It must be reiterated that this assessment type should not be designed for a whole class to research the same issue or variations of the same issue. Students should be encouraged to ‘negotiate a suitable issue and topic’.

As in previous years, the most successful investigations researched current and controversial issues and as a result the sources they used were both varied (i.e. including both primary and secondary sources) and contemporary. Such student work provided evidence of ‘comprehensive and sustained knowledge and understanding of media structures, issues, concepts, and interactions’ (KU1), as well as ‘comprehensive research into and analysis of the ways in which groups and individuals are represented in media’ (RA1).

The currency of the issue of the investigation was clearly established and referenced by students in their introductory paragraphs.

As mentioned previously, the teacher’s role must be to monitor and advise their students in formulating the topic for their investigation. Students should also be made aware of the performance standards, as this will guide them in ensuring that their work will be directed towards meeting the standards, and also guide them as to what is needed to achieve at higher levels.

## **Operational Advice**

School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers. Teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators. Teacher grades should be evident on all student school assessment work.

Teachers should take care when preparing material for both moderation and external marking. Samples submitted for moderation that are well packaged, with student work clearly labelled, make it easy for moderators to identify the materials for each student and assist the moderation process. For school assessment, student identification on each assessment task within each assessment type is required.

The approved learning and assessment plan (LAP) and a complete set of task sheets for the school assessment tasks should be included in the moderation package. The use of the LAP addendum, if applicable, is important, as it enables moderators to easily locate changes to the assessment design and the corresponding student material.

Where samples are presented in electronic format, such as a DVD or USB drive, two clearly labelled copies should be included wherever possible, as this helps the team of moderators work more efficiently.

Most media investigations were submitted in an appropriate format (for written work, on single-sided sheets stapled in the top left corner). Investigations that are bound may look appealing, but this does not contribute to the outcome. Teachers are reminded to retain appendices and work of a supportive nature within the school. Most investigations complied with the de-identification necessary for the external assessment of the investigation.

Teachers should refer to the subject operational information, and regularly visit the SACE website. All forms, including the current cover sheet for the investigation, can be located on the Media Studies minisite.

## **General Comments**

Of particular note for 2015 was the success of the SACE Board-initiated workshop with specific focus on Assessment Type 3: Investigation. Concerns over previous investigations that were out of scope were addressed and this was not an issue in 2015. It was also encouraging to have an increasing number of teachers new to this subject not only attending clarifying forums and workshops, but also volunteering to be markers or moderators.

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Chief Assessor