2021 English Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2021 assessment cycle, gives 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, and the quality of student performance.

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.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Responding to Texts (30%)

Within this component of the subject, students produce three responses to texts. Two of the responses must be written, and one must be oral. Either the oral response or one of the written pieces may be replaced by a multimodal response. One of the responses could be a comparison of two or more texts. A maximum of 2000 words for written responses is allocated and the oral response is up to a maximum of 6 minutes. A multimodal response is of equivalent length.

The more successful responses commonly:

* embedded and integrated short pithy quotes for evidence
* evidence was strong and clearly substantiated interpretations of the text
* demonstrated strong analysis by taking on the role of the creator, such as an interview with the director
* ensured language and stylistic features were analysed rather than identified and discussed
* focussed on analysing audience positioning in response to central ideas
* produced speeches for a specific, often unfamiliar audience (e.g. award acceptance speech) to demonstrate more sophisticated and versatile texts
* allowed the innovative use of IT skills
* chose texts that clearly focused on a cultural aspect to allow An1to be addressed specifically
* considered and analysed the context of texts in order to fully address KU1 and An1
* included images/footage and music to create tone in oral presentations by including multiple layers of textual knowledge
* were in response to challenging and engaging texts
* provided an element of independence for the student through options that included text and task choice
* enabled students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of a ‘range of texts’
* included comparative responses that were useful preparation for the external assessment
* comparative pieces contained a balanced discussion and clearly signposted the connections between the texts
* enabled students to express their own unique voice through their written and oral expression
* revealed a depth of analysis using metalanguage appropriate to the text type analysed
* demonstrated consistent and sophisticated use of accurate, clear, and fluent expression
* referred specifically to cinematic techniques when discussing film.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not embed evidence but rather used large chunks of text as evidence
* were over-scaffolded with overt similarities across samples including the same evidence used in responses and similar structure or content
* did not explicitly address KU2 and An2 to analyse stylistic features and language techniques (e.g. a personal essay about the student’s values does not allow for in-depth analysis of the author’s craft)
* relied on outside sources or critics in the style of a hybrid Research Project in English
* tended to revert to plot description without any discussion of techniques
* provided author biography to address context with little or no connection to the purpose or ideas of the text
* sometimes identified language and stylistic features, but recounted their appearance rather than providing analysis
* divorced technique from purpose
* focused on characterisation as a stylistic feature, but did/could not identify the techniques employed to create the characterisation
* did not consider mise en scène when recording orals (e.g. if filming at home consider the background of the shots and if filming at school make sure classmates are not distractors in the shot)
* did not use the conventions of the chosen form appropriately (e.g. used sub-headings inappropriately in an essay)
* did not include at least one oral presentation or multimodal text
* identified key ideas or themes without expanding on them or analysing how the idea is expressed.

Assessment Type 2: Creating Texts (40%)

Within this assessment type, students are expected to create three texts, at least one of which is written, to demonstrate variety in text type, purpose and audience. Students are required to create one writer’s statement. A maximum of 3000 words is allocated to the creation of texts and a maximum of 1000 words is allocated to the writer’s statement. An oral or multimodal text or writer’s statement is of equivalent length.

The more successful responses commonly:

* had a clear vision for context, purpose and audience (and this helped facilitate a successful writer’s statement)
* included innovative text creation such as a vlog paired with a feature article on a similar topic, but for a different audience allowing clear comparisons in the writer’s statement
* wrote for authentic contexts such as a feminist article response in Womankind, and double spread real estate advertisement for expensive properties
* included creative texts from fascinating and unusual perspectives such as an obituary for an inanimate, defunct object (e.g. a phone book)
* applied a wide range of language features and stylistic features such as the creation of a music video that had a clear audience, purpose and context appropriate to the choice of song
* sophisticated use of language and stylistic features
* included using a multimodal approach to informing about a topic, particularly with use of a video so students could show their use of film techniques to meet the purpose of the text (e.g. a documentary) and its audience
* carefully addressed the assessment criteria for the writer’s statement (e.g. if An3 was being assessed it was covered in the statement)
* presented writer’s statements that explained and justified language features, stylistic features and conventions as well as the creative decisions made in the process of writing
* presented writer’s statements that, when comparative, were well structured and analysed each created text equally. Moderators also commented favourably upon examples of comparative writer’s statements that analysed created texts that were connected by a common topic or theme
* demonstrated sound engagement on the part of the student due to choice associated with the task.
* carefully edited their work to ensure highly accurate work.

The less successful responses commonly:

* produced texts in a similar format (e.g. a recount and a narrative) limiting opportunities to display versatility in their writing (Ap1)—this was particularly common when students were given a ‘free choice’ option
* were overly scaffolded and lacked originality
* did not demonstrate an awareness of audience and purpose
* created texts that limited opportunities such as a poster with only a couple of words
* were formatted responses across classes that did not allow for independent thinking or creativity
* demonstrated repetition of the recount form, regardless of the individual purpose of the creating texts task
* did not reveal adequate consideration of accurate, clear and fluent expression
* emphasised visual information at the expense of spoken or written language
* produced writer’s statements which tended to recount the process of creating texts rather than analyse the features to show how they suit the context, audience and purpose
* revealed little or no evidence of designated performance standards. (e.g. where An3 was identified for assessment and yet the writer’s statement either did not contain the analysis of two or more texts or the response revealed analysis of the texts individually)
* were well over the word count.

Operational Advice

School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers. Teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators.

* The performance standard record sheet should be completed very carefully as this is the official record of results used in the online moderation process. Ensure that the shading matches the grade assigned.
* Ensure the variations from is submitted to account for missing tasks.
* As moderation is online uploading and viewing of video or oral recordings is encouraged rather than a transcript (although it is appropriate to upload both recording and transcript). Teacher feedback alone is not appropriate evidence.
* Teachers should ensure that the performance standards they mark on each individual assignment match the performance standards on their LAP, and the PSR filled in on SACE online.
* Student samples submitted for moderation should include all pieces of work for all tasks in an assessment type.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

This task requires students to independently compose a 2000 word, written comparative analysis of two texts which evaluates how the language features, stylistic features, and conventions in these texts represent ideas, perspectives, and/or aspects of culture, and influence audiences. These texts can be extended texts, poetry, drama texts, film texts or media texts.

It is important to remember that students are assessed on all assessment design criteria within this section of the course.

The more successful responses commonly:

* showed evidence of excellent teaching and a clear understanding of the analytical features of the Comparative Analysis
* chose texts which provided opportunities for comprehensive depth of analysis and evaluation of complex ideas, perspectives, and aspects of culture. Often this involved analysing two texts of different text types or with distinctly different purposes (e.g. written and visual, to provide greater scope for discussion of ideas and acknowledging how authors use different techniques to create imagery, impact audience, express emotion and show ideas). This catered for both KU3 and An3
* paid close attention to the text type when analyzing. For example, analysis of films examined film techniques such as camera angles etc.
* chose successful pairings which allowed opportunity to analyse context, purpose, audience, conventions, point of view, narrative features of texts and stylistic choices relating to the text type
* made thoughtful comparisons between films, novels, poetry, short stories, poems, speeches, graphic novels, episodes of tv shows, documentaries, opinion pieces, or articles with a clear narrative and a range of text features and in doing so demonstrated a clear, and in-depth understanding of the texts, their features and messages
* showed immense depth regarding understanding of both the author’s ideas, but importantly their use of language which had precise flow and rich vocabulary
* included a concise and specific focus question/s and/or overarching idea, which was clearly stated at the beginning, that allowed students to analyse ideas and techniques in depth and detail, versus an analysis that was very shallow and/or tried to cover too much about the texts
* selected a clear theme and texts which could be clearly discussed in terms of how the creator presented the theme
* took the form of appropriately structured essays, reports, articles, and interviews that were predominantly analytical despite their creative format. In some cases, the use of headings or clear topic sentences based on specific performance standards reduced the repetition of ideas and evidence by focusing the analysis on specific aspects of the texts
* communicated students’ strengths as writers where the structure of text type they had chosen to produce was clear and each paragraph began with a strong topic sentence, linking holistically to the chosen texts. These pieces included clear topic sentences that addressed each of the performance standards and were delineated in body paragraphs, and often finished with a persuasive conclusion
* addressed aspects of culture and context, showing understanding of the contextual elements of author and text placement in revealing how they position an audience, especially non-narrative text types
* clearly analysed audience and purpose (e.g. without generalisations such as “the ABC is aimed at adults”)
* analysed texts from different eras or very specific eras and showed more thorough knowledge of context
* provided insightful discussion of the texts in relation to their sociocultural or sociohistorical context. Effectively doing so, where appropriate, often helped students to extend their analysis and demonstration of knowledge and understanding
* had balanced comparison and contrast of texts to make a critical analysis of similarities and differences (An3) of both texts’ ideas, language features, purposes, and contexts. Furthermore, students included integrated analysis of the two texts that alternated with parity and complexity within the same paragraph, rather than basing separate paragraphs on each text
* demonstrated critical understanding of ideas and how these were developed through a range of language and stylistic features and the effect on the audience
* carefully considered examples and evidence which best revealed the key ideas and explained the use of stylistic and language features of both texts, which were then connected back to the question or point of focus. Examples were most effective when students supported their analysis with seamlessly incorporated and relevant short quotations within the body of the response, rather than longer ‘chunks’, illustrating higher order ability (Ap2)
* maintained an analytical focus throughout the assessment. More successful students used authors’ names frequently in their paragraphs. This helped students to orient their discussion towards analysing how and why authors use language features, stylistic features and conventions in their texts
* clearly analysed the texts rather than recounting
* made subtle and accurate use of diverse, eloquent, sophisticated vocabulary, including appropriate metalanguage, with a clear sense of engaging the implied reader of the investigation which clearly showed evidence of careful proofreading and editing to produce a fluent polished final comparative analysis
* were free of track changes, other editing comments, grades and or highlighted performance standards from teachers
* showed integrity for the parameters of the task, including the 2000-word limit and did not go over, or misrepresent their total. Instead, the word count was used carefully to strategically construct the comparison so as to add accurate and meaningful evidence which was reinforced by analysis

The less successful responses commonly:

* obligated the whole class either to analyse the same text(s) or to base their text choice on the same theme or to discuss the same text features
* chose to focus on aspects of the texts that were too similar, for example: comparing overly similar and or repetitive ideas and or language features, especially in comparisons involving, entire series of tv shows, two versions of the same text, or texts with ambiguous plotlines and philosophical complexity. This often led to plot driven explanations rather than thematic understanding and analysis of specific textual features that involve both similarities *and* differences (An3)
* chose texts which did not provide enough detail and content to analyse, such commercials or magazine advertisements, computer games and or songs which were not language and or thematically rich
* had no question or limiting questions, often meaning the focus was on plot or characters or ideas rather than features and effect on audience. This had the potential to limit the discussion and analysis of meaning, ideas, purpose, and audience response. It is also wise to revisit the question on completion of writing the response
* wrote with an unclear structure which led to ambiguity in terms of the intended text type students were using to show evidence of their learning, often lacking topic sentences that were explicit in detailing the focus of their paragraphs
* did not acknowledge the text types or any text type specific conventions that may show an understanding that different text types have different features
* lacked appropriate metalanguage and use of stylistic features for the text types chosen. (i.e. in choosing a film, students did not look at the cinematic conventions e.g. mise en scène, cinematography, sound and/or lighting etc. to shape texts and rather retold the narrative)
* showed misunderstanding of techniques (e.g. claimed an author had used allegory but the evidence provided did not support that claim, or confused camera movement, shots and angles) and or commented on how directors ‘use’ characterisation or use ‘historical context’ or use the theme of, use intertextuality. In such examples, writing about the techniques used to develop/explore these text features would have strengthened their point. Similarly, there were also instances where students demonstrated a lack of awareness that audience, context, themes, ideas and conventions are not techniques
* listed great metalanguage in the topic sentence and then proceeded to retell a chapter/scene/entire text with no further reference to techniques, quoted examples or attempt at analysis. Similarly, some students identified ‘key words’ such as ‘context’, and specific ‘techniques’ from the performance standards and embedded them into their initial topic sentence then disregarded exploring them within the paragraph
* separated the discussion of the texts into paragraphs instead of fluently integrating them
* shifted between the novel and then the film versions for the same text when analysing despite having two completely different texts
* either failed to articulate what a theme/idea is in the text, or were too thematic and or plot focused in their analysis, focusing predominantly on ideas and perspectives, but neglecting to analyse language features, stylistic features, and conventions in terms of how they are used to make meaning
* lacked cohesiveness due to a lack of conjunctions and or comparative phrases
* discussed ideas in the texts separately from techniques. This did not demonstrate that they understood how “language features, stylistic features, and conventions make meaning”. More successful students were able to explain how the techniques made the ideas clearer, stronger
* made didactic explanations of basic terminology and common concepts to the marker such as explaining what ‘metaphors’ are
* focused on language analysis to the detriment of depth and detail in analysing ideas, perspectives and/or aspects of culture (KU1 and An1) which hindered complexity of analysis
* did not include enough specific evidence in such responses examples were general, or gave vague descriptions of the text or in some cases non-existent
* included images and pictures as evidence of scenes or techniques
* quoted the director on the experience of making the film which wasn’t relevant to the analysis and is beyond the scope of the subject along with quotes from or reference to any texts beyond the two under analysis, such as internet quotes
* lacked strong editing, including frequent solecisms, notably errors in word choice and sentence structure as well as subject verb agreement (e.g. “How do the authors of …”), inaccurate punctuation, and no understanding of the use of punctuation as a persuasive tool; inaccurate tense usage; expression errors leading to convoluted and confusing argument
* showed uncertainty about or failure to identify titles, authors, text types as well as their spelling and capitalization of proper nouns
* were as low as half the available word count, at times in contradiction to the figure cited on the cover sheet, which severely limited opportunity for success.