

2021 Society and Culture Subject Assessment Advice *(extract)*

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Investigation (30%)

The range of topics was excellent, and the research methods were impressive, especially given the limitations on face-to-face contact. Most students showed the ability to gather and understand information and process it meaningfully. Responses from students demonstrated a mastery of the subject matter. Overall, the investigations were of a good standard with interesting local topics where students were able to gather primary first-hand information and analyse it well (e.g. Stigma of Mental Health and Plastic Pollution). Other contemporary issues provided for analysis and discussion (e.g. Islamophobia in Australia and Domestic Violence due to COVID Restrictions). The investigations were generally pertinent, thorough, using thoughtful approaches with a clear structure and varied sources.

The more successful responses commonly:

* used appropriate primary sources and credible, contemporary secondary sources
* reflected well on a chosen contemporary social or cultural topic and offered recommendations in the conclusion
* had a set of focused questions used to specifically address social change that set clear boundaries to limit the breadth of the investigation
* used a range of strategies to structure the investigation clearly and logically (e.g. guiding questions, hypotheses, appropriate headings and topic sentences)
* used relevant experts as primary sources and integrated quotes from primary sources and interviews fluently within the discussion
* analysed and evaluated various perspectives on their chosen issue rather than summarising collected information from secondary sources
* cross-referenced primary and secondary sources with one another and synthesised information
* explicitly pointed out the local context of an issue, as well as the broader state, national or international aspects
* used different ways to demonstrate information and findings (e.g. tables, graphs and images)
* showed a good understanding of the mechanisms of change and the implications (KU2) and demonstrated effective use of reliable, valid and relevant sources, and contrasting opinions (EC1)
* synthesised the material to provide their authentic voice rather than a compilation of other’s opinions
* presented or summarised research findings and discussed the findings, showing an ability to pick up on differences in opinion, unexpected results and/or gaps in the research
* approached the chosen topic with an open mind and were prepared to discuss and accept unexpected findings
* reflected on their research and evaluated its effectiveness as well as the usefulness of their sources and suggested alternative approaches and sources as well as possible future action.

The less successful responses commonly:

* relied too heavily on description and recounted findings rather than analysis
* spent too much word count describing the research methodology
* had broad or generic questions lacking in a clearly defined purpose that became a challenge to answer in 2000 words or explore them locally, nationally and or internationally
* included graphics, diagrams, tables, graphs and surveys but did not analyse them within the body of the investigation
* focused on ‘the what’ and definitions of terminology which at times used inappropriate or dated terminology (e.g. ‘Aboriginals’, ‘Aborigines’, ‘Indians’ and ‘Gypsies’). At times key definitions were gathered from simple sources that undermined the entire investigation. For example a dictionary website, Wikipedia
* were over-scaffolded, limiting adequate flexibility to address the topic in the way best suited to it
* did not adequately address the assessment design criteria especially social change (e.g. topic selected were more suited to Health and Psychology investigations with little references to social or cultural issues)
* relied heavily on personal experience and opinion and lacked in expert primary sources
* used primary data that was irrelevant to the discussion or the line of inquiry, or was from an inexpert source (e.g. interviewing friends or surveying the class)
* did not evaluate different sources and opinions (EC1)
* provided responses that were too biased to one perspective and lacking thorough analysis of the different parts of the issue
* selected topics with a preconceived idea about the answer and therefore overlooked a range of perspectives and sources leading to a biased report
* used readily available, but not always reliable, online sources without questioning its authenticity
* inadequately acknowledged sources by omitting or incorrectly referencing, and/or not providing a comprehensive bibliography.