

2021 ASSESSMENT REPORT

OXP315118 - OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP

Section A

Criterion 2

Question 1

You are the leader of a group of four inexperienced paddlers, exploring a remote river in sea kayaks in Tasmania's Southwest National Park. You are two hours in to your four-day journey and the weather has been poor with drenching rain and low temperatures. All of your group members have become quite miserable. Some are already shivering and trying to convince you to return back to the vehicle, but you know that this evening you will have reached a hut on the edge of the river and this will provide warmth and shelter. In a carefully constructed extended response (essay form), analyse two (2) recognised leadership theories which you feel could be used to manage the situation outlined above. Provide an evaluation including similarities and/or differences, and strengths and/or limitations of the theories.

This question requires students to identify and name two (2) recognised leadership theories (not acronyms) which may include (but are not limited to):

- Conditional Outdoor Leadership Theory (COLT)
- Situational
- Transactional
- Transformational
- Feminist
- Servant
- Trait & Great Men
- Contingency

Ideally, these theories will be contrasting to acknowledge the notion that different leadership styles may lead to different outcomes. Students are required to provide clear, concise and detailed description of each of the chosen theories. Markers take into account the timeframe students have to articulate and apply their understanding to two complex theories.

Students are required to describe how each leadership theory aligns with the scenario and how each theory influences approaches to the scenario. Students can use diagrams to articulate depth of knowledge and understanding, but these must be directly referred to within the body of the essay.

Students are not required to "resolve" the scenario but rather discuss how their chosen leadership theories help to influence approaches to the given scenario. Students should take into consideration the **context** of the scenario and how that may influence their approach to the scenario. For example, the group is in a remote area on day one of a four-day trip. The group is made up of inexperienced people. Morale is low, and people are shivering meaning that some form of active leadership would be ideal. The hut at the end of the day provides warmth and shelter. The key thing is for students to recognise and consider the range of variables in this scenario and applied it to a theory of leadership.

An evaluation implies that students will outline **benefits** and any **disadvantages** of each theory and/or outline a **comparison** between the two theories. Strong responses will do this very effectively.

Stronger responses gave a comprehensive definition of both theories of leadership, using specialised terminology. Each theory was then applied to the situation, not necessarily coming to a decision, but describing how leadership would look if applying this theory (noting style and orientation where applicable). Stronger answers made a comprehensive comparison of the two theories noting their strengths, limitations, differences, and similarities. These responses may have mentioned all or a combination of these aspects.

Weaker responses missed components or key terminology of each theory or may not have applied both to the scenario. The comparison may have only noted one of the key differences, similarity, limitation or strength or lacked any analysis of the two theories at all. A few answers compared styles of leadership rather than theories.

Other concerns about knowledge of the theories were those that evaluated both theories within the conditions of favourability of COLT. For example, when evaluating 'Environmental Dangers', students would apply their second theory within this paragraph and link it to environmental dangers, demonstrating their lack of knowledge of how COLT is applied.

Task/Relationship orientation was frequently missed out of any explanation or application of COLT and occasionally was discussed initially but not applied to the scenario.

The most common theories chosen were:

- COLT
- TRANSACTIONAL
- TRANSFORMATIONAL
- FEMINIST
- SERVANT
- SITUATIONAL

Criterion 8

Many students referenced the author of their theories which helped to strengthen their criterion 8 responses. Spelling, grammar and punctuation errors were common in many responses and some essays did not have an introductory paragraph or conclusion. Most essays followed a logical format with separate paragraphs.

To be successful in Criterion 8 students need to organise information in logical sequence in response to the question. Good essay writing structure including strong and clear introductions that address the question and attribute theories/ concepts to their writers/ developers.

Strong essays provide:

- logical progression of ideas
- clear organization of information
- strong introductions that address question
- an ability to weave theoretical information and personal understanding into a cohesive discussion
- the development of relevant ideas that avoid over generalizing or repetition, and
- recognition of developers of theories and concepts.

Response should merge theoretical knowledge/ information with the scenario to produce a coherent and cohesive discussion.

Correct use of grammar/ syntax, spelling (including spelling of terminology/ specialized/ technical terms), punctuation and sentence/ paragraph structure, and language is important, with specialized terminology prioritised. Abbreviations should be spelled out in the first use and explained in context.

Handwriting must be relatively easy to decipher to make the intended meaning clear. This is still an issue for many students.

Section B

Criterion 3

There were four questions in this section. All questions were out of 10.

Question 2

How might the leadership style of an outdoor leader be dependent on the skills and experience of the group he/she is leading? As part of your response, define and give some examples of the key skills and character traits required of a leader when working with people in an outdoor adventure setting.

Students are given the opportunity in this question to discuss how leaders need to be adaptable and flexible depending on the skills and experience of the people they are leading. Leaders almost always have to deal with a range of skills and experiences in a group and as such may have to continually review their style (autocratic→democratic→laissez-faire) according to the level of experience and environmental factors.

It is important for students to remember that the level of experience does not negate a leader's responsibilities to the group and individuals within the group. Approaches to problem solving or decision making may be influenced by more experienced group members. Decision-making and problem-solving requires knowledge and understanding of the group members and an ability to adapt to the variables.

The terms "experienced" or "inexperienced" are both very subjective and will have a different meaning for different people.

The allocated time and space provided serves as an indication to the depth of response expected for this question.

Stronger responses provided a thorough description of the three types of leadership styles (autocratic, democratic and abdicator), mentioning that a leader is sometimes required to fluctuate between leadership styles depending on the competency and skill set of each individual and the group. They also clearly defined the differences between skills and traits and the synergy between the two, presenting a variety of qualities/traits. Qualities such as patience, confidence, empathy and sense of humour were discussed and described well and linked to how a leader can utilise these traits to maintain motivation with the group. A discussion of delegating responsibilities within the group for the participants to gain 'experienced based judgment' and further develop their leadership skills was also explored.

When discussing a democratic approach, strong responses explain that risk management shared concern for the group and with this approach/style a leader will likely enforce both task and relationship goal setting. Soft skills such as communication were commonly discussed showing that it is required by the leader throughout every leadership approach. The Brick wall analogy was used well, showing foundation: technical skills, bricks: soft skills, mortar: meta skills.

Section of a response to Questions 2

'When a group is more experienced, a leader can rely on their skills less heavily, however, character traits such as humour, confidence, patience and empathy will still be used to maintain positive attitudes in the group.'

Weaker responses discussed some skills and/or traits but did not describe them well or at all. There was little mention of leadership approach/style and content and application to an outdoor activity setting was minimal. Some responses lacked the use of specialised terminology when describing leadership approaches/styles.

Question 3

How might an outdoor leader be able to minimise or prevent emergency situations in an outdoor environment?

Some strategies used to answer this question include (but are not limited to):

- A leader's ability to:
 - carry out risk assessments focusing on the people, the place and other environmental factors
 - conduct activities in a safe and meaningful manner using activity protocols (students may refer to Adventure Activity Standards or equivalent)
 - undertake ongoing risk assessments in the field.
- Leaders should:
 - undertake site visits
 - consider capacity
 - possess the appropriate skills, character traits and experience for the context
 - maintain clear communication channels between group members and leadership and
 - take a flexible approach to individual and group goals.

Stronger responses acknowledged that risk is an essential element of outdoor adventure activities and the elimination of risk is neither desirable nor possible. A leader should not wish for healthy and well-managed risk-taking behaviour to devolve into an emergency situation.

Students often applied the SCARE acronym (Stop, Contain the group, Assess the problem or emergency, Respond appropriately and Evaluate) and described/linked this concept to an outdoor environment and to minimise the severity of an emergency situation.

Topics explored such as experienced-based judgment, organisation, preparation and risk management were clear and concise. Good descriptions of GOPREARE were provided and were linked well to leadership projects.

Some mentioned the importance of clear safety briefs and communication as a strategy for reducing emergency situations. Many mentioned the different types of risk such as perceived versus actual/real.

Section of response to Question 3

'A leader should go through an extensive process of considering risk factors such as environmental conditions including changing weather forecasts; equipment risks such as broken or forgotten items/gear; people risk like inexperienced participants. This will minimise the likelihood of emergencies occurring.'

Weaker responses only mentioned that the leader must do research and gain knowledge about risks associated with the chosen outdoor activity. Such responses lacked substance on why they should do this and the area that need research.

Question 4

Decision-making models provide outdoor leaders with a framework to develop and enhance their capacity to make effective decisions and solve problems. Describe one decision-making model which might be used by a leader in an outdoor setting. As part of your response, you may wish to refer to your own experiences on your Individual Outdoor Leadership Project.

The intention of this question is to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of a recognised model for decision making. Students could discuss the variables which differentiate between complex and simple decisions. Three models could be chosen from: Naturalistic, Creative (non-linear) and Rational (linear).

The rational model eight-step process should be explored in detail, with students acknowledging that it is time consuming and not appropriate for all emergency scenarios. A less experienced leader will likely use this model to decide on the best solution as it does not rely on experienced based judgment.

Stronger responses outlined the strengths and/or weaknesses of their chosen model and argued when and why their chosen model might be used over an alternate model. For example, the analytic method being an appropriate model for leaders with less experience. These responses defined simple and complex decisions, explaining that simple decisions involve fewer variables, predictable outcomes, and limited consequences, while complex decisions involve more variables, less predictable outcomes, and potentially serious consequences.

Stronger responses discussed how important reflection is and how feedback can enforce the decision-making process for outdoor leaders. They provided detailed and relevant links to IOLP's and how experienced-based judgment influences the decision-making process. The strengths and weaknesses of the chosen model were explored in detail.

One response mentioned '*when applying the naturalistic model there is potential danger of the heuristic traps*'.

Weaker responses failed to mention or discuss a decision-making model. Attempts were often made to apply concepts such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs concept, or Conditional Outdoor Leadership Theory components rather than addressing the actual question. On occasion conflict resolution techniques were provided as a model; this resulted in no marks being gained. Some students mentioned a decision-making model but then failed to describe the strengths and weaknesses of the chosen model.

Question 5

How are Australian Adventure Activity Standards (AAAS) or Department of Education Off-Campus Guidelines used to support outdoor leaders when planning for outdoor experiences? As part of your response, you may wish to refer to your own Individual Outdoor Leadership Project.

All schools use standards to guide their running of outdoor activities. Students should have referred to these in planning and running their IOLPs. This question requires students to discuss that:

- People with knowledge, skills and experience have created these standards as a guideline for schools to conduct adventurous activities.
- It is not necessary for leaders to invest time and money in developing their own set of standards and protocols when they have these standards available to them.
- Standards provide consistency for leaders who may have multiple contract employers. Leaders who may be employed by a number of different organisations will be able to readily identify issues and concerns if they are working to the same set of protocols.
- These standards have been provided so institutions such as schools and commercial enterprises understand the systems which need to be put in place, so they do not expose staff, students or other participants to unwanted and unnecessary risk. Students may wish to briefly mention different types of risk (real, perceived, residual, etc).
- These standards and protocols are accessible via the internet.

Stronger responses acknowledged that:

- Simply adopting the standards does not "guarantee" safety.
- Schools will need to consider how they might wish to adapt the standards to their educational context. For example, if a school has a number of students with special needs, they will need to adjust their leader ratios accordingly.

Stronger responses discussed the importance of the document and that the protocols/guidelines are the same for each school or organisation. They provided a clear and concise discussion about teacher/student ratios and how they differ based on the outdoor activity, and that schools have a duty of care and that the guidelines protect schools from litigation.

They discussed the importance of risk management documents and how they need to be closely linked to the guidelines and discussed how the protocols informed their preparations for their negotiated project. Relevant topics and supervising clearances such as ethical standards, WWVP check, first aid qualifications were mentioned and that they were national directives.

Weaker responses provided little or no discussion about the relevance of the document standards at all. They repeated the same information about the standards, just worded differently and instead, explored the types of injuries that could occur. Weaker responses provided little or no solid link to an IOLP.

Section C

Criterion 5

There were four questions in this section. All questions were out of 10.

Question 6

You are asked to lead a group of tourists on a five-day bushwalk in a remote Tasmanian National Park. These people come together on the first day and are unknown to each other. They are quiet and nervous, and awaiting instruction from you. As the leader, how can you use the concepts associated with stages of group formation to facilitate and manage issues of group development in the coming days?

Students were expected to write to the different stages of Tuckman's Stages of Group Development and how progress through these stages is not necessarily linear. Effective leadership is essential for participants to be optimally guided through these stages.

Given the nature of the question, students may focus on the "storming" and "forming" stages disproportionately to the other stages. Nearly three quarters of the answers referred to all 5 stages of group formation and explained them quite well.

The response to this question should not just concern the student's understanding of the theory, but how a leader should/could facilitate their group members as they start their journey. A leader might decide, for example, to focus on building of relationships in the first few days of a multi-day journey rather than being task oriented. Students may describe connections between stages of group formation and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

This question was generally answered well by students with stronger responses describing how a leader facilitates the group through the stages. Responses discussed ways a group may regress and that the role of the leader in guiding the group through the stages of group formation may shift.

Weaker responses did not respond to the scenario or observe that the group in the scenario in question was in the forming and storming stages. Some weaker responses discussed 'characteristics' of each stage other than 'quiet and nervous' for forming stage and 'conflict' in the storming stage.

Question 7

Describe two (2) different barriers to communication which may limit the way in which information is delivered to participants of an outdoor experience. Provide a strategy which a leader can use to overcome each of these barriers. As part of your response, you may wish to refer to your own Individual Outdoor Leadership Project.

This question required students to discuss barriers to effective communication: semantic noise; internal noise; external noise; overload. In doing so, students could describe channels for communication (verbal; tactile; auditory; visual) and in responding to the part of the question about strategies, students could describe factors that can reduce or prevent barriers impacting on communication:

- Barriers to communication occur at both the sending and receiving ends.
- Leaders should plan communications to minimise overload and noise.
- The effects of barriers to communication can be minimised through clarification of understanding and two-way communication.
- To the best of their ability, leaders need to understand the participants' needs prior to the commencement of the trip (for example, knowing that there may be some non-English speakers)
- Leaders need to reduce distractions of any sort that interfere with communication.
- Semantic noise: leaders should avoid semantic noise through defining terms and understanding the participants (level of English, age, experience, etc).

- Internal noise: leaders need to consider Maslow's hierarchy of needs - basic needs must be met before a receiver can concentrate on listening. Leaders can minimise some internal noise through well prepared and thought-out communication (especially in the case of pre-prepared briefings).
- External noise: leaders can minimise external noise by carefully considering the orientation etc. of the receivers. (e.g. when giving a briefing, receivers should have their backs to the sun and wind).
- Overload: leaders should consider information overload - there is a limit to the amount of information and ideas that humans can process at one time. They need to avoid speaking too quickly and limit distractions.
- Sensory overload – leaders need to be aware of difficulties in concentrating when there is a lot going on.

Weaker responses provided limited or no discussion of the importance of communication, send/receiver, two/one-way, etc. Generally, the barrier to communication was explained well but some students neglected to give relevant outdoor examples.

Stronger responses provided justification on how to prevent or minimise each chosen barrier.

Question 8

What are some strategies that a leader could use to help facilitate the achievement of goals? Consider your response from the perspectives of individual goals and group goals.

It was expected that a framework such as SMART or SMARTER would be used to facilitate goals both on an individual and group level. Generally, all students discussed this framework well.

Group Goal discussions could include the following:

- Effective goal setting involves recognising, accepting and valuing each member of the group.
- Failure of the leader to take into account individual differences and the needs of others is likely to result in a negative outcome/experience.
- Differences should be taken into account when setting group goals: motivation for participation in activity; differences in opinion; individual strengths and weaknesses; ethnicity; socio-economic background; world view; religious beliefs/ orientation; political beliefs/ orientation; values and ethics systems.
- Weaknesses of individuals can be accommodated within appropriately set group goals.
- Involvement of all members of the group in goal setting means that there is some negotiation and ownership of the goals.

Individual Goal discussions could include:

- Leaders need to make efforts to understand group members at an individual level.
- Strengths of individuals can be used to benefit the group.
- Weaknesses of individuals may be accommodated within appropriately set group goals.

- Individuals viewed as 'weak' should be esteemed and have their strengths and values recognised.
- Clashes between individual and group goals should be eliminated.

Weaker responses simply defined and summarised the SMART/ER acronym (or an equivalent framework). They failed to address the individual/group aspect of the question. While Maslow was referred to on occasion, often there were no link to the question.

Stronger responses discussed the nuances and challenges of group and individual goals, explaining the role of objectives in facilitating the achievement of goals. They addressed strengths and weaknesses of both group and individuals when setting goals plus the enthusiasm, reinforcement, and encouragement of the leader.

Students should remember that coercive power or punishment is not appropriate in an outdoor adventure setting.

Question 9

You are the leader of a small group of friends on a day walk. One of your friends, Luke, is eager to take a side-trip up a mountain, but you know that there is not enough time in the day to reach the top and get back again in daylight hours. You have concerns for the wellbeing of everyone, but Luke has started walking up the mountain and everybody has started following him. Respond to the following two questions:

- Explain what conflict management strategy could be used to resolve this situation?*
- Explain what conflict management strategy would be unlikely to resolve this situation?*

It would be expected that students will discuss avoidance; accommodation; competition; compromise; collaboration. Students should indicate that collaboration would be an effective method to resolve conflict and avoidance would be an ineffective method. Students were not expected to "resolve" the situation but rather explain techniques that might be used to resolve conflict. They were required to make an argument as to why they felt that their chosen techniques were likely/unlikely to be effective in the situation.

Overall this question was answered quite well, with most responses containing relevant justification for the use of the chosen technique. Weaker responses lacked depth in the explanation of that technique and often tried to resolve the situation with minimal/no technical or theoretical understanding. Many did not mention all resolution techniques and failed to discuss that conflict can be a positive or negative depending on how it is handled. Avoidance and Collaboration were written about most commonly, but few students explained the technique e.g., high, or low assertiveness or any other theory behind the technique.

Strong responses argued that conflict in itself is not necessarily a negative thing and that depending on how conflict is handled, it can result in either positive or negative outcomes.

Section D

Criterion 7

All students responded to Question 10, with an even split between students who attempted questions 11 and 12.

Question 10

According to Tourism Tasmania, over one third of tourists who come to Tasmania visit at least one national park during their stay. Including local, interstate and international visitors, well over one million people visit Tasmania's most popular national parks each year. This provides opportunities for many people but can also have the potential to negatively impact upon experiences within these national parks. Referring to specific user groups and/or stakeholders, describe the potential impact of a high number of visitors to Tasmania's national parks. Discuss how this can influence human-nature experiences and shape values towards the natural environment.

Students were asked to discuss the potential implications of high visitor numbers on human-nature experiences, and how this shapes values towards the natural environment. This question provided students with the opportunity to discuss the tensions that exist between user groups of Tasmanian National Parks and how catering for the needs of a particular user group will inevitably impact upon human-nature experiences.

Students discussed a range of topics including:

- strategies used in National Parks to cater for increased usage (Cradle Mountain shuttle buses, track work at Freycinet, Three Capes, Free Capes, Frenchmans, etc)
- user fees and the impact that may have on experiences of nature
- how values and attitudes towards the natural environment have changed over time (historical versus contemporary)
- what experiences and changes might have led to the increased usage of natural spaces, particularly as it relates to the selected stakeholders
- contributing factors towards changing perspectives including:
 - personal experiences
 - culture and family values
 - beliefs based on values and attitudes
 - changing value of nature
- impacts on the natural environment over time, including impacts of sustainability issues on human-nature relationships and wilderness experiences
- ways in which people build connections with nature
 - emotional and physical identity with a place shaped by the place and their experience of it

- does a user fee system "protect" that experience? What would be the implications if these experiences were unregulated? How might that influence values, attitudes, beliefs?

There was scope in this question to discuss how the modification of wilderness experiences such as the Overland Track or Three Capes Track might affect values and attitudes towards the experience and whether places with high visitor numbers have the same meaning as more "wild" places? How "paying" for an experience may change it could also be explored?

Links with issues of increased tourist and resource development and pre- and post- values of this area/environment (contemporary and historical) could be explored, along with environmental worldviews and changing perceptions of 'wilderness'.

This is an open-ended question which allows students to provide a broad range of responses based on the user groups or stakeholders the student chooses to write about. The number of user groups or stakeholders was not prescribed, but it was anticipated that students would discuss at least two user groups/stakeholders to respond to the question appropriately. Most students did refer to two user groups, but often chose ones with similar values and experiences resulting in limited depth or complexity. Stronger responses explored user groups/stakeholders with (arguably) competing worldviews (for example, environmental groups and forestry, tourist groups and park management).

The question does not ask students to argue for or against tourism, although stronger responses argued that point within the framework of user groups. Values were explored in depth, incorporating theory covered in the course and considering changes over time. How values are influenced by culture and experiences and directly impact the relationship and connections people have with the natural environment, were also explored.

The best essays answered the question comprehensively, addressing all aspects of the question and the standards for Criterion 7.

Many students gave only satisfactory answers. They did not address human-nature experiences and relationships in detail or expand on issues relating to Martin's Signposts to Nature (2004), proximity to nature, metaphors for human-nature interaction or discuss a sense of space and a sense of place, and how increasing visitor numbers could impact these specifically. Tourism operators were the main user group cited and were frequently stereotyped as exhibiting only economic values regarding nature. Students were often critical of the addition of new huts, hardened tracks, viewing platforms and signage. While these criticisms are valid, generally commercial guides are also very strict on sustainable practices and educating clients about the intrinsic, scientific, and aesthetic values regarding human-nature relationships.

Some students expressed their opinion about the harmful effects of nature tourism but did not provide evidence, detail, and a balanced answer. Many weaker responses provided an extensive response on sustainability without addressing the question.

Question 11

For many years, Tasmanians have struggled with finding the balance between using the natural environment for commercial profit (e.g., hydroelectricity, mining, forestry, aquaculture, tourism)

and developing strategies to enhance and protect these same environments so that people can develop a deeper connection with nature. Describe the historical and contemporary issues that have influenced values towards the natural environment in Tasmania. As part of your response, describe ways an outdoor leader may facilitate how members of their group reflect on their own values and attitudes towards the natural environment.

The word "historical" is subjective. Students could approach this question by describing a chronology of events that may influence attitudes and values towards the natural environment and how that has evolved over time to reflect changing values. They may choose to go back to the early timber cutters and fur traders, for example, but could have equally discussed key moments in the Tasmanian environmental movement such as the damming of Lake Pedder or the Franklin Dam dispute. More contemporary issues include tourism and park management.

Responses should have included an understanding of 'sense of place' and how this may be developed and enhanced through people's relationship and engagement with nature. They should have referred directly to Peter Martin's 'Signposts to Nature' to describe human relationships and experiences with nature.

Stronger responses demonstrated an understanding of the tensions which exist between user groups and how values and attitudes towards the natural environment are shaped by interactions. They acknowledged that values and attitudes of people can compete against each other (e.g. Forestry and conservationists), but also addressed how they can form partnerships (e.g. Forestry and Mountain Bike Trails). They discussed how people may demonstrate their values and attitudes towards the natural environment in a number of different ways.

An important component of this question was the discussion of how outdoor leaders can shape values and attitudes towards nature by increasing connections to the natural environment and helping users reflect on their own values and attitudes. Stronger responses provided a number of different ways in which leaders facilitate reflection on values and attitudes toward the natural environment. This could include any activity but should specifically show how their chosen activity impacts values and attitudes. Facilitation and leadership techniques could include:

- appropriate preparation sessions
- extended visits to nature and direct experiences with nature
- repeated visits to the one place at different times of day and during different seasons
- providing participants with language and ideas for describing relationships with nature
- making people comfortable in the outdoors
- equipping participants with the skills and competencies for outdoor living and travel, educating and informing (how to set up a tent and select a suitable site, adjusting a pack, cooking tasty and nutritious meals, keeping warm and wearing the correct clothing, navigational skills)
- providing time to reflect upon experiences and focus specifically on self and personal relationship with nature (solo time, nature journals, sharing of ideas and stories, use of poems, songs, and other creative mediums)
- spending time alone in nature
- positive experiences in nature

- use of interpretation to foster knowledge of, and connection to, place
- a focus on ecology and the interconnectedness of all species
- exploration and discovery.

Weaker responses spoke about one user group or set of values without showing change over time. Describing historical and contemporary issues that have influenced values towards the natural environment in Tasmania and ways in which leaders can enhance relationships tended to be done poorly by many students. Similarly, to Question 10, weaker responses failed to show evidence of human-nature relationship theory or connect it to the question. Answers were sometimes superficial showing little evidence of course knowledge or explicit actions the leader could take to foster relationships with nature.

Question 12

When people engage with the natural environment, they bring with them their own unique values, attitudes and cultural perspectives. This includes people with an Aboriginal heritage. Discuss and describe ways in which outdoor experiences can specifically contribute to our understanding of the way in which many Aboriginal people value the natural environment.

Question 12 tended to be dealt with more strongly than question 11, with more students showing a clear understanding of Aboriginal connections.

This question allowed students to identify different values people have for the environment, especially values and attitudes held by Aboriginal people. Responses needed to be sympathetic to the broad understanding of the relationships that Aboriginal people have with the natural environment and that there is not one single set of values and attitudes for indigenous populations. Specifically, students can use this question to discuss how an increased understanding of Aboriginal values may impact their own understanding, experience and relationship with nature.

Students were specifically asked to describe ways (more than one) in which outdoor experiences can contribute to an understanding of the way in which Aboriginal people value the natural environment. Stronger responses demonstrated an understanding of 'sense of place' and how this may be developed and enhanced through people's relationship and engagement with nature. They cited Peter Martin's 'Signposts to Nature' to describe human relationships and experiences with nature and linked this to their discussion. They explored why the natural environment is significant to Indigenous people and how this occurs, whilst also exploring the way many Aboriginal Australians seek to be integrated with nature and how this compares to other ways people approach nature. Examples were provided that explored historical and/or contemporary connections to country, values and worldviews, and concepts of reciprocity and proximity.

Better responses gave explicit ways in which outdoor experiences can be used to help people understand these connections, either through outdoor experiences in school, or cultural immersion programs, whilst acknowledging some of the dangers of leaders (including non-aboriginal leaders) discussing culturally sensitive issues. They discussed how leaders can foster an ability to empathise with Indigenous people and their relationship with nature and the natural environment.

Weaker responses simplified Indigenous cultures, suggesting life was easy, or that through eating native plants or spending time in the bush non-indigenous people could enhance their understanding of Aboriginal connections to land. More attention needs to be paid to the complexity of Aboriginal relationships and connections to country and how this understanding can in turn enhance connections across the broader community. They failed to explicitly explore human-nature relationships and tended, instead, to write about Aboriginal culture and historical practices. Such responses seemed to draw on content learnt in high school rather than that explicit to this course.

Criterion 8

To be successful on Criterion 8, students need to organise information in logical sequence in response to the question. Good essay writing requires strong, clear introductions that address the question and ensures theories/ concepts are correctly attributed to their writers/ developers.

Strong essays provide:

- logical progression of ideas
- clear organization of information
- strong introductions that address question
- an ability to weave theoretical information and personal understanding into a cohesive discussion
- the development of relevant ideas that avoid over generalizing or repetition
- recognition of developers of theories and concepts

Responses should merge theoretical knowledge/ information with the scenario to produce a coherent and cohesive discussion.

Correct use of grammar/ syntax, spelling (including spelling of terminology/ specialized/ technical terms), punctuation and sentence/ paragraph structure, and language is important, with specialized terminology prioritised. Abbreviations should be spelled out in the first use and explained in context. Handwriting must be relatively easy to decipher to make the intended meaning clear and is still an issue for many students.

Students generally wrote clearly, displaying some logic in structure. However, many students could have been more careful with spelling, grammar, sentence structure and paragraphing. Students need to take the time to plan their essay carefully and make the most appropriate use of their introduction, key paragraphs, and conclusion. Key to this section is that students refer to specialised terminology.

Weaker responses lacked structure and instead provided a narrative, telling a story of what the participants are experiencing. This detracted from the essay, preventing the question from being fully addressed. These responses often had numerous spelling and/or grammatical errors, were too brief, and did not provide enough evidence or structure to allow for a higher mark. Many students could have made more productive use of the time available.