

2025 ASSESSMENT REPORT

SDI315117 STUDENT DIRECTED INQUIRY

The external assessment for Student Directed inquiry includes two main sections:

1. An Inquiry Folio, consisting of four parts –
 - 1.1 Executive Summary
 - 1.2 Inquiry Proposal
 - 1.3 Inquiry Report / Product and Communication Log / Reflective Journal
 - 1.4 Inquiry Presentation Digital File
2. The Inquiry Oral Presentation, which is a 30-minute oral presentation to a marking panel.

General Comments

On the TASC SDI315117 course webpage, in a tab titled “Supporting documents”, the External Assessment Specification provides a description of the work requirements which must be followed by candidates to meet the examinable elements in the external examination.

In the folio sections and the oral presentation, candidates are encouraged to demonstrate that they know, and can discuss and reflect upon:

- the class teaching of the course content assisting in the choice, adoption and refining of a research question for an inquiry proposal, the research design, the research tools, or the methods adopted
- the critical task of bringing the inquiry research to a conclusion through an analysis of the findings and recommendations for future action, all relating back to the research question
- each set of relevant criterion and elements in each of the folio sections.

The external examiners will not assess the internal Criterion 2 and Criterion 5. Too much time and emphasis on these areas, such as project management skills or personal capabilities will detract from the limited oral presentation time for the critical criteria in an external assessment of:

- Criterion 1: resolving a transdisciplinary inquiry question
- Criterion 3 and Criterion 4: planning and conducting the research methods, including a literature review and making ethical decisions
- Criterion 6 and Criterion 7: creative and critical thinking in using and analysing primary and secondary sources, drawing conclusions and reflecting on those processes for the transfer of knowledge into new contexts
- Criterion 8: communicating in a range of contexts or modes.

Additional teachers and/or subject mentors having a role as a subject expert will provide their own *Subject Expert Declaration Form* in which they complete a statement indicating an acknowledgement that they have read and understand the course, the TASC External Assessment Rule 4 (a-b) and Academic Integrity of the Candidate Declaration Form. This form is countersigned as a verifiable acknowledgement by the subject teacher or course co-ordinator that there is no conflict of interest and submitted to TRACS with the folio.

General Notes from the Panel

- The range of Inquiry topics and questions across the state were diverse and specialised, with most candidates embracing the possibilities of the transdisciplinary nature of the subject.
- Students achieving a strong result gave very insightful, well-written and presented work. These students showed clear and significant transdisciplinary focus. They also applied rigorous and thorough academic referencing, using the chosen convention consistently and appropriately.
- Students with a high result demonstrated understanding and application of a sound research methodology and deeply reflective critical analysis.
- Successful candidates also demonstrated thorough documentation of all communication with mentors and supervisors as well as a diary of metacognitive reflection and robust development of the inquiry throughout the process.
- The panel recommends teachers to facilitate deeper understanding, description and application of research methods focusing on robust research processes. More attention to the reflective journal / communication log will demonstrate the inquiry process and the development of ideas.
- Students need to understand the importance of a robust literature review and the panel would encourage teachers to support students further in accessing academic research databases. Weaker candidates had very little analysis of literature relating to their topic.
- It is important for teachers to be aware which criteria are internally assessed and which are externally assessed. Material in presentations that is relating to internally assessed criteria only cannot be assessed by the panel and uses valuable time that should be used for addressing the other criteria.
- Teachers are encouraged to support students in the set up process, ensure they are ready to go at the required time and have their pink slips with them to be sighted by the panel as they enter the presentation room.

Folio Component

1. An **Inquiry Folio**, consisting of four parts –
 - 1.1 Executive Summary (300 – 500 words)
 - 1.2 Inquiry Proposal (minimum 1,000 words)
 - 1.3 Reflective Journal and Inquiry Report (maximum 15,000 words for parts 1.1 – 1.3)
 - 1.4 Inquiry Presentation Slides (digital record or zipped file of slides, multimodal presentation, audio/video or website, exhibition material).

The 15,000-word limit for the Inquiry Report does not include the title page, contents list, or, the list of tables and figures; the acknowledgements, the subject expert, or mentor declaration form; intext references or the reference lists and bibliographies; additional material in the body of the report, such as charts, tables, diagrams, the appendices, questionnaire or interview survey forms; the Communications Log, or a Reflections Journal [diary].

Successful responses in the external assessment fully utilised the maximum word count. These successful responses provide and demonstrate understanding of each of the elements in the six (6) criteria externally assessed – Criteria 1,3, 4, 6, 7 and 8.

Responses need to demonstrate their theory-to-practice application of research methodologies, such as a qualitative or quantitative or mixed methods study, or an investigative, narrative or case study; and then reasons for their choice of research tools such as interviews, questionnaires, or surveys throughout their report in the required Reflections Journal or Communication Log. Summarising these research decisions in the written form or evaluating by using a SMART or SWOT table can be a strength of an Inquiry Report.

The presentation file included in the inquiry folio, such as MS PowerPoint presentation slides for support of the oral presentation, must not be edited or extended once they have been uploaded to TRACS. It is intended to provide depth and support the oral presentation, so it is useful to use meaningful slide headings or prompts, such as Research Question, Transdisciplinary Focus, Literature Review and Methodology, Survey Results, Findings, Reflections on the evidence for each Criteria, and Communications Journal/Log.

Criterion 1: apply self-directed, transdisciplinary inquiry skills

Students who succeeded in this criterion demonstrated a documented ability to manage their own time and complete what they started. This can include changing direction and refining the original inquiry conception.

For weaker candidates there seemed to be confusion amongst some candidates regarding the nature of transdisciplinary inquiry. Stronger candidates began with a sharp, incisive inquiry question and explored this in as many contexts as possible. Strong topics of enquiry confirmed and extended existing literature using transdisciplinary approaches with integrity and originality.

Criterion 3: determine research methodologies and utilise appropriate tools and methods

Students using surveys need to understand the relationship between sample size and the nature of the conclusions that can be drawn. Stronger responses were more circumspect in their conclusions, using language that took into account the limitations of their sample sizes. These students drew conclusions that were appropriately conservative in relation to the chosen research method and the data that was collected and analysed. The marking panel are looking for evidence of robust and academically grounded research methods rather than impressive outcomes or conclusions.

The use of AI tools

Teachers should advise candidates on the use of generative AI tools as defined in each provider's academic integrity policy and the use of AI policies and procedures. The marking panel do not expect to see a non-recoverable AI source that cannot be hyper-linked or retrieved later in time, listed in an in-text citation or end reference. However, candidates are advised that there are several options or personal preferences that can be exercised concerning their ethical use (Criterion 4) or acknowledgement of information sources in referencing styles. This may include a candidate's decision to include illustrative prompts used in a generative AI query to strengthen academic integrity, or provide evidence of creative, computational or critical thinking modes, such as:

- adding a "personal communication/date" listing the AI tool used in the list of references, or the publisher of the tool and the date used
- using a recommended convention description listed in the relevant discipline style, e.g., MLA 9th edition where the AI result is recoverable via a website
- including in an Appendix an "Acknowledgement" to indicate where and how an AI tool is used, providing such details as the prompts or the outputs (e.g. audio transcription to text, images, code, formulas).

The panel encourage students to be transparent when they have used AI to support their research journey. A number of helpful tools exist including programs for transcribing audio recordings of interviews. It is vital that students clearly articulate when and where AI tools have been used in the process and give robust reasoning for their use.

Criterion 4: apply ethical understanding throughout all phases of the inquiry

Referencing Conventions

Harvard referencing convention is the default, as it is the common convention and logical solution to legitimise a transdisciplinary approach. It does not mix, or duplicate in-text citations or footnote styles, and it does not need a numbered reference list for footnotes as well as a bibliography. The Harvard style enables a good flow of text with in-text citations, encouraging academic integrity in writing; clear styles and advice on tabulating data, devising figures and tables, with labelling for each; or analysing and synthesising results effectively, without resorting to lengthy footnotes.

Other referencing conventions may be considered relevant, such as MLA 9th or APA 8th editions, but they should be selected through being able to stand the most important and practical test of being relevant to more than one discipline, such as English/Language/Philosophy and Life/Natural or Health and Behavioural Sciences respectively.

Criterion 6: apply creative and critical thinking to analyse and synthesise reasoning and procedures

Investigations which demonstrated creativity and critical thinking in the exploration of the main questions; in the methodology used; in the interpretation of findings, and in the final synthesis of their own learnings are important factors to do well on this criterion. An approach to an inquiry might simply be to reimagine the problem creatively and then seek alternative ways and means of seeing a problem, solving the problem, or designing a solution.

To do well on this criterion, there is a need to fully define a problem rather than jumping straight into an obvious, predictable, or common solution, taking the time to re-imagine the problem creatively and then to seek new or alternative ways of solving the problems.

Students also need to consider the level of sophistication with which they approach data analysis. Some candidates that chose to use surveys as part of their research methods lacked the skills to interpret numerical data, and/or analyse written responses with sophistication. For many candidates, surveys were undertaken and data was presented in its raw form with very little interpretation and very basic conclusions.

Criterion 7: apply metacognition to reflect on processes and transfer knowledge into new contexts

Students are encouraged to spend time examining their own bias and articulating this in their presentation. Stronger students were able to reflect intelligently on their own bias and deliver research outcomes that were tempered by this awareness.

Stronger students were able to demonstrate the development of their inquiry topic in response to challenges and feedback.

Criterion 8: communicate in a range of modes and contexts

Strong folios included written reports that were well organised and included all the required components. Weaker candidates were disjointed in their writing and organisation of ideas. The panel encourage students to develop their written skills, engage in editing and clear formatting conventions, working towards strong written communication skills focusing on formal academic language.

Stronger students provided clear labels for tables and graphs and images throughout the report and ensured that all elements of the written document submitted are numbered with page numbers.

The development of the slide show is an important element of the student demonstrating their proficiency with different modes of communication. The panel recommend students keep slide shows simple, pay attention to consistent formatting and correct grammar, avoid distracting transitions and ensure that the size of the typesetting is readable from a distance.

Oral Component

The Inquiry Oral Presentation is an oral assessment supported by the digital file of the presentation included with the submission of the Inquiry Folio. It may be the oral presentation of the digital record or zipped file of slides, multimodal presentation, audio/video or website, exhibition material.

For the Inquiry Presentation, thirty (30) minutes is allocated with an additional ten (10) minutes for assessment panel questions and candidates' answers at the examination centres of each school or college provider.

Five (5) minutes at the beginning and at the end of each presentation is available for the candidates' setting up, whether the multimodal settings and data projection devices or the physical display of product/s or the material evidence. The evidence display is considered as supplementary or a prop which must be referred to in the report's slides, or its appendices, through a photographic image capture or other digital formats. A physical prop or product alone will not be accepted for external assessment by the examination panel.

Successful responses in the Oral Presentation provide evidence of the inquiry process, and an objective or analytical summary of the generation of new ideas or new knowledge.

Successful responses in the external assessment fully utilised the maximum time allowed for the Inquiry Presentation. These successful responses provided and demonstrated understanding of each of the elements in the six (6) criteria externally assessed – Criterion 1,3, 4, 6, 7 and 8. These students were also able to respond to robust questioning by the panel.

Criterion 1: apply self-directed, transdisciplinary inquiry skills

Many candidates presented a very comprehensive list of inquiry questions at the start of their presentation. Strong candidates demonstrated how these were refined, examined and explored in further detail. The panel encourages students to ensure that there is a strong and logical correlation between the questions presented at the onset of the presentation and the conclusions drawn at the end of the presentation.

Criterion 3: determine research methodologies and utilise appropriate tools and methods

While many students were able to articulate which type of methodological approach was selected, stronger students were able to justify the reasons for this choice. These students demonstrated higher-level critical thinking skills which enabled them to select research processes that were most appropriate to the thorough investigation of the research question.

Criterion 4: apply ethical understanding throughout all phases of the inquiry

Students are required to engage with a subject-matter expert that is separate to their mentor / teacher. It is important that candidates are able to articulate in their presentation the role that their mentor or subject expert played in supporting their research process.

Teachers are encouraged to remind students that all images, tables and information that are presented in the oral presentation need to be appropriately referenced on the slide show. If the images are original, for example photos taken by the student, these also need to be clearly credited on the slide show.

Criterion 6: apply creative and critical thinking to analyse and synthesise reasoning and procedures

Many students gave a robust discussion regarding limitations and challenges to their research through the year. The panel encourages students to focus on the challenges regarding to the development of ideas, innovative solutions to changed circumstances and how they find solutions to limited or conflicting information. The panel would encourage students not to focus on shifts in motivation levels throughout the year and keep the presentation solutions based.

The panel found that highly successful students were able to explore their inquiry question from a range of different perspectives, engaging with literature and data that provided diverse, complex and sometimes conflicting results. Students who were able to examine this in detail and present clear, coherent and balanced interpretations and findings were better able to respond to questioning by the panel.

Criterion 7: apply metacognition to reflect on processes and transfer knowledge into new contexts

Students who were able to consistently maintain a regular progress journal demonstrated higher levels of metacognition and reflective power throughout their inquiry process. The panel noted that students who were regularly in contact with their supervisors and mentors were able to participate in an active feedback cycle that produced stronger results.

The panel would encourage teachers to provide their students with regular opportunities to discuss their work, reflect on their work with others in order to actively reflect on and articulate their learning progress.

Criterion 8: communicate in a range of modes and contexts

The ability of the candidate to respond to questioning is an important part of the oral presentation. The panel aim to establish that the candidate has understood the criteria and will engage in questions relating specifically to each of the criteria. The panel is interested in understanding how challenges were overcome and will often inquire about specific terminology and the candidates understanding of terms, especially where discipline-specific jargon is used.

Some candidates presented from cue cards, others read a prepared speech. Candidates who write their oral presentations are often more efficient and formal with their use of language. The panel commends those candidates who were clearly nervous yet employed breathing techniques and other methods to ground themselves during their presentations.

The panel strongly encourage students to avoid superfluous activities in their presentations such as ice-breakers and games as these do not allow the candidate time to delve into the assessment criteria in greater detail

An important part of this criterion is for students to be able to articulate verbally the reasons why they made certain choices along their inquiry journey – whether they be methodological choices, ethical choices or how they drew certain conclusions from the data. Students need to be prepared to respond to questions regarding their data collection and analysis process.

Successful candidates delivered their presentations with confidence, earnestness and sincerity. Many students were clearly engaged by their chosen topics and delivered their work with a sense of professionalism across complex topics. These students used formal academic language in a conference-style setting.