

# 2022 ASSESSMENT REPORT

## TAS315119 - FIRST NATIONS STUDIES

### INTRODUCTION

It is encouraging to see an increasing number of students choosing this course, perhaps suggesting a rising interest in First Nation histories and futures.

The 2022 extended research inquiries offered a range of topics reflecting student interests. While there were several related to assimilation and language, an increasing diversity of topics was noted. For example: the role of fashion in First Nation cultural identity; advocacy through sport; and film, short stories and art as mechanisms for truth telling. Many students produced reports that clearly reflected individual engagement with the course and their topic of choice. Many reports were crafted in an academic style which is a skill that will serve students well should they choose to continue into tertiary education.

Recognising and understanding one's own privilege and what it means in one's own context can nurture perceptions that avoid 'othering' First Nations experiences and perspectives. Standpoint Theory, whilst a feminist theory, may help to remind students and teachers of how position, ethnicity and socio-economic position can impact one's perceptions of others. In relation to this course, this is specific to how one interprets, speaks and writes about First Nation peoples, their histories, experiences and progress.

Students are encouraged to use the full word count available to them. The inquiries are complex and need to address the following: all parts of the proposed question, examples from three unique places and their peoples, evidence from primary and secondary sources – including analysing contemporary First Nations experiences, contestability where possible, and enough detail to address both Criteria 8 and 9, and analysis. Shorter responses often lack this depth.

The required final word count must be shown on the Inquiry's front cover, as well as an accurate culminating word count throughout. See the course's [External Assessment Specifications](#) on the course webpage for specific details.

### INQUIRY QUESTION AND TOPIC

Better questions offer clear direction and narrow scope that can be addressed within the 6000 words. It is vital that every Inquiry question has the scope to meaningfully address both Criterion 8 and Criterion 9.

In 2022, the use of visuals in folios – relevant images, graphs and maps – was excellent. The images were generally clearly titled and referenced and served to demonstrate the students understanding of the inquiry question and relevant concepts.

In relation to Canada, when speaking about assimilation, the policy was the Indian Act, and Residential Schools were one aspect of this legislation. Questions that claimed to look at assimilation and the cultural genocide this caused whole communities needed to consider multiple parts of the Act (which controlled all aspects of daily life). Or, students need to focus a question, for example one that clearly shows that the study is examining the issue of removal of children and the impact of Residential Schools (only). Without such clarification of the intention to offer a narrow focus on assimilation policy in Canada, a discussion may be judged as limited in not discussing the many ways First Nations people are working to overcome the consequences of assimilation (such as the restoration of cultural practices ((potlatch, language, and traditional names), greater freedom of movement, and rights for First Nations women in Canada) that were once denied, disconnecting them from community and culture). It is also worth noting that, although amended several times, the Indian Act is still in place in Canada; there continues to be ongoing debate about the Act itself and its parts.

In relation to Lutruwita/Tasmania, it is noted that the impact of the Black War was significant, along with the dispossession and conflict which preceded this formally titled conflict. However, a number of students attributed cultural genocide to the Black Line alone. While the Black Line is notable (it highlights colonial attitudes towards Lutruwita's First Nation people), it was events of the preceding years that had greater impact.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

While a short section providing the historical context of the topic can be useful, in most cases such historical information rarely addresses Criteria 8 and 9. It is strongly recommended that students carefully consider the purpose of including this information, and whether it is being included at the expense of content that provides evidence for the Inquiry criteria.

Stronger submissions were able to interweave details relating to historical context into the broader discussion.

## CRITERION SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

### CRITERION I

#### **Create texts using historical, anthropological and sociological ideas**

This criterion requires students to communicate clearly and formally. More effective submissions used an academic voice, and content was logically and clearly organised, allowing for the clear development of an argument. This was only possible when students used effective language, syntax and punctuation. Students are reminded to use paragraphs to organise and present content in an effective, clear and logical manner. The use of headings is useful in this regard.

Three elements in this criterion are specific to referencing, emphasising the need to ensure all information is referenced clearly – both in-text citations and the required bibliography (which can be divided into text types if students choose to do so). Academic Integrity is most important – see TASC’s Academic Integrity Guide.

Accurate reference details are required. This year there was an increased prevalence of missing information for some specific references; for example, ‘ND’ was overused. Students are reminded to include correct and accurate referencing details and check before submission.

The purpose of the Introduction is to orientate the question, perhaps define key terminology, and offer a sense of direction and structure for the following content. More successful examples had a Context Statement, Introduction and Conclusion that were distinctive, each serving a unique purpose. Less successful examples tended to repeat the findings in all three sections, although with slightly different wording.

## CRITERION 2

### **Use evidence and historical, anthropological and sociological terms, concepts and ideas to support interpretations.**

It is important that culturally appropriate terminology is used. Students will encounter inappropriate terms in historical texts. These may be quoted in the context of an explanation of historical racism, noting it is not acceptable to use them when describing contemporary First Nation people or within the general body of a student’s work.

Students are encouraged to check use of plurals in relation to Stolen Generations and First Nations and consider the use of appropriate terminology in general – more information can be found in the [Australians Together Language and Terminology Guide \(2020\)](#).

The First Nations Studies course exposes students to a range of concepts and terminology specific to historical, sociological, anthropological contexts – stronger responses used this terminology effectively throughout their analysis and argument. A full list of terms is found in Appendix I on the First Nations Studies course webpage.

For many inquiries it is beneficial to define key terminology used in the question to clarify what definition is being applied in the study. Students are encouraged to use definitions found in academic or other reputable sources.

More successful responses crafted a balanced discussion between the three chosen nations. While it is acknowledged that this can be difficult as information about some nations is more available than others, this is part of the research and writing process. Issues with inquiry focus and content should be identified early to refine focus if necessary.

Interviewing key stakeholders, including those in the First Nation community, is encouraged when undertaking primary research in the community. Students are reminded of the importance of the course's Appendix 2 (on the TASC website) relating to Ethical Study and Research Practice when doing so.

Some inquiries discussed the necessity of listening to First Nations individuals, but failed to incorporate their voices, viewpoints, and perspectives into the analysis and evidence. On the other hand, more effective research prioritised First Nation opinions and voices, which informed discussions and impacted conclusions. As a result, the conclusions often reflected the views of First Nations people rather than what others assumed they were saying.

Quality well-referenced evidence is fundamental to this criterion. While this can include drawing upon academic texts and historians, it also relates to the number and variation of examples used to inform findings. Many 2022 studies did this well; there was a balanced discussion and examples were analysed according to the question, whether this be an organisation, program, short story, artwork, cultural place etc. However, some studies referred to one example numerous times with little analysis. One example is not evidence of wide research and suggests conclusions are based on very limited evidence.

Examples need to be relevant to the First Nation peoples included in the study. Students are reminded to choose examples carefully, and check that they adequately support the Inquiry.

### CRITERION 3

#### **Apply research and analytical skills to complete First Nations inquiry**

The purpose of the Context Statement is for students to explain why they have chosen the topic (Criterion 3, Element 1, 'create question, explain context and offer rationale and justification'), along with their findings. Context statements that make a personal connection between the content and the student were most effective, and often related to experiences, interests, personal identity, curiosity, intended career etc.

Students need to access a range of texts and text types. There is a clear reliance on internet resources, and while often relevant, they do not offer the whole picture for many topics. Students are encouraged to access academic texts, including a range of printed texts by First Nation authors and scholars.

More successful studies were able to synthesise information from a range of sources. This facilitated more sophisticated comparisons and analysis of the topic. Less convincing discussion tended to focus on a single source then move onto another, rather than weaving together a range of well-considered concepts and ideas to address the question and criterion.

This criterion requires evidence of the use of both primary and secondary sources. Stronger responses used primary sources, utilising high-quality secondary sources that offered valuable historical, anthropological, and sociological perspectives on the relevant subject matter and informed a balanced and complex discussion.

Where relevant, students are encouraged to consider contrasting opinions, not just those of First Nation people, but also those who challenge popular interpretations.

This year there were many questions that were refined, specific to course content, and offered a sense of direction for inquiry research and analysis. Less developed questions lacked focus. They often included numerous parts to a question and insisted they were going to look at a range of concepts. Lengthy and complicated questions were less likely to meet the standard elements of the criterion because the content skimmed over important information and examples because the size of the report did not allow full analysis or comparison of research.

## CRITERION 8

### **Analyse contemporary First Nations experiences of political advocacy, self-determination, global indigenous politics and truth-telling.**

This criterion and Criterion 9 are content-specific and students must ensure their chosen topics have the scope to meet elements within both criteria

More successful studies foregrounded First Nation people and their voices in the discussion, emphasising the important role First Nations people have, whereas less successful submissions tended to prioritise government and legal actions and initiatives inadvertently implying a passivity from First Nation people. While the role of governments and other initiatives are important, it is important to credit First Nations people as mechanisms for change – it is worth remembering governments usually don't just apologise, return land or offer reparations; rather, this is often a consequence of decades of campaigning by First Nations people, supporting voices, institutions and organisations.

More successful studies included specific First Nation-owned and operated organisations and initiatives. These studies were able to not only describe the organisations based on their website content, but they also expanded on how these organisations and initiatives work in practice. Additionally, they were able to clearly evaluate and analyse the role these organisations have and the outcomes of their involvement in within First Nations communities and beyond. Most successful studies offered a range of examples specific to their topic and ensured First Nation experiences and voices were heard in relation to these examples.

Reference to international rights documents like the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – were made in stronger responses. In some cases, students managed to incorporate several relevant and connected articles from the Declaration and similar documents into their argument – this added credibility to the Inquiry's assertions.

A balanced discussion is needed for both this criterion and Criterion 9; this includes, balanced representation of the places being discussed and ensuring the content clearly relates to criterion elements while addressing the inquiry question.

## CRITERION 9

**Explain the contemporary resurgence and significance of First Nations identity, community, culture and connection to place in a comparative context.**

If Criterion 8 has a focus on advocacy and the fight for rights and other progress, Criterion 9 has a focus on the current situation, and students should aim to include discussion and analysis that reflects First Nation peoples in the present context.

Much like Criterion 8, Criterion 9 has several elements: there is overlap and interconnections between concepts such as identity, community connection to place and culture. Focus on those concepts most relevant to the specific topic/question is encouraged, noting that, for example, in discussion about identity, reference is also made to community and culture, and possibly place depending on the topic.

Also, as with Criterion 8, students are encouraged to look beyond First Nation-run organisation's websites, using these sources to learn about the organisations then undertaking wider research to learn about what they are achieving. In some places this content may be found in news and social media, reports, opinions from those being positively or negatively impacted by these organisations and institutions. Students can then make connections in their discussion and analysis as to how those involved are being impacted by the initiatives and organisations, and how they are seeing culture and/or community and/or identity resurged through these initiatives.

Successful Inquiries offered analysis of specific examples, including people, organisations, movements and their real-world impact and practice. Depending on the inquiry, this often looked like specific reference and analysis of how reclaimed land is being used, or what First Nation communities are doing with returned human remains and artefacts, or how traditional foods or traditional medicines were not only used in the past, but how they are being consumed or applied in the present and what this means for First Nations culture, community, connection to place etc. Inquiries offering a depth of discussion showed the students' interest in the present and appreciation for First Nations people and their practices as being an ongoing and contemporary lived experience, rather than a thing of the past.