Assessment guidelines for the Modern Languages K–10 Syllabus

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**Note:** this document provides advice only. It is the responsibility of individual school executive and teaching staff to ensure assessment processes are compliant with both NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and departmental requirements and policies.

# Introduction

This document supports teachers of modern languages 7–10 to understand and design relevant and engaging assessment opportunities for students. It provides comprehensive information for teachers in all contexts across NSW public schools, as well as their supervisors and the educational teams who provide universal support to schools. **Only read the sections relevant to you, based on your context.**

**The document provides advice only.** Assessment is a school-based decision, aligned with the [Curriculum planning and programming, assessing and reporting to parents K-12 policy](https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2005-0290) in NSW public schools. (If the link does not open, you can access via the policy library in the portal.)

For general advice on programming for the Modern Languages K–10 Syllabus, please access ‘Programming guidelines for the Modern Languages K–10 Syllabus’ on the [Planning, programming and assessing languages 7–10](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/languages/planning-programming-and-assessing-languages-7-10) webpage. For support with planning a unit, please access ‘Unit guidelines and sample template for the Modern Languages K–10 Syllabus’ template on the same page.

# Syllabus outcomes and content

In the [Modern Languages K–10 Syllabus](https://curriculum.nsw.edu.au/learning-areas/languages/modern-languages-k-10-2022) (2022), students **apply** **knowledge of language systems** and **develop intercultural capability** as they communicate across 3 focus areas:

* **Interacting**
* **Understanding texts**
* **Creating texts.**

Each focus area has 3 stage-based outcomes.

**Stage 4**

* **ML4-INT-01** exchanges information and opinions in a range of familiar contexts by using culturally appropriate language
* **ML4-UND-01** interprets and responds to information, opinions and ideas in texts to demonstrate understanding
* **ML4-CRT-01** creates a range of texts for familiar communicative purposes by using culturally appropriate language

**Stage 5**

* **ML5-INT-01** exchanges information, ideas and perspectives in a range of contexts by manipulating culturally appropriate language
* **ML5-UND-01** analyses and responds to information, ideas and perspectives in a range of texts to demonstrate understanding
* **ML5-CRT-01** creates a range of texts for diverse communicative purposes by manipulating culturally appropriate language

The content for each outcome is represented through content groups and dot points, as seen in the figure below.

Figure 1 – syllabus content groups and content

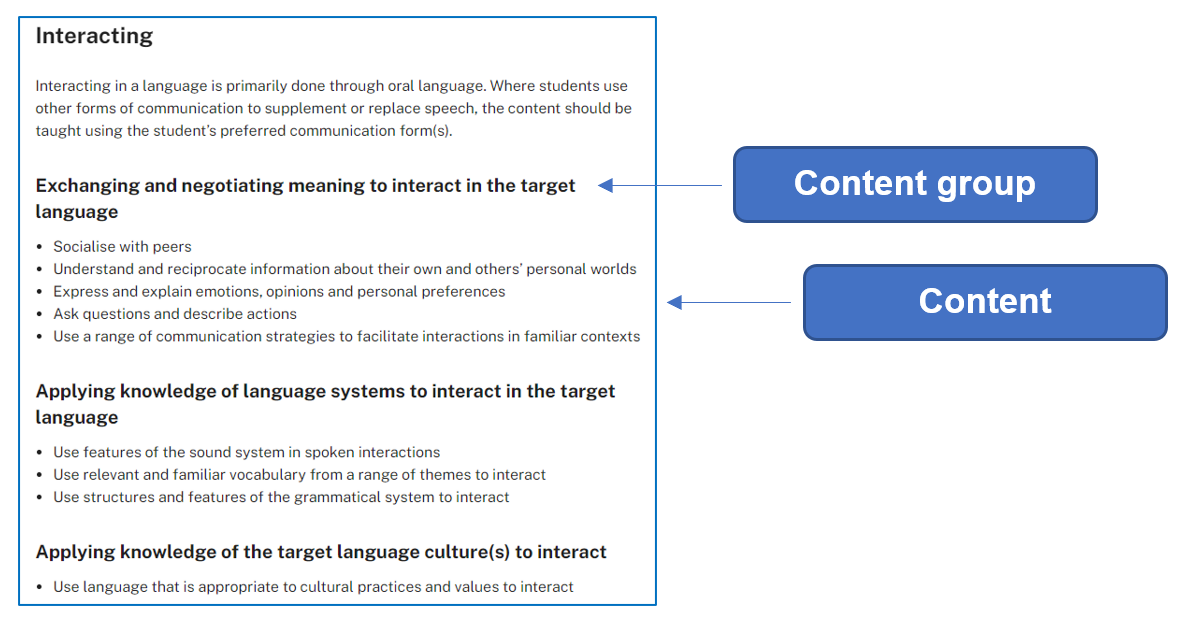


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All content is considered essential for students to demonstrate achievement of the outcome.

In the syllabus, content groups are organised by:

* communication skills and function
* knowledge of language systems
* knowledge of culture.

Figure 2 – organisation of content groups

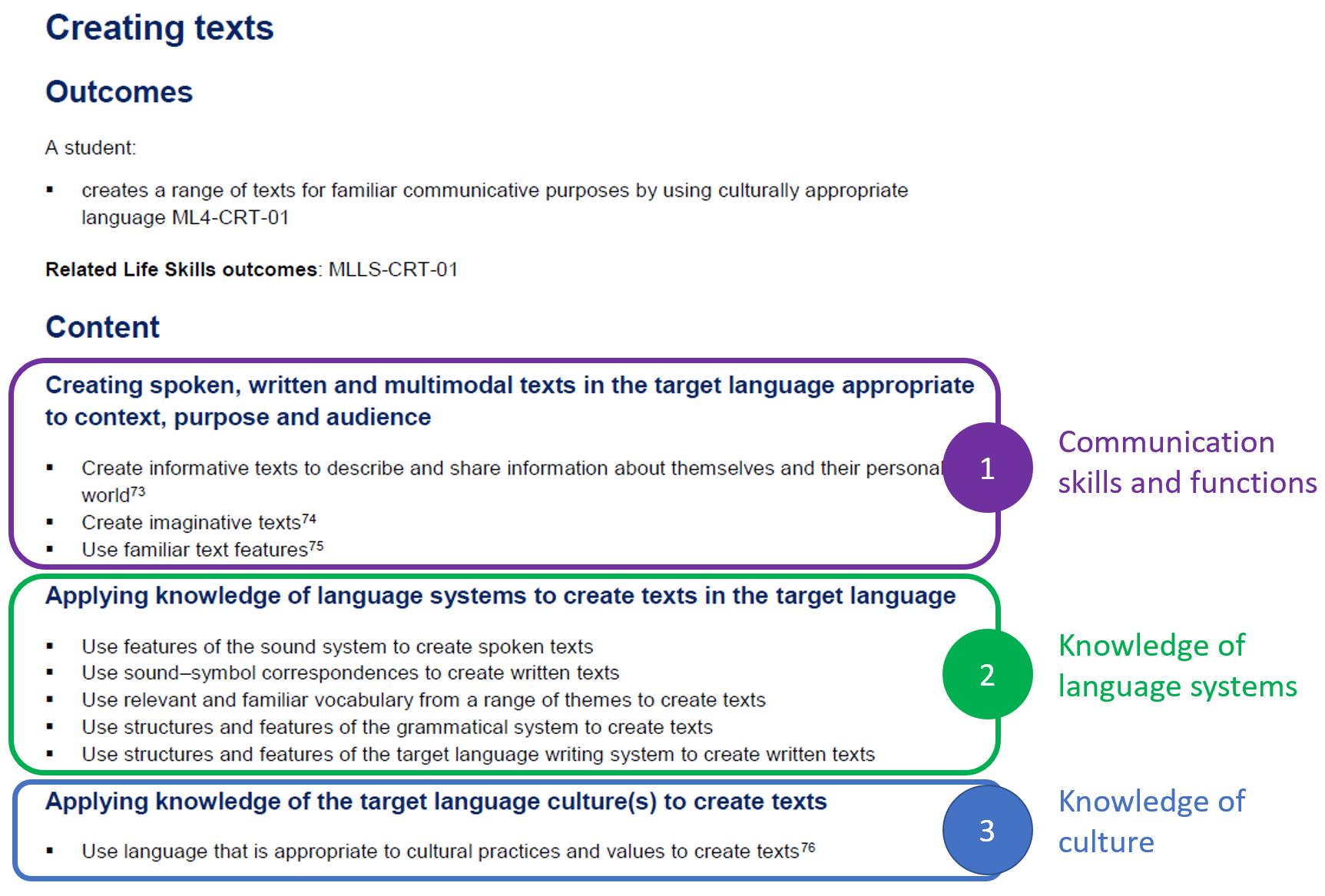


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# Overview of assessment

## What is assessment?

**Assessment** is the broad name for the collection and evaluation of evidence of a student's learning.

Assessment:

* provides opportunities for teachers to gather evidence about student achievement in relation to syllabus outcomes
* enables students to demonstrate what they know and can do
* clarifies student understanding of concepts and promotes deeper understanding
* provides evidence that current understanding and skills are a suitable basis for future learning.

Source: [Assessment Principles](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/understanding-the-curriculum/assessment/assessment-principles) (NESA 2022b)

In the Modern Languages K–10 Syllabus, the purpose and aspects of assessment are described as:

‘The primary role of assessment is to establish where students are in their learning so that teaching can be differentiated and further learning progress can be monitored over time. It provides information that assists teachers to target their teaching at the point of student need. Assessment is most effective when it is an integral part of teaching and learning programs.

Assessment involves:

* establishing where students are in their learning
* ongoing monitoring
* formative and summative tasks
* providing feedback about student progress.’

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Assessment opportunities are required to be inclusive of and accessible for all students. It is important to consider how you will support the needs of all students, for example by:

* providing print and digital options
* allowing students to communicate in their preferred communication mode, including the use of assistive technology
* providing a scaffold
* negotiating a plan to prepare students for assessment tasks.

An equitable assessment allows for demonstration of learning across a range of different contexts – refer to [Curriculum planning for every student – advice](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/planning-programming-and-assessing-k-12/advice-on-curriculum-planning-for-every-student-k-12) for more information.

## Formative and summative assessment

Effective assessment involves using a range of measures. The use of high impact assessment strategies supports students to become ‘assessment capable learners’. They can understand and respond to the following questions:

* Where am I going?
* How am I going?
* Where to next?

### Formative assessment

Formative assessment is an **ongoing process** which aims to **close the gap between where a student is now and where they need to be**, in order to successfully demonstrate their achievement of the outcomes.

The goals of formative assessment are to:

* collect evidence of students’ knowledge, understanding and skills in order to inform next steps in teaching
* provide feedback to students about their learning and how to improve
* allow opportunities for student self-reflection and setting learning goals.

Think of formative assessment as a targeted opportunity for students to **practise specific language and skills**, so you can give them feedback and they can identify areas for focus and plan next steps for their learning. It can occur before, within or between a sequence of lessons.

Formative assessment can take a range of forms – there is no set format. For example, you may use any or all of the following, as formative assessment opportunities:

* activities and quizzes, including those using mini whiteboards
* exit tickets
* online tools, such as [Kahoot!](https://kahoot.com/), [Plickers](https://www.plickers.com/) or [Mentimeter](https://www.mentimeter.com/)
* ‘mini task – progress checkpoints’.

Effective formative assessment is a key contributor to success in summative assessment.

### Summative assessment

Summative assessment occurs at the end of a period of learning (such as a unit or term). It measures student achievement **at a point in time**, allowing teachers to gather **evidence of achievement of learning intentions and outcomes against standards**. Like formative assessment, it also provides an opportunity to provide feedback to students on their progress.

With communication the central goal of language learning in the syllabus, summative assessment takes the form of real-world or simulated real-world tasks, which articulate the context, purpose and audience of the communicative act.

For example: ‘Imagine you have become separated from your tour group in Indonesia. Ring the tour leader and negotiate where and when you can meet the group to rejoin the tour. Your teacher will play the role of the tour leader.’

In this task it is clear the students are conducting a conversation. The **context** is they are travelling in Indonesia as part of a tour group. The **audience** is the tour leader and the **purpose** is to rejoin the group and no longer be lost.

The department recommends providing students with a description of the assessment task, with marking guidelines, **at the start of each unit**. This supports them to see the purpose of all content within the unit. Allow time to discuss the task, and then revisit the task at various points throughout the unit so students are reminded of why each sequence of learning is relevant.

## When to assess

Assessments should provide a balance of progress (formative) and achievement (summative) evidence. With assessment being both at **specified points in time** and **ongoing**, it is important to find the balance between using assessment for reporting and using assessment more broadly.

Schools provide parents and/or carers with a formal report on their child's learning at least twice per year. Therefore, we need to ensure we have a clear picture of each student’s ability in relation to syllabus outcomes at these times.

We also need to keep our focus on building students’ language acquisition over time while meeting reporting requirements. For example, if our end-of-unit summative assessment task falls in Week 9 or 10, yet report writing occurs in Week 6, we would need to identify and use alternative assessment approaches, including a greater focus on formative assessment opportunities. However, we would still require students to complete the end-of-unit summative task, as it enables opportunities to:

* demonstrate their achievement of the unit’s learning, as a whole
* provide ongoing monitoring and feedback
* plan next steps in learning
* develop skills that apply to real-world communication.

The summative assessment task can then contribute to the next reporting cycle.

### Reporting considerations

Each student’s achievement is reported in relation to syllabus standards, for example outcomes and content. The 3 focus areas – **Interacting**, **Understanding texts** and **Creating texts** – and their related outcomes and content should form the basis of your reports.

Each of the 3 focus area has only one outcome per stage. As such, the department recommends reporting on each outcome across a stage. This allows opportunities for students to demonstrate and understand their achievement more broadly. It is not necessary, however, to report on all outcomes in every reporting period. Schools and teachers decide what to report on to determine a grade for each subject.

Outcome content dot points are considered essential to students being able to demonstrate achievement of the outcome. While all content dot points must be addressed over a stage, they do not all need to be formally assessed. Also, it is not possible to explicitly assess some content dot points, for example this **Understanding texts** content dot point in Stage 4: **Listen to, read and view information and ideas in a range of predictable texts on familiar themes (ML4-UND-01)**.

In modern languages, there are 4 macro skills, also known as language modes: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Assessment tasks require students to complete tasks in the language modes, but the language modes are not necessarily reported on. For example, if an **Interacting** assessment task requires students to both listen and speak, and this task is used to report on student achievement, this should be done in relation to the **Interacting** outcome. If you would like to report on how students performed in different components of a task (in this case the listening and speaking modes), you could do so in the report comment.

In the resources created by the department, we suggest an approach where formative assessment tasks (mini tasks) are completed at the end of each learning sequence within the unit. These mini tasks provide opportunities for teachers and students to assess their progress and for teachers to modify future learning accordingly. Considering that reporting deadlines often occur for teachers within a term or semester before the summative assessment task can be completed, mini tasks and other activities in the unit can also be used as assessment for reporting purposes.

When creating assessment tasks that will be used for reporting, the department recommends you identify the content dot points within the outcome that the task addresses and then use these to inform wording in marking guidelines and reporting.

For example, a **Creating texts** assessment task would address the outcome **ML4-CRT-01 – Creates a range of texts for familiar communicative purposes by using culturally appropriate language**. This task addresses the following content dot points for that outcome:

* Create informative texts to describe and share information about themselves and their personal world
* Use relevant and familiar vocabulary from a range of themes to create texts
* Use structures and features of the grammatical system to create texts

A sample Grade C report comment relating to a **Creating text** task could be:

Esther demonstrated consistent focus and effort in class this semester but needs to ensure she follows up with revising content at home. In the ‘Creating texts’ assessment task, Esther produced an audio-visual presentation to introduce herself and her school to a potential exchange student from [country]. She demonstrated a solid grasp of relevant vocabulary and language structures to create the written text but needs to ensure she includes all required information and elaborates with the required detail. Esther provided opinions on the subjects she studies at school but could have enhanced her response by giving the reasons for these opinions and including details about her favourite teacher. Esther has a strong grasp of verb conjugations and is working towards creating compound sentences using conjunctions.

## What to assess

**Assessment is based on syllabus outcomes.** While there is no requirement to formally assess all outcomes, the department recommends assessing each outcome at least once across a year of learning to build a complete picture of students’ overall achievement.

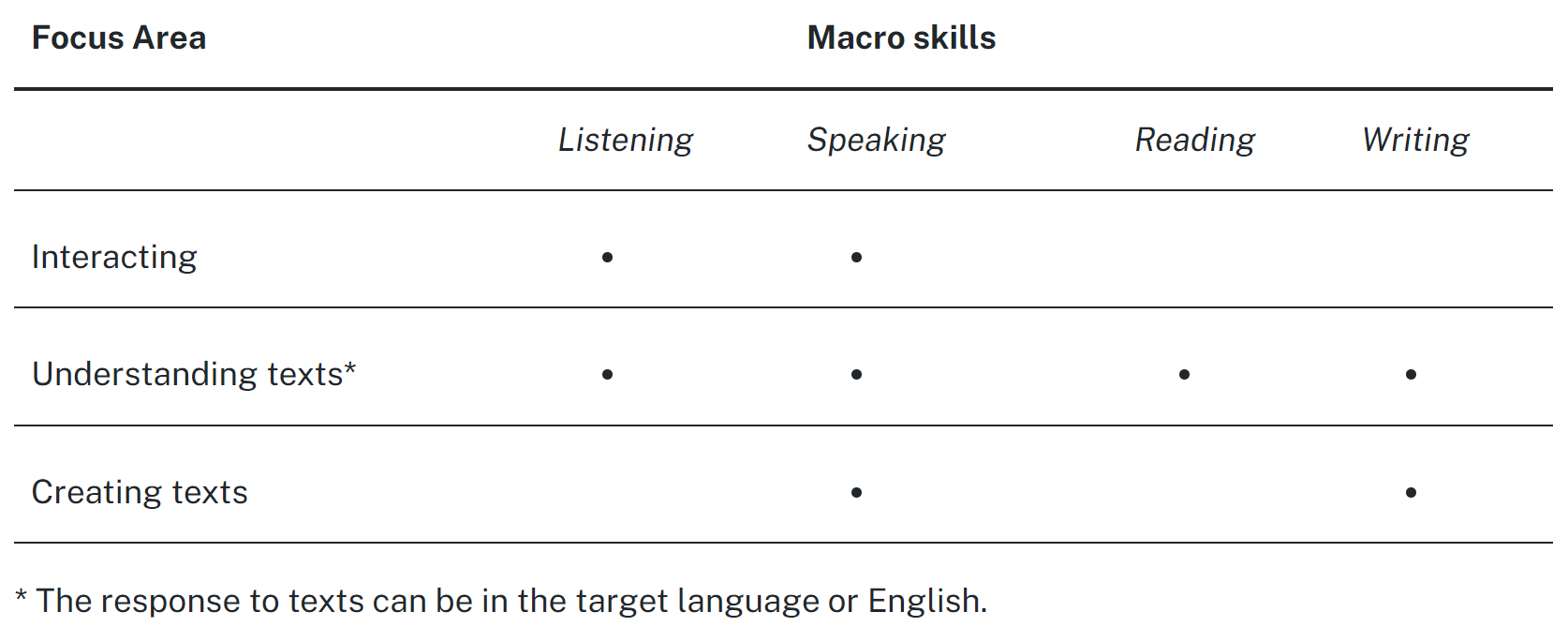
In the Modern Languages K–10 Syllabus, the outcomes are very broad and the true ‘richness’ of the syllabus lies in the content dot points. For this reason, the department recommends assessing against one or more content dot point(s) aligned to the relevant outcome(s). If you teach a scripted language, the content dot points are also where you find references to the ‘target language writing system’, which should form part of assessment.

The number of content dot points you assess through each task will vary, based on the nature and demands of the task. Be aware that not all content is measurable, so not all content will be assessed. The marking guidelines section will help you identify which one(s) to choose.

While we expect students to demonstrate the macro skills of listening, speaking, reading and/or writing, it is important to remember that the outcomes are not based around the macro skills. Therefore, we do not organise our assessment by these skills.

The syllabus does indicate the relationship between the focus areas (which organise the outcomes) and the macro skills, as seen in the figure below:

Figure 3 – relationship between focus areas and macro skills



[Modern Languages K–10 Syllabus](https://curriculum.nsw.edu.au/learning-areas/languages/modern-languages-k-10-2022) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2022.

The syllabus outcomes are inclusive in nature, allowing us to embed appropriate adjustments to speaking, listening, reading, writing and communication experiences to support students with disability.

Remember, the syllabus includes a [glossary](https://curriculum.nsw.edu.au/learning-areas/languages/modern-languages-k-10-2022?tab=glossary) if there is any terminology in the outcomes and content you are unfamiliar with.

## How to assess

Ensure you provide students with a range of formative and summative assessment opportunities.

The aim of the Modern Languages K–10 Syllabus is to empower students to become **effective communicators** in the target language by developing linguistic competence and intercultural capability. In our context, summative assessment takes the form of a real-world or simulated real-world task, which articulates the context, purpose and audience of the communicative act.

With translating and AI tools available to students, it is critical that we assess the student’s own work. Consider if tasks will be completed in class or at home. If students do complete some or all of a task at home, consider:

* a portfolio approach, with a reflection journal
* check-in sessions to discuss the student’s work and progress, including targeted questions
* identifying part(s) to complete at home and part(s) in class, to identify any inconsistencies in achievement
* conducting post-assessment interviews.

If your school has exam periods, you can still design task-based assessment. For example, for a Stage 4 half-yearly written exam, you could use the following:

* **Task A** – you have just received this email[[1]](#footnote-1) from your future host student, outlining what they generally eat for dinner, and their favourite foods, with reasons. Demonstrate your understanding of the information by answering questions about the text in English. Then, determine if you think you will have any concerns (or not) with the food during the homestay, with 3 references to the text.
* **Task B** – write back to your future host student. In your reply, include your name, age, at least 2 of your favourite foods, one food you do not like (with reason) and what you generally eat for dinner.

Choose the approach which works best for you and your students – remember, ‘assessment can enhance student engagement and motivation, particularly when it incorporates interaction with teachers, other students and a range of resources’ (NESA 2022b).

### Assessing content through different outcomes

In any given task, we can assess outcomes individually, or we can combine outcomes. For example, you can have a receptive component assessing ‘Understanding texts’, combined with a related productive component, assessing ‘Interacting’ or ‘Creating texts’.

To support you to assess in a range of ways, take a look at the sample ideas below, which illustrate ways of assessing a unit on food and drink through different outcomes.

### Interacting (ML4-INT-01)

In celebration of Bastille Day, your class would like to hold a small party. To help decide what to eat, you will share your opinions about possible food and drink choices for the party.

You will each be given a ‘placemat’ with common French foods and drinks to choose from.

In pairs (or groups of 3), take turns to ask each other about the foods and drinks on the placemat, using the question format *Tu aimes… ?* (Do you like …?)

When answering, include your opinion of the food or drink, and the reason. Use conjunctions, for example *et* (and), *mais* (but) and *parce que* (because).

For example:

*• Tu aimes le jus ? Oui, j’aime le jus, mais c’est mauvais pour la santé.*

*• Tu aimes le café ? Non, je déteste le café parce que c’est dégoûtant.*

*• Tu aimes le chocolat chaud ? Oui, j’aime beaucoup le chocolat chaud et c’est délicieux.*

Once you have each identified a range of likes and/or dislikes, with reasons, call your teacher over and interact in front of them. Each of you will ask and answer 3 questions, showcasing your knowledge of French foods, drinks, opinions, preferences and reasons.

When you have finished, your teacher will ask you what you would like to eat and drink at the party. Each of you chooses one food and one drink, and ‘orders’ it from your teacher, for example:

*Pour la fête je voudrais [name of food] et [name of drink], s’il vous plaît.*

Adapted from the ‘Sample summative task for Term 2 – French, Stage 4’ document on the [Stage 4 French](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/languages/planning-programming-and-assessing-languages-7-10/french#showhide35041872) webpage.

### Understanding texts (ML4-UND-01)

Read a post from the ‘*Nuestros sabores, tus sabores*’ food blog, written by a [language]-speaking teenager. The post includes details about his family’s eating habits and his own personal preferences. Answer a series of questions in English to demonstrate your understanding of the text.

Adapted from [Stage 4 Spanish](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/languages/planning-programming-and-assessing-languages-7-10/spanish) on the NSW Department of Education website.

### Creating texts (ML4-CRT-01)

Create a post in response to the teenager outlining your eating habits and some of your food or drink preferences in [language]. Include:

* what you typically eat at 2 different mealtimes
* at least one food or drink you enjoy, with reason(s), and how often you eat or drink it
* at least one food or drink you do not like, with reason(s), and comparing it to another food or drink
* 1–2 Spanish foods that you have never eaten and a reason why you would or would not like to try them.

# Backward mapping

The department recommends a ‘backward mapping’ approach to assessment and unit design for modern languages.

By designing our summative assessment task first, then backward mapping our teaching, learning and formative assessment opportunities, we are supporting our students to develop the skills required for effective communication. Teaching and learning activities should be specifically designed to prepare students with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to succeed in the planned assessments.

A backward mapping approach has 3 key steps, as outlined below. We will explore each step in detail.

Figure 4 – 3 steps for backward mapping

The 3 steps for backward mapping:
Step 1: Identify learning goals and outcomes.
Step 2: Determine measures of success.
Step 3: Plan instruction.
Each of the steps are unpacked in further detail in the text beneath the image.

## Step 1 – identify the desired learning goals and outcomes

There are 2 key questions to consider in this step:

* By the end of this unit, what do I want my students to be able to know, understand and do?
* How will I get them to demonstrate this?

For the purpose of this document, we are planning a Stage 4 unit called ‘All about me’. By the end of the unit, we would like students to be able to:

* express their name, age and nationality
* express who is in their family
* describe personalities
* express likes and dislikes
* join sentences using *and*, *but*.

In order to design our task, we will first need to decide which **outcome(s) and related content** we want to assess.

The Stage 4 outcomes are:

* **ML4-INT-01** exchanges information and opinions in a range of familiar contexts by using culturally appropriate language
* **ML4-UND-01** interprets and responds to information, opinions and ideas in texts to demonstrate understanding
* **ML4-CRT-01** creates a range of texts for familiar communicative purposes by using culturally appropriate language.

We can assess outcomes **individually**, or we can also assess a **combination** of outcomes, depending on the task we create. Keep in mind that, across a year or stage, it is good practice to assess a range of outcomes and content. This builds a more complete picture of students’ overall achievement.

For our context, we decide to focus on assessing student achievement against the ‘Creating texts’ and ‘Understanding texts’ outcomes.

Our plan is for students to:

* create a profile of themselves to send to a sister school
* read a range of student profiles from the sister school, and choose 2 students they would like to correspond with and one they would not like to correspond with, providing reasons for their choices (in English).

In assessing ‘Creating texts’ and ‘Understanding texts’, we do not need to assess every content heading and dot point. In fact, some content dot points are not designed with assessment in mind; rather they support student learning.

Below are all the content dot points for the 2 outcomes we have chosen. Read the dot points carefully and choose the one(s) relevant to what students will be demonstrating through our task.

When choosing the dot points, consider:

* are the dot points measurable across a range of ability levels A–E?
* are they relevant to the task?

*(In brackets, you will find some possible thinking about whether to assess this content, or not, in relation to the task. This information has been provided for illustrative purposes only – you choose the content dot point(s), based on the assessment you design.)*

### Creating texts

**ML4-CRT-01 creates a range of texts for familiar communicative purposes by using culturally appropriate language**

**Creating spoken, written and multimodal texts in the target language appropriate to context, purpose and audience**

* Create informative texts to describe and share information about themselves and their personal world *(Definitely assessed – students are creating an informative task, and this is a measurable skill against grades A–E.)*
* Create imaginative texts *(Not assessed – while some students may choose to create a fictional student profile, you are not assessing the accuracy of the information, but rather the amount of information they are providing using accurate language, which is covered by the dot point above.)*
* Use familiar text features *(May or may not be assessed, depending on context – students are creating a student profile, which has specific text features. If you want to assess the textual features and format of a student profile, be explicit in identifying what you want students to include so you can describe achievement against grades A–E in your marking guidelines. Alternatively, consider allowing students to choose how they present their information, which allows the opportunity for student choice. If allowing students to choose, you are focusing on the language students use, not the format, and this dot point would not be assessed.)*

**Applying knowledge of language systems to create texts in the target language**

* Use features of the sound system to create spoken texts *(Not assessed. This could be an audiovisual presentation, in which case you may like to consider assessing this outcome)*
* Use sound–symbol correspondences to create written texts *(May or may not be assessed, depending on context – if students have been learning script and you want to specifically assess their achievement, you may consider assessing. However, for most contexts, the last content dot point in this section would be sufficient.)*
* Use relevant and familiar vocabulary from a range of themes to create texts *(Definitely assessed – students are being assessed on their ability to use the vocabulary learned during the unit.)*
* Use structures and features of the grammatical system to create texts *(Definitely assessed – students are being assessed on their ability to use grammatically correct language learned during the unit.)*
* Use structures and features of the target language writing system to create written texts *(Likely to be assessed, for scripted languages. If assessing, consider handwritten script versus input method with technology.)*

**Applying knowledge of the target language culture(s) to create texts**

* Use language that is appropriate to cultural practices and values to create texts *(Not assessed.)*

### Understanding texts

**ML4-UND-01 interprets and responds to information, opinions and ideas in texts to demonstrate understanding**

**Understanding and responding to spoken, written and multimodal target language texts**

* Listen to, read and view information, opinions and ideas in a range of predictable texts on familiar themes *(Not assessed – while this is what students will be doing, this is not a measurable skill in the context of the task.)*
* Develop and use comprehension strategies to interpret information, opinions and ideas in texts *(Not assessed – while this is what students will be doing, this is not a measurable skill in the context of the task.)*
* Respond appropriately in the target language and/or English to main ideas and supporting details in texts by interpreting information, opinions and ideas *(Definitely assessed – students will be able to demonstrate their degree of understanding, across grades A–E.)*
* Demonstrate understanding of the context, purpose and audience in predictable texts *(Not assessed – students are being assessed on the content of the student profile, not their understanding of the purpose, context or audience of the text.)*

**Applying knowledge of language systems to understand and respond to target language texts**

* Use knowledge of features of the sound system to understand texts *(Not assessed.)*
* Use knowledge of sound–symbol correspondences to understand and respond to texts (Not assessed – while students are using their knowledge of sound–symbol correspondences to understand the text, it is not assessable across grades A–E in this context. It may be assessable across A–E for some scripted languages, depending on context.)
* Use knowledge of appropriate and familiar vocabulary from a range of themes to understand and respond to texts *(Definitely assessed – students are using their knowledge of the learned vocabulary to understand and respond to texts.)*
* Use knowledge of structures and features of the grammatical system to understand and respond to texts *(May or may not be assessed, depending on context – understanding likes and dislikes, with reasons, may be complex in some languages.)*
* Recognise and use structures and features of the target language writing system to understand and respond to texts *(May be assessed, for scripted languages.)*
* Use familiar metalanguage to compare target language structures and features with English *(Not assessed.)*

**Developing intercultural understanding through target language texts**

* Respond to texts by reflecting on how language is connected with cultural practices and values, and how this is evident in their own language(s), culture(s) and identity *(Not assessed.)*

### Outcomes and dot points to be assessed

After consideration, we decide to assess the following content dot points for each outcome.

**Creating texts (ML4-CRT-01)**

* Create informative texts to describe and share information about themselves and their personal world
* Use relevant and familiar vocabulary from a range of themes to create texts
* Use structures and features of the grammatical system to create texts
* Use structures and features of the target language writing system to create written texts (for scripted languages only)

**Understanding texts (ML4-UND-01)**

* Respond appropriately in the target language and/or English to main ideas and supporting details in texts by interpreting information, opinions and ideas
* Use knowledge of appropriate and familiar vocabulary from a range of themes to understand and respond to texts

## Step 2 – determine measures of success

Measures of success are determined through creating:

* your summative task, in detail
* the related marking guidelines
* a sample student response at A-grade level.

### Designing your summative task in detail

Consider what information students need to succeed in the task. Here is our planned task:

* create a profile of themselves to send to a sister school
* read a range of student profiles from the sister school, and choose 2 students they would like to correspond with and one they would not like to correspond with, providing reasons for their choices (in English).

Let’s unpack this for students, to set them up for success. For example:

**Part A**

You will create a profile of yourself to send to a sister school. You may choose the format of your profile, for example a social media post, a Google Slides or PowerPoint presentation, a poster or a video[[2]](#footnote-2) (with captions). In your profile, include:

* your name, age and nationality
* at least 2 descriptions of your personality
* one thing you like and one thing you don’t like
* who is in your family
* a description of at least one family member.

Use a range of vocabulary and structures we have learned through the unit, including:

* correct personal pronouns and verb forms
* a range of adjectives
* *and*, *but* to join sentences.

**Part B**

You will be given 5 student profiles from students at your sister school. In each profile, the student says their name, age and nationality. They also describe themselves and their families, including likes and dislikes.

Read each profile, and answer a range of questions in English, to demonstrate your understanding. Then choose 2 students you would like to correspond with and one you would not like to correspond with, providing reasons for your choices (in English).

### Developing marking guidelines

Marking guidelines describe student achievement against standards, across a range of grades or marks. Achievement standards have 2 important components – **what** students are expected to learn and **how well** they have demonstrated this learning. In our context, the ‘what’ is the syllabus outcome(s) and related content dot point(s). The ‘how well’ is the A–E grade scale.

Explicit marking guidelines support equity and transparency in assessment. They clearly communicate to students what is expected of them at each grade level.

Marking guidelines can be developed in a range of ways and have a range of formats. What is essential is that there is a **clear link between your marking guidelines and the syllabus**. In deciding on your approach, consider your school requirements and context. It is good practice to share your summative assessment task and related marking guidelines with students at the start of a unit, so students know what they are expected to demonstrate, and how well, and the end of the unit’s learning.

The dot points we identified in Step 1 of this document will form the basis of our marking guidelines.

We now need to describe what ‘A–E’ range of achievement looks like for each dot point. This is based on the description of the task provided to students. Below is a sample. You can see some dot points are standalone, and others have been grouped. Consider what works best in the context of the tasks you design.

Table 1 – creating marking guidelines for achievement for ‘A–E’ level

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Outcome and content | A – extensive | B – thorough | C – sound | D – basic | E – elementary |
| Creating texts  (ML4-CRT-01)   * Create informative texts to describe and share information about themselves and their personal world * Use relevant and familiar vocabulary from a range of themes to create texts | Creates a detailed text, with a high level of accuracy, that includes:   * name, age and nationality * at least 2 descriptions of their personality * one thing they like and one thing they don’t like * who is in their family * a description of at least one family member. | Creates a detailed text, with minor errors, that includes:   * name, age and nationality * at least 2 descriptions of their personality * one thing they like and one thing they don’t like * who is in their family * a description of at least one family member. | Creates a text, with errors that do not impact communication, that includes:   * name, age and nationality * at least 2 descriptions of their personality * one thing they like and one thing they don’t like * who is in their family * a description of at least one family member. | Creates a text, with errors that might impact communication, that includes some of the following:   * name, age and nationality * a description of their personality * one thing they like and one thing they don’t like * who is in their family * a description of at least one family member. | Creates a text with isolated words and/ or phrases. |
| Creating texts  (ML4-CRT-01)   * ****Use structures and features of the grammatical system to create texts**** | Uses a variety of structures and features of the grammatical system, with a high level of accuracy, including:   * correct personal pronouns and verb forms * a range of adjectives * *and*, *but* to join sentences. | Uses a variety of structures and features of the grammatical system, with minor errors, including:   * correct personal pronouns and verb forms * a range of adjectives * *and*, *but* to join sentences. | Uses structures and features of the grammatical system with some errors, including:   * correct personal pronouns and verb forms * a range of adjectives * *and*, *but* to join sentences. | Uses structures and features of the grammatical system, with errors that might hinder comprehension, including any of the following:   * correct personal pronouns and verb forms * a range of adjectives * *and*, *but* to join sentences. | Attempts to apply structures and features of the grammatical system. |
| Creating texts  (ML4-CRT-01)   * Use structures and features of the target language writing system to create written texts (for scripted languages only – sample provided for Japanese) | Composes Japanese script with a high level of accuracy, appropriately using *hiragana* and *katakana* and *kanji* for numbers.  Selects correct input method and *rōmaji* to accurately type in Japanese. | Composes Japanese script with accuracy, appropriately using *hiragana* and *katakana* and *kanji* for numbers.  Selects correct input method and *rōmaji* to type in Japanese with minimal errors. | Composes Japanese script with some degree of accuracy, using *hiragana* and *katakana* appropriately and *kanji* for numbers.  Selects correct input method and *rōmaji* to type in Japanese with some errors. | Composes Japanese script, using *rōmaji* and *hiragana* with frequent errors.  Selects correct input method and *romaji* to type in Japanese with frequent errors. | Attempts to compose some script, often using *rōmaji* in place of script. |
| Understanding texts (ML4-UND-01)   * Respond appropriately in the target language and/or English to main ideas and supporting details in texts by interpreting information, opinions and ideas | Responds in English, providing all of the relevant information including extensive **justification**, with detailed reference to the text, for choosing 2 students and not choosing one student. | Responds in English providing most of the relevant information including **justification**, with detailed reference to the text, for choosing 2 students and not choosing one student. | Responds in English providing most of the relevant information with some errors, including **justification**, with reference to the text, for choosing 2 students and not choosing one student. | Responds in English providing some information with frequent errors, may include **justifications** with reference to the text, for choosing 2 students and not choosing one student. | Attempts to convey some relevant information. |

To access **a range of marking guidelines** with descriptions of achievement across A–E for all outcomes, view the department’s language-specific units on the [Planning, programming and assessing languages 7–10](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/languages/planning-programming-and-assessing-languages-7-10/) webpage. We encourage you to explore the range of assessment tasks and marking guidelines for each language, as they are written in English and can be adapted to your context and for the language you teach.

In place of grades, you may prefer to use mark ranges on your marking guidelines. For example, in a task worth 20 marks, you may consider:

* 18–20, in place of A
* 15–17 in place of B, and so on.

The benefit of mark ranges is that they support us to rank our students, if required.

### Developing a sample response

The department recommends writing a sample response. This allows us to:

* understand exactly what is required to complete the task
* identify the language and skills needed
* evaluate if the task design, description and marking guidelines work, so you can make refinements where necessary
* identify how to adjust and/or scaffold the task to support success for all learners.

With the Modern Languages K–10 Syllabus providing a framework for all modern languages, sample responses can also support consistent teacher judgement.

We can develop a sample response in the target language or in English. We can use the sample response in a range of ways, including:

* showing it to students at the start of the unit, in the target language, to illustrate to students what they will be able to know and do by the end of the unit
* using it to co-design marking guidelines, allowing students to see how their learning is applied within the context of the unit
* using it during the unit, to explore ‘what a good one looks like’ (WAGOLL), for students to identify key language they still need support with
* providing it in English, with the summative task notification as a scaffold.

As with all advice, use the approaches which work best for you and your context, meeting the needs of your students. If showing the sample in the target language, consider strategies to prevent students copying the response, such as ensuring devices are packed away.

Writing a sample response is a critical step in ascertaining student achievement and ensuring your marking guidelines are appropriate.

#### Sample response

Figure 5 – sample response

Boy with beanie and school backpack. Text in 4 speech bubbles is:
First bubble - My name is Assad and I am 12 years old. I am Australian.
Second bubble - I like soccer and cats, but I don't like school.
Third bubble - I am kind but I am also a bit cheeky.
Fourth bubble - I have one sister.  She is funny but annoying.

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(Note that the sample response would be in the target language – English has been provided for illustrative purposes only.)

Having the sample response in front of us supports us to identify a range of options to support students with disability to complete the task, for example providing:

* a preparation schedule (‘steps to success’)
* a scaffold
* sentence starters
* a cloze version, with options
* a vocabulary chart.

These are sample ideas only. Make adjustments based on the needs of the students in your class. The task has options for how students present their work, so discuss these with your students too.

### Task notifications

We provide assessment notifications to students for summative assessment tasks, so they understand what is required. Schools often have their own formats or templates for notifications.

Task notifications include:

* adequate written notification in advance of the task (typically, 2 weeks)
* details of the task, including
* task number and weighting (from the related course assessment schedule)
* outcome(s) assessed
* description of the task
* marking criteria (‘You will be assessed on your ability to …’)
* feedback, including how this will be given to students
* marking guidelines.

Notifications use student-friendly language, allowing all students to access and understand task requirements.

## Step 3 – plan instruction

Now it is time to identify and design:

* the learning sequences which will support student success in the summative assessment task
* ‘mini task – progress checkpoints’ within each sequence, to ensure students are on track with their learning
* the teaching and learning activities (with related resources) within each sequence.

### Learning sequences and related mini tasks

The department recommends organising teaching and learning activities into ‘chunks’ or short learning sequences. The duration of each ‘chunk’ or learning sequence will vary, depending on the content. Generally, they are 2 to 4 weeks in length.

This structured approach enables more explicit teaching and fosters deeper student understanding. Each ‘chunk’ represents a particular aspect of the content, with related:

* learning intentions and success criteria
* vocabulary, language structures and/or grammar
* script, where relevant
* formative assessment opportunities, including a ‘mini task – progress checkpoint’ which links directly to the summative task.

‘Mini task – progress checkpoints’ ideally occur towards the end of a ‘chunk’ or learning sequence. Mini tasks are designed to assess student progress towards the summative (end-of-unit) assessment task. There should be a clear link between each mini task and the summative task.

Let’s go back to what we would like our students to be able to do by the end of our Stage 4 unit, ‘All about me’:

* express their name, age and nationality
* express who is in their family
* describe personalities
* express likes and dislikes
* join sentences using *and*, *but*.

And our planned summative assessment task requires students to:

* create a profile of themselves to send to a sister school
* read a range of student profiles from the sister school, and choose 2 students they would like to correspond with and one they would not like to correspond with, providing reasons for their choices (in English).

Our possible ‘chunks’ or learning sequences, with related ‘mini task – progress checkpoints’ may be:

#### Chunk 1

* Introducing self and others
* Numbers 0–20 and saying how old you are
* Discussing nationality
* **Mini task:** It’s your first day at your sister school in [country]. In pairs, introduce yourself to another student in [language], exchanging names, ages and nationalities. (**ML4-INT-01**)

#### Chunk 2

* Expressing who is in your family
* Describing personalities and appearances
* **Mini task:** Your host family wants to learn more about you. Create a text (real or imagined) about you and your family, including
* an image and 3 adjectives to describe yourself
* an image of your family, identifying each family member
* a description of at least one other family member. (**ML4-CRT-01**)

#### Chunk 3

* Saying what you like and do not like
* **Mini task:** You receive a message from your host brother about what he likes and doesn’t like. In English, explain to a friend if you think you will get along, with at least 2 references to the text. (**ML4-UND-01**)

You can see the 3 mini tasks:

* relate directly to the summative task, in terms of both language and skills
* increase in complexity, in language and/or skills.

This sets students up for success in meeting the requirements of the summative assessment task.

As part of each mini task, include:

* an opportunity for feedback (by peers or the teacher)
* student self-reflection – this enables students to recognise areas for development and plan their next steps
* time to review future teaching – seeing how students demonstrate their learning through the mini task allows us to refine what we have planned next. If students are not yet demonstrating mastery of key language and skills, we may need to include additional activities to what we planned, or if students are confident, we may be able to move more quickly through content.

While mini tasks are designed for formative assessment, they can be adapted for use as summative assessment. This may be required if your unit is for a full term, yet report writing occurs mid-term, or if you need to modify the timing of your unit to meet student needs. The number of ‘chunks’ or learning sequences, with related mini tasks, will vary depending on your context and the needs of your students.

Activities and tools for providing feedback are available on the department’s [Digital Learning Selector](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/). Advice on providing effective feedback is available through our [Effective feedback in languages’ microlearning](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/languages/professional-learning-languages-k-12/languages-7-12-professional-learning-catalogue/effective-feedback-in-languages).

### Teaching and learning activities (with related resources)

Availability of resources varies from school to school. In addition, some teachers may prefer using a textbook, while other teachers may prefer designing their own activities.

Whether you use a textbook or not, only source or choose activities which are relevant to the summative assessment task. While it is important for students to learn vocabulary, the central goal in language learning is **communicating in the target language**. This requires a strong focus on **using the vocabulary in a range of structures**, recycling and building on these structures within and across units. This also supports students to communicate about their personal worlds, aligning with syllabus content.

# Evaluation

After implementing a summative assessment task, it is important to **evaluate** it. Consider the following reflection questions and, where possible, work collaboratively with colleagues.

1. Were the marking guidelines applied consistently?
2. Was effective feedback provided?
3. Did the task effectively assess the outcome(s)?
4. What changes need to be made in future assessments?

It is important to also evaluate the formative assessment opportunities, including mini tasks, to ensure they effectively built the knowledge and skills required to complete the summative assessment task.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, the following steps support **quality assessment design**. The order in which you do the steps may vary – what is important is that all steps are addressed, rather than the order in which you address them. You may also do 2 or more steps simultaneously.

* Identify outcome(s) and content to be assessed – what skills and knowledge are you assessing?
* Design the task – what do you want students to do? Is it engaging for students? Does it have a context, purpose and audience?
* Design the marking guidelines – what does achievement look like? Are the marking guidelines clearly expressed for students?
* Draft a sample response – do the task and marking guidelines work, or do you need to make adjustments?
* Consider differentiation adjustments – how will you make the task accessible and engaging for the range of students in your class?

# Support and alignment

**Resource evaluation and support:** All curriculum resources are prepared through a rigorous process. Resources are periodically reviewed as part of our ongoing evaluation plan to ensure currency, relevance, and effectiveness. For additional support or advice, contact the Languages and Culture team by emailing [languagesnsw@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:languagesnsw@det.nsw.edu.au).

**Alignment to system priorities and/or needs:** [Curriculum planning and programming, assessing and reporting to parents K-12 policy](https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2005-0290)

**Alignment to the School Excellence Framework:** This resource supports the [School Excellence Framework](https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2016-0468) elements of curriculum (teaching and learning programs).

**Alignment to Australian Professional Standards for Teachers:** This resource supports teachers to address [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/teacher-accreditation/meeting-requirements/the-standards/proficient-teacher) 2.2.2, 2.3.2, 3.2.2.

**Consulted with:** Curriculum and Reform and subject matter experts

**NSW syllabus:** Modern Languages K–10 Syllabus

**Author:** Languages and Culture

**Publisher:** State of NSW, Department of Education

**Resource:** Assessment guidelines for the Modern Languages K–10 Syllabus

**Related resources:** Further resources to support Modern Languages can be found on the [Languages curriculum page](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/languages).

**Professional learning:** Relevant professional learning is available through the [Languages statewide staffroom](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=muagBYpBwUecJZOHJhv5kSNaKRC4ClVDiPgZI5jjt3lUQ1pMWVRSU0kzWExaMEIyVFg5VlJPVkRVRyQlQCN0PWcu&wdLOR=cEA84311A-3447-4AD2-B1BB-FA5CACDA69B7) (entry survey link for staff only).

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NESA (NSW Education Standards Authority) (2023) ‘[Proficient Teacher: Standard descriptors](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/teacher-accreditation/meeting-requirements/the-standards/proficient-teacher)’, *The Standards*, NESA website, accessed 4 November 2024.

NESA (NSW Education Standards Authority) (2022b) ‘[Assessment Principles](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/understanding-the-curriculum/assessment/assessment-principles)’, *Assessment*, NESA website, accessed 25 August 2023.

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1. Teacher to provide text. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. To ensure the task is valid and reliable, students who wish to create a video would not be assessed on their spoken language, as this changes the content dot point being assessed. Instead, they would include written text in their video. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)