

AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT: OP-ED

This authentic assessment example is from an Art and Education Unit called Responding to Climate Change Through a Planetary Health Lens from the Graduate Certificate in Planetary Health degree.

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Overview	Length	Weighting	Due
Write an op-ed on the impact of the 2019/2020 bushfires and future preparedness.	750 words	30%	After Session 3 of 8

Purpose

The purpose of this assessment task is to:

- Conduct research into climate change and environmental disasters
- Practise advocating for climate change mitigation/adaptation strategies

It aligns with the following learning outcomes:

LO1: Understand and articulate the scientific bases of climate change

LO2: Understand and identify the cross-disciplinary (inter-, multi-, trans-) nature of CC and its inter-connectedness with all other human-related systems (economy, policy & governance, socio-culture, ethics)

LO3: Critically review local drivers of CC and future CC projections

Assessment requirements

Background

The summer of 2019/2020 witnessed the most catastrophic wildfires ever recorded in Australia and globally. The fire season began much earlier than usual, in early September 2019, and continued for seven months, to March 2020. During this period, an estimated 900 million metric tons (MMT) of carbon dioxide was spewed into the atmosphere, more than double the amount of Australia's annual carbon emissions (approximately 400 MMT annually).

The fires burned an estimated 186,000 square kilometres, killing 34 people directly and 417 indirectly from smoke pollution. An estimated one billion animals have been killed, including a third of the koala population, driving it and other endangered species closer to extinction. Over 5,900 buildings were destroyed. The air quality throughout the region dropped to hazardous levels and remained so for many days.

Why were the wildfires so ferocious? Why did they occur to this extent, in this summer, and not in other summers? In class, we will be discussing the global and local climate change

drivers, which enabled the development of these catastrophic conditions at this time. For now, it is sufficient to state that the summer of 2019 was the warmest and driest on record. The combination of extreme high temperatures, low relative humidity, low soil moisture and strong winds combined to create ideal conditions for the rapid spread of fires.

Task

Write an op-ed addressing the topic “The impact of the 2019/2020 bushfires and future preparedness”.

Choose one of the following impacts and focus only on it:

- Smoke haze on public health (mental and physical)
- The wildfires on the farming industry (discuss only non-economic impacts)
- The wildfires on affected communities
- The wildfires on biodiversity loss
- Fire ash on water systems

In your op-ed, you need to first discuss the impact using scientific evidence (approximately 450 words). You then need to persuasively advocate for a mitigation or adaptation strategy, based on the presented evidence (approximately 300 words).

Your work must include:

- A short, catchy title to capture your main argument (the reader needs to get a clear idea regarding the impact and strategy just from reading the title)
- A description of the big, overarching idea of your op-ed in the first 1 to 3 sentences
- A description of the effects of the impact in the next 2 to 3 paragraphs, using no less than 4 scientific resources
 - At least one of these resources needs to be a peer-reviewed article
 - Other acceptable resources are reports by reputable organisations (e.g. CSIRO), or non-academic journal articles, written by academics (e.g. The Conversation)
- Your persuasive opinion about an appropriate mitigation or adaptation strategy – make sure your proposal is highly connected to the impact, and that there is a good flow between the description of the impact and the suggested strategy
- A summary of your argument in a strong final sentence
- A reference list using the Harvard style

Instructions

1. Carefully read the assessment requirements, criteria and rubric
2. Choose one of the impacts listed above
3. Research your chosen impact
4. Write your op-ed and evaluate it against the rubric criteria
5. Finalise and submit your work to the dropbox after Session 3

Assessment criteria

Criterion 1: Clear, focused title

Criterion 2: Description of context, challenges and impact

Criterion 3: Strategy and argument

Criterion 4: Structure and presentation

Criterion 5: Referencing and use of information in a scholarly and ethical manner