

Introducing Queensland's new senior assessment system

From syllabus to subject result





Syllabus to subject result

Queensland's system of senior assessment is set to change, commencing with Year 11 students in 2019. There will be:

- new processes to strengthen the quality and comparability of school-based assessment
- an external assessment introduced in most subjects
- a move away from the Overall Position (OP) rank to an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

These changes will improve the validity and reliability of subject assessments and increase confidence in the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE).

The curriculum development and assessment processes described here are primarily for senior subjects that include an external assessment component. Subjects developed from Subject Area Syllabuses will remain a feature of senior schooling from 2019. These subjects will have an alternative assessment program and are likely to contribute differently towards tertiary entrance.

Key changes

When the changes are in place, students will complete a total of four assessments that count towards their final grade in each subject.

Three school-based assessment instruments will be endorsed by QCAA before they are used in schools. Students' results in these assessments will be externally confirmed by independent teacher assessors trained and accredited by the QCAA.

These results will be combined with one external assessment developed and marked by QCAA. The external assessment results will contribute 25% towards a student's result in most subjects. In mathematics and science subjects, it will generally contribute 50%.

The school-based assessments will not be scaled by the results of the external assessment when calculating a student's subject result. The Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) will calculate tertiary entrance ranks by comparing student results through a process of inter-subject scaling.

In making the transition to more rigorous quality assurance processes, we will be keeping some important features of our current system:

- QCAA will continue its close partnership with schools and education stakeholders
- teachers will continue to play an important role in developing assessments, making judgments about student achievement, and independently reviewing the work of their colleagues
- students will be assessed using a variety of assessment techniques.

QCAA syllabuses

New syllabuses will be developed for use from 2019. The new syllabuses will:

- define course content, which will be organised into four units (units 1 and 2 developmentally less complex than units 3 and 4)
- inform teaching
- outline assessment requirements
- include instrument specific marking guides for each school-based assessment.

Writing teams of subject experts and practising teachers, in partnership with Learning Area Reference Groups, are developing syllabuses to reflect contemporary practice and research. Draft syllabuses are being released for public feedback before final syllabuses are approved by the QCAA Board.

Syllabuses will be accompanied by supporting resources, including exemplar assessment instruments and samples of student work to show how they represent different standards of achievement.

Teachers will have access to comprehensive professional development in 2017 and 2018.



School-based assessment

Based on syllabus requirements, schools will devise three school-based assessment instruments for each senior subject. The three school-based assessment instruments will be based on the learning described in units 3 and 4 of the syllabus.

The validity and reliability of these three school-based assessments will rely on two important quality assurance processes — endorsement and confirmation — and the involvement of over 1000 accredited assessors. Accreditation will involve formal structured professional learning to ensure all assessors have a consistent understanding of quality assessment and high-level skills in judging the qualities of student work.

Endorsement

School-based assessment instruments will be endorsed by QCAA's trained expert assessors before they can be used in schools. This will involve scrutiny of around 30,000 individual assessment instruments submitted to QCAA annually using an online application.

The process of endorsement will ensure that school-based assessment instruments are comparable across schools and provide sufficient opportunities for students to demonstrate the syllabus requirements.

Feedback from the endorsement process will build teachers' capacity to design quality assessment.

Confirmation

To maximise public confidence in the reliability of the grades awarded by teachers, QCAA will independently review a representative sample of assessments in every subject in every school. Approximately 1400 QCAA-trained reviewers will confirm the grades assigned by schools for around 200 000 assessments.

We know that teachers are best able to judge the qualities of student work when they have received specialist training immediately prior to confirming or reviewing teachers' judgments. For this reason, QCAA's reviewers will participate in calibration activities designed to fine-tune their capacity to make judgments about how well students have achieved against the standards prescribed in the syllabus. Their work during confirmation will be monitored and sampled for review by highly accomplished assessors who will check that the assessors' judgments are accurate.

QCAA will review a sample of each school's assessment instruments. The number of samples will depend on the number of students studying the subject at a school. More than the usual sample may be requested for a subject in a particular school if QCAA considers there is reason to do so. Sampled assessments will be uploaded to QCAA's online system to enable confirmation to be completed as efficiently as possible.

QCAA will adjudicate when there are discrepancies between the grades awarded by schools and the independent reviewers.

External assessment

While schools are implementing their three school-based assessments, they will also be preparing students for the external assessment.

External assessment will be:

- common to all schools
- administered under the same conditions at the same time and on the same day
- marked by QCAA according to a commonly applied marking scheme.

The external assessment will not be privileged over the school-based assessment. It will be a mechanism for adding equally valuable but different evidence of achievement to a student's profile.

The external assessments will be developed by a team of discipline experts, including school-based and university experts. Draft external assessments will be subject to scrutiny by additional panels of experts.

Markers will be engaged by QCAA and will receive special training. Most will mark online and will be subject to monitoring and review by QCAA to ensure consistency and reliability.



Ratification of subject results

After confirmation and external assessment marking have been completed, QCAA will determine the final subject result for each student.

This process of ratification will involve identification and resolution of anomalies, and consultation and liaison with schools.

Subject results will be calculated by combining the school-based assessment marks with the external assessment mark. The final subject result will be expressed as a numerical value.

Students will be able to access their results in their learning account. Subject results and other learning, such as vocational education and training qualifications, will be reported during the annual certification process.

Eligible students will receive a QCE.

Subject results and other learning that can contribute towards tertiary entrance will be provided to QTAC so it may be scaled to calculate ATARs for ranking purposes.

Transition to the new system

QCAA has commenced a number of activities to support schools and students with the transition:

- Syllabuses will be redeveloped in 2016 and 2017 and made available to schools in 2017. Drafts will be made available for consultation and feedback on three occasions as the syllabuses take shape.
- Professional development will be delivered to senior teachers during 2017 and 2018.
- Trials of external assessment, endorsement and calibration processes, and assessor accreditation will occur in 2016 and 2017.
- New policies and procedures will be developed to support the changed assessment processes.
- New information and communication technology systems will be developed to support the new system.

QTAC will develop new tertiary entrance procedures during 2016 and 2017.

There are many opportunities for teachers to participate in the important foundation activities for the new system. These include participating in syllabus writing teams or commenting on drafts of redeveloped syllabuses, being involved in the accreditation, endorsement and calibration trials, and marking trial external assessments.

More information

For more information, please visit www.qcaa.qld.edu.au.

Valid and reliable senior assessment

