Senior Assessment & Tertiary Entrance in Queensland

Parent Information

The Rockhampton Grammar School
Established 1881

Every opportunity. Every student. Every day.
History of the New System

Following a review directed by the Queensland government, an announcement was made on 25 August 2015 that a new assessment and tertiary entrance system for senior students would be implemented for Year 11, 2018. This system applies to all State, Catholic and Independent schools. This implementation date was later amended to Year 11, 2019.

According to the government, the new system is designed to meet the needs of current and future students. It will feature a model that uses school-based assessment and common external assessment, new processes that are designed to strengthen the quality and comparability of school-based assessment, and move away from the Overall Position (OP) rank to an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR). Queensland state government Education Minister, Kate Jones, has indicated the new system will include some external assessment and bring Queensland into line with all other Australian states and territories by issuing an ATAR.

The introduction of external assessment will significantly impact teaching and learning as schools prepare students to engage with both forms of assessment. As such, The Rockhampton Grammar School formed a Curriculum and Pedagogy Cadre which provides advice on the School’s academic planning, activities, policies and procedures related to changes in Senior Assessment as proposed by the Queensland state government. These include proposals for new or substantially modified programmes, proposals for new organisational structures for academic activities, proposals for the development of new academic policies and procedures and proposals that affect teaching, learning and assessment that occurs at the School.

The Cadre is chaired by the Headmaster, Phillip Moulds, with the Deputy Headmaster, Arthur Kelly, Director of Teaching and Learning, Reniece Carter, Head of Senior School, Denise Wright, Dean of Studies, Catherine Cuddihy, Dean of Administration and Staffing, Julien Wright as well as the Heads of the Science, English, Mathematics and Social Science Departments and a teacher representative from each of these departments forming this group. The Cadre's purpose is to provide advice to the Headmaster on the School's academic planning, activities, policies and procedures related to changes in senior assessment.

The Cadre determined and established a number of key tasks to focus on during 2017. Each task had a leader from the Cadre who was ultimately responsible for the development and progress of the task throughout the year. Based on their expertise and role at the School, other Cadre staff were also assigned to each task. The task groups met regularly under the direction of the task leader, with regular updates given at Cadre meetings. The tasks for 2017 were: Year 9 Planning Terms 3-4, Year 10 2018 Units, Trial Assessment Types, Review of Subject Offerings, Staff Professional Development, Communication, Workforce Management, and Fact Finding Study Tour (Melbourne).
97 senior syllabuses will be redeveloped and revised to support the implementation of the new Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE).

**Syllabus Redevelopment**

The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) is redeveloping and revising 97 senior syllabuses to support the implementation of the new Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) from 2019. The revised suite will include:

- 46 General syllabuses (excluding senior external examination syllabuses)
- 25 Applied syllabuses (including Essential English and Essential Mathematics)
- 4 Short courses
- 10 Senior External Examination syllabuses (Languages)
- 12 Senior External Examination syllabuses (Non-language subjects).

**General syllabuses**

The redevelopment of Authority syllabuses commenced in 2015 with academics and subject experts commissioned by the QCAA to undertake literature reviews for 11 learning areas. When redeveloping syllabuses, writing teams have consulted with Learning Area Reference Groups - comprised of practising teachers and academics - and stakeholder group representatives. Where applicable, the senior secondary Australian Curriculum subjects have been used as the basis for the redevelopment of Queensland syllabuses. This alignment with the Australian Curriculum has led to a consistent syllabus structure of four units - two foundational units and two units where the assessment contributes to the final subject result and therefore tertiary entrance calculation.

**Applied syllabuses**

The current suite of Subject Area Syllabuses (SASs) will adopt a new naming convention of Applied syllabuses. The primary pathway for an Applied subject is work and vocational education.

**About the new General subject syllabuses**

The suite of new and redeveloped General subject syllabuses (currently known as Authority subjects) forms the foundation of the new Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) system.

These syllabuses:
- define course content
- inform teaching
- specify standards
- outline assessment requirements.

Each syllabus features:
- a focus on 21st century skills
- principles of literacy and numeracy
- pedagogical frameworks unique to each discipline but shaped by a taxonomy of learning based on the work of Marzano and Kendall (2007)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
- learning objectives and assessment requirements.

The aim is to introduce students to the knowledge, skills and habits of mind for success in further education, work and life.

**A new taxonomy of learning**

Queensland’s new senior curriculum is influenced by Robert Marzano and John Kendall’s taxonomy which describes the levels of mental processing involved in learning and separates various types of mental processes that operate on different types of knowledge from the mental processes that operate on them. Marzano and Kendall organise knowledge into three domains:

- information
- mental procedures
- psychomotor procedures.

The cognitive, metacognitive and self systems act on these domains. The cognitive system describes a student’s ability to retrieve, comprehend and apply information. The metacognitive system describes a student’s capacity to set goals and design strategies for accomplishing those goals. The self system describes the active decision of a student to engage in a learning experience. The outcomes mapped in subject syllabuses guide students towards mastery of the foundational concepts in a discipline, including its skills, dispositions and knowledge.

**Literacy and numeracy skills**

The new syllabuses increase emphasis on making sure students have high level literacy and numeracy skills, embedding them in each subject syllabus. This complements the focus on 21st century skills.

- **Literacy** refers to the knowledge and skills about language and texts essential for understanding and conveying information.
- **Numeracy** refers to the knowledge and skills students need to use mathematics in a range of situations, and recognise and understand the role of mathematics in the world.
General Subjects

Assessment continues to play an integral role in improving learning and informing teaching in the new Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) system.

In General subjects, senior students’ learning will be assessed using three assessment instruments developed by schools (internal) and one subject-specific state-wide external assessment instrument. These instruments will be mapped to unit objectives.

Schools will develop internal assessment instruments based on the syllabuses and these will then be approved by QCAA.

Teachers will mark student responses to an internal assessment using an instrument-specific marking guide (ISMG) provided by QCAA. Comparability of those student results will be achieved through a process called Confirmation. QCAA will check the accuracy and reliability of a school’s marking by selecting samples of student responses and matching them to the ISMG for each of the assessments.

External assessment instruments will be developed by QCAA and all Queensland students in the relevant subject will sit the item at the same time.

A temporary workforce of assessors, recruited and trained by QCAA will support the processes of endorsement, confirmation, external assessment development, and external assessment marking.

Schools will be confident that school-based assessment instruments:

- meet subject-specific syllabus requirements for the technique
- collect valid evidence
- follow accepted assessment conventions
- are accessible to all learners
- are comparable across schools.

Schools will be confident that the student work:

- is judged using the ISMGs
- is subject to judgments that are valid and reliable, and comparable across schools and the state.

Endorsement

In the new system, the design of internal assessment instruments will be informed by the syllabuses using templates provided by QCAA. These instruments will be then submitted to QCAA for an approval process called Endorsement. This process will be completed before the assessment is used in the classroom.

Before they are used, schools will upload all planned assessment items to QCAA’s online endorsement application. QCAA will manage the distribution and workflow of assessment instruments to the assessors using the endorsement application. Schools will be able to track the progress of an instrument.

An endorsement decision will identify any changes required to be made to an instrument. Schools are responsible for actioning the decision, according to defined timelines, to ensure the assessment instrument has been endorsed. Schools will be confident that internal assessment instruments completing the endorsement process:

- meet subject-specific syllabus requirements for the technique
- collect valid evidence
- follow accepted assessment conventions
- are accessible to all learners
- are comparable across schools.

The endorsement process will further refine teachers’ skills and abilities in quality assessment design by considering and providing feedback on evidence of:

- use of the syllabus in developing the instrument
- understanding of the syllabus objectives to be assessed, the specifications of the assessment, and the conditions.

Confirmation

In the new system, teachers will mark student responses to internal assessments using an instrument-specific marking guide (ISMG) provided by QCAA. Comparability of student results will be achieved through a quality assurance process called confirmation which involves QCAA assuring the accuracy of a school’s marking by matching it to the ISMG for each of the three internal assessments.

After schools complete marking and internal quality assurance, all student results will be uploaded to QCAA’s online confirmation application. Then QCAA will use an algorithm to select student samples. Schools will then be asked to submit the relevant individual student assessment responses.

QCAA will distribute the student responses to trained assessors who will review student responses to ensure appropriate alignment between schools’ judgments and the ISMGs. When discrepancies are identified, QCAA will investigate and communicate outcomes to schools. Schools may be required to submit additional samples and/or adjust student results. The distribution and workflow will be managed through QCAA’s online confirmation application.

The confirmation process is informed by the attributes of validity, reliability, and accessibility. Schools will be confident that the confirmation process ensures:

- student work is judged using the ISMG
- judgments are valid and reliable
- student’s final subject results are credible
- judgments are comparable across schools and the state.

Using the ISMG, teachers will mark student assessment and internally moderate judgments within or across syllabus cohorts, to ensure consistency of results. This will continue building each teacher’s skills and abilities in making judgments about student responses.
In the new system, the assessment program for all General subjects will include external assessment that is:
- common to all schools
- administered under the same conditions, at the same time and on the same day
- developed and marked by the QCAA according to a commonly applied marking scheme.

External assessment will be conducted annually in Term 4. The external assessment result will form part of the final subject result for students in conjunction with their three internal assessment results. The external assessment result will not be used to scale the internal assessment result.

In General Mathematics and Science, subjects will assess subject matter from Units 3 and 4 with the external assessment contributing 50% of the subject result. For all other General subjects it will assess subject matter from Unit 4 and contribute 25% of the subject result. Schools will be able to prepare their students for the assessment by teaching the subject matter specified in the syllabus.

The QCAA will engage teams of assessment writers with expert curriculum knowledge to develop external assessment instruments. Each external assessment will be subject to rigorous quality assurance from panels of Queensland teachers, academics and subject experts. Teachers will be encouraged to complete the required training and to apply for roles as assessment writers or scrutiny panel members.

It is important that students are given every opportunity to perform at their best in the external assessments. Mock, or practice, assessments for each subject will be released well in advance of the first external assessments. Students and teachers will be able to use these as resources to prepare for the external assessment. Marking of external assessment will be undertaken by teachers from around Queensland who have successfully completed the marker accreditation process and comprehensive training specific to each instrument. Marking of external assessment will be subject to extensive checking and cross-marking to ensure consistency and reliability.

The assessment schedule will be released in the year prior to external assessment sittings. QCAA will aim to minimise the chance of multiple sittings occurring on the same day; however students may be required to sit two external assessments in one day. Rescheduling will not be possible for avoidable issues, or because a student is not happy with their schedule.

Special provisions will enable equal access to assessment for all students with disability or those who experience misadventure. No student will be disadvantaged or advantaged through the use of special provisions. The QCAA is currently working with stakeholders and educational, legal and medical professionals to develop special provision policy and procedures prior to implementation. Schools will be confident that external assessment processes:
- meet subject-specific syllabus requirements
- are part of a balanced assessment program
- collect valid evidence
- follow accepted assessment conventions
- are accessible to all learners
- are consistently and reliably marked.

It is important that students are given every opportunity to perform at their best in the external assessments. Mock, or practice, assessments for each subject will be released well in advance.
Feedback & Reporting

Feedback provides meaningful information about a student's strengths and areas for improvement to allow them to progress their learning. Teachers and students use qualitative and quantitative assessment information to understand and improve learning.

Reporting is the process of communicating assessment information, formally or informally, to help students, parents, teachers and the system make decisions about what students know and can do, including recommendations for their future learning. The key purpose of reporting student achievement and progress is to improve student learning.

Reports are written for:
- parents, carers and students to provide information about progress and achievement
- school communities to summarise the school's achievements and progress
- broader educational communities to provide state-wide and national statistical information and analyses.

In the new system of senior assessment, schools will continue to play an important role in using the reporting standards in each syllabus to advise students, parents and carers about the achievements of students in senior subjects.

Recording and reporting achievement in Units 1 and 2

For Units 1 and 2, schools will determine if a student has satisfactorily demonstrated the achievement of the unit objectives identified in the syllabus.

Teachers will do this by determining whether a student has met the following requirements:
- their work demonstrates achievement of the unit objectives
- it is their own
- they have observed QCAA and school requirements.

Schools will continue the current practice of determining their own procedures for reporting levels of achievement in Units 1 and 2 to students, parents and carers. There will be no requirement for schools to report levels of achievement in Units 1 and 2 to the QCAA.

After work is submitted and marked, teachers should provide timely feedback to students, parents and carers. Appropriate feedback may include:
- advice on particular strengths evident in the work
- advice on areas for development and how improvements could be made
- school decisions relating to achievement against the performance standard.

Importantly, schools must ensure students are aware that grades or results for summative assessments reported by the school are not final until confirmed by the QCAA. Prior to confirmation, the most informative feedback on a student's achievement will be achieved through the use of A-E descriptors.
Teaching, Learning & Assessment in General Subjects (Units 1 & 2)

In the new system, syllabuses will be a key foundational component of teaching, learning, and assessment planning in General subjects. Schools will decide on the sequencing, scope and scale of assessment for Units 1 and 2 and should reflect the local context. Teachers will determine the assessment program, tasks and marking guides that will be used to assess student performance for Units 1 and 2. Unit 1 and 2 assessment outcomes provide feedback to students on their progress in the course of study.

Teaching and learning planning

The syllabus provides the necessary components to develop a teaching and learning program:

- **Syllabus objectives** outline what students need to learn and are explored at least once in Units 1 and 2 and again in Units 3 and 4 to inform unit objectives.

- **Unit objectives** are contextualised for the subject matter and requirements of the unit to inform the assessment objectives.

- **Assessment objectives** are further contextualised for the requirements of the assessment instruments.

Assessment planning

In General subjects, teachers and schools will ensure that assessment programs for Units 1 and 2:

- assess each unit objective at least once
- provide at least two, but no more than four, assessments for Units 1 and 2
- provide at least one assessment for each unit
- consider the suggested assessment information outlined in Units 3 and 4 of the syllabus that will most effectively assess the unit objectives
- provide opportunities for students to experience and respond to the types of assessment they will encounter in Units 3 and 4
- consider the assessment guidance in the syllabus.

Assessment Instruments

In General subjects, teachers and schools will ensure that assessment instruments for Units 1 and 2:

- are aligned with the attributes of quality assessment and reflect the principles of quality assurance
- assess all the unit objectives or are part of a set of instruments that assesses all the unit's objectives
- contextualise the unit objectives to suit the subject matter and assessment technique chosen
- develop questions, items and/or activities that:
  1. are timed to reflect the developmental stage of the course
  2. use the appropriate language level for the units
  3. use, where required, sources or stimulus materials that are clear and appropriate to the task
  4. provide clear instructions so that students understand what is required of them
  5. provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the identified objectives
  6. where appropriate, use the conditions of similar tasks offered in Units 3 and 4
- provide students with appropriate time and resources to complete the task
- have an appropriate marking guide developed.

Marking Guides

In Units 1 and 2, a marking guide for each assessment task will be developed by the school to make the criteria used to make judgments clear and explicit. Marking guides:

- describe how well students demonstrate the unit objectives
- help to ensure a consistent understanding of the criteria that guide the judgments made
- provide the basis for feedback to students
- reflect the identified assessment objectives
- describe the evidence in student responses at various performance levels.
The Rockhampton Grammar School takes seriously the challenge of preparing students for today's world. We treat each student as a whole person through a balance of academic, sporting, co-curricular and social activities. Our School motto is Macte Virtute et Litteris or Grow in Character and Scholarship.

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