Queensland Review
of Senior Assessment and
Tertiary Entrance Processes

Focus Questions

Preamble

The overarching aim of this review, as set down in the Terms of Reference, is 'to consider the effectiveness of the systems and identify ways to improve, revitalise or reform them'.

For it to remain fair, any system of a certain age should be subject to periodic review and evaluation. Externally moderated school-based assessment has been in place for more than 40 years. The OP system for tertiary entrance has been in place for almost 25 years. The environment in which these two systems operate has changed. This review seeks to find out whether there are aspects of those systems that require modification, fundamental change, or no change at all.

The reviewers are seeking short-form responses to ten questions based on their deliberations to date. We are particularly interested in responses that indicate a depth of understanding of assessment modes in senior secondary schooling and the use of those assessments in university selection decisions.

Your submissions should address some or all of the following:

1. **School-based assessment**

   We have suggested that school-based assessment be preserved. What is your response to this suggestion? What value do you place on school-based assessment in general, and teacher-devised assessments in particular? What would you do specifically to enhance the validity and reliability of teacher-devised assessments?

2. **External assessment**

   We have suggested that an externally set and marked assessment be used in some or all Authority subjects and that this assessment contribute up to 50% of a student's result in a subject. What is your response to this suggestion? What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of including an External Assessment?

3. **Moderation**

   We have suggested that, for school-based assessment, current moderation processes be strengthened. What do you see as the advantages of the consensus model of moderation that is currently operating? Do you agree that current moderation processes need to be strengthened and, if so, what specifically would you change?

4. **Finer scale for school assessments**

We have suggested that school assessments be reported on a 15-point scale based on five described and illustrated achievement levels (1 to 5, with 5 being the highest) within each of which teachers make finer-grained distinctions (+, 0, -). The process would recognise that teachers may arrive at a student's overall result by adding marks on different assessments and interpreting the resulting scores qualitatively by reference to the described achievement levels. What is your response to this suggestion? Do you believe teachers will be able to use their assessment evidence to make meaningful and comparable finer-grained distinctions of this kind?

5. **Cross-curriculum capabilities testing**

We have suggested that a small number of capabilities essential to study and work beyond school, which we call key cross-curriculum capabilities (KCs), be tested and that KC test results be reported alongside subject results. What is your response to this suggestion? What do you see as the role, if any, of these test results in university entrance decisions?

6. **Separation of responsibilities at the secondary–tertiary interface**

We have suggested that the responsibilities of QCAA (formerly QSA) and the universities be separated so that QCAA's role is the certification of student achievement upon completion of Year 12 and the universities' role is to decide how this and other evidence is used in selection decisions (e.g. constructing rank orders of applicants, specifying pre-requisite subjects, giving greater weight to results in certain subjects). What is your response to this suggestion? What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of a separation of responsibilities?

7. **Scaling and the construction of rank orders**

We have suggested that it is the responsibility of universities to decide what evidence they will use to select students for entry into competitive courses and how that evidence will be used to rank applicants. We have also suggested that the construction of a single rank order (e.g. OP or ATAR) of *all* applicants to *all* courses in *all* universities no longer seems appropriate. It would be a decision of the universities whether or not they construct such a rank order. A consequence is that a scaling test (the QCS Test), schools' provision of SAIs, and QCAA scaling processes would no longer apply. What is your response to this suggestion? What are your predictions of effects on universities and schools/teachers?

8. **Governance**

These suggestions have implications for the work of the QCAA. Changes to QCAA's legislated functions would be necessary. A number of responsibilities would be removed (e.g. the calculation of the OP and FPs) and a number of responsibilities would be added (e.g. the development and marking of external assessments). This may have implications for capacity

building within that Authority. What do you see as the implications of our suggestions for the QCAA?

These suggestions also have implications for the work of QTAC. As the agent of the universities, QTAC would be responsible for implementing universities' student selection policies. QTAC would receive Subject Results (on a finer scale than in the present system of senior assessment) and KCCC results from QCAA, and would use these (and other evidence as agreed) to produce rankings of applicants to competitive university courses. What do you see as the implications of our suggestions for the universities and QTAC?