

Background Paper No. 1

Senior assessment and tertiary entrance in a nutshell

The purpose of this paper is to describe senior assessment and tertiary entrance in Queensland in a nutshell. It does not purport to be an academic paper, a procedural manual, or the definitive description of senior assessment and tertiary entrance procedures in Queensland. Its focus is on describing and explaining the key features of the system to an audience that is not necessarily acquainted with the intricacies of the Queensland system. And it is simply an aide mémoire for those who are part of the system. Not all aspects of senior assessment and tertiary entrance are mentioned and technical discussion is kept to a minimum.

This background paper deliberately separates the discussion of senior assessment from tertiary entrance.

- Senior assessment is described in terms of subject-specific assessment and cross-curriculum testing.
- At present, achievement in senior studies is used in tertiary selection for senior students.
- The OP is the primary but not the only selection device. The current tertiary entrance system is described in terms of QTAC procedures, in which the OP and FPs are involved.

Background Paper No. 2 will provide more detail about the procedures that underpin topics featured in Paper No. 1 such as the use of the criteria and standard matrix in arriving at a student's level of achievement, and the calculation of OPs and FPs. We believe that discussing the construction of tertiary entrance ranks is a technical issue best left until senior assessment is understood in its own right.

Where information in this paper is in conflict with official statements from QSA or QTAC, it is the latter that takes precedence. Where possible we have checked our facts with QSA; however, the paper's structure and emphasis are those of the author.

This first draft of the paper will be continuously refined and updated.



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Acronyms

ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
CCE	Common Curriculum Element
CHC	Christian Heritage College
CQU	Central Queensland University
FAI	Field Achievement Indicator
FP	Field Position
HA	High Achievement
JCU	James Cook University
LA	Limited Achievement
LOA	Level of Achievement
OAI	Overall Achievement
OP	Overall Position
QCE	Queensland Certificate of Education
QCIA	Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement
QCS	Queensland Core Skills
QSA	Queensland Studies Authority
QTAC	Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre
SA	Sound Achievement
SAS	Study Area Specification
SBA	School-Based Assessment
SCU	Southern Cross University
SEP	Senior Education Profile
SS	Senior Statement
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TE	Tertiary Entrance
TER	Tertiary Entrance Rank
TES	Tertiary Entrance Statement
USC	University of the Sunshine Coast
USQ	University of Southern Queensland
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VHA	Very High Achievement
VLA	Very Limited Achievement

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Part I – Senior Assessment

1: Senior studies

The studies listed below are on offer to students in their senior phase of learning.

- a. Authority subjects
- b. Authority-registered subjects
- c. Vocational Education and Training certificate studies
- d. School-based apprenticeships and traineeships
- e. Tailored training programs
- f. International learning
- g. Preparatory, enrichment and advanced courses recognised by QSA

All *certification* relating to results in senior studies is determined by the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA).

QSA is a statutory authority, established under an Act of Parliament, the *Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002*. Functions of the QSA include developing, purchasing and accrediting 1–12 syllabuses, testing, assessment, moderation, certification, vocational education and training, and tertiary entrance.

Of the studies listed above, Authority subjects illustrate fully both school-based assessments (devised by teachers) and moderation of those assessments (through an external verification process).

Authority subjects are courses of study that have been approved and issued by the QSA. Results in Authority subjects can count in the calculation of tertiary entrance ranks (constructed by QSA), and are the most common selection devices used by the tertiary sector. It does not necessarily follow however that all students who take these subjects are tertiary bound or want to be so.

Authority-registered subjects are developed from Study Area Specifications (SASs) and generally include substantial vocational and practical components. Results in Authority-registered subjects are not used in the calculation of tertiary entrance ranks but, as is the case with national vocational education and training certificates that are undertaken by many senior students, Authority-registered subjects can count towards alternative tertiary ranks calculated by the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC).

Syllabuses in each Authority subject describe the standards for assessing that subject. The notion of commonly applied pre-set standards is one of the significant differences between Authority and Authority-registered subjects.

Tertiary entrance ranks constructed by QSA and alternative tertiary entrance ranks constructed by QTAC are the main topics of discussion in Part III of this paper.

Authority subjects are the focus of discussion because all of the procedures referred to in this paper involve Authority subjects in some way or another.

2: Senior assessment system

The current Queensland senior assessment system has two components:

1. School-based assessment in specific subjects
2. A test of cross-curriculum skills

Both of these measures of student achievement occur in a high-stakes environment.

Results in each of these components appear on a student's Senior Statement, the transcript of learning received by all students completing Year 12 at a school in Queensland.

3: School-based assessment

Senior assessment is internal

There are no external examinations for students in full-time schooling in Queensland¹. The senior assessment model in Queensland is a form of internal assessment.

Senior assessment is school-based

Schools plan and manage their own assessment. Teachers and schools are responsible for designing assessment plans and instruments, collecting and collating evidence of student achievement (student work), profiling student achievement over a course of study, awarding grades and reporting on student achievement up to the award of a summative or terminal level of achievement for certification on course completion.

Schools assess significant aspects of the course of study as set down in the syllabus and translated into an approved work program. Teacher-devised assessments include supervised examinations, short tests, assignments, complex tasks, unseen essays, projects, practicals, orals, aurals, observational schedules, and field studies. Assessment occurs under various rules and conditions such as supervision, notice, access to resources, set schedules, handing-in procedures and acceptance of late submissions.

Information about student achievement is gathered through a process of continuous assessment. Continuous assessment does not mean very frequent or continual formal assessment. Nor does it mean cumulative or terminal assessment but rather a process of constant judging of student achievement with an implication that the result or product is not a static quantity. Assessment is balanced over the course of study (not necessarily within a semester or between semesters). The school work program shows how performances in the various elements of the course are to be combined to produce an exit level of achievement for certification. Within schools teachers use profiles as a tool to record assessment results of students throughout the two-year course of study. Profiling incorporates the notion of selectively updating student records so that the profile is an accurate record of achievement at any point in time during those two years. This makes possible a decision about a student's exit level of achievement for a particular subject that is based on the latest and most complete

¹ There is an exception: QSA sets Senior External Examinations in 22 subjects for Year 12 students unable to access particular subjects at their school and adult students (people of any age not enrolled at a Queensland secondary school) to meet TE or employment requirements or for personal interest. This apparent anomaly has historical roots not described here.

information on record. The rules for combining results in different assessments are set down in syllabuses.

Senior assessment is standards-based

Senior assessment focuses on the specific nature of each student's actual achievements on multiple criteria or dimensions with reference to pre-set standards, in contrast to norm-based assessment where the emphasis is on relating the achievement of a particular student to the achievements of other students. Descriptions of student work that meets these standards appear in the corresponding subject syllabus. The descriptions of standards are free from any references to the performance of the typical student, the proportion of students expected to achieve a given level, or the particular age or stage of schooling at which a certain level of performance is thought to be acceptable.

Comparability of standards

Teachers use a variety of assessment instruments for obtaining evidence about students' achievement levels. The public need for credibility would not be met if teachers were the sole assessors of the performance of their own students and if teachers were working in isolation.

Students who take the same subject in different schools and who attain the same standard through assessment programs based on a common syllabus should be awarded the same level of achievement on exit from Year 12, irrespective of the teacher who is responsible for setting and marking of assessment instruments. (This is not to suggest that two students who receive the same level of achievement have had the same collection of experiences or have achieved equally in any one aspect of the course. It means that they have, on balance, reached the same standard.)

It is the role of moderation to ensure comparability of standards through a system of verification of school decision-making.

Senior assessment is moderated

The Queensland approach to moderation uses review panels operating at district and state levels. Moderation by review panels places bounds on the extent to which teachers exercise freedom in deciding standards of student work.

A review panel is a group of experienced practicing teachers who give advice to schools, on behalf of QSA, in subjects within their area of expertise, about the appropriateness of work programs and about standards of student work. They are appointed by a committee of school principals in each district. Their participation is voluntary and supported by their schools (e.g. being released to attend panel meetings). While panellists receive some remuneration², schools bear much of the cost of their involvement in the system. The partnership between schools and the QSA is a defining feature of the system.

Queensland is divided into 13 administrative districts. For each subject or subject area there is a district panel in each district plus a state review panel; some subjects with small enrolments have different arrangements. State panels regulate the operation of the district review panels, advise on issues within the district review panels, and resolve disagreement between schools and district panels.

² Panellists are paid for up to two hours per school submission for pre-reviewing at monitoring and verification, and for reviewing work programs. Panel chairs and state chairs also receive a stipend for their work throughout the year.

Components of moderation

- Approval of school plans for implementing the subject syllabus (work programs)
- Review of each school's assessments through monitoring, verification, comparability, and confirmation
- Random sampling (a post-hoc mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of the moderation process).

Approval (or work programs)

QSA approves a school's programs of study in Authority and Authority-registered subjects as programs for which students' results may contribute to certification and be recorded on the Senior Statement. The term "Authority subject" like "Board subject" in an earlier era does not have meaning beyond Queensland. Authority subjects are the only subjects for which the full suite of moderation processes applies and which "count" in determining tertiary entrance ranks (discussed later). In the case of an Authority subject, the course of study is confirmed by a process in which the relevant review panel checks a school's work program against the corresponding syllabus to ensure that the requirements of the syllabus have been met. The life-span of an approved work program is six years, with designated commencement and expiry years.

Review: Monitoring, Verification, Comparability and Confirmation

The operation of the review panels during monitoring and verification is as follows.

At *monitoring*, a sample of student folios of Year 11 work is sent from each school in each subject to the relevant review panel, and advice is then provided to the school about the effectiveness of its assessment package and interim judgments about levels of achievements.

At the end of a course of study, schools provide a *verification* submission to district panels for review. This typically involves five folios at mid-range level and four at threshold level. Each folio includes the relevant pieces of student work or other records of their performances as well as the school's judgments of the standard attained by the student. Teachers' judgments concerning how close each student is to the boundary between adjacent levels (e.g. Sound and High) are also provided at verification. Adjustment for any student in the sample can have repercussions for other students in the group. Members of the review panel meet and review each of the sampled folios, considering whether they agree with the teacher judgments about standards based on the evidence before them. The panel seeks agreement across its members before offering its advice to the school.

Verification is followed by a process called *comparability* in which state review panels look at a sample of folios from each district to ensure judgments are comparable across the state.

Confirmation is the final process of validation of the results to appear on the Senior Statement. The responsibility for confirmation rests with QSA.

Random sampling

A postscript to certification, random sampling is part of the system of moderation that relates to verification of school decision-making. It offers information about how successful the QSA's review procedures are in providing schools with suitable advice about standards, advice that leads to appropriate further action by schools. At the beginning of the year following certification of results, QSA extracts random sample of student folios for post-hoc

analysis. This student work is analysed by review panels in “non-home” districts. Where there are concerns, QSA contacts the school and advises the principal of action to be taken.

Timing and summary of events

Figure 1, provided by QSA, summarises the events described above for Authority subjects and indicates the timing of those events.

Phase 1: Syllabus development

Learning Area Reference Committees develop syllabuses for QSA approval
Syllabuses contain the pre-set standards for assessment
Schools write work programs

Phase 2: Work program approval

District review panels ensure that work programs meet syllabus requirements
QSA approves work program
Schools teach and assess students according to their approved work programs

Phase 3: Monitoring (February)

District review panels provide advice on schools about course implementation based on samples of Year 11 work
Schools apply panel advice

Phase 4: Verification (October)

District review panels verify schools’ judgments of student achievements
Schools respond to panel advice
State panel negotiates if there is disagreement between schools and district panel

Phase 5: Comparability (November)

State review panels ensure judgments are comparable across the state

Phase 6: Confirmation (November)

QSA checks school results and confirms levels of achievement

Student outcomes (December)

Exit levels of achievement awarded

Phase 7: Random sampling (December–January)

Random samples of student folios extracted
Student work analysed and school decision-making verified

Figure 1: Summary of moderation events for Authority subjects

Curriculum, teaching, assessment and certification

Appendix 1 contains Figure 2, sourced from the QSA website, locates moderation within a sequence of events that starts with curriculum documents and ends with certified student achievement. Pathways for both Authority and Authority-registered subjects are shown. It can be seen that there is no approved syllabus for Authority-registered subjects and there is no panel review process. Authority-registered subjects are generated at the school level, and tailored to the needs of their student population.

4: Queensland Core Skills (QCS) Test

Content

The QCS Test assesses achievement in the common elements of the senior curriculum, referred to as Common Curriculum Elements (CCEs). These skills are embedded, to varying degrees, in subject syllabuses and students acquire them in different contexts as they move through their subject-specific studies. At the end of Year 12 students are tested on how well they can apply these skills in unfamiliar contexts. The test is developed and marked by QSA. Items that appear on the test have been thoroughly tried out beforehand.

Population

The QCS Test must be sat by students who are eligible for an OP (tertiary entrance ranking described elsewhere). Students who are not eligible for an OP may choose to sit for the test. All students who take the test are awarded a grade (A to E) which is recorded on the Senior Statement.

Format

The 7-hour test comprises four papers in three formats – extended writing (one paper), short response (one paper), and multiple-choice (two papers).

Two *multiple-choice* papers (1.5 hours each for 50 items) contain questions based on a variety of stimulus material, such as prose passages, poetry, graphs, tables, maps, mathematical and scientific data, cartoons and reproductions of works of art. Students are required to answer the question asked by selecting the best answer from four options.

In the *short-response* paper (2 hours) students respond by writing sentences or paragraphs, arguing a point of view, interpreting literary extracts and academic prose, sketching/drawing, performing calculations, graphing, tabulating, summarising written text, substituting in formulae etc.

A *writing task* (2 hours) requires students to produce an extended piece of continuous prose of about 600 words in response to multi-medium, multi-mode stimulus material, presented to students as an A3 fold-out in colour.

Marking and grading

Marking of the QCS Test involves the use of computer technology and human markers. Markers of the short-response items and the writing task are recruited by the QSA. Training and monitoring of markers ensure that marking schemes are applied in the same way to students' responses.

The multiple-choice papers (100 items in total) are scored by computer according to a key (list of correct options). Each incorrect response scores zero. Unattempted items and multiple responses for an item also score zero.

Each unit (collection of items attached to the same stimulus material) on the short-response is marked a minimum of twice and, if necessary, three times using an acceptable minimum standards marking scheme specific to the item and its associated performance domain(s). Predetermined trade-offs are incorporated in the marking scheme. Grades for each item are translated into scores which are aggregated to give the total score on the short-response paper. There are processes for monitoring the marks awarded by markers during the marking operation (marker consistency).

Writing Task responses are marked on five dimensions (criteria): Central idea; Vocabulary; Responsiveness; Grammar, punctuation, spelling; and Structuring & sequencing. Length of the response is also taken into account (the task requires 600 words). The overall score is arrived at holistically (as opposed to an analytic process where scores on separate criteria are combined). Each response is marked by three independent markers. Different combinations of markers are assigned to each of three markings.

The total QCS score is the weighted aggregate of the subtest scores (Writing Task contribution being adjusted to 25%). The total score on the test is converted to one of the five available grades (A to E). The statewide distribution of grades is not predetermined, but is ascertained by setting numerical cut scores after analysis of student performance on five overarching criteria (see below).

Administration and security

The test is administered across the state under commonly applied conditions (e.g. time, equipment allowed) over two consecutive days at the end of Term 3. Tests are administered with strict security. A new version of the QCS Test is produced each year. All papers including the multiple-choice papers are released into the public domain.

Construct

There are sets of the CCEs that fit together. These five sets of CCEs or aspects of achievement are referred to as “criteria” and they provide a summary of what is measured by the test and they are the basis for establishing cut scores for grades. Table 1 shows the five criteria, together with a description of what it means to perform at an A-standard on the test.

Table 1: QCS Construct

Criterion (or basket of CCEs)	A-standard descriptor
Comprehend and collect ideas and information	Comprehend facts and literal meanings over a wide range of material Extract information, clarify it, and transform it to display meaning
Structure and sequence ideas and information	Select/sort relevant, subtle and/or obscure information from a wide range of materials and then sequence it logically and organise it systematically Discern complex patterns and relationships from verbal, pictorial, tabular, graphical and symbolic text
Create and present	Demonstrate a confident and flexible proficiency with written language, a skilled and effective control of structure, and a consistent ability to develop, clearly and sensitively, a relevant central idea Write effectively and accurately Produce clear, coherent and accurate information of the highest visual appeal
Analyse, assess and conclude	Deduce and induce subtle causal and other relationships between factors from interrelated material Identify the essence and suitably evaluate the worth of multi-faceted, complex arguments, verbal and mathematical Draw conclusions through evaluation of a wide range of materials thus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – evaluate explicit and implicit assumptions, distinguish factors, evince and assess principles, predicts conclusions – consider many possibilities from a wide range of complicated material in making sound judgments
Apply techniques and procedures	Determine and use appropriate techniques for making exact and approximate calculations Solve problems involving a number of pieces of information

One illustration of the way a set of CCEs fits together under a criterion (or within a “basket”) is Criterion 5: “Apply techniques and procedures”. This basket includes all the mathematics-specific CCEs:

- Calculating with or without calculators
- Estimating numerical magnitude
- Approximating numerical value
- Substituting in formulae
- Structuring/organising a mathematical argument
- Applying a progression of steps to achieve the required answer
- Identifying shapes in two and three dimensions

Appendix 2 contains a list of the 49 CCEs.

How QCS results are used

Contrary to what is often taken to be a fact by people outside the Queensland system, the QCS Test is *not* used to moderate school-based assessments. School-based assessments are validated through external moderation as described in Section 3.

The primary function of the QCS Test is to enable the statistical process of scaling in constructing rank order lists for use in tertiary selection. Scaling uses group results *not* individual results.

Measuring and certifying individual achievement in cross-curriculum skills (as described above) is a secondary function of the QCS Test.

Sections 3 and 4 in Part I have described two sources of assessment information recorded on the Senior Statement. Part II links senior assessment to tertiary entrance.

Part II: From Senior Assessment to Tertiary Entrance

1: Year 12 Certification

All certification relating to results in the senior phase of learning is determined by QSA. Students completing Year 12 may receive one or more of the following:

- Senior Statement – records all learning in the student’s account³ and the results achieved during the senior phase of learning including a QCS result if applicable
- QCE – Queensland Certificate of Education – described in detail below
- QCIA – Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement – confirms learning outcomes for special needs students on individualized learning programs
- VET Certificate – Vocational Education and Training Certificate – certifies competence in a vocational education and training course or qualification level
- Tertiary Entrance Statement – records a student’s Overall Position (OP) and up to five Field Positions (FPs).

Queensland Certificate of Education

The QCE is Queensland’s senior school-based qualification, awarded to eligible students on completion of the senior phase of learning, usually at the end of Year 12. The QCE recognises the broad learning options available to students and offers flexibility in what, where and when learning occurs.

Learning options include Authority and Authority-registered subjects, VET courses, workplace and community learning, and university subjects undertaken while at school. To be eligible for a QCE, student must achieve at least 20 credits of learning including minimum literacy and numeracy standards. A minimum of 12 credits must come from completed Core courses of study. These include Authority and Authority-registered subjects, VET courses, school-based apprenticeships and recognised international learning programs. The remaining eight credits can come from a combination of Core, Preparatory, Enrichment or Advanced courses.

Part I of this paper referred to elements of the Senior Statement (results in Authority subjects and the QCS Test). Sections 1–3 in Part III refer to elements of the *Tertiary Entrance Statement*.

QSA is responsible for the production and integrity of the Tertiary Entrance Statement (OP-eligible students only). OP-eligible students compete for places in tertiary courses not only with their peers but with applicants outside the school system.

2: Selection for tertiary study

It is the role of QTAC (Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre) to process applications for the majority of undergraduate courses at Queensland universities, Medicine at Bond University, the Australian Maritime College in Tasmania, and to some courses at universities in Northern NSW, TAFE Qld, Southbank Institute of Technology and some private providers of post-secondary courses. Part of their role is to manage the bridge between senior assessment and tertiary entrance.

The main selection criteria for tertiary study are:

- Meeting the institutional admission rules
- Meeting the minimum course entry requirements
- OP or QTAC selection rank (for OP-ineligible students)

Part III: Tertiary Entrance

This section discusses how senior assessments are used for tertiary entrance purposes, and the roads to tertiary that exist for students with an OP and for students who do not have an OP.

1: Tertiary Entrance Statement

A Tertiary Entrance Statement (TES) is issued by QSA to students who are eligible for an OP. The TES records a student's OP and up to five Field Positions (FPs).

To be eligible for an OP (and therefore for one or more FPs) a student must study a certain number of Authority subjects and satisfy other requirements including completion of Year 12 and the QCS Test. The basic eligibility requirement is 20 semester units of credit in Authority subjects with at least three subjects taken for four semesters. (Authority subjects are based on syllabuses that have been approved and issued by the QSA. There is a list of International Baccalaureate (IB) studies comparable to QSA subjects.)

The OP shows how well an individual student has performed overall in Authority subjects when compared with the performance of all other OP-eligible students in the state. The OP shows a student's ranking on a scale of 1 to 25, with 1 being the highest. All subjects are weighted equally in the calculation of a student's OP.

A student's OP, together with subject prerequisites or other requirements such as portfolios and interviews, is very important in determining the tertiary courses for which they could gain entry.

The TES also reports a student's achievement in up to five fields of study, expressed as FPs. FPs show a student's ranking on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the highest, based on achievement in Authority subjects. These fields identify areas of study that emphasise particular knowledge and skills. FPs are determined for OP-eligible students only and only for

the fields for which their subject choice qualifies them. Field Positions are located within an OP band. Students are not ranked over the full OP range for their FPs.

Different subjects contribute different weights to the different fields. For example, Mathematics B⁴ contributes more highly to Field C than English. On the other hand, English contributes more highly to Field A than Mathematics B. The extent to which a subject contributes to each field is published each year.

FPs are used to provide more information when it is necessary to consider two or more applicants with the same OP at the cut-off point for a course.

Students who are not eligible for an OP can be considered for tertiary entrance on the basis of assessable academic achievements or other qualifications.

The five fields are described in Table 2.

Table 2: Field Descriptions

Field	Description
A	Extended written expression involving complex analysis and synthesis or elements of writing necessary to complete such tasks
B	Short written communication involving reading comprehension, pictorial interpretation and basic English expression or understanding the elements necessary to complete such tasks
C	Basic numeracy involving simple calculations and graphical, diagrammatic and tabular representation
D	Solving complex problems involving mathematical symbols and abstractions or elements of problem solving necessary to complete such tasks, including complex graphical and scientific interpretation
E	Substantial practical performance involving physical or creative arts or expressive skills

2: QTAC procedures

What follows is drawn from QTAC publications.

Institution admissions rules

These rules vary by institution and can include policies regarding, for example, the level of English proficiency required and minimum age or qualification requirements. More specifically, Christian Heritage College (CHC), CQU, JCU, QIBT, University of New England, and USC require applicants to have completed Year 12 or be 17 years of age. SCU requires applicants to have completed Year 12 or be 18 years of age. Southbank Institute of Technology and TAFE QLD require applicants to have completed Year 12 or attained Year 12 leaving age. Applicants who do not meet the above rules can still apply for courses; however, the success of their application is at the institution's discretion.

⁴ The nomenclature of the Maths hierarchy is counterintuitive: Maths C, Maths B, Maths A

Minimum course entry requirements

These requirements are usually prerequisite subjects but can also be success at interview or audition.

Subject prerequisites are the subjects studied in Years 11 and 12 that are stated by the tertiary institutions as necessary for consideration for entry for particular courses. They are expressed as minimum exit LOAs in specific senior subjects. For example, an entry of English (4, SA) in the list published through QTAC indicates that QSA subject English (or equivalent) must have been studied over four (4) semesters (i.e. Years 11 and 12) and an exit (overall) LOA of Sound or better be obtained.

Assumed knowledge is the minimum LOA in a senior subject (or equivalent) considered necessary for successful first-year tertiary study. Students lacking the assumed level of knowledge are not prevented from enrolling; however, they might be disadvantaged unless they undertake recommended bridging, preparatory or appropriate introductory subjects prior to or during their first year of study.

Recommended study refers to subjects that are recommended in order for a student to study a course successfully. They are not entry requirements and do not affect selection of applicants.

Subject choice

QTAC advises students selecting their Year 11 and 12 subjects to select prerequisites and recommended subjects for the tertiary courses they are interested in and to choose the remainder of their senior subjects according to those in which they do best and which they prefer to do.

3: The selection process

The OP road

Selection is a three-stage process.

1. All applicants who fall into an OP band above the minimum cut-off point for a particular course will be offered a place in the course.
2. If the number of places in a course dictates that not all applicants within an OP band can be made an offer then selection within the OP band will be based on FPs.
3. In some cases, even after FPs have been considered (where applicable), more information may be needed to differentiate between students with the same OP applying to courses that are highly competitive. In these instances a further step may be added. Depending on the institution this could include any of the following:
 - a. Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR);
 - b. LOA in prerequisite subjects; school reports or additional information supplied by the applicant; or,
 - c. QCS grade.

The OP-ineligible road

Selection is based on the OP Ineligible QTAC selection rank.

Ranking is based on results in a student's best 20 semester units of Authority and Authority-registered subjects and VET units of competency/modules as recorded on the Senior Statement and, if available, the student's QCS grade (QCS grade used to moderate upwards only).

Students are ranked from 1 (lowest) to 99. QTAC compiles a table showing comparisons between OPs and QTAC selection ranks thus allowing OP-eligible and OP-ineligible students to compete for tertiary places.

FPs are not used in differentiating applicants in the QTAC selection rank because the scale is finer than the OP scale. Taking 2012 as an example, OP11 (one band) lined up with a selection rank from 77 to 79 (three points).

Students not taking the standard tertiary pathways (i.e. being OP-eligible) may not be considered for tertiary entry interstate or overseas (and should contact the relevant institution outside Queensland).

Other roads to tertiary study

Courses not requiring OPs/QTAC selection ranks

For such courses applicants may be selected on the basis of a portfolio of work, audition, interview, test result, or other requirement (these are published in the QTAC handbook). This scenario usually occurs within skills-based courses such as art, music and dance.

Applicants with qualifications in addition to senior study

Some Year 12 students have qualifications in addition to senior results that can be used in the assessment of their application. Such qualifications include AQF Certificate III or IV, music qualifications (e.g. from the Australian Music Examinations Board), or study undertaken at a tertiary institution. These qualifications may give the student a more competitive QTAC selection rank than awarded for their senior study.

Special admissions schemes

Most institutions have admissions schemes to assist applicants in special circumstances gain entry to tertiary courses. For example, there are access and equity schemes, regional preference schemes, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schemes.

Subject bonus schemes

Some institutions have schemes where applicants receive bonus ranks if they have passed specified subjects at school, such as languages other than English or Maths C.

QTAC's educational access scheme

This scheme takes into account circumstances beyond the control of the applicant that affected their level of academic achievement when assessing an application for tertiary entrance. The range of circumstances includes financial hardship, English language difficulties, and disruption at home or school.

Appendix 1 – The moderation process

This diagram is copied from QSA’s Senior Moderation Handbook at www.qsa.qld.edu.au

Diagram 1: The moderation process

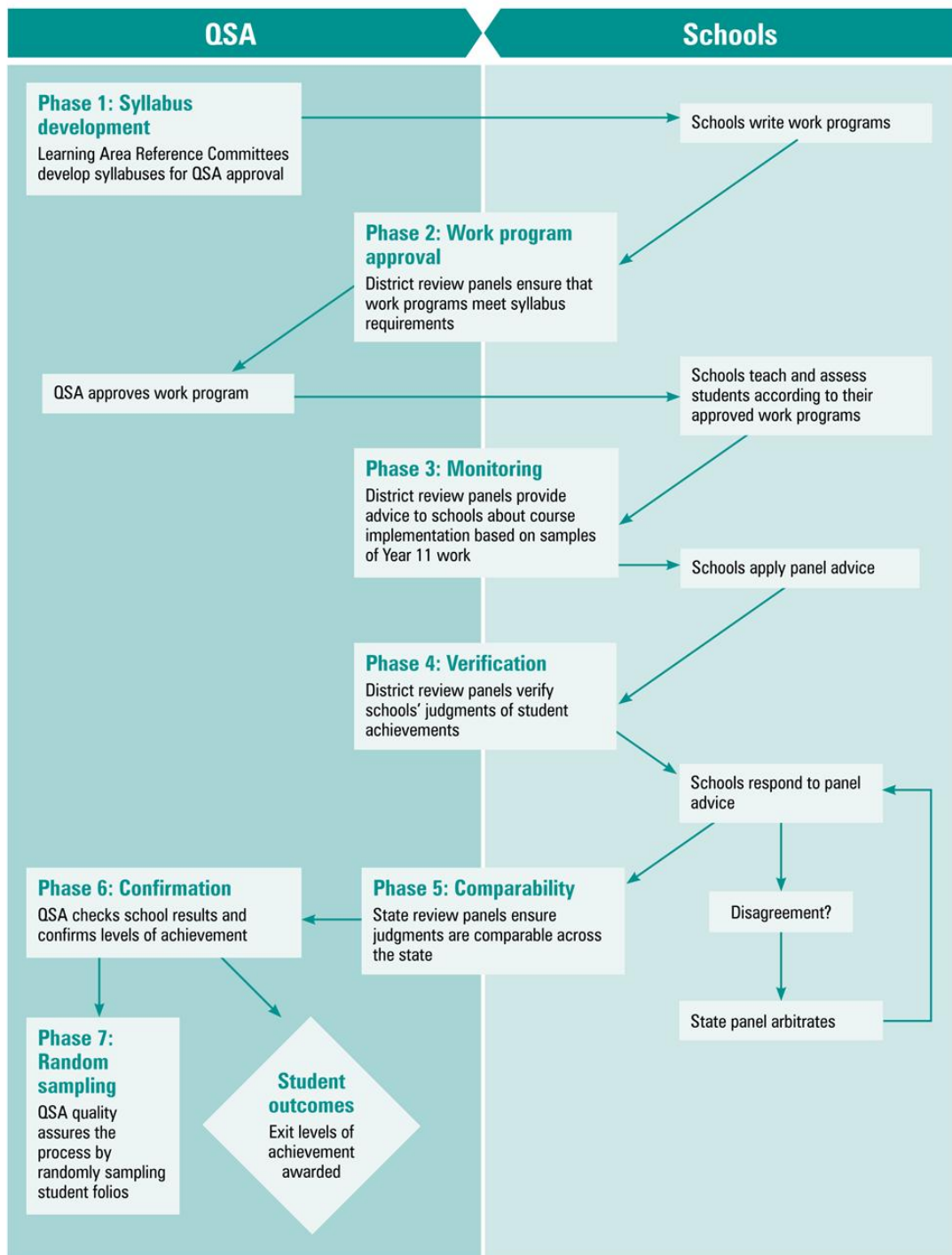


Figure 2: Flowchart for moderation

Appendix 2 – Common Curriculum Elements

Recognising letters, words and other symbols
Finding material in an indexed collection
Recalling/remembering
Interpreting the meaning of words or other symbols
Interpreting the meaning of pictures/illustrations
Interpreting the meaning of tables or diagrams or maps or graphs
Translating from one form to another
Using correct spelling, punctuation, grammar
Using vocabulary appropriate to a context
Summarising/condensing written text
Compiling lists/statistics
Recording/noting data
Compiling results in a tabular form
Graphing
Calculating with or without calculators
Estimating numerical magnitude
Approximating a numerical value
Substituting in formulae
Setting out/presenting/arranging/displaying
Structuring/organising extended written text
Structuring/organising a mathematical argument
Explaining to others
Expounding a viewpoint
Empathising
Comparing, contrasting
Classifying
Interrelating ideas/themes/issues
Reaching a conclusion which is necessarily true provided a given set of assumptions is true
Reaching a conclusion which is consistent with a given set of assumptions
Inserting an intermediate between members of a series
Extrapolating
Applying strategies to trial and test ideas and procedures
Applying a progression of steps to achieve the required answer
Generalising from information
Hypothesising
Criticising
Analysing
Synthesising
Judging/evaluating
Creating/composing/devising
Justifying
Perceiving patterns
Visualising
Identifying shapes in two and three dimensions
Searching and locating items/information
Observing systematically
Gesturing
Manipulating/operating/using equipment
Sketching/drawing