

# Senior Secondary Assessment Taskforce



## Communiqué: Fourth meeting, 11 February 2016 / Fifth meeting, 8 March 2016

This is the fourth in a series of updates on deliberations of the Senior Secondary Assessment Taskforce, which has been established to guide the development of new Queensland senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems. These communiqués can be accessed on-line at <http://deta.qld.gov.au/initiatives/senior-assessment-and-tertiary-entrance.html>

### Background

The Queensland Government will introduce new systems for senior assessment and tertiary entrance, which will commence for students entering Year 11 in 2018. They will provide a new approach to senior assessment, combining school-based assessment with external assessment set and marked by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA). Students seeking tertiary entrance will be provided with an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) instead of the current Overall Position (OP) rank.

A Senior Secondary Assessment Taskforce has been established by the Minister for Education, who chairs the Taskforce to guide these historic reforms. The Taskforce includes stakeholders from key groups including schools, school systems, parent groups, secondary principals' associations, teacher unions, tertiary institutions, QCAA and the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC).

At the first Taskforce meeting on 8 September 2015, members endorsed formal terms of reference and an agenda to consider key aspects of senior assessment and tertiary entrance arrangements. Findings of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) review of senior assessment and tertiary entrance will provide a starting point on these issues.

At the second Taskforce meeting on 11 November 2015, Taskforce members supported all senior Authority subject results being based on a combination of four summative assessments, and new processes to enhance the comparability and quality of school-based assessment and of teacher judgements of student achievement. Taskforce members gave general support to the ACER recommendation that school assessment results should not be scaled against external assessment results.

At the third Taskforce meeting on 9 December 2015, Taskforce members endorsed processes for judging and reporting on student attainment, including:

- the development of instrument-specific marking guides for each senior assessment activity, based on objectives and standards set out in the syllabus document;
- marking each school-based assessment using a 15 point scale mapped against specified performance standards - taskforce members noted that a wider range of points will be used for students at the upper end of the scale to enable a greater level of differentiation between high achieving students; and
- student results in each senior subject being reported as a numerical score, with an accompanying level of achievement based on syllabus standards.

## **Taskforce Meeting 4 – Key outcomes and points of discussion**

At the fourth Taskforce meeting on 11 February 2016, Taskforce members noted an update on the progress of senior assessment trials, and discussed the contribution of external assessment to overall subject results and the future of the existing external senior examinations.

### *Implementation update*

The Taskforce expressed its appreciation for the preliminary implementation work currently being undertaken by the QCAA. More than 20,000 Year 11 students across 264 schools are scheduled to participate in initial trials of external assessment during Semester 1, 2016. Trials of new processes for the endorsement of school-based assessment activities prior to use will also continue across Semesters 1 and 2 of the current school year. Nine Learning Area Reference Groups, including practising teachers and learning area experts from subject associations and tertiary institutions, have been appointed to provide advice on syllabus and assessment design. A series of syllabus writing teams are also being appointed to lead the redevelopment of senior syllabus documents.

### *Contribution of external assessment to overall subject results*

Taskforce members noted that feedback to date suggests strong support for 50 per cent external assessment among mathematics and science teachers, while teachers in other subject areas have suggested external assessment could provide a smaller contribution to the overall subject result. Taskforce members generally expressed support for external assessment to comprise 50 per cent of the overall subject result in mathematics and science subjects and 25 per cent of the overall result in all other subject areas, unless there are compelling educational grounds to the contrary.

### *External Senior Examinations*

The Taskforce considered further information regarding External Senior Examinations (ESEs) currently administered by the QCAA in 21 senior Authority subjects. This included figures on the number of students undertaking ESEs, including Year 12 students accessing subjects that are not otherwise available at their school, mature age students returning to senior studies, and school-age students in exceptional circumstances who may access ESEs in up to three subjects per year.

### *Tertiary entrance arrangements*

Taskforce members noted the Minister's invitation to QTAC to provide advice on future Queensland tertiary entrance arrangements at the March Taskforce meeting. The Taskforce was also provided with an overview of key tertiary entrance arrangements across all Australian states and territories.

## **Taskforce Meeting 5 – Key outcomes and points of discussion**

At the fifth Taskforce meeting on 8 March 2016, Taskforce members discussed advice from QTAC on future tertiary entrance processes for Queensland Year 12 students. In this context, the Taskforce supported the proposal that responsibility for the calculation of a common Year 12 tertiary entrance rank could be transferred from the QCAA to QTAC, who would administer this process on behalf of participating tertiary institutions. Taskforce members also noted that an ATAR would be derived by a process of inter-subject scaling. Inter-subject scaling is used in a number of other Australian jurisdictions

to enable students studying different combinations of senior subjects to be compared in a single tertiary entrance rank.

A number of other issues were also discussed, including:

- the number of Authority subjects that should contribute to a student's ATAR;
- the role of additional forms of attainment, such as Vocational Education and Training (VET) or Authority-registered subjects (developed from Subject Area Syllabuses), in the calculation of a student's ATAR;
- whether eligibility for an ATAR should be conditional on completion of a specified English course; and
- the future of the QTAC Selection Rank.

These matters will be considered further at the next Senior Secondary Assessment Taskforce meeting.

### **Further updates**

Further updates will be published as the Taskforce guides the development and implementation of Queensland's new senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems prior to their commencement in 2018.