

# Senior Secondary Assessment Taskforce



## Communiqué: Seventh meeting, 6 June 2016 / Eighth meeting, 20 July 2016

This is the sixth in a series of communiqués on deliberations of the Senior Secondary Assessment Taskforce, which is guiding the development of new Queensland senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems. The documents are available on-line at <http://deta.qld.gov.au/initiatives/senior-assessment-and-tertiary-entrance.html>

### Background

The 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, the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) and the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC).

The first Taskforce meeting on 8 September 2015 saw members endorse formal terms of reference and an agenda to consider key aspects of senior assessment and tertiary entrance arrangements.

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. Taskforce members broadly supported the proposal 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 using syllabus standards to derive a numerical result in each assessment activity. A final subject result would be reported as a total numerical score, together with an accompanying level of achievement based on syllabus standards.

At the fourth Taskforce meeting on 11 February 2016, 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.

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. The Taskforce supported the proposal that responsibility for the calculation of a common Year 12 tertiary entrance rank be transferred from the QCAA to QTAC, who would administer this process on behalf of participating tertiary institutions. Taskforce members also noted that an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) would be derived by a process of inter-subject scaling, as practiced in a number of other Australian states and territories.

At the sixth Taskforce meeting on 3 May 2016, the Taskforce supported a proposal that the ATAR calculation will be based on five senior subject results. Taskforce members also agreed that eligibility for an ATAR will be subject to satisfactory completion of an English subject, though English will not be a mandatory inclusion in the calculation of a student's ATAR.

## **Taskforce Meeting 7 – Key outcomes and points of discussion**

At the seventh meeting on 6 June 2016, Taskforce members noted the significant foundational work currently being undertaken in the development of new senior assessment and tertiary entrance arrangements. Taskforce members also considered further detailed advice on Year 12 tertiary entrance pathways.

### *Implementation update – From syllabus to subject result*

The QCAA provided an overview of proposed new senior assessment arrangements. Taskforce members noted that redeveloped senior syllabuses will include more specific descriptions of senior syllabus content that will support the use of external assessment, as well as common parameters for the development of school-based assessment. Senior teachers will have a high degree of involvement in the quality assurance of school-based assessment. This will include the *endorsement* of school-based assessments by the QCAA prior to use; *confirmation*, in which the QCAA will select samples of completed student work in each assessment activity for review by accredited assessment supervisors; and *ratification*, in which patterns of results will be analysed and compared by the QCAA.

### *Tertiary entrance*

The QCAA provided a presentation on proposed methodologies for calculating an ATAR through inter-subject scaling. Taskforce members noted that initial modelling, based on current patterns of subject selection and results, has produced a distribution of student ATARs that correlates with ranking under current scaling and ranking processes.

QTAC provided an overview of tertiary entrance pathways available through the current QTAC tertiary application and offer process. Discussion focused on the wide range of learning that may be taken into account as part of this process, including QCAA subjects, vocational education and training (VET) qualifications, the International Baccalaureate (IB) and interstate and overseas qualifications.

## **Taskforce Meeting 8 – Key outcomes and points of discussion**

At the eighth meeting on 20 July 2016, the Taskforce engaged in further consideration of future senior assessment and tertiary entrance arrangements, including further issues relating to the calculation of student ATARs.

### *External Senior Examinations*

The Chair noted that senior officers from the Department of Education and Training have consulted with Queensland teaching centres that offer External Senior Examinations (ESEs). Taskforce members noted that ESEs will continue to operate under the new senior assessment system. The QCAA will work with existing ESE centres to see how future ESE arrangements may be aligned with the new senior assessment regime.

### *Tertiary entrance – ATAR calculation*

Taskforce members endorsed the proposal that the ATAR include a broader range of learning than the current Overall Position (OP) tertiary entrance rank, which is based exclusively on QCAA senior Authority subjects. In particular, the Taskforce provided general support for student ATAR calculations to be based on:

- five senior Authority subjects; or
- four senior Authority subjects plus either a completed VET qualification at Certificate III or above, or a QCAA subject based on a Subject Area Syllabus (SAS).

The Taskforce noted that this approach will recognise the important role that VET plays in senior studies, while also including a range of academic subjects as a broad foundation for future tertiary study. Under the new ATAR calculation model, Queensland Year 12 students with completed VET qualifications will be provided with a scaled subject result. This will allow VET results to contribute to an ATAR.

Taskforce members also agreed that 'satisfactory completion' of an English subject (as agreed on 3 May 2016) would require an overall subject result that is equivalent to the attainment of a 'Sound Achievement' under the current senior assessment system.

### *Tertiary entrance – Other pathways*

Taskforce members discussed existing arrangements by which different forms of learning and attainment are recognised as part of the QTAC application and offer process. In this context, members emphasised the desirability of having Year 12 students compared on a single ranking methodology. Taskforce members noted that the operation of these arrangements will be subject to further consideration in partnership with QTAC and tertiary institutions.

### **Further updates**

The Taskforce will continue to meet to guide the ongoing introduction and communication of these new arrangements.