

Senior Secondary Assessment Taskforce



Communiqué: Sixth meeting, 3 May 2016

This is the fifth in a series of updates on deliberations of the Senior Secondary Assessment Taskforce. The Taskforce 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 obtain an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) instead of the current Overall Position (OP) rank.

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, 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. The findings of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) review of senior assessment and tertiary entrance provided 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 comparability and quality of school-based assessment. Taskforce members gave general support to school-based assessment not being scaled against external assessment.

At the third Taskforce meeting on 9 December 2015, Taskforce members endorsed processes for judging and reporting on student attainment to derive a numerical result in each assessment activity, and reporting final subject results as a total numerical score with an accompanying level of achievement based on syllabus standards.

The fourth Taskforce meeting on 11 February 2015 saw broad support for external assessment to generally comprise 25% of the total subject result in most subjects, and 50% of the total result in mathematics and science subjects.

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 transfer of responsibility for the calculation of a common Year 12 tertiary entrance rank from the QCAA to QTAC, and noted that an ATAR would be derived by a process of inter-subject scaling.

Taskforce Meeting 6 – Key outcomes and points of discussion

At the sixth Taskforce meeting on 3 May 2016, Taskforce members acknowledged the foundational importance of English skills for both tertiary study and citizenship in a modern, globally connected world.

It was confirmed that it will be compulsory for Year 11 and 12 students to undertake an English subject under the new senior assessment and tertiary entrance framework. Specifically, the Taskforce agreed that *eligibility* for an ATAR will be subject to satisfactory completion of an English subject, although a student's results in English will not be a mandatory inclusion in *calculation* of their ATAR.

Discussion then focused on further processes for calculation of an ATAR, and in particular the need to ensure that tertiary entrance processes provide appropriate recognition for different forms of student attainment. QTAC and the QCAA provided additional information on current and potential tertiary entrance processes for Queensland students.

Taskforce members supported QTAC's recommendation that the calculation of an ATAR be based on a student's best five senior subjects. It was noted that the use of five subjects will help to ensure a clear differentiation of student attainment, particularly for students at the upper range of the achievement scale. This approach will also provide for a smooth transition from current OP arrangements, which require students to complete the equivalent of five senior subjects.

The Taskforce also noted that further consideration will be required as to the type and mix of senior subjects that may be included in the ATAR calculation, such as QCAA Authority subjects, Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications and Subject Area Syllabus subjects. In this context, Taskforce members noted that any future arrangements will need to provide for an appropriate balance of rigour and inclusiveness.

Further updates

The next Taskforce meeting will include further consideration of the type of subjects that will be included as part of the calculation of a student's ATAR, and the mechanism for producing a common tertiary entrance rank for Queensland Year 12 students.