

Senior Secondary Assessment Taskforce



The Queensland Government recently announced the introduction of new systems for senior assessment and tertiary entrance. The new systems will commence for students entering Year 11 in 2018. They will:

- enable a new approach to senior assessment which will combine school-based assessment with external assessment. Classroom teachers will develop and mark school-based assessments. The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) will set and mark external assessments
- strengthen the quality and comparability of school-based assessments
- provide students seeking tertiary entrance with an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) instead of the current Overall Position (OP) rank.

A collaborative approach will guide these historic reforms. The Minister for Education has established a Senior Secondary Assessment Taskforce. The Taskforce is chaired by the Minister and includes representation from a wide range of key groups:

- *schools and school systems* — Queensland Catholic Education Commission, Independent Schools Queensland, State Schools
- *parent groups* — P&Cs Queensland, Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools in Queensland, Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network, Isolated Children's Parents' Association Queensland
- *secondary principals' associations* — Queensland Secondary Principals' Association, Queensland State P10-12 School Administrators' Association, Catholic Secondary Principals Association of Queensland, Association of Heads of Independent Schools Queensland Branch
- *teacher unions* — Queensland Teachers' Union, Queensland Independent Education Union
- *tertiary institutions* — University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, Griffith University, Deans of Education (CQ University Australia)
- *system administrators* — QCAA, Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC).

The Taskforce met for the first time on 8 September 2015. Members endorsed the Terms of Reference, which pose such fundamental questions as:

- What is the appropriate balance between school-based and external assessment?
- How do we strengthen the comparability of school-based assessment, while preserving flexibility and scope for teacher judgement?
- How do we ensure that senior subject results are reported in a manner that is meaningful for students, parents, tertiary institutions and employers?
- How can we ensure that tertiary selection provides appropriate recognition for a range of student attainment?

Findings and recommendations from the 2014 Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) review of senior assessment and tertiary entrance will provide a starting point on these issues. The Taskforce acknowledged that ACER's proposals may need to be further tested and refined, and that alternative approaches may be put forward for Government consideration.

For students now in Years 9, 10 and 11, the current senior assessment system will remain. The QCAA will strengthen the current system before the new system is introduced. This will include new accreditation and training for moderation panel members, secondary teachers and curriculum leaders.

The Taskforce will establish a working group to consider tertiary entrance pathways. This includes access for VET students and other senior students who seek tertiary entrance outside the OP rank. The working group will draw on views and expertise from across the tertiary and schooling sectors.

The introduction of the new systems from 2018 will require thorough and complex preparations. The QCAA briefed the Taskforce on the implementation plans which include:

- trialling new senior assessment processes
- trialling endorsement of school-based assessments prior to use
- redeveloping senior syllabuses with input from teachers and curriculum leaders
- providing teachers and schools with extensive professional development
- communicating new tertiary entrance arrangements with students, parents and tertiary institutions.

An illustration of these processes and timelines is attached.

The Taskforce will meet at least twice more before the end of 2015. Further updates will be published as the Taskforce guides the development and implementation of Queensland's new senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems.