



QCEC Response to Draft 3 Consultation on Senior Syllabuses

28 April 2017

Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) again welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the draft three consultation on the following senior subject syllabuses: **English & Literature Extension, Chinese Extension, French Extension, German Extension, Agriculture Science, Marine Science, Psychology, Aerospace Systems, Design, Digital Solutions, Engineering and Food & Nutrition.**

QCEC is the peak strategic body for the 302 Catholic schools in Queensland which are operated by 22 different Catholic school authorities and include 107 secondary schools impacted by changes to senior secondary assessment and tertiary entrance processes.

The considerable time constraints continue to be an issue for the consultation phase in the syllabus redevelopment process which QCEC believes is a risk to the integrity of this process. Two Catholic school authorities, which together represent about half of the senior secondary students in Queensland Catholic schools, organised teacher meetings and provided feedback that has informed QCEC's response. Schools and teachers are encouraged to submit their own responses to QCAA surveys.

The QCEC response to this consultation on senior syllabuses focuses on high level issues across syllabuses. The feedback provided to QCEC acknowledged that this third draft reflects consideration given to issues and concerns raised in the draft two consultation. However, there do remain some overarching areas of concern.

General

Feedback continues to highlight concerns regarding the resourcing and appropriate staffing requirements to implement syllabuses that are new or significantly changed, such as Food and Nutrition, Engineering and Design.

Subject syllabus specific feedback:

Business and Economics

There was general support for draft three of the Business syllabus. Feedback did request that the source of case studies provided be clarified.

English

One Catholic school authority raised a query as to whether the schools will know beforehand the 'literary theories' that are to be applied to the external assessment. Feedback also indicated concern about how many 'literary theories' students will need to know for the final assessment piece.

Science

There was general support for draft three of both Agricultural Science and Psychology syllabuses.

Technologies

The following was provided for the different subject syllabuses:

Aerospace Systems

- It was suggested that this subject may not allow for combined classes to be offered in the future. This could deter schools from offering this subject due to the possibility of small numbers in initial take up.

Design

- A concern was raised about the broad timing of some units, for example 8 to 10 weeks for an assessment task could create inconsistency between students' results at different schools. It was suggested that an additional two weeks could allow for considerable refinement of the product or task. The use of hour allocation instead was recommended as more equitable.
- Feedback suggested that the inclusion of a draft alternative curriculum and assessment sequence for composite class delivery could have enabled more effective feedback.

Digital Solutions

- Feedback provided some general support.

Engineering

- Alerts were raised about the required upskilling of teachers in the physics, mathematical and manual arts components of the syllabus.

Food and Nutrition

- Feedback suggested that resourcing could be an issue due to the requirements for specialised machines, for example sous-vide.
- It was suggested that the syllabus may not adapt well for combined classes, due to foundation knowledge in Units 1 and 2. This could be a concern in rural schools
- A request was made for consistency of language to be used across the syllabus, for example aroma is interchanged with smell
- A concern was raised about the correctness of the description of 'food rich in vitamins and minerals are predominately fruit and vegetables' found in Unit 1, Topic 2.

Reporting Standards

One Catholic school authority highlighted the limited explanations of the Reporting Standards included in these syllabus drafts. It was suggested that the Reporting Standards be aligned to the ISMGs in order to provide clarity regarding how they are to be applied.

ISMG

Feedback from one Catholic school authority suggested that the ISMGs as presented were cumbersome. It was recommended that consideration of the layout of ISMGs could benefit the practical application of this new assessment regime.

Further responses indicated the ISMGs that do not discriminate between mark levels: for instance where a range of marks is presented alongside a descriptor that includes multiple dot points (for example 5 - 6 marks), it is not clear to the student and teacher what part of the descriptor indicates a 5 mark and what part indicates 6 mark. It was suggested that the application of the ISMGs in examples such as this could be problematic within confirmation processes. Further clarity was requested.

Feedback also highlighted concern with the language for the descriptors used within ISMGs. It was suggested that there could be potential grey areas in discriminating between descriptors such as what is 'adept' and what is 'methodical'. Opportunities for teacher moderation will be important in developing consistency.

External Assessment Specifications

Greater clarity was sought by one Catholic school authority in regard to the subject content that would be addressed within external assessment.

Glossary

Feedback suggested that the Glossary within each syllabus was helpful in providing consistent application of syllabus and system terminology. However, it was requested that careful consideration be given to the definition of descriptors used within ISMGs to limit the potential ambiguity concerning application of the ISMGs.

A Catholic school authority proposed that some of the descriptors used were very subjective in nature and the definitions in the glossary did not successfully clarify differences (particularly in consideration of the potential challenges due to the "newness" of a syllabus, or for new or isolated teachers). A case in point provided from the Food and Nutrition syllabus highlighted in ISMG 1 *where discerning and insightful investigation* is used as part of the "top" descriptor (4 Marks) and *purposeful and coherent investigation* is used as part of the "second top" descriptor (3 Marks). When the glossary is consulted, the resulting clarification (for this small part of the overall descriptor only) is:

discriminating; showing intellectual perception; showing good judgment; making thoughtful and astute choices; selected for value or relevance; showing understanding of a situation or process; understanding relationships in complex situations; informed by observation and deduction

vs

having an intended or desired result; having a useful purpose; determined; resolute; full of meaning; significant; intentional; having a natural or due agreement of parts; connected; consistent; logical, orderly; well-structured and makes sense; rational, with parts that are harmonious; having an internally consistent relation of parts.

Additional feedback suggested that some terms needed a more appropriate definition. For example, "Simplistic" is defined as "Characterised by extreme simplification". It was proposed that circular definitions where a term is used to define a term do not provide sufficient clarity.

Conclusion

QCEC welcomes all opportunity to input into the process of syllabus redevelopment and will be happy to discuss further any issues raised in this response.



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