



QCEC Response to Draft 4 of the redeveloped Essential English and Essential Mathematics senior syllabuses

June 2017

Introduction

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) provides this submission on Draft 4 of the Essential English and Essential Mathematics senior syllabuses to inform further development.

QCEC is the peak strategic body with state-wide responsibilities for Catholic schooling in Queensland. This submission is provided on behalf of the five Diocesan Catholic school authorities and 17 Religious Institutes and other incorporated bodies which, between them, operate a total of 302 Catholic schools that educate almost 147,000 students in Queensland. There are 107 Catholic 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 Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) surveys.

The QCEC response to this consultation on the Essential English and Essential Mathematics senior syllabuses focuses on high level issues. The feedback provided to QCEC acknowledged that this fourth draft reflects consideration given to issues and concerns raised in previous drafts for consultation. However, there do remain some overarching areas of concern.

QCEC acknowledges that this consultation focused on the assessment requirements of the draft Essential English and Essential Mathematics senior syllabuses.

Essential English

General

- Feedback indicated general support for the increased quality assurance processes for assessment.
- There was additional support from one Authority for this quality assurance approach to be employed across all Applied Syllabuses in consideration of their potential to contribute to the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).
- It was suggested that there could be more assessment guidance for Units 1 and 2 including suggested word lengths and timing, the possibility of a mock Authority Developed Assessment (ADA) in Unit 2 and sample assessments to provide greater clarity on expectations.

Internal assessment (IA)

- Feedback indicated support for three school-developed assessment items to be endorsed through a quality assurance process.
- One Authority suggested that further consideration be given to the choice of text types to ensure that the diversity of student interests is addressed.

Instrument-specific standards (ISS)

Feedback suggested:

- The ISS could be accompanied by worked exemplars to demonstrate discerning features in student work.
- The glossary could be more comprehensive; there appeared to be some gaps such as a definition for 'on-balance judgement' for reporting purposes.
- That professional development to support using the ISS could be beneficial to teachers.

Authority Developed Assessment (ADA)

Feedback suggested:

- That it may be worthwhile to provide the ADA to schools before the Unit to assist with planning.
- That further elaboration regarding QCAA facilitated moderation practices could provide greater clarity about the nature and timing/logistics of these practices.
- That information regarding special provisions could be important for flexibility of delivery/adjustments for students with additional needs.

Essential Mathematics

General

- Feedback questioned the level of rigour and suggested that General Objectives (4, 5) could be more appropriate for a General subject and therefore this syllabus may not meet the needs of all students who currently take Prevocational Mathematics.
- One Authority indicated that the assessment tasks for this syllabus could be considered too complex for the anticipated cohort of students.
- One authority suggested that this quality assurance approach be employed across all Applied Syllabuses in consideration of their potential to contribute to the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

Internal assessment (IA)

- Feedback indicated support for three school-developed assessment items to be endorsed through a quality assurance process.
- There were questions raised in relation to IA3 regarding use of calculators to determine the standard deviation and the literacy demands expected of students.

Instrument-specific standards (ISS)

Feedback suggested:

- That ISS1 and ISS3 may not reflect the General Objectives of the course and requirements for a 'D' standard could be too complex.
- That significant scaffolding might need to be allowed for ISS1 in consideration of the requirements for this task.
- That the assigning of percentages in ISS4 could mean a student achieves an 'A' and not demonstrate proficient application of mathematical concepts and techniques to solve problems in complex unfamiliar situations.
- The glossary could be more comprehensive; there appeared to be some gaps such as a definition for standard deviation and what are 'commonly used symbols and abbreviations'.

Authority Developed Assessment (ADA)

Feedback suggested:

- Further detail be provided in the General Information regarding the type of task.
- That information regarding special provisions could be important for flexibility of delivery/adjustments for students with additional needs.

- That it could be worthwhile to provide the ADA and associated marking guide to schools prior to planning for implementation of the Unit.
- Further information is needed regarding the 'facilitated moderation practices' referred to for the ADA on page 37 of the syllabus.

Conclusion

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee-Anne Perry', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Lee-Anne Perry AM
Executive Director