

Australia, Queensland

Full Review

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Aim and purpose

- What is the stated aim and purpose of this stage of education, e.g. linked to entry to higher education, the world of work; a broad aim of personal and societal enrichment etc.?
- Are these aims and purposes influenced by an overarching national plan for education or do they reflect the influence of international organisations such as the OECD?

The Queensland Government Department of Education and Training (DET) *Strategic Plan 2016-2020* (DET, 2016a) 'sets the direction for the Department to deliver high quality learning and skilling opportunities for all Queenslanders to reach their full potential and engage fully in the lifelong learning journey'. It is supported by the *Advancing Education* action plan (DET, 2017a) which aims to:

- 'inspire students to become lifelong learners, global citizens and successful people, confidently able to navigate their future, building on the essentials of literacy and numeracy', and to
- 'position schools to more effectively support students to develop the knowledge, skills and qualities they need to be job-ready for the jobs of the future'.

In terms of senior secondary schooling (for 15/16- to 18-year-olds), *Advancing Education* has a focus on strengthening the pathways available to students and continuing to expand the number of vocational education and training (VET) options in schools. This is with a view to ensuring that every Queensland state school student has the opportunity to complete Year 12 (age 18) and, where possible, achieve the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) as the stepping stone to enhanced employment prospects and future opportunities. Introduced in 2008, as

the new senior secondary leaving qualification, the QCE began the process of generating a stronger link between school and career. It reflected a heightened focus on providing tailored, more flexible pathways and began to place greater value on vocational education for students in senior secondary school. Under the action plan, the system of senior secondary assessment under the QCE will change in 2019, along with the system of entry to tertiary education (see the subheading 'Assessment and reporting' below), but the QCE will remain as the key Year 12 certificate.

The *Advancing Education* action plan and the *Strategic Plan* are further supported by the Queensland state schools strategy 2017-2021 - *Every Student Succeeding* (DET, 2017b), which has a focus on raising the performance of all state school pupils, teachers and principals, and identifies successful learners as those who successfully transition through each phase of learning to further education, training and employment. The state schools strategy includes priorities to:

- create inclusive opportunities for all students to reach their potential as successful people
- identify and support at-risk students
- provide vocational education and training options in schools
- create a culture of engaging learning that improves wellbeing and achievement, values diversity and responds to student needs and interests
- provide opportunities for students to identify their intended learning options and learning pathways
- create the next generation of global citizens and entrepreneurs by valuing student voice; embedding science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) opportunities; and expanding the study of languages.

Its performance goals include:

- improving academic achievement for all students
- lifting the performance of the state's top students
- improving reading and writing for all students
- improving Year 12 (upper secondary) certification rates
- closing the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) students
- improving the participation and achievement of students with disability.

These aims and purposes do not appear to reflect the particular influence of international organisations such as the OECD. The changes to senior secondary assessment (via the QCE) and tertiary entry being introduced from 2019 follow an Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) report (2014), which found that, while existing arrangements had served Queensland students well and were fair and reliable, changes were required to achieve greater rigour, simplicity and sustainability.

Structure of the education system

- How is upper secondary provision for students structured, e.g two-year / three-year / varied approach; around subjects or broad areas of learning; broad/comprehensive or specialised / narrow in focus?
- When does compulsory education end?
- What is the age profile of students in this stage of education?
- How well does the structure of the system reflect the stated aim as outlined above

Upper secondary provision in Queensland is the final two years of education, Years 11 and 12 as detailed in the table below.

Year	Age range	School Level
Preparatory year (Prep)	Age 5-6	
Year 1	Age 6-7	Primary school
Year 2	Age 7-8	Primary school
Year 3	Age 8-9	Primary school
Year 4	Age 9-10	Primary school
Year 5	Age 10-11	Primary school
Year 6	Age 11-12	Primary school
Year 7	Age 12-13	Primary school
Year 8	Age 13-14	Secondary
Year 9	Age 14-15	Secondary
Year 10	Age 15-16	Secondary
Year 11	Age 16-17	Senior secondary
Year 12	Age 17-18	Senior secondary

Under the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, as amended (Queensland Government, 2017a), since 2008, education has been compulsory from the Preparatory Year until completion of Year 10 (or until a young person reaches the age of 16, whichever comes first). Unless they are in full-time work, young people who have finished Year 10 or reached the age of 16 are then required to participate in education and training until they have:

- completed Year 12, or
- gained a vocational qualification, or
- turned 17.

These requirements were introduced with a view to encouraging young people to remain in education or training (be earning or learning) and raising the number of students completing Year 12.

A range of senior secondary pathways are available in the intention that these are responsive to individual needs and so enable young people to complete Year 12. All can lead to successful completion of the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE). Some of the vocational programmes available begin in Year 10 and continue into Years 11 and 12.

Available pathways / programmes

- What pathways / programmes are available to students - academic / vocational / professional / flexible?
- At what stage are decisions about the student choice of pathway finalised and who has an input into these decisions?
- Where do these pathways lead - entry to higher education; accreditation for professional life; further training?
- What percentage of the overall cohort of students progress through each pathway?
- How many students progress to higher education / further education / workforce / apprenticeships?

The learning pathways in Years 11 and 12 are intended to lead to the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE). This is Queensland's senior school qualification (introduced in 2008), awarded at the end of Year 12. It records achievement of learning at a set standard and pattern in contributing studies (credits); meets a minimum level of literacy and numeracy requirements; recognises broad learning options; and offers flexibility in what, where and when learning occurs. The following can, for example, contribute towards a student's QCE:

- the study of general / academic subjects in school
- the study of vocational education and training (VET) courses / qualifications in school (known as VETiS - vocational education and training in schools)
- the study of VET courses / qualifications with an external registered training organisation, such as a TAFE institution (institution of technical and further education)
- school-based apprenticeships and traineeships*
- the study of university subjects in school
- studies towards the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma
- the study of an employment skills development programme recognised under the Further Education and Training Act 2014 (Queensland Government, 2017b).

*School-based apprenticeships and traineeships (SAT) allow students in Years 11 and 12 to work with an employer as paid employees, while studying for their QCE. At the same time, students undertake a training qualification with a supervising registered training organisation chosen by both the employer and the student. Part of the student's time must be spent in school. Some school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, like some vocational qualifications, may begin in Year 10. To commence a SAT, a student must have the support of the employer, the school, the supervising registered training organisation, and their parent or guardian.

Decisions on student pathways for Year 11 and 12 are taken in Year 10 when students, in consultation with their school and their parents / carers, develop a Senior Education and Training (SET) plan. The purpose of a SET plan is to help students:

- think about their education, training and career options after Year 12 and make decisions about their learning pathways
- set and achieve their learning goals for Years 11 and 12
- include flexible and coordinated pathway options in their course of senior study
- structure their learning around their abilities, interests and ambitions
- communicate with their parents, teachers and career guidance officers about their learning pathways and post-school plans.

The SET is agreed between the student, their parents / carers and the school. It maps out what, where and how a student will study during their senior phase of learning. It is developed by the end of Year 10, updated as necessary, and reviewed to monitor progress / ensure the subjects and learning included in the plan remain right for the student's individual pathway and future career after Year 12.

Achievement of the QCE alone does not grant entry to tertiary (higher) education. Students wishing to go on to tertiary education need to obtain an Overall Position (OP) ranking in addition (see the subheading 'Assessment and reporting' for more detailed information on the OP).

In December 2016:

- 48,643 students completing Year 12 (93 per cent of the 51,613 Year 12 students in Queensland) received the QCE
- 877 students from 223 schools received the QCIA (the Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement for students with impairments or difficulties in learning)
- 416 students achieved the IB Diploma (of 449 students who undertook study towards the Diploma)
- 31,353 students, from 471* schools, received a VET qualification (QCAA, 2017a)
- 26,303 students - 50.9 per cent of the 51,613 Year 12s in Queensland - received a Tertiary Entrance Statement (TES) confirming their OP ranking and consequently their eligibility for university entry (Martyn-Jones, 2016).

*Of the 1725 schools in Queensland in August 2015, 521 were either secondary schools (257) or combined primary / secondary schools (264) (Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2016).

The proportion of students receiving a Tertiary Entrance Statement / OP ranking following completion of Year 12 is down from 54.0 per cent in 2013, and 80.4 per cent in 1992 (ACER, 2014). This downward trend in the proportion of Year 12 completers who follow the academic / tertiary entry track and are 'OP-eligible' (eligible for a tertiary entrance ranking), has continued steadily since 2008 and the introduction of the QCE. At the same time, there has been an increase in the proportion of 'OP-ineligible' Year 12 completers, reflecting the increasing numbers of students remaining in senior secondary education since the 2006 legislative reforms (see the subheading 'Structure of the education system' above), and completing Year 12 education via the more varied pathways available to them.

The Queensland Government Department of Education *Next Step* report for 2016 (a survey of the destinations of 40,110 Year 12 completers from 2015, who participated in the Government's destinations survey in 2016 (DET, 2016b)) indicates that:

- 60.6 per cent of the young people who completed Year 12 continued in some recognised form of education or training in the year after they left school
- the most common destination was bachelor degree level programmes - 39.7 per cent
- followed by campus-based VET (that is, not apprenticeship or traineeship) programmes - 12.2 per cent, with more than half the campus-based VET students entering programmes at Certificate IV level or higher* (6.9 per cent of all respondents)
- employment-based training accounted for 8.8 per cent of Year 12 completers, either as an apprentice (6.3 per cent) or trainee (2.5 per cent).

*Levels on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), the regulated qualifications framework in Australia.

The Year 12 completers responding to the survey who did not enter post-school education or training (39.4 per cent) comprised those that were employed (26.2 per cent); seeking work (10.7 per cent); or not in the labour force (that is, neither working nor seeking work), education or training (2.4 per cent). This last group could include those who had deferred a university offer, those with a disability or health condition, those who were travelling, and those who were waiting for their course or secured employment to commence.

State school student enrolment numbers from February 2017 indicate that:

- in February 2015, there were 38,514 students enrolled in Year 10; in February 2016, 37,496 pupils were enrolled in Year 11
- in February 2016, 37,400 students were enrolled in Year 10; in February 2017, 36,737 were enrolled in Year 11
- in February 2015, 37,032 pupils were enrolled in Year 11, and in February 2016 32,928 were enrolled in Year 12

- in February 2016, 37,496 were enrolled in Year 11; in February 2017, 33,680 were enrolled in Year 12
- in February 2015, 38,514 students were enrolled in Year 10; in February 2017, 33,680 were enrolled in Year 12 (DET, 2017e).

Although for state schools only (which account for around two-thirds of all schools in Queensland), these figures give some indication of the numbers of students who do not continue from Year 10 to Year 11; from Year 11 to Year 12; and from Year 10 to Year 12.

Summary results from the Department of Education's *Early School Leavers Report* for 2015 (documenting the results of an annual statewide survey on the destinations of students who left Queensland schools in Years 10 or 11 or prior to completion of Year 12 in 2014 (DET, 2016c)), indicate that:

- the majority of early school leavers (65.1 per cent) were studying or in paid employment at the time of the survey
 - further study was being undertaken by 37.0 per cent of early school leavers in the year after they had left school
 - students undertaking campus-based VET programmes accounted for 17.5 per cent of all early school leavers
 - employment-based training accounted for 16.7 per cent of early school leavers, either in apprenticeships (13.9 per cent) or traineeships (2.8 per cent)
 - a further 28.1 per cent of early school leavers were not participating in education or training but had entered employment, with 12.5 per cent employed full-time and 15.6 per cent employed part-time
- the remaining 34.9 per cent of early school leavers were either seeking work (25.4 per cent) or not in the labour force, education or training (9.5 per cent).

Note: these are the most recent *Early School Leavers Report* results available.

Specified curriculum within pathways

- How is the curriculum within these pathways organised? Is it broad / comprehensive / specialised / narrow?
- Are there core subjects that are central to the curriculum?
- What degree of choice is afforded to students within each pathway?
- Is the curriculum presented in subject specifications / syllabi / learning outcomes?
- Is there differentiation of learning outcomes in terms of stage and / or ability?
- What degree of autonomy do teachers / schools have in shaping and implementing the curriculum?
- What is the place of wellbeing / social, personal and health education (SPHE) / citizenship education within the curriculum?
- What competences / key skills are promoted in the curriculum?
- To what extent are skills and competences central to the curriculum structure? How do they feature i.e. are they embedded in learning outcomes?

The curriculum in senior secondary education in Queensland is determined by a student's choice of subjects for the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE). A range of subjects, courses and qualifications can contribute towards the award of the QCE, but students must achieve:

- a minimum amount of learning – 20 credits from a range of subjects – which they must also achieve at a set 'pass' standard. (Note that credits remain live for a period of up to nine years should students leave early and wish to continue their QCE at a later date, and that the 'pass' grade is equivalent to the 'Sound Achievement' grade in the five-point grading scale of Very High Achievement (VHA), High Achievement (HA), Sound Achievement (SA), Limited Achievement (LA) and Very Limited Achievement (VLA) (see the subheading 'Assessment and reporting' below))
- this learning in a set pattern – 12 credits must come from completed core courses of study (at least one of which must come from core studies completed while enrolled at school) and the remaining eight can come from a combination of 'core', 'preparatory', 'enrichment' or 'advanced' courses of study
- minimum literacy and numeracy requirements - determined by successfully completing one of a range of literacy and numeracy courses / qualifications.

Core courses (12 credits)

are usually courses in '[Authority](#)' and '[Authority-registered](#)' subjects (subjects based on syllabuses that have been approved and issued by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA)), which can range from academic subjects such as chemistry, maths and English to more vocational subjects such as hospitality studies and early childhood studies. Each Authority or Authority-registered subject studied for the complete four semesters of Years 11 and 12, and graded as SA (Sound Achievement) or higher, contributes four credits towards a QCE (one credit for each semester successfully completed and graded as SA). Students who study a subject for one, two or three semesters and achieve the required SA grade receive one, two or three credits respectively, i.e. corresponding with the number of semesters completed. The minimum amount of timetabled school time is 55 hours per semester for each senior Authority or Authority-registered subject studied – so 55 hours per credit.

Core courses can also include some [senior external examinations](#) –

which are examinations in 21 individual subjects (such as physics, biology or accounting), and are intended for students who are unable to access these particular subjects at school. Again, each subject completed at SA grade counts four credits towards the QCE. VET Certificates II, III and IV – the numbers refer to the level of the Certificate on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) are also classed as core courses. As with all courses which accrue credits towards the QCE, VET Certificates II, III and IV must be recognised by the QCAA as meeting QCE course criteria and standards. They can be studied in school, at a TAFE institution, or as part of a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship, and are available in a wide range of areas such as animal studies, veterinary nursing, business, outdoor recreation, hospitality, health care etc.. VET II Certificate qualifications contribute four credits towards a QCE, while awarded Certificate III and IV qualifications generally contribute eight credits (although some may contribute fewer). (Partly completed VET qualifications (Certificate

II and above) may contribute credits towards the QCE. The number of credits depends on the proportion of competencies completed.) Some recognised international learning programmes such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma are also classified as core courses. The courses of study must be recognised by the QCAA and a pass in a recognised programme contributes four credits towards a QCE.

Preparatory courses (maximum six credits)

include VET qualifications at Certificate I level on the AQF; employment skills development programmes; recognised re-engagement programmes; recognised certificates and awards; and literacy or numeracy short courses developed by the QCAA. These courses are generally identified as courses which provide 'stepping stones' to further study or training. No more than six credits from preparatory courses can count towards the QCE. Awarded VET Certificate I qualifications contribute two or three credits towards the QCE – two credits for qualifications of 199 nominal hours or less; three credits for those of 200 nominal hours or

more. Employment skills development programmes, which usually include literacy and numeracy programmes, employment preparation activities, and some basic vocational skills training can contribute two credits to the QCE, but only one such programme can contribute towards a QCE. Similarly, only one re-engagement programme can count towards a QCE. Re-engagement programmes are developed locally to help young people participate in education or training and a successfully completed programme can contribute two credits. A wide range of recognised certificates and awards in areas such as music, dance, drama, sport and community development can also count as preparatory courses towards the QCE. Credits vary depending on the individual recognised certificate. Literacy and numeracy short courses (completed at a Sound Achievement level or higher) each contribute one credit towards the QCE, and also meet the minimum literacy and numeracy requirements for the QCE.

Enrichment courses (maximum eight credits)

provide students with opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge

at a higher level. They include recognised certificates and awards; structured workplace or community-based learning programmes; learning projects; accredited VET courses; and some Authority extension subjects and non-QCAA school-based courses. A maximum of eight credits from enrichment courses can count towards the QCE. A range of recognised certificates and awards in areas such as music, dance, drama, sport and community development, and a range of programmes developed and / or owned by community or workplace based-organisations, and approved by the QCAA, can count as enrichment courses towards the QCE. Credits vary depending on the individual recognised certificate. Learning projects contribute one credit towards the QCE and are independent and unique short programmes of learning separate from any established school, training or other educational programme. They are designed by students themselves, take 55 hours to complete, are approved by the QCAA, and allow learners to develop employability or lifelong learning skills in the workplace, the community or as part of self-directed learning. Authority

extension subjects are two-semester courses which contribute two credits towards a QCE when completed at a Sound Achievement (SA) level or higher. They are available in English, French, German, Indonesian, Chinese and music. School-based courses are developed by schools but not based on a QCAA subject syllabus. Schools apply to the QCAA to have courses recognised and recognised four-semester school-based subjects contribute four credits towards a QCE.

Advanced courses (eight credits) go beyond the scope and depth of typical senior secondary schooling and include university courses and VET diploma or advanced diploma programmes undertaken while at school. They must be undertaken while the student is enrolled at a school to contribute towards the QCE. Again, a maximum of eight credits from advanced courses can count towards the QCE. University subject courses are available as one-semester courses counting for two credits, or as two-semester courses for four. The required standard of achievement is a grade four on a seven-point scale or a pass grade. Study towards a VET diploma or advanced

diploma while enrolled at school is also classified as an advanced course. VET qualifications are expressed as competencies and each completed diploma or advanced diploma competency contributes one credit towards the QCE.

[Authority and Authority-registered subjects \(core courses\) are specified as individual subject syllabuses, each of which describes](#) the aims, objectives, course organisation, learning experiences, assessment requirements and work programme requirements for the subject. Individual subject syllabuses are expressed in a range of ways. English, for example, is expressed as 'objectives', which the school is required to teach and students must have the opportunity to learn. Schools assess how well students have achieved the objectives through standards-based assessment. The standards are described in dimensions, which are the valued features of English about which evidence of student learning is collected and assessed. The Mathematics A syllabus is expressed as core and elective topics and strands, concepts and skills, general objectives, global aims, and key competencies.

Biology is expressed as global aims, general objectives, key concepts and key ideas, while geography is expressed as global aims and general objectives across four themes (incorporating core and elective strands and geographical and wider skills). All subject syllabuses have in common that subjects are also expressed in terms of minimum hours of timetabled school time. A course of study is usually 55 hours per semester, so 220 hours in the four semesters of Years 11 and 12, with each semester counting as one credit for the QCE.

In accordance with the *P-12 Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework* (DET, 2017d), in Years 11 and 12, in addition to providing all students with a programme of learning that enables them to achieve a Senior Education Profile (see the subheading 'Assessment and reporting' below), all Queensland state schools must also provide health and wellbeing education as part of the school's pastoral care programme. To do this, they are supported by the Queensland *Learning and Wellbeing Framework* (DET, 2015a); the *Alcohol*

and other Drugs education programme (DET, 2015b); and the *Respectful Relationships* education programme (DET, 2016i).

The states and territories across Australia are gradually introducing a national curriculum from Kindergarten (or Prep in Queensland) to Year 10. This sets out the knowledge, understanding and skills needed for life and work in the 21st century and establishes common standards and expectations of achievement across Australia. Queensland schools are currently implementing the Australian Curriculum for English, maths, science and history in Prep to Year 10 (ages five to 16). The Australian states and territories are also working towards national consistency in senior secondary curricula / course specifications. While the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible for the development of content and achievement standards for agreed senior secondary subjects, the Queensland Curriculum

and Assessment Authority (QCAA) is responsible for the structure and organisation of senior secondary courses in Queensland and for determining how to integrate the Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards into QCAA approved courses and assessment and certification specifications.

Note: students with special educational needs (impairments or difficulties in learning that are not primarily due to socioeconomic, cultural or linguistic factors) can follow an individual learning programme, which leads to the Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement (see the subheadings 'Inclusion' and 'Assessment and reporting' below).

Inclusion

- How is inclusion addressed?
- How are the learning needs of all students catered for, including students who have completed a reduced curriculum at lower secondary school, students with challenging behaviour patterns who find it difficult to function in larger classes, international learners for whom the language of instruction is not their first language, students with special educational needs?

Goal 1 of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* is that Australian schooling should promote equity and excellence. It states that all Australian governments and all school sectors must:

- provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socio-economic background or geographic location
- ensure that schools build on local cultural knowledge and experience of Indigenous students as a foundation for learning, and work in partnership with local communities on all aspects of the schooling process, including to promote high expectations for the learning outcomes of Indigenous students
- ensure that the learning outcomes of Indigenous students improve to match those of other students
- ensure that socio-economic disadvantage ceases to be a significant determinant of educational outcomes
- reduce the effect of other sources of disadvantage, such as disability, homelessness, refugee status and remoteness
- promote personalised learning that aims to fulfil the diverse capabilities of each young Australian (MCEETYA., 2008, p.7).

The aim in Queensland is to ensure that 'inclusive education practices are embedded in all state schools policies and initiatives' (DET, 2016h), and schools have a statutory duty to make 'reasonable adjustments'

to ensure that students with special educational needs and disabilities can, wherever possible, participate in education and training on the same basis as students without a disability. In addition, in senior secondary

education, students who have impairments or difficulties in learning that are not primarily due to socio-economic, cultural or linguistic factors may follow individual learning programmes leading to the Queensland Certificate of

Individual Achievement (QCIA) (rather than the QCE) on completion of Year 12. The QCIA is an official record that students have completed at least 12 years of education, and provides a summary of their skills and knowledge that they can present to employers and training providers.

Schools identify students who may be eligible for an individual learning programme and award of the QCIA rather than the QCE. Consultation with students and their parents / carers is central to this decision-making process. Individual learning programmes are based on learning goals from the *Guideline for Individual Learning* (GIL) (QCAA, 2015c) and the certificate records educational achievement in two areas:

- a statement of achievement which certifies students' demonstrated knowledge and skills according to their individual educational programme. This includes statements showing achievement information under a maximum of five curriculum organisers – communication and technologies; community, citizenship and the environment; leisure and recreation; personal and living dimensions; and vocational and transition activities
- a statement of participation which details activities undertaken as part of the student's senior schooling.

The *Guideline for Individual Learning* provides a curriculum, assessment and reporting framework for schools when developing individualised curriculum plans for senior secondary students working towards the QCIA. Schools are required to select curriculum organisers, learning focuses and learning goals for their students from the GIL. The QCAA makes a curriculum plan builder available online (via a School Portal) and schools must use this to create, submit for approval and amend curriculum plans for students eligible for the QCIA. Plans must be created and approved by the end of term 1 of Year 11.

Senior secondary students with special educational needs can also study subjects which would normally contribute towards award of the QCE – such as Authority subjects or VET subjects. Achievements in these subjects are not recorded as part of the QCIA but are recorded on the student's Senior Statement (the transcript of all student learning and results). Where students with special needs meet the QCE requirements, a QCIA will not be issued and they will achieve the QCE. If students receive a QCIA but have some credits towards the QCE recorded on their Senior Statement and

registered in their learning account, they can continue to work towards the QCE as credits remain live for up to nine years.

In addition, for assessment of Authority and Authority-registered subjects which contributes towards the award of the QCE, the QCAA allows schools to make special provisions for some students (i.e. to make reasonable adjustments to conditions of assessment to ensure equitable opportunities). Special provisions require schools to design inclusive learning and assessment programmes and to provide opportunities for alternative assessment arrangements.

Students to whom such arrangements can apply include:

- students with special educational needs, e.g. with disabilities such as those of a sensory, motor or neurological nature
- those with educational needs arising primarily from socio-economic, cultural and / or linguistic factors where there may be some form of educational disadvantage. This can include students of Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) backgrounds; students with language backgrounds other than English; students who are migrants or refugees; students from rural and remote locations; students in low socio-economic circumstances
- those who have short-term impairments, e.g. illnesses, fractured limbs
- students with special talents / giftedness (QCAA, 2015d).

Specific initiatives to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) students also include 'Solid Pathways', an academic extension programme to support high achieving students in Year 4 to Year 12. Students participate in weekly one-hour culturally inclusive web-conference lessons designed to develop their higher order thinking skills (critical and creative thinking).

Visa students – students who are not citizens of or permanent residents in Australia - are not included in the OP rankings for tertiary entrance (see the subheading 'Current Year 12 assessment and reporting system and tertiary entrance requirements' below). Such students are given an 'Equivalent OP'. This is with the aim of ensuring that domestic students are not disadvantaged for tertiary entry if they are in subject groups and school groups with a high number of Visa students.

Assessment and reporting

- How is the curriculum assessed?
- What variety of assessment modes and methods are in evidence? For example, external assessment / internal assessment / online assessment / portfolios / formative / summative / synoptic etc.?
- How does the system recognise varied learning / skills / competences?
- How does assessment link to certification / qualifications / a qualifications framework / selection for further and higher education?
- How is vocational / technical education assessed and accredited?
- How is achievement reported? What is reported?
- Where reform is taking place, how is the reform being prepared / what is happening now to prepare the ground for this reform?

Achievement in senior secondary education in Queensland

Assessment in senior secondary education in Queensland is linked to achievement of the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE). Every student completing Year 12 in school receives a Senior Education Profile (SEP) from the QCAA. This may contain one of the following combinations:

- a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) and a Senior Statement
- a QCE, Senior Statement and a Tertiary Entrance Statement (TES)
- a Senior Statement and a TES
- a Senior Statement only
- a Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement (QCIA) and a Senior Statement
- a Senior Statement that provides a record of studies undertaken towards an International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB Diploma).

The Senior Statement is a transcript of the learning undertaken by all students completing Year 12 at a Queensland school. It shows all eligible studies and the results achieved that may contribute to the award of a QCE or TES. If a student is issued with a Senior Statement, then they have satisfied the completion requirements for Year 12 in Queensland.

The Tertiary Entrance Statement (TES) shows an eligible student's ranking which is used to determine eligibility for admission to tertiary courses. The Queensland tertiary ranking is known as the Overall Position (OP) and the TES provides information that is recognised by universities and tertiary providers in other Australian states and territories

and internationally, and that may be required for students to enrol in study at institutions outside Queensland.

Schools are required to register all senior secondary students with the QCAA and, when they do so, usually in Year 10 (aged 15-16), a learning account is created for them. This records their

senior secondary subject enrolments and the results of any completed studies which contribute to the QCE. These details are provided by the school and /or other learning provider/s and students are given a learner unique identifier (LUI) and a password for their learning account, which they can access any time via the [Student Connect](#) website.

Current Year 12 assessment and reporting system and tertiary entrance requirements

Students in Years 11 and 12 are assessed using a variety of techniques, including presentations and assignments as well as school-based supervised assessments / tests. Assessment for the QCE is school-based, with external moderation. Senior secondary teachers design, develop and administer the assessments based on broad syllabus requirements, and external moderation ensures that students are treated fairly, and that achievement standards are comparable across all schools for all students. Moderation takes place after assessments have been completed by students and marked by their teachers. Schools select samples of completed student work

and submit them to QCAA moderation panels. The panels consider whether the overall subject grades given to students by their teachers are consistent with the work samples provided.

Students wanting to go on to higher education must usually obtain an Overall Position (OP) tertiary entrance rank. This is achieved by having 20 QCE credits from senior secondary Authority subjects (including having studied three subjects for all four semesters which make up Years 11 and 12). They must also choose courses that meet the subject prerequisites for their tertiary preferences and must take the Queensland Core Skills (QCS) test. The OP ranking is calculated

by the QCAA based on a student's best five teacher-assessed results in Authority subjects, plus their results in the QCS test. To receive an OP ranking, students must also complete Year 12. Students who satisfy the prerequisites are then selected for particular tertiary courses based on their OP. Students with the best OPs are offered places first. In some cases, institutions need to differentiate between students with the same OP. To do this, they will use Field Positions, FPs.

In calculating a student's score in their best five Authority subjects, teachers judge student work in each subject based on a matrix of syllabus standards and award an overall grade -

ranging from A–E - for each standard. Rules outlined in each syllabus are then used to convert these grades to an overall subject result for each subject. This is reported on a five-point scale - Very High Achievement (VHA), High Achievement (HA), Sound Achievement (SA), Limited Achievement (LA) and Very Limited Achievement (VLA). These levels of achievement alone are too broad to calculate OPs, for which teachers then assign subject achievement indicators (SAIs). These are scores - from 200 to 400 in each subject - which show individual student achievement in that subject compared with the achievement of other students in the school. The highest achieving student in a subject group in a school is assigned an SAI of 400, and the lowest achieving student an SAI of 200. Other students are assigned numbers between 400 and 200 to represent their position in the rank order. The QCAA provides software to help schools with the allocation and checking of SAIs.

The QCS test is a test of the Common Curriculum Elements (CCEs). This is a set of 49 testable generic skills present across the Authority subjects and grouped in the skills

areas 'comprehend and collect', 'structure and sequence', 'analyse, assess and conclude', 'create and present' and 'apply techniques and procedures'. The QCS test assumes that candidates have basic levels of general knowledge and vocabulary and a Year 10 knowledge of mathematical operations. It consists of four papers – a 600-word writing task; a short response paper; and two multiple choice papers in response to a variety of stimulus materials (e.g. prose passages, poetry, graphs, tables, maps, mathematical and scientific data, cartoons and artistic works). The results achieved for each of the four test papers are combined into one grade, ranging from A (highest) to E. Results are used in the calculation of a student's OP, so all students wanting to have an OP and so be eligible for tertiary entry must take the QCS test.

Student achievement indicators (SAIs) and QCS test results are used by the QCAA to calculate Overall Positions (OPs) and Field Positions (FPs). The OP is a student's position in a statewide rank order based on their overall achievement (SAI) in Authority subjects. It indicates how well a student has done compared

with all other OP-eligible students in Queensland. Students are placed in one of 25 OP bands from OP1 (highest) to OP25 (lowest). Where individual tertiary institutions need, for example, to differentiate between students with the OP1 rank who want to enter the same tertiary education course, they use Field Positions (FPs). These are also calculated by the QCAA and are based on the student's Authority subject performance in the following 'fields':

- Field A — extended written expression involving complex analysis and synthesis of ideas
- Field B — short written communication involving reading, comprehension and expression in English or a foreign language
- Field C — basic numeracy involving simple calculations and graphical and tabular interpretation
- Field D — solving complex problems involving mathematical symbols and abstractions
- Field E — substantial practical performance involving physical or creative arts or expressive skills.

When calculating FPs, the QCAA uses the SAls for the subjects that contribute to a particular field. Subjects do not contribute equally to FPs, and some subjects do not contribute any weight to some fields. The extent to which a subject contributes to each FP depends on that subject's 'weight' and subject weights change every year as syllabuses are updated.

Students who don't complete five Authority subjects (20 credits) and the QCS test – and are consequently not eligible for an OP ranking – may still be considered for admission to some tertiary courses, through a process

commonly referred to as the 'OP-ineligible schedule'. This enables students to be ranked for tertiary entrance based on a combination of senior secondary studies. Eligible courses can include Authority subjects, VET modules and qualifications, certificates on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), the International Baccalaureate Diploma, and the results of the QCS Test. Application is via the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC). (In addition, the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) is intended for candidates who don't have any formal academic qualifications but want to enter a course of

tertiary education based on alternative pathways such as employment experience. The STAT is a 70-question multiple choice, two-hour aptitude test that aims to help applicants to demonstrate their potential for tertiary study and to enable institutions to make their selection decisions. Half the questions are 'verbal' (e.g. based on English / English comprehension) and half quantitative (e.g. based on maths and science). They focus on candidates' ability to process, analyse and understand information presented in different ways, e.g. graphs, tables, diagrams, poems and cartoons.)

New senior secondary assessment and tertiary entrance system from 2019

New senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems begin in Queensland with students entering Year 11 (age 16+) in 2019 and completing Year 12 in December 2020 (the school year begins in late January / early February). The new systems include:

- updated QCE subject syllabuses – to ensure that they reflect the knowledge and skills required for further study and employment in the 21st century and that they align more closely with the Australian Curriculum
- a new QCE assessment model that introduces external assessment alongside school-based assessment
- new processes to strengthen the quality and comparability of school-based assessment
- replacement of the OP tertiary entrance rank (introduced in 1992) with an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), which all other Australian states and territories with the exception of Queensland currently use.

The new system 'combines the flexibility and authenticity of school-based assessment, developed and marked by classroom teachers, with the additional rigour of a common external assessment set and marked by the QCAA' (Queensland Government., 2016, p.2). It reduces the number of final assessments that count towards a student's final grade in each senior secondary subject – typically to four from current requirements of up to seven assessments per subject. This will be enabled by a reduction in senior syllabus requirements. The aim is to provide additional time for 'other important aspects of teaching and learning' (Queensland Government., 2016, p.2).

As a result of the changes:

- Most QCE subjects will have four summative pieces of assessment, which will include three school-based assessments and one external assessment. This will be a common external assessment in each subject.
- External assessment will generally contribute 25 per cent towards a student's subject results in most QCE subjects.
- In QCE maths and science subjects, external assessment will generally contribute 50 per cent of the overall subject result 'because the type of skills and knowledge found in these subjects are more readily assessed through common external assessment' (Queensland Government., 2016, p.2).
- External assessments will commonly involve a written examination, but other forms of external assessment may be used depending on the requirements of a given subject.
- The new syllabuses will include greater detail on what students must know and be able to do. They will also contain common requirements / parameters for the development of school-based assessments (e.g. type of assessment and the conditions under which assessment should be administered), and common marking guides to support teachers in making judgements about student learning.
- Under the common marking scheme, in each senior secondary subject, scores from the three school-based assessments will be added to the external assessment score to provide a final subject result. Students will be provided with an overall numerical score and a level of achievement.
- All school-based assessments will be subject to endorsement by the QCAA prior to use.
- The QCAA will select representative samples of completed student responses from each school and expert assessment supervisors will consider whether the QCAA marking scheme has been correctly applied for each school-based assessment.
- QCAA will administer a final ratification process in which patterns of results in school-based and external assessment activities will be analysed to detect issues or anomalies.
- School-based assessment will not be scaled (statistically adjusted) against the results of

the external assessment when calculating subject results.

- The Queensland Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) will be calculated by a process of inter-subject scaling. Under this process, patterns of student results across different subjects are compared and adjusted to enable students completing different combinations of subjects and with different combinations of results to be compared in a single tertiary entrance rank order. This is intended to allow for the inclusion of a VET qualification or a Subject Area Syllabus (SAS) subject*. It is also intended to provide a 'fine-grained' rank, which can help to differentiate students who seek entry to high-demand tertiary courses. Note: an ATAR is a percentile rank between 0.00 and 99.95 in intervals of 0.05. It is based on an aggregate of individual subject scores. ATARs are calculated in different ways in different states and territories in Australia (e.g. eligibility rules and scaling models are not the same across jurisdictions). The Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) will calculate students' ATARs.
- The use of inter-subject scaling in the Queensland ATAR will mean that the QCS Test will no longer be used to support the calculation of a Year 12 tertiary entrance rank.
- There will be a new requirement of satisfactory completion of an Authority English subject to be eligible for the award of an ATAR. This reflects the fundamental importance of English as a foundation for tertiary study. The requirement will be a result equivalent to 'Sound Achievement' (SA) in one of five Authority English subjects – English, Essential English, Literature, English Extension, or English as an Additional Language. While students must meet this standard to be eligible to receive an ATAR, a student's English result will not be a mandatory inclusion in the calculation of their ATAR.

* The Queensland ATAR may include either:

- a student's best five Authority subject results, or
- a student's best results in a combination of four Authority subjects, plus a result from a completed VET qualification (at Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Certificate III or above), or
- a student's best results in a combination of four Authority subjects, plus a result from a subject based on a QCAA Subject Area Syllabus (SAS) subject (more practical / vocational subjects, e.g. tourism, visual arts in practice, engineering skills).

The intention is to further recognise the role that VET plays in senior secondary studies, while also ensuring that students have a sufficient breadth of academic subjects to cope with the demands of tertiary study. (New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia also allow students to include VET subjects as part of their ATAR calculation.)

Flexibility and transfer options

- What flexibility is inherent in the system for movement between or within pathways?
- What are the student transfer options?
- Can students combine study across schools / institutions?
- Can credits / certification be transferred?

The credit-based Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE), usually completed in Year 12 of senior secondary education, aims to offer flexibility in what is learnt and in where and when learning occurs. It allows students to tailor their senior pathway to suit their interests and support their future goals by recognising a broad range of learning in a range of learning environments. Students can, for example, study Authority subjects in school with a view to gaining their QCE alongside an Overall Position (OP) and so enter tertiary education; study senior school subjects and VET subjects in school; study VET subjects with a registered TAFE provider to contribute towards their QCE; include workplace and community learning in the subjects which contribute towards their QCE; include the study

of university subjects undertaken while at school as a contribution to their QCE; or study school-based apprenticeships and traineeships and achieve their QCE. The subheadings 'Available pathways / programmes' and 'Specified curriculum within pathways' above provide further information on the range of options / tracks available.

A student's pathway is established in his / her Senior Education and Training Plan (SET) which they produce – in collaboration with their school and their parents / carers in Year 10. This is kept under regular review to ensure that the subjects and learning included on the plan remain right for the student's intended individual pathway / career after Year 12. Planned courses of study and their

contribution towards the credits required to successfully achieve the QCE can change during the four semesters that comprise Years 11 and 12, with the approval of the student's school or learning provider.

Students who do not achieve a QCE at the end of Year 12 can continue to work towards one for up to seven years after leaving school through the completion of additional learning, such as VET courses, traineeships or recognised workplace programmes. (QCE credits remain live for up to nine years.) Once eligible, the QCAA will award the student a QCE, together with a Statement of Results, in the following July or December (the school year in Queensland begins in late January / early February).

Under the changes being introduced to senior secondary / QCE assessment and tertiary entrance in Queensland in 2019/2020, the introduction of a Queensland Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), which will be similar to those used in all other states and territories in Australia, aims to simplify administrative processes for Queensland students who wish to apply for tertiary courses in other states, as well as for students from other states who wish to apply for courses in Queensland.

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Glossary of terms and abbreviations

ACARA	The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority	
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research	
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework	The regulated qualifications framework in Australia, which incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single, comprehensive national qualifications framework.
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank	The new ranking system to be used for tertiary entrance in Queensland from 2020. (ATARs are already used in all other Australian states and territories.)
Authority subjects / Authority-registered subjects		Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) subjects that are based on syllabuses that have been approved and issued by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA). Results in Authority subjects count in the rankings for tertiary entrance.
DET	(Queensland) Department of Education and Training	
IB Diploma	International Baccalaureate Diploma	
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	
OP	Overall Position	The 25-band achievement rank currently used for tertiary entrance in Queensland.
QCAA	Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority	
QCE	Queensland Certificate of Education	Queensland's senior school qualification, usually awarded at the end of Year 12. It recognises broad learning options and offers flexibility in what, where and when learning occurs.
QCIA	Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement	Recognises the achievements of students who have impairments or difficulties in learning that are not primarily due to socioeconomic, cultural or linguistic factors and who have followed individual learning programmes. It is an official record that students have completed at least 12 years of education, and provides as summary of a student's skills and knowledge that they can present to employers and training providers.

QCS Test	Queensland Core Skills Test	A test of generic skills (Common Curriculum Elements, CCEs), the results from which currently contribute towards the calculation of a senior secondary student's Overall Position (OP) (tertiary entrance) ranking.
QTAC	Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre	
SAI	Subject achievement indicator	The SAI is a score - from 200 to 400 in each Authority subject which is used to calculate a student's Overall Position (OP) for tertiary entry. The highest achieving student in a subject group in each school is assigned an SAI of 400; the lowest achieving student an SAI of 200.
SAS subject	Subject Area Syllabus subject	Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) practical / vocational subjects that are based on syllabuses that have been approved and issued by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA).
	Senior Statement	A transcript of the learning undertaken by students completing Year 12 at a Queensland school. If a student is issued with a Senior Statement, he or she has satisfied the completion requirements for Year 12 in Queensland.
SAT	School-based apprenticeships and traineeships	
SET plan	Senior Education and Training plan	The plan which students develop in Year 10 for their senior secondary education in Years 11 and 12.
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and maths	
TAFE	Technical and further education	
TES	Tertiary Entrance Statement	Shows a student's ranking (Overall Position, OP) which is used to determine eligibility for admission to tertiary courses. Provides information that is recognised by universities and tertiary providers in other Australian states and territories and internationally, and that may be required for students to enrol in study at institutions outside Queensland.
VET	Vocational education and training	
VETiS	Vocational education and training in schools	