

I do request that my personal details are kept confidential

The following three changes need to be made to our current assessment system:

1. Long written assessment pieces should be greatly reduced and / or dropped in Physics, Chemistry and Maths (and other subjects);
2. Teachers should be able to use numerical marks when determining a student's final grade for a subject instead of only being allowed to use criteria matrices/ standards grids. It should be mandatory to add marks in assessment and towards grading;
3. External exams should be introduced for at least some fraction of the total assessment, (as is already the case in other states).

We need your help in urgently initiating these changes. Why the urgency? Because the longer it takes for these changes to occur, the more students we are subjecting to overwhelming stress in an inequitable ranking system and the more disillusioned teachers resigning due to the strain of large workloads and/or having had letters of complaints to QSA (Qld Studies Authority) fall on deaf ears. Parents know there is a problem but are unsure about what exactly that problem is and what needs to change. The need for change has been obvious to those teaching in the QLD education system.

My own personal experience of teaching Maths for 16 years in QLD follows.

It is evident to me (and many others) that student's maths skill levels are dropping. Countless students will tell me that they just spend their time at home going from one assignment to the next and this leaves them very little time for completing daily Maths homework. Students are definitely far busier yet learning less and becoming more stressed. In addition, assessment for Maths / Science is now weighted too heavily on being able to write well rather than on solving problems.

Teachers should be able to devote most of their time to helping students learn. This involves meeting students for tutorials, sharing ideas with other colleagues, researching and preparing engaging, productive and creative lessons. However, unfortunately, a teacher's time is mostly spent on setting and marking assignments and tests to satisfy QSA. QSA forbids any adding of marks to get the final overall grade. Trying to mark maths using wordy criteria is highly subjective and leads to inconsistencies between teachers. The QSA suggests teachers hold moderation meetings to discuss grade allocation (A - E) yet they haven't addressed where the time to hold these meetings would come from. How could teachers possibly discuss every Maths question and every possible student's response before agreeing on a grade to give?

Finally, QSA's OP ranking system is highly flawed. Through being a member on panel for many years to review the work of countless schools and through preparing submissions from my own school, it is clear to me that our ranking system is unfair. How can it be when:

- the interpreted 'quality' of a school's folio submissions (i.e. the ability of a school to assign grades using appropriate assessment) boils down to 'pot luck' on which panellists review it? You can submit the exact same assessment instruments and grade allocation method two years straight and one year have them praised and used as an exemplar and the next have them highly criticized.
- panel requests to see evidence of students performing at a certain Level of Achievement (LOA) in order for the student to be awarded that grade, yet Panel has no idea on how rehearsed the assessment pieces given to students may be?
- panel is presented with exam questions that are as different as chalk and cheese from so many schools and this is what is used to compare students across the state?

- only a sample of 'typical' LOA folios are sent to Panel by every school? How can Panel be sure other students from a particular school have been correctly placed? How do Panels know if schools are taking a gamble and hoping they don't get random sampled on a particular student?
- a student's OP can be dragged down by how poorly another students in the class is performing?

The following is a copy and paste from an email sent from a HOD, which hinted at the need to encourage students who are performing poorly in a subject to drop it so they don't harm the rest of the cohort in that subject.

*"XXXX and I again looked at the students at risk in all our subject areas. I have definitely seen these names popping up throughout the semester as we struggle to get students to submit assignments, stay on task and attend tutorials. It would be appropriate if you could update the students at risk file I have at the following address with just a few comments on progress. **Big gaps from the remainder of the co-hort created by these students especially at senior level eats up a lot of SAI points. Ideally students should not remain in the subject if they are not likely to maintain a C standard.** Please flag those students you would like XXXX XXXXXXXX to interview with a view to encouraging these students to consider their options or just provide a brief comment on current progress so that we have an ongoing summary occurring".*

- I have seen students receive a B overall for Maths when they only have the ability to scrape a C- in exams. Their struggle to grasp mathematical concepts has also been obvious in the classroom. The reason for their solid overall mark is due to the equal weighting of the Communication criteria with Knowledge and Procedures Criteria and the Modelling and Problem Solving Criteria. Also inflated marks result from students submitting assignments of a very high standard. How fair is it that students who can afford tutors to assist with assignments score better than those who tried the assignment on their own?