

To: The Education and Innovation Committee eic@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Members,

I have been teaching Chemistry for many years. I feel gravely concerned about the QSA and their approach to assessment. The workload is horrendous. The effect of this is that my preparation and student contact time is limited, and my stress levels are dangerously high and affecting my health. I know that many of my colleagues are concerned about the assessment in the Science areas.

Perhaps more important, is the damaging effect this assessment is having on the students. They have too many long written assignments in which the basics of Chemistry knowledge are not as important as writing to criteria that are vague and difficult to understand. I have trouble understanding them enough to apply them during my marking, so I can only imagine how difficult students must find it. Students, especially male students, some of whom love Chemistry and Physics but are only average at English, often complain to me that they do not understand what the criteria mean or what is required of them to do well.

Assessing Chemistry through long written assignments is not valid for many reasons:

- (1) There is the issue of who actually does the assignments,
- (2) Students do not learn a lot of basic Chemistry by doing them,
- (3) These assignments use up much time, which could be used in practice and reinforcement of basic Chemistry knowledge and understanding, and performing experiments of a wide variety.

The criteria paragraphs, which QSA call standards, are quite wordy, vague and ineffective. They are subjective and unhelpful. If the assessment is to be criteria based, and that is what we are told by the QSA we must have, surely we should at least have criteria that are clear cut and easily applied by both students and teachers alike. It should be obvious that they are Scientific criteria and NOT vague using social science based type language that is often difficult for scientists to apply with confidence and accuracy.

The application of criteria to Chemistry tests brings its own difficulties. Science and Mathematics questions are often right or wrong, not written to a criterion standard, just right or wrong. When criteria are applied to each and every question, and this is something the QSA seems to think is most important, I have found to my dismay, the marking of a test goes completely haywire and correct answers are deemed to be a D level answer when judged on criteria. What a nightmare. The result is that the moderation of Chemistry assessment has become a subjective lottery with assessment items deemed as good one year but not of the required standard for the next year. This is disturbing for teachers, students and parents as nobody can be sure that their assessment or Level of Achievement in any year will not be dropped significantly lower on the whim of a different panel member. What a mess.

Yours faithfully,  
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