



Submission to the Education and Innovation Committee Inquiry into assessment of senior mathematics, chemistry and physics

May 2013

Context

Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) welcomes the opportunity to provide a written submission to the Education and Innovation Committee Inquiry into assessment of senior mathematics, chemistry and physics. QCEC is the peak strategic body with state-wide responsibilities for Catholic schools in Queensland. These 294 schools are administered by five diocesan schooling authorities: Brisbane, Cairns, Rockhampton, Toowoomba and Townsville that operate 260 schools; and 17 Religious Institutes that operate a further 34 schools. There are ninety-five Catholic secondary schools in Queensland.

QCEC does not own or operate any schools but has delegated roles in relation to liaising with State and Federal Governments, negotiating and distributing government funds to Catholic schools and facilitating collaboration, consultation and planning among Catholic schooling authorities.

The Minister for Education, Training and Employment is the Minister for all education and the Department for Education Training and Employment has overarching responsibility in supporting all sectors of education. Catholic education is part of the non-state sector and identifies as distinctly separate from Education Queensland, however has very collaborative relationships that exist across all three schooling sectors.

This extends to the model of senior assessment. With the exception of those schools using the International Baccalaureate, all secondary schools write their senior secondary programs from the same source syllabuses and all participate in the same processes of school based assessment, external moderation and scaling through the Queensland Core Skills Test.

QCEC notes the impending review of OP and tertiary entrance processes and agrees it is timely. The current system has been in place for 20 years; the nature of the senior student cohort has changed, government policies surrounding expectations for tertiary education uptake have escalated and processes for tertiary entrance have changed significantly over that time.

QCEC is of the opinion that the broader review of OP and tertiary entrance processes should encompass all aspects of those processes for all subjects and that it will be important to ensure consistency in approaches for all subjects without isolating conditions for one specific group of subjects. The intent of the broader review should not be lost or subsumed into a more isolated focus on one area of assessment.

There is broad support for school based assessment processes as they operate in Queensland senior secondary schooling and it is important and timely that all aspects of OP and tertiary entrance processes, including school based assessment are able to be canvassed in the review.

QCEC Response points specific to Inquiry

The terms of reference for this Inquiry focus particularly on teacher support for assessment processes used in mathematics, chemistry and physics. QCEC notes that

- There is a range of opinion expressed across teachers regarding assessment in these areas
- The extremely negative comments registered in some submissions are not reflective of general response from teachers in Catholic schools
- Discussion in chemistry and physics assessment tends to hone in on extended experimental investigations (EELs) and extended research tasks (ERTs) and the time and workload engendered by these methods of assessment
- Extended experimental investigations (EELs) and extended research tasks (ERTs) were introduced into syllabuses to enable broader assessment to recognise problem solving and communication abilities
- The benefits of EELs and ERTs are well recognised
- It appears that evolved custom and practice in these areas does not always replicate the intention set out in syllabuses or work programs
- Syllabuses identify word limits of 1500 words but this is not always replicated in tasks produced – some extend well beyond this
- Extended tasks have been in place in mathematics for a longer period than chemistry and physics and appear to have gained higher acceptance among teachers
- Professional development and support for teachers is critical to quality assessment and moderation processes for all subjects
- Getting the balance right in terms of assessment, in all subjects not just maths, chemistry and physics is essential
- There is no support for the introduction of external exams.

Conclusion

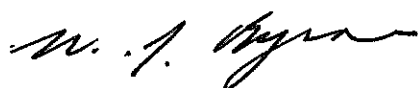
QCEC thanks the Education and Innovation Committee for the opportunity to provide written submission Inquiry into assessment of senior mathematics, chemistry and physics. QCEC

highlights that in the interim between the announcement of this inquiry into specific aspects of assessment in a limited selection of subjects and the closing date for submissions, the Queensland Government has called tenders for the full review of the OP and tertiary entrance systems. In light of this timely action QCEC recommends that the fuller review should give due consideration to all ears of assessment and that best practice for assessment in all subjects be carefully evaluated.

Submitted on behalf of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission
By Mr Mike Byrne, Executive Director

Signature:

Date: 13 May 2013

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. J. Byrne', is written over a horizontal line.