

Education and Innovation Committee

From: STOODLEY Ann [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 13 May 2013 10:18 AM
To: Education and Innovation Committee
Subject: Submission to The Inquiry into Senior Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry Assessment

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Dear Committee Members,

I have been teaching Mathematics for many many years. I feel gravely concerned about the QSA and their approach to assessment.

Assignments can be a nightmare to set and to mark. Despite all warnings to students that they need to be their own work, this does not always happen. We cross mark the Modelling and Problem Solving questions at our school and students are aware of this. However, copied answers are still discovered. Students will even photocopy another's answers and hand them in as their own. There is also the situation where a teacher knows that the work is not the student's own work and that it must have been done by a tutor or parent or similar. However, we can never prove this so the work has to be accepted, thus inflating the student's result.

Marking assignments is a huge time commitment for teachers. They also take a huge amount of time for students to do if they do them properly. I am unconvinced that this equates to a comparable amount of learning. Term 3 is the worst time as all Year 12 assignments have to be due in this term to be prepared for the Verification submissions. This places undue stress on students and staff alike. This also takes time away from students to prepare for their exams as they can have up to six assignments due in similar time frames. They can be so exhausted at the end of this that they do not have the energy left to put time to preparing for their exams.

The criteria paragraphs, which QSA call standards, are unwieldy, unclear and subjective and do not ensure consistency of teacher judgements. When QSA releases a new syllabus, they do not have the answers about how to put into practice the assessment section of their syllabus. They give this task to schools to grapple with. However, if we get it wrong they are the first to criticise us for what we have done. They should have exemplars with every new syllabus to illustrate what they mean by the criteria they are using in the assessment section. However, to avoid this stress and confusion, adding marks and awarding percentages would be an easier and fairer method to use. When I started teaching and this method was used, students still went on to be engineers, architects, teachers, doctors, accountants etc. They produced excellent work in their working life. Parents can also understand this more easily as well.

Assessment varies from school to school. Therefore, students are not exposed to assessment of the same standard. The results they gain are not equal from school to school. Moderation and verification meetings are a farce. They cannot, in the time available, really validate the comparability of assessment from one school to another. When panels downgrade a student's work, it is not uncommon for the grade to be returned to the original level after discussion with the panel chairman. The panel meeting efforts were thus a waste of time. Inexperienced panellists can make unfair judgements.

I would support state-wide exams set by teams of experienced teachers in preference to the current system.

Please help restore some sanity to assessment practices in Queensland.