Trialling the endorsement of assessments

In Semester 1, 2015 the QCAA worked with a small number of schools to trial the provision of feedback on Year 11 assessments prior to their use with students in three subjects:

- Philosophy and Reason (statewide)
- Study of Society (statewide)
- Mathematics B (Brisbane South District).

Schools submitted their assessment packages to an expert colleague who then provided feedback on the validity of each instrument in a process known as ‘endorsement’. Following a positive response from schools, trials are now underway in further Year 11 subjects:

- Accounting (Mackay district)
- Biology (Brisbane East district)
- Geography (Townsville district)
- Mathematics B (Brisbane North district)
- Physical Education (Sunshine Coast district).

More subjects will follow in Semester 1, 2016. While most trials will occur in specific QCAA districts, next year’s trials will also involve some subjects on a statewide basis.

FAQs

What is endorsement and what is its purpose?

Endorsement will ensure that school-devised assessment instruments meet the requirements of the current syllabus and provide sufficient opportunities for students to demonstrate the syllabus objectives and standards before they are used in schools.

Are schools offering these subjects expected to participate in the trial?

The QCAA encourages all schools offering these subjects to participate in the trial. Trial schools will be able to attend specific training at the end of the year. This training will focus on the design of quality assessment instruments and provide a framework for participants to evaluate assessment in their own schools.
What type/s of assessment will be endorsed?

For most trial subjects, a sample of Year 11 assessment instruments described in each school’s approved work program will be endorsed by the QCAA. Individual instruments are designed using a range of techniques including extended modelling and problem solving tasks, examinations, reports, supervised written and extended responses.

Year 12 assessments will also be included in the 2016 trials for some subjects.

What processes will QCAA trial to endorse school-based assessments?

Assessment instruments will be endorsed by a select group of ‘assessors’ employed and trained by the QCAA for this purpose. The assessors will be chosen based on their expert subject knowledge and assessment expertise.

When will the trial take place?

The trial commenced during Semester 1, 2015 and is continuing in Semester 2, 2015. Further opportunities will be announced in October for schools to participate in Semester 1, 2016 trials.

Enhanced quality assurance processes for student assessment (calibration) trials

Calibration is a process that aims to ensure our review panellists develop a consistent understanding of how the qualities of students’ assessments match syllabus standards. Prior to 2015 Verification and 2016 Monitoring, calibration trials will occur with approximately 40 district review panels in the following senior subjects:

- Visual Art
- Physics
- English Extension
- Music Extension
- Japanese
- Mathematics A
- Home Economics
- French
- Chemistry
- Japanese
- Modern History.

In addition to participation in the calibration trials, all 13 district panels for Modern History will receive specialist training on using standards to make judgments.
FAQs

What is calibration and what is its purpose?
Calibration is a series of training activities focused on improving review panellists’ judgments prior to key moderation events. It involves:

- use of sample student responses as a focus for benchmarking activities
- use of a structured process for building reviewers’ skills in consistently and accurately matching evidence to standards for each criterion
- clear and explicit communication of the standards represented in sample responses
- professional conversations to build shared understandings of the match between standards and evidence.

Who will be involved?
The trial will involve District Review Panellists from a selection of districts. Participating panels will be contacted directly.

What are the expected benefits of calibration?
Calibration is intended to increase panellists’ confidence in matching evidence to standards and making on-balance decisions. It is expected to lead to immediate improvements in the consistency of panel judgments, and prepare our assessment experts for possible changes to the moderation system.

When will the trials take place?
Calibration will occur prior to the process of Verification in October 2015 and before Monitoring in February 2016.

Trialling external assessment

In Semester 1, 2016, the QCAA will trial external formative assessments in the following subjects:

- Year 11 Mathematics B
- Year 11 English
- Year 11 Chemistry
- Year 11 Geography
- Year 11 Modern History.

To maximise the learning opportunities for the trials, the assessments will be developed externally, administered under secure conditions, and graded externally. They will enable QCAA to evaluate the effectiveness of its processes for delivering external assessments in a real-life situation. They also offer an opportunity for schools and students to become familiar with the use of subject-based external assessments.
The trials will be restricted to volunteer schools. Selection will be based on criteria that will take into account factors, such as location, school sector, school type, and school size. All schools are encouraged to submit an expression of interest.

**FAQs**

**Why is QCAA conducting these trials?**

These trials offer opportunities for us to grow a culture of assessment where internal and external assessments work in combination to provide complementary information about student achievement and identify potential implementation issues.

They will inform decisions about wider implementation of external assessments, improve system capacity to deliver them, and prepare students and schools to participate in them.

**Why have these subjects been selected?**

These subjects have been selected to represent a range of learning areas and student enrolment patterns. The assessments will be aligned to the relevant syllabus and will be designed as an alternative to an existing task already being undertaken at participating schools.

**What assessment techniques will be used in the trial?**

The Semester 1, 2016 trials will be supervised assessments.

**Will the trial assessments count towards a student’s Year 12 exit level of achievement?**

No. As the trial will involve Year 11 formative assessments, there will be no impact on a student’s Year 12 exit result in the subject.

**Are all schools expected to participate in the trial?**

While there is no requirement for schools to participate, schools are encouraged to nominate for a trial wherever possible. Schools should consider their local readiness and whether the assessment parameters complement their current program.

**When will the trial take place?**

The external assessments will be delivered in late May/early June 2016.

The parameters for each assessment will be provided to schools in late October 2015. Schools will then be requested to express interest in participating, with final notification of their inclusion being provided by mid-November.

**What information will be provided to students and parents in the trial?**

The QCAA will develop online fact sheets and a dedicated section on its website to keep school communities informed about the trials. There will also be updates via social media and online newsletters.

**Who will be responsible for developing the trial assessments?**

The QCAA will develop the trial assessments in close consultation with subject experts drawn from schools, subject associations and universities.
Who will grade the student responses?

Classroom teachers will be recruited to grade student responses. The marking operation will occur outside of school time and markers will be remunerated for their work.

QCAA encourages schools that are interested in participating in the trials to also provide markers.

What information will be provided to schools after the assessments have been delivered?

Schools will be provided with details of individual student achievement at the conclusion of the trials. Cohort analysis will also be provided once all student results have been confirmed.

**Trialling the modules for an assessor accreditation process**

In collaboration with tertiary institutions, the QCAA commenced a project this year to develop learning modules that will be used as the foundation for future professional development activities. The first of these modules has since been used with State Review Panel Chairs, State Review Panellists and District Review Panel Chairs.

The QCAA will now extend the trial to include a nominee from each school in Queensland.

This trial will have a beneficial impact on the assessment capabilities of teachers but, most importantly, it will support the development of evidence-based modules for use in a future system of accreditation of expert assessors. It will also provide an opportunity to recruit and nurture the skills of the assessor workforce for any future system of senior assessment.

**FAQs**

What will the trial involve?

The QCAA will develop learning modules that will be used as the foundation for professional development of teachers and requisite training for accredited assessors in a future system. The modules will be developed in partnership with tertiary institutions and form the initial part of a formal program of accreditation for review panellists.

Schools will be invited to nominate a suitable teacher to participate in a full day professional learning program focussed on the principles of quality assessment and how these are represented in assessments. The QCAA will provide teacher release for one teacher from each school but may be able to accommodate additional nominees upon request.

When will the trial start and end?

The trial began with the State Review Panel Chairs, State panellists and District Review Panel Chairs in 2015. This learning will now be extended to each school across the state with all schools offered the opportunity to nominate a key teacher to participate in this program.