

## Nothing ‘experimental’ about proposed OP changes

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Following the release of the Queensland Government’s draft response to our review of senior assessment and tertiary entrance, some commentators have described our recommendations as a return to the past, while others have described them as ‘experimental’. In recommending an overhaul of the current OP system, our proposed changes, while significant, are based on well-established assessment and tertiary selection processes, as illustrated by five key features of our recommendations.

First, teachers will continue to play a central role in the assessment of student work. In all senior subjects there are aspects of learning that cannot be assessed validly with a written examination. For each subject, we propose three specified but teacher-designed assessment activities. These might take the form of projects, presentations, reports, performances, practical exercises, short-response tests or created artefacts. Teachers will judge performances on each activity using a 10-point scale, which QCAA will provide. Queensland has a long history of teacher judgement of student work, and our proposal builds on this experience.

Second, a more rigorous moderation process will be used to ensure that teachers’ judgements are comparable across schools. This will include the prior endorsement of schools’ proposed versions of assessment activities and confirmation that the 10-point marking scale is applied consistently across schools through the ‘blind’ remarking of student work. Importantly, we have rejected the ‘statistical’ moderation of school assessments – a process that constrains average performance in school-assessed aspects of learning to be no better or worse than students’ performances on an external examination. Queensland has a long history of teacher moderation and our proposal builds on that experience.

Third, in most subjects, an external assessment will be developed and marked by QCAA. Students’ knowledge and understanding of a subject usually can be assessed efficiently and reliably with a common test. Schools already make extensive use of teacher-developed tests for teaching and learning purposes, and Australian senior secondary authorities – including QCAA – have considerable experience in developing and marking external tests and examinations. We propose that results on the external assessment be reported as a mark out of 30.

Fourth, each student’s marks on the three school assessments and the external assessment will be added to obtain a Subject Result out of 60. This provides a level of transparency often absent from senior assessment processes. Students will be able to confirm their Subject Result simply by adding their three school marks and one external mark. Subject results will then be available to universities for use in selection decisions.

Fifth, the ranking of applicants to university courses will be the responsibility of universities rather than the school curriculum and assessment authority (QCAA) as at present. It is appropriate that universities themselves decide the basis on which they admit some students ahead of others. We envisage QTAC ranking course applicants on behalf of the universities, as already happens in a number of Australian states. The attempt to place all students in a single queue, regardless of the senior subjects they have studied or the tertiary courses or institutions to which they are applying, is increasingly being questioned in Australia. However, if Queensland

universities choose to do this, the use of an Australian Tertiary Entrance Rank (ATAR) instead of the OP would be consistent with practice in other states.

Our consultations revealed strong support for an overhaul of the current OP system. We do not believe Queensland students would be well served by a return to the past. The new system we have proposed retains a number of existing features combined with internationally tried and tested processes.

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Further information about *Redesigning the secondary–tertiary interface* is available at < [www.acer.edu.au/queensland-review](http://www.acer.edu.au/queensland-review) >

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