

Initial response to the external evaluation of the Queensland Certificate of Education system

The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) commissioned an independent evaluation of the new Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) system in 2023. We did this because we recognise that regular monitoring and review is crucial to the ongoing success of the system.

In 2021, we conducted a post-cycle review immediately after the new QCE system produced its first graduates. This was an interim measure, designed to give us initial feedback on the new system so we could make necessary adjustments. We had always intended to commission a formal program evaluation at the appropriate juncture to determine whether the expected benefits of the new system had been realised.

Following an open tender process, the University of Melbourne's Assessment and Evaluation Research Centre was engaged to conduct the evaluation. The project was initially expected to conclude by mid-2025, but mutually agreed changes to the large scope led to some adjustments to the timeframe.

The QCAA received the final report in March 2026. It confirms that the QCE system is strong and working well, and Queensland has a high-quality senior schooling system that delivers reliable and fair results for students.

The report commends the QCAA on its support for different pathways for students, recognising a wide range of learning and helping students move into university, training or work. Assessment processes are rigorous and results are reliable across schools and student groups. The system works through strong partnerships with teachers, supported by training and quality assurance.

The evaluation report also identifies practical ways to strengthen the system, and we will act on these as part of our continuous improvement agenda. Priorities include improving research capability, engaging with external expertise and ongoing monitoring of the system. We will use evidence from these activities to inform our communication approaches, assessment processes and support for teachers. Ongoing improvements will help maintain confidence in the system into the future and ensure it continues to deliver positive outcomes for students.

We have considered the six recommendations made by the University researchers and accept all either in full or in part. We are currently assessing each for:

- strength of evidence supporting the need for change and the proposed solution
- consequences for schools, teachers and stakeholder groups, and the risk of other unintended consequences
- feasibility of implementing the recommendation and sustaining change.

This assessment is not yet final. Before we settle on our implementation actions, we intend to consult with schools, teachers and other stakeholder groups with an interest in the findings and recommendations and consider their feedback. This will take time for some elements of the recommendations, as it involves reviewing internal and external data sources, identifying and allocating resources, and working through consultation with external stakeholders before any final decisions on implementation are made. For other elements, where the path forward is clearer, initial actions have already commenced or will soon be underway — though these too remain subject to refinement as consultation progresses.

This document summarises the QCAA's initial response to the six recommendations.

Recommendation 1	QCAA response
Refine documentation related to the QCE and build a stronger public facing profile of the processes that underpin the elements of the qualification for stakeholders and the wider community.	Accepted
Actions	Progress
The QCAA acknowledges that promoting a deeper understanding of the QCE system is an ongoing challenge. We also recognise that our communication approach must remain sensitive to the needs of a diverse group of target audiences — effective communication isn't one-size-fits-all, it needs to be tailored to the audience and reinforced over time. Our short-term actions will include: • consulting with our stakeholders and survey our clients to ensure their views inform the data and other information we share, and our communications more generally • reviewing existing technical documentation to assess usability and identify any gaps that require development of new materials • developing new communication collateral from these products for a general audience • continuing to promote a 'digital first' communication approach through initiatives such as the redevelopment of the QCAA website and use of new technologies to bring a consistent, plain English brand voice to our corporate and operational communications • enhancing our approach for delivering professional development to maximise reach and impact.	

Recommendation 2	QCAA response
Enhance governance and decision-making through increased external representation and specialist advisory capability.	Accepted
Actions	Progress
The QCAA acknowledges that external expertise brings the insight and challenge we need to continue to deliver and innovate. Paired with internal capability, external expertise will help us to maintain a healthy system and prepare it for further challenges. Our short-term actions will include: • reviewing the membership of our committees and working groups to ensure that there is sufficient external expertise to bring new ideas and independence to decision-making and review processes. • reviewing psychometric and related programs of work. The QCAA notes the researchers' view about the composition of the QCAA Board; however, board membership is prescribed in legislation and is a matter for the Queensland Government to consider.	

Recommendation 3	QCAA response
Establish a coordinated research and evaluation agenda to inform continuous improvement, sustainability, and confidence in the QCE system.	Accepted
Actions	Progress
The QCAA acknowledges that research drives continuous improvement and is the foundation of long-term sustainability and confidence in the system. Our short-term actions will include: • finalising a forward research agenda that supports, for example, syllabus implementation, our promotion of assessment literacy, and our ability to harness the potential of advanced technologies • developing an ongoing monitoring framework for the QCE system to assess progress made in achieving the medium and long-term outcomes that were established during the development of the new system. The framework will include both confidence and sustainability measures • establishing research partnerships with universities.	

Recommendation 4	QCAA response
Continue to build and sustain system-wide assessment capability to support consistent, high-quality implementation of the QCE across Queensland.	Accepted
Actions	Progress
The QCAA acknowledges that the ongoing success of the QCE system relies on the active involvement of teachers in our curriculum and assessment processes and sustained investment in their professional capability. Our short-term actions will include: • implementing our assessor workforce recruitment and retention strategy • enhancing our approach for delivering professional development to maximise reach and impact • enhancing assessor monitoring and calibration activities, especially during training for QCE system processes • developing resources to enhance teacher knowledge and understanding of QCE system processes to strengthen curriculum and assessment implementation.	

Recommendation 5	QCAA response
Continue to strengthen monitoring and review processes to identify risks, unintended consequences, and system impacts across the QCE.	Accepted
Actions	Progress
The QCAA acknowledges that robust monitoring and review is needed to detect risks, anticipate unintended consequences, and manage system effects. Our short-term actions will include: • using our research agenda and system monitoring framework to support good governance of the QCE system • improving our internal monitoring processes to ensure we are on track to deliver our assessment processes • continuing our partnership with the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre to identify risks and impacts at the secondary-tertiary interface • building our data collection, analysis and reporting capacity to support internal processes and stakeholder needs.	

Recommendation 6	QCAA response
Use longitudinal data analysis and psychometric evidence to drive continuous improvement and quality assurance across QCE assessment and reporting processes	Accepted
Actions	Progress
The QCAA acknowledges that high-quality assessment systems use longitudinal data and psychometric evidence to ensure validity, reliability, and fairness over time. Analysis of this information reveals trends, strengths, and areas for refinement. Our short-term actions will include: • reviewing our existing measurement practices to support assessment and certification processes • identifying datasets of interest to education stakeholders and making this information publicly available • ensuring QCAA has sufficient in-house psychometric, statistical and research expertise • engaging additional external expertise to support our research agenda and quality assurance mechanisms.	

Progress key:

				
Completed	On track	Minor issues	Major challenge	Not started



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