

Task-specific standards

Prep–Year 10

When making judgments about the evidence shown in student assessment responses, teachers use task-specific standards (or a marking guide). Task-specific standards give teachers:

- a tool for directly matching the evidence of learning in the student response to the achievement standard across a five-point scale
- a focal point for discussing student responses
- a tool to help provide feedback to students.

Task-specific standards are a guide that:

- specifies identified aspects of the achievement standard that are the focus of the assessment and qualities that will inform the overall judgment — alignment between the identified aspects of the achievement standard and the assessment must be obvious and strong
- clarifies the curriculum expectations for learning across a five-point scale and shows the connections between what students are expected to know and do, and how their responses will be judged
- enables teachers to support students in developing their assessment literacy
- supports evidence-based discussions to help students gain a better understanding of how they can reflect on their responses and identify the qualities needed to improve
- supports students to communicate with teachers and parents/carers about their achievements and ask relevant questions about the next steps to progress their learning
- promotes conversations among teachers, students and parents/carers about the quality of student work in relation to curriculum expectations and the achievement standard.

Task-specific standards should be developed in conjunction with the assessment and an associated sample response to ensure alignment. Teaching teams engage in professional conversations during this process to develop a shared understanding of the expected qualities of student work aligned to the standards descriptors for each level of achievement.

The standards elaborations resources can be used to develop task-specific standards.

Standards elaborations

The QCAA has developed standards elaborations based on the Australian Curriculum achievement standards to provide teachers with a tool for making consistent and comparable judgments about how well students have demonstrated what they know, understand and can do on a five-point scale.

The standards elaborations for all learning areas have a consistent structure. The specific organising features of each learning area, such as strands and sub-strands, have been used to create structure down the left-hand side of the matrix (see Figure 1).

The standards elaborations and their descriptors are presented in a matrix. The Australian Curriculum achievement standard appears as ‘C’ (or equivalent), with each sentence of the achievement standard included. It is then elaborated into a five-point scale using standard descriptors. The standard descriptors, A–E (or equivalent), describe discernible differences or degrees of quality in student work aligned to the levels of achievement.

[Standards elaborations](#) are available from the QCAA website in both Word and PDF formats.

Figure 1: Structure of the standards elaborations: Science example

		A	B	C	D	E
The folio of student work has the following characteristics:						
Science understanding	Chemical sciences	application of the observable properties of materials to provide a reasoned explanation of how objects and materials can be used	application of the observable properties of materials to provide an informed explanation of how objects and materials can be used	application of the observable properties of materials to explain how objects and materials can be used	application of the observable properties of materials to describe how objects and materials can be used	statements about the use of materials
	Physical sciences	thorough description of how contact and non-contact forces affect interactions between objects	informed description of how contact and non-contact forces affect interactions between objects	description of how contact and non-contact forces affect interactions between objects	identification of contact and non-contact forces between objects	statements about forces
	Earth and space sciences	reasoned discussion of how natural processes and human activity cause changes to Earth's surface	informed discussion of how natural processes and human activity cause changes to Earth's surface	discussion of how natural processes and human activity cause changes to Earth's surface	identification of natural processes and human activity that cause changes to Earth's surface	statements about changes to the Earth's surface
	Biological sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> thorough description of how relationships assist the survival of living things sequencing and thorough description of key stages in the life cycle of a plant or animal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> informed description of relationships that assist the survival of living things sequencing and description of key stages in the life cycle of a plant or animal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> description of relationships that assist the survival of living things sequencing of key stages in the life cycle of a plant or animal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identification of relationships between living things partial sequencing of the life cycle of a plant or animal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> statements about the survival of living things fragmented sequencing of life cycle

These two columns are determined using the specific organising structures of a learning area. In this Science example, the strands and sub-strands of the learning area are used to provide the structure of the standards elaborations.

Achievement standard

Shading shows the discernible differences or degrees of quality associated with the levels of achievement in student work against which judgments are made.

Creating task-specific standards using the standards elaborations

The standards elaborations can be used as a basis for creating task-specific standards. Aspects of the achievement standard that are the focus of the assessment are identified and form the basis of the task-specific standards. Detail can be added to reflect the context of the assessment and enhance the clarity of expectations; however, the intent of the achievement standard must be maintained.