

Memo

Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority

17 September 2025

Senior secondary

Number: 037/25

Essential English and Essential Mathematics: Common internal assessment (CIA) in 2026

Purpose

- To notify schools of the dates for the two CIA phases of delivery for 2026.
- To remind schools to ensure they have selected an Essential English and/or Essential Mathematics CIA phase of delivery for 2026 in the Student Management application (app) on the [QCAA Portal](#).
- To notify schools about the Essential English CIA topics for 2026.

Background

In the QCE system, a student's result in an Applied subject is based on their achievement in four internal assessments in Units 3 and 4. For Essential English and Essential Mathematics, schools develop three of these assessments. The fourth is a CIA developed by the QCAA and marked by schools.

In 2026, schools deliver the CIAs in a three-week administration period during one of two five-week phases, with each phase using a different version of the CIA. Teacher judgments about student responses to assessment in Essential English and Essential Mathematics will be reviewed at annual quality assurance meetings in Term 3.

Information

Phase of delivery

Schools select their phase of delivery in the Student Management app in the [QCAA Portal](#). Principal's delegates are responsible for ensuring their school has selected a phase of delivery.

The 2026 CIA papers will be made available to schools at the beginning of their nominated phase. It is recommended that the papers are administered in the third week of the school-chosen three-week administration period during the selected phase. (See the following schedule).

Two CIA phases of delivery 2026

Phase 1 (Term 2 Weeks 1–5)		Phase 2 (Term 2 Weeks 5–9)	
CIA available	CIA completed by	CIA available	CIA completed by
Monday 20 April	Friday 22 May	Monday 18 May	Friday 19 June
Ancillary CIA (flexible/alternative learning centres only): Term 3			

Essential English

Description

Short response to seen stimulus

Students will respond to representations of a community, local and/or global issue in a seen media text by writing a response that identifies, considers and explains how the elements or components that make up the text/s shape meaning.

Short response to unseen stimulus

Students will respond to representations of an identity or identities, place, event or concept in an unseen media text by writing a response that identifies, considers and explains how the elements or components that make up the text communicate ideas and information.

Topics

The topics for 2026 are representations of:

- the internet
- print media.

Schools deliver the CIA in one of two phases and will receive a 2026 CIA paper on one of these topics — either the internet or print media — depending on their selected phase.

The internet refers to a digital network connecting billions of users through electronic devices, e.g. smartphones, computers, smart TVs, home appliances, wearables — it can be written as 'Internet' or 'internet'.

Print media refers to published written or pictorial printed materials that provide information and/or entertainment, e.g. books, picture books, magazines, newspapers, posters, billboards, brochures, pamphlets.

CIA materials

The QCAA provides the following materials:

- seen stimulus book — given to students at the start of the three-week administration period to enable deconstruction of only the seen stimulus in class. Teachers must ensure students do not have access to an annotated copy of the seen stimulus during the administration of the assessment
- question and response book — given to students at the start of the CIA session/s
- stimulus book — given to students at the start of the CIA session/s — includes the seen and unseen stimulus

- marking guide — used to mark student responses and guide moderation processes — not to be given to students.

Essential Mathematics

Description

The Essential Mathematics CIA will representatively sample subject matter from all topics in Unit 3 only.

The CIA has two parts:

- simple (Part A)
- complex (Part B).

CIA materials

The QCAA provides the following materials:

- question and response book — given to students at the start of the CIA session/s
- QCAA formula sheet — unannotated copy given to students at the start of the CIA session/s
- marking guide — used to mark student responses and guide moderation processes — not to be given to students.

What you need to do

- Ensure your school has selected an Essential English and/or Essential Mathematics CIA phase of delivery for 2026 in the Student Management app on the [QCAA Portal](#).
- Inform Essential English teachers, students and curriculum leaders in your school about the 2026 topics for the Essential English CIA.
- If your school wants to select a different phase to the one originally chosen, please email qau@qcaa.qld.edu.au.

Finding out more

For information about selecting your school's phase in the Student Management app, please email the Certification Unit at certification@qcaa.qld.edu.au.

For information about the Essential English CIA, please email EssentialEnglish@qcaa.qld.edu.au or phone (07) 3864 0289.

For information about the Essential Mathematics CIA, please email EssentialMaths@qcaa.qld.edu.au or phone (07) 3864 0306.

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