

## **Criteria-Based Assessment: The Queensland experience**

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**John A Pitman  
Robert P Dudley**



**Queensland  
Board of Senior Secondary School Studies**

Enquiries regarding this paper may be directed to the Deputy Director (Moderation & Curriculum)

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Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies  
Floor 7, 295 Ann Street, Brisbane  
PO Box 307 Spring Hill Qld 4004

Telephone: (07) 3864 0299  
Facsimile: (07) 3221 2553  
Email: office@bsssq.edu.au

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## Abstract

Since 1972 a system of school-based assessment has been in operation at all levels of secondary schooling in Queensland, Australia. Until recently, the outcomes of assessment had been reported in norm-referenced terms. The Review of School-Based Assessment (ROSBA), whose recommendations are currently being phased in to secondary schools, adopts a criteria-based stance. ROSBA recognises the legitimacy of a working compromise between criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessment. ROSBA sets assessment as an integral aspect of curriculum design and attempts to identify the assessment criteria required in a way that is practicable and acceptable to teachers and students. Examples of criteria-based assessment and reporting at the school level are presented.

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Ray McGuire, Subject Master, English, Ipswich State High School.

Robyn Wallace, Subject Master, Mathematics, Loganlea State High School.

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## Historical context

This paper is developed in the context of secondary education in the State of Queensland in the Commonwealth of Australia. Three overlapping eras of assessment modes can be identified in the history of Queensland's secondary education. These are:

- the external examination era of the period 1910–1972
- the school-based assessment era of the period 1970–
- the review of school-based assessment (ROSBA) era beginning 1978.

### The external examination era<sup>1</sup>

The first public secondary examinations set by a Queensland authority were conducted by the University of Queensland in 1910. There were two public examinations conducted at the secondary school level throughout the period 1910–1972. These were the Junior Examination at the end of Year 10 and the Senior Examination at the end of Year 12. Although the central authorities conducting the examinations changed throughout this period, the mode of assessing students' achievements remained constant—students' achievements were assessed at the end of the course of study by a single examination that consisted primarily of a pen-and-paper test. Examinations were set and marked by authorities external to the schools, and certificates, based on students' results in these, were issued by the central authorities.

Syllabuses for subjects in the external examinations often started with the words 'The examination will consist of ...'. By 1972 some syllabuses stated aims of the subject in student-oriented terms, described the scope of the subject and stated texts and references as well as describing the examination requirements. Nevertheless, the real scopes of subjects were determined by past examination papers; students spent a great deal of time becoming familiar with the format of these, and rehearsing how to answer the questions contained in them. The assessment of student achievement at the end of the courses of study had an overwhelming influence on the objectives that could be achieved, on the scope and depth of treatment of subject matter, and on the learning experiences to which students were exposed.

### The school-based assessment era

In 1969 the Queensland Government appointed a committee to review the system of external examinations for Queensland secondary school students, and to make recommendations for the assessment of students' achievements. The major recommendation of the committee's report was that the Junior and Senior examinations (for the awarding of Junior and Senior Certificates) be replaced by school assessment.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Radford, W. C. (Chairman) 1970, *Public Examinations for Queensland Secondary School Students*, Department of Education, Brisbane, pp. 7–17. (Provides a succinct statement of the history of external examinations in Queensland.)

2. *ibid.* pp. 2, 3.

Control over the nature and award of the certificates was to be vested in a statutory authority to be called the Board of Secondary School Studies. This Board was to be responsible for maintaining the comparability of gradings which appeared on the Junior and Senior Certificates. The Board was also to approve syllabuses recommended by Subject Advisory Committees on which teachers were to be a majority. Syllabuses approved by the Board were to present broad frameworks of subjects and not prescribe their details.

The Board of Secondary School Studies was established in 1971 and the last external examination for school students was conducted in 1972. To the present time [1985] all assessments of students' achievements in Queensland's secondary schools, including those assessments used as a means of selection for tertiary entrance, have been based on judgments made by the students' teachers.

The move to school-based assessment heralded changes to Queensland's secondary education scene, these being:

- the gradual development of syllabuses that presented integrated curriculum frameworks
- the development of new subjects and the reconceptualisation of existing subjects
- the adoption of a system of certification that was overtly norm-referenced
- a gradual change in the modes of assessment employed in schools
- increased teacher involvement in all aspects of curriculum planning and implementation.

Once the focus of the external examination was removed, it gradually became evident that teachers were now cast in the role of curriculum planners and that the syllabuses required to support teachers' endeavours needed to supply more than a listing of subject matter. Consequently the Board adopted the following curriculum framework for syllabuses:

- rationale
- general aims
- objectives
- organisation (outlining subject matter, required time allocation etc.)
- learning experiences
- evaluation
- resource material.

In the first decade of the operation of school-based assessment the following new subjects were introduced into Queensland's secondary schools:

Junior subjects	Senior subjects
Chinese	Chinese
Japanese	Japanese
Speech and Drama	Speech and Drama
Health and Physical Education	Health and Physical Education
Citizenship Education	Social Mathematics
Study of Society	Secretarial Studies
Agricultural Science	Film and Television
	Dance
	Theatre
	Study of Religion

The outstanding feature of many of these subjects was that a large proportion of the students' learning experiences were acquired outside a normal classroom, and many aspects of students' achievements were assessed by means other than pen-and-paper tests. In the new Junior subject Health and Physical Education approximately three quarters of the students' class time was spent on practical aspects of the subject, and a similar proportion of achievements in these aspects was used for assessment purposes. In the Senior subject area of the Arts (Speech and Drama, Film and Television, Dance, Theatre) approximately 60 per cent of class time and assessment weighting were devoted to practical activities.

English was, perhaps, the best example of a subject that was reconceptualised shortly after the introduction of school-based assessment. The emphasis changed from a study of grammar and literary criticism to that of student growth through enhanced functioning in the language. Assessment moved from terminal pen-and-paper tests to periodic and, in some schools, continuous assessment<sup>3</sup> in the modes of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

3. Frith, D. S. & Macintosh, H. G. 1984, *A Teacher's Guide to Assessment*, Stanley Thornes Ltd, Cheltenham, p. 54. The authors define these terms as follows:

- Terminal Assessment takes place at the end of a predetermined set period or unit;
- Periodic Assessment is designed to permit a series of intermittent probes to be taken over a course; while
- Continuous Assessment denotes the continuous updating of judgments about performance in relation to specific criteria which will allow, at any time, a cumulative judgment to be made about performance [based] upon these same criteria.

A norm-referenced system of certifying student achievement was adopted. This incorporated the use of a 7–1 rating scale (7 being the highest rating) with the following distribution of ratings assigned to any Board subject.

<b>Rating</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
Percentage of State group	2–6%	6–12%	12–20%	30–50%	10–20%	6–12%	0–6%

While the Board’s rhetoric espoused the notion of continuous assessment, the influence of the external examination was so great that schools and teachers found great difficulty in adopting this. Nevertheless, many schools and subjects moved to forms of periodic assessment and the most innovative incorporated continuous assessment in some aspects of some subjects.

Teachers shared with the Board the responsibility for the development and maintenance of standards of assessment for both the Junior and Senior Certificates. The Board facilitated these by arranging consensus-style moderation meetings at which teachers viewed work from neighbouring schools and, through dialogue, agreed upon the standards appropriate to the various subjects.

Teachers also shared the responsibility for devising syllabus documents. They were in the majority on the committees that wrote the syllabuses for subjects and advised the Board on all syllabus-related matters.

## The era of reviewing school-based assessment

Soon after the implementation of school-based assessment, two reports<sup>4</sup> of the scheme's operations were published. The Board commissioned a committee to review them and to advise it of changes that might be needed to its policies and practices. The committee's deliberations and recommendations were published in 1978 as a document titled *A Review of School-Based Assessment in Queensland Secondary Schools (ROSBA)*.<sup>5</sup>

Although it was concluded that the spirit of school-based assessment was visionary and worthy of pursuit, the following problems were identified:

- there had been no improvement in the openness of school climates
- the operational syllabus in schools seemed largely determined by the expectations of moderators and by the sanctions of moderators' meetings
- individual differences in students were not really accommodated
- tests and examinations remained the imperative of school life
- assessment was almost exclusively concerned with the recall of academic knowledge
- low priority had been given to assessment as a means of feedback to amend teaching strategies and to diagnose student weaknesses
- testing and ranking of students had increased in frequency and had a detrimental effect on students, teachers and school administrators
- a marks fetish had developed, leading to unhealthy competition, a lack of trust and a build-up of animosity between students.

On the positive side the following benefits were identified:

- new subjects had been developed, not only in the traditional academic areas but also in less academic ones, and in new areas such as human relations
- greater coherence had occurred among objectives, curricula and evaluation
- there was a greater sense of professional unity among teachers—teachers had experienced challenge, stimulation, and a sense of professional growth
- there was an increase in both quality and variety of instructional policies, course preparation, lesson preparation and classroom teaching.

The Board of Secondary School Studies endeavoured, therefore, to maintain and enhance the positive aspects of school-based assessment while looking into the negative aspects identified in the evaluative studies. The main features of the ROSBA scheme can be identified in the following way:

- the redrafting of syllabuses in accordance with a 'Broad Objectives Model' of curriculum design and the classification of objectives into areas of content, process, skill and affect
- a requirement for schools to develop integrated curriculum documents called 'work programs' from frameworks supplied in centrally developed syllabuses

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4. The two reports were:

- Fairbairn K., McBryde, B. & Rigby, D. 1976, *Schools Under Radford*, The Department of Education and the Board of Secondary School Studies, Brisbane.
  - Campbell, W. J., Bassett, G. W., Campbell, E. M., Cotterell, J. L., Evans, G. T. & Grassie, M. C. 1976, *Some Consequences of the Radford Scheme for Schools, Teachers and Students in Queensland*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.
5. Scott, E. (Chairman), 1978, *A Review of School-Based Assessment in Queensland Secondary Schools*, Board of Secondary School Studies, Brisbane.



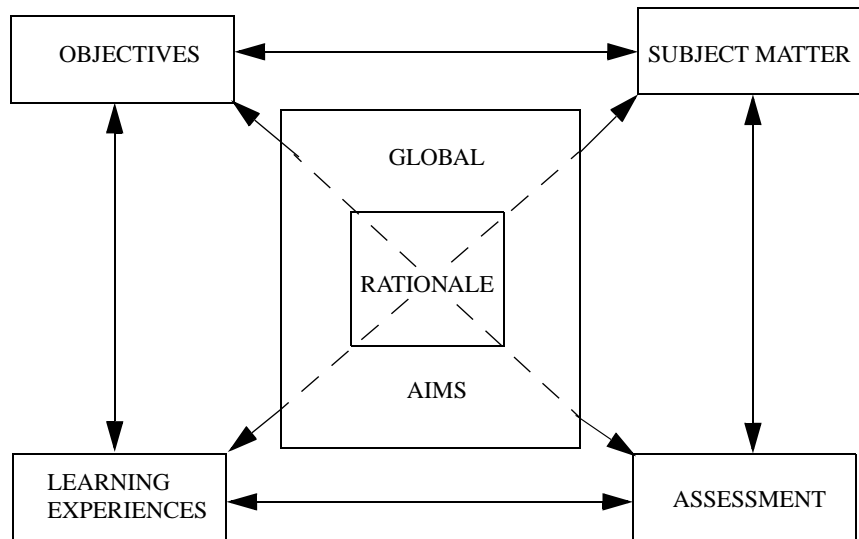
- the certification of a single exit Level of Achievement from a process of continuous or periodic assessment, as opposed to a semester-by-semester certification in the senior secondary school
- the replacement of the norm-based scheme of numerical gradings for reporting the outcomes of assessment with verbal descriptions based on predetermined criteria.

## Criteria-based assessment

## Curriculum design

Figure 1 illustrates a concept of an integrated structure of curriculum design for syllabuses and work programs. While the Board adopted a ‘Broad Objectives Model’ for curriculum design for ROSBA, it also stipulated that a syllabus commence with a statement of rationale that outlines: the area of study encompassed by a syllabus; the importance of the study in Queensland society; and why the study should be included in a secondary school curriculum.<sup>6</sup> It also stated that the ‘Rationale’ and ‘Global Aims’ outline a defensible educational proposal in the Queensland context and the statements of ‘Objectives’, ‘Organisation’ (of subject matter), ‘Learning Experiences’ and ‘Evaluation’ must be consistent with the proposal.<sup>7</sup>

Under these notions, assessment must relate to more than making judgments about whether students have achieved set objectives—assessment must be consistent with the stated conceptualisation and values of the subject, as well as the learning experiences that are considered to be worthy of student involvement.



**Figure 1:** Curriculum design

In an attempt to direct teachers’ attention to teaching and assessing other than factual recall, objectives are classified in the following way:

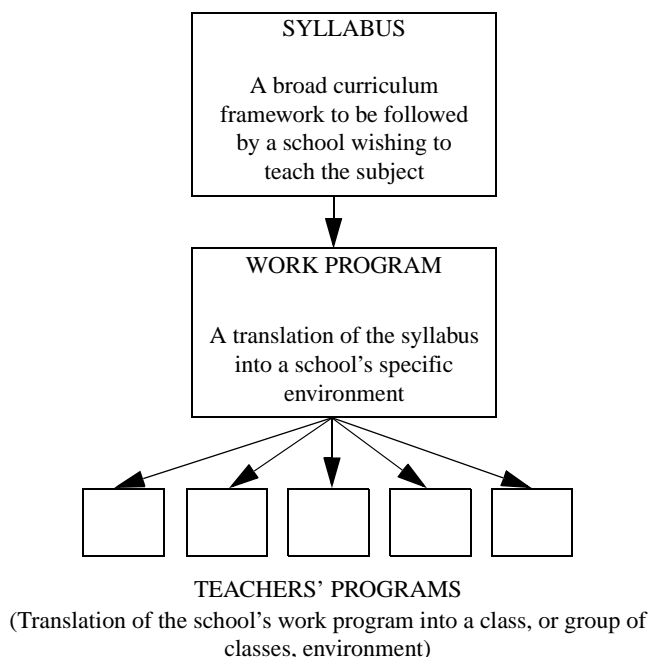
- process objectives (the cognitive skills to be developed in relation to the discipline)
- content objectives (relating to the body of factual knowledge to be acquired)

6. Dudley, R. P. (ed.) 1984, *Guidelines for the Development of Syllabuses for Board Subjects*, Board of Secondary School Studies, Brisbane, p. 15.

7. *ibid.*, p. 16.

- skill objectives (the practical skills required by the discipline)
- affective objectives (the attitudes, values and feelings the discipline aims to develop which may be manifested in overt performance).<sup>8</sup>

Such a classification is best viewed as an analytical tool rather than a discrete compartmentalisation of knowledge. It is a useful memory-aid to help in selecting appropriate subject matter, learning experiences and assessment techniques.



**Figure 2:** Relationships among syllabus, work program and teachers' programs

A subject syllabus is prepared by a group of at least 15 secondary and tertiary teachers and validated over a five-year developmental period.<sup>9</sup> Schools that wish to avail themselves of the Board's certification of student achievement in a subject prepare a translation of the syllabus's requirements that suits their own educational contexts. This document, called a work program, also conforms to the curriculum requirements stated previously. It transposes the broad requirements of a syllabus into a specific school's environment, taking into account such variables as teacher expertise, local community expectations, and students' interests and school resources.

Judgments relating to a work program's viability and suitability are made by panels of teachers. Initially a work program, in its entirety, is judged against a syllabus. When agreement as to its meeting syllabus requirements is reached it is accredited. The actual assessments made by teachers are also judged in relation to their congruency with the accredited work program statements and the comparability of standards in relation to other schools.

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8. Scott, op. cit., p. 10.

9. A description of this process is contained in Dudley, op. cit.

Schools are advised to make work programs available to parents so that they can help their children through a course of study, and be aware of the nature of the assessment program and the times that the various assessment instruments will be used. Nevertheless, each teacher needs to make professional judgments about the implementation of the work program with each class; many accredited work programs have opportunities for such choice built into their design.

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## Transition of assessment emphasis—summative to formative<sup>10</sup>

Under ROSBA, which has evolved into the system itself, teachers are expected to use a diversity of assessment instruments (assignments, oral presentations, etc.), as opposed to the exclusive use of formal tests. They are also counselled to place emphasis on diagnosis with remedial feedback where the results obtained do not contribute to certification. Thus teachers are expected to become involved in both formative assessment and summative assessment. These terms are defined as follows:

- formative assessment occurs when assessment is primarily intended for, and instrumental in, helping a student attain a higher level of performance
- summative assessment is designed to indicate the achievement status or level of a student—it is geared towards reporting at the end of a course of study, especially for purposes of certification.

As ROSBA is a system of school-based assessment, the school is able to exercise autonomy in assessing and meeting the learning needs of its students. This autonomy allows for a variety of teacher responses to the differing learning patterns and rates of students. Although individual standards on different criteria may be goals common to large groups of students, the paths each student takes to get there may be different. The person most capable of directing these paths is the teacher. Thus, suggestions by the teacher as to how the gap between present achievement and the aimed-for standard can be lessened will probably differ from student to student.

Under ROSBA summative assessment depends on the fullest and latest information on a student's performance, based on a process of continuous assessment. Teachers in Queensland have the opportunity to provide summative assessments that are based on many student performances across a variety of tasks and over a considerable period of time. This gives a stability or robustness to teacher judgments and can show how certain students habitually progress faster or slower than the majority. Thus formative assessment informs the end-of-course summative judgment (see Figure 3).

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10. This section is based on McMenimen, M. 1985, *Formative Versus Summative Evaluation—A Complementary Approach*, Working Paper produced in the Authority of the Board of Secondary School Studies, April.

	SEMESTER I	SEMESTER II	SEMESTER III	SEMESTER IV
C O R E	Individual Mime	Written Scenario	Duo Polished Text  Reading	Course Production  Directing Seminar  Formal Examination  Journal
	Group Myth Improvisation	Group Commedia dell'arte  Performance	Melodrama Production  Individual Performance of Original Monologue	
	Journal	Individual Scripted  Shakespearean Extract	Research Assignment	
		Research Assignment		
		Journal		
	Project/ Assignment	Individual Characterisation	Journal	Journal
O P T I O N S	<b>Voice</b>  Individual Voice Tape  Written Test	<b>Costume</b>  Folio of Costume Designs  Theory Assignment	<b>Set Construction</b>  Model Set  Written Test	<b>Music</b>  Creative Sounds Tape  Theory Assignment

**Figure 3:** Example of a total course assessment plan for the senior subject Theatre. (Source: Feros, M. 1984, *Discussion Paper on Assessment in Theatre*, Board of Secondary School Studies, Brisbane.)

The assessment plan presented as Figure 3 is an example of the ‘state of the art’ in Queensland at the time of writing [1985]. Senior subjects are taught and assessed over four semesters and commonly have core and optional components. The shaded sections contain summative assessment items whereas the assessment items in the clear sections are for formative purposes for those students who complete four semesters of study. Students who exit from the subject after completing three or fewer semesters may have the results of the ‘formative’ assessments contribute to the summative judgments made about their achievement. In the early semesters the assessment emphasis is placed on the production of feedback about progress to students and their parents. The emphasis in the later semesters is placed on the making of summative judgments for the purposes of certifying student achievement.

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## Transition of assessment emphasis

### Norm-referenced to criterion-referenced<sup>11</sup>

Norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment are often portrayed as mutually exclusive opposites. While it is conceptually easy to separate these, in practice they cannot be entirely divorced from one another.

In its pure and abstract form norm-referencing takes no account of the quality of student performance in any absolute sense, because it is concerned only with the rank ordering of students. In practice, employers, parents and teachers are all concerned with the quality of student achievement and act as criterion-referenced checks. In Queensland such checks are reinforced by syllabus requirements and meetings of teachers. Teacher meetings are devised with the express purpose of maintaining comparability of standards between schools.

Criterion-referencing, broadly speaking, covers any attempt to interpret a student’s performance by referring not to the performance of other students, but to specific domains of knowledge. In the context of the criticism of the overly competitive nature of school-based assessment, criterion referencing held an attraction for the formulators of ROSBA. This was the hope it held for a system of non-competitive assessment, in which students pit themselves against defined levels of achievement rather than against one another. One of the early difficulties the developers of ROSBA faced was to try to develop appropriate levels of achievement. The system would soon fall into disrepute if the levels were set so low that all students were certified at a ‘very high’ level of achievement, or so high that no student achieved this level.

ROSBA is an attempt to put into operation a set of principles and practices that recognises the legitimacy of a working compromise between criterion referencing and norm referencing, and identifies the assessment criteria required in a way which is practicable and acceptable to the teacher and student.

A common means by which such compromise is reached in schools can be described in the following way:

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11. This section is based on Sadler, D. R. 1985, *ROSBA’s Family Connections*, Working Paper produced in the Authority of the Board of Secondary School Studies, Brisbane.

## Planning stage

1. Teachers use the syllabus to formulate a sequencing of the subject matter and learning experiences to present to their students.
2. Assessment techniques appropriate to serving formative and summative purposes are planned and sited at appropriate stages in the work program.
3. Criteria for making judgments about student achievement in relation to the assessment techniques and the nature of the subject matter and learning experiences are stated.
4. Summative Assessment Criteria are stated. (In each of the above stages judgments are made in relation to teachers' experiences with similar groups of students in the past.)
5. Students are presented with an overall plan of assessment techniques and criteria.

## Execution stage

6. Actual assessment instruments and refined criteria are developed.
7. The assessment instrument is administered and a mark allocated to the student work in accordance with the stated criteria. (In this stage of the operation it is almost inevitable that some comparison is made between students and that the mark represents not only achievement against criteria but also a rank-ordering of students.)
8. Students are given feedback in an appropriate way about their achievement and the mark awarded.
9. At the end of the course of study a summation of the marks awarded is made, a check is made against the list of Summative Assessment Criteria and negotiated with the student, and finally an achievement level is awarded.

Examples of such stages in assessment from the subject English at Ipswich State High School are presented in Figure 4.

## Assessment item 1

This guideline is developed from the school's accredited work program and presented to all Year 12 (17-year-old) students.

<b>2. Australian Prose/Film Studies</b>	
(a) In this unit you will be required to choose an Australian novel, subject it to critical analysis (theme, plotting, characterisation, style), design an appropriate question, and answer it. Rather than viewing Australian prose narrowly, you should see your novel in a broader perspective and gain some appreciation of historical and current trends. Possible areas of focus will be: <i>The Land's Meaning; Landscape and Character; Morris West; World War I Revisited; S-E Asian Settings; Women Writers.</i>	Critical response written in class
<b>Approx. 3 weeks</b>	<b>Due Date:</b> _____
<b>(b) Australian Film</b>	
Your film study will obviously be linked with your prose study and will be designed to extend your knowledge of Australian film and Australian culture. Film studied, <i>Newsfront.</i>	Shorter answer related to film
<b>Approx. 3 weeks</b>	<b>Due Date:</b> _____
<b>(c) Oral</b>	
Students will be required to present a 5–7-minute talk on some aspect of Australian culture, using visual aids.	
<b>3. Stage Drama Studies</b>	
A new approach will be tried in this extended unit. It will involve a comparison of Shakespearean drama with 20th century drama and discussion of what drama has to offer as an art form. This means that you will need to start thinking in terms of themes, dramatic structures (plot, characterisation, etc.) and stage rhythms. You will be expected to come to terms with Shakespeare's language, his ideas on tragedy and comedy, and to try to imagine his plays in the Globe Theatre.	Designing a kit of materials to interest a fellow Year 12 student in Shakespeare and 20th century drama
Twentieth-century drama will involve discussion and understanding of such things as symbolism, expressionism, absurdism, satire (e.g. burlesque, humour and wit, stylised characterisation, irony) and it is interesting to trace elements of these things back to Shakespeare.	
<b>Approx. 7–8 weeks</b>	<b>Due Date:</b> _____
ORAL WORK WILL PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART IN ALL UNITS AND WILL BE TESTED IN SELECTED UNITS.	

Figure 4: Extract from the Assessment Guideline.

## Assessment item 2

These criteria are stated in the school's accredited work program. They are available to all teachers and students of English as well as parents.

### **2. High Achievement**

A student awarded HIGH ACHIEVEMENT has demonstrated:

- ability to use language fluently
- ability to develop ideas in depth
- a thorough understanding of the principles behind, and meanings in, the range of literature and mass media studied
- ability to develop a variety of spoken and written responses to literature and mass media studied
- ability to read and comprehend information
- ability to evaluate information verbally and in written form
- ability to carry out critical analysis
- thoroughness and consistency in using language across a variety of spoken and written tasks, and flair in:
  - using language appropriate to the tasks
  - establishing and maintaining audience contact and a sense of purpose
  - selecting and ordering detail
  - maintaining cohesiveness (through paragraphing, scripting, etc.)
  - using techniques/skills associated with the tasks attempted.

Students at this level show control over spelling, punctuation and grammar, but flaws will be evident in work, especially that which has not been prepared and proofread and is near the lower border line.

### **3. Sound Achievement**

A student awarded SOUND ACHIEVEMENT has demonstrated:

- solid use of language
- ability to develop ideas to required lengths
- a solid understanding of principles behind, and meanings in, the range of literature and mass media studied
- ability to develop a variety of spoken and written responses to literature and mass media studied
- ability to read and comprehend information
- ability to evaluate information verbally and in written forms (not extended)
- consistency in using language across a variety of spoken and written tasks
- solidity in
  - using language appropriate to the tasks
  - establishing and maintaining audience contact and a sense of purpose
  - selecting and ordering detail
  - maintaining cohesiveness (through paragraphing, scripting etc.)
  - using techniques/skills associated with the tasks attempted.

While students at this level show control over spelling, punctuation and grammar, flaws will be evident in their work, especially that which has not been prepared and proofread and is near the lower border lines where students have difficulty with written expression.

**Figure 5:** Extract from the Summative Assessment Criteria.



### Assessment item 3

The guidelines and criteria in Figures 4 and 5, and the written response form part of a folio of work. In making the summative assessment typical responses are used in the mode of continuous assessment as defined previously.

<i>Newsfront</i>	
<b>TASK: To write a critical response to a statement about this film</b>	
<b>ASSESSMENT CRITERIA</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Apparent awareness of purpose • develops a point of view	
Apparent knowledge of subject matter • evaluates director's statement • selects significant details • supplies adequate details	
Use of structure to reinforce theme • introduces a relevant point of view • selects and orders support details • evaluates information • rounds off point of view	
Cohesiveness	
Vocabulary	
Sentence structure • control • variation	
Spelling	
Punctuation	
Handwriting	
FURTHER COMMENTS:	

**Figure 6:** An assessment sheet used in relation to the Australian Prose/Film Study shown in Assessment Item 1 (Figure 4).

## Reporting the outcomes of assessment

Responsibility for reporting the outcomes of assessment is shared by the central authority (the Board of Secondary School Studies) and each school. The latter is responsible for formative reporting to parents and students, and both are responsible for the summative statements upon completion of the course of study.

The Board of Secondary School Studies issues a summative assessment certificate at the completion of the course of study. This certificate gives a brief verbal description of the level of achievement. As the philosophy of school-based assessment places prime responsibility on making judgments about student achievement, the school certificate contains statements that reflect the real achievements of students in accordance with the pre-stated criteria of the accredited work program. Figure 7 gives an example of statements on a Board Certificate and p. 16 gives an example of statements on school certificates.

BOARD SUBJECTS	UNITS STUDIED				No. OF UNITS STUDIED	ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL
	Sem 1	Sem 2	Sem 3	Sem 4		
English	01	02	03	04	4	High Achievement
German	01	02	03	04	4	Sound Achievement
Economics	01	02	—	—	2	Very Limited Achievement
Mathematics I	01	06	—	—	2	Sound Achievement
Chemistry	01	02	—	—	2	Limited Achievement
Biological Science	—	—	03	04	2	Sound Achievement
Film & Television	01	02	03	04	4	High Achievement
Health & Phys. Ed.	—	—	03	04	2	Sound Achievement
TOTAL NUMBER OF UNITS					22	TOTAL NUMBER OF SUBJECTS 8

**Figure 7:** Extract from a Board of Secondary School Studies Senior Certificate.

## Examples of reporting on a school certificate

### *English*

### *Sound Achievement*

Vincent has demonstrated an ability to:

- write analytically, using the basic conventions of written English form, and express in writing and speech, personal opinions and responses to literature
- speak and listen effectively in group situations
- use one of the media for creative expression.

### *Mathematics I*

### *Very Limited Achievement*

In this course Vincent studied Algebra, Analytical Geometry and Trigonometry.

He:

- usually achieved numerical accuracy, with or without calculator
- is familiar with a computer system.

Seldom did he solve routine problems or display an understanding of the concepts involved.

### *English*

### *Very High Achievement*

Angela's visual, aural and prose comprehension skills are very good. She has prepared all set tasks most conscientiously, and she has also made a valued contribution to class learning. Angela's oral expression is logical and mature, and her prose writing is properly structured and accurately expressed. She is a perceptive student of literature, and her own creative writing shows originality and depth.

### *Latin*

### *Very High Achievement*

Angela has a very wide vocabulary in Latin and is highly skilled in translating passages of Latin into English. She has a very good grasp of sentence structure. She shows very good comprehension of Latin passages and is able to make intelligent inferences from information supplied in Latin. She also has a very broad knowledge and good understanding of Roman culture and literature and is able to comment intelligently on aspects of these.

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## Conclusions

Although theory has informed practice in Queensland it has not been allowed to hinder the development of good practice. In fact there appears to be a wealth of practical data that can be used to inform theory. An area that warrants further investigation is the *objectives versus process* dilemma of curriculum design. A cursory analysis of the section dealing with curriculum design indicates that a workable compromise may be within reach in the Queensland scheme. It has been contended that formative and summative assessment need not, in practice, be mutually exclusive. Similarly it has been contended that, in practice, assessment can include simultaneously, criteria-based and norm-referenced notions.

Vitally important beliefs about curriculum, including assessment, have been incorporated in the ROSBA Criteria-Based scheme:

- assessment is an integral aspect of curriculum design
- the most validly informed judgments about a student's achievement are made by the student's teachers
- a student's opportunities to achieve are enhanced by the student's having access to the criteria used to make judgments about such achievement
- the outcomes of assessment are reported most meaningfully when the conditions stated above have been met.

It has not been contended that the Queensland scheme of criteria-based assessment has been perfected, and this is particularly pertinent in reference to the reporting of the outcomes of assessment. However, it has been proposed that prerequisites to developing a sound system of reporting have been identified and explored, and that in the foreseeable future gains will be made in this aspect of secondary school curriculum.