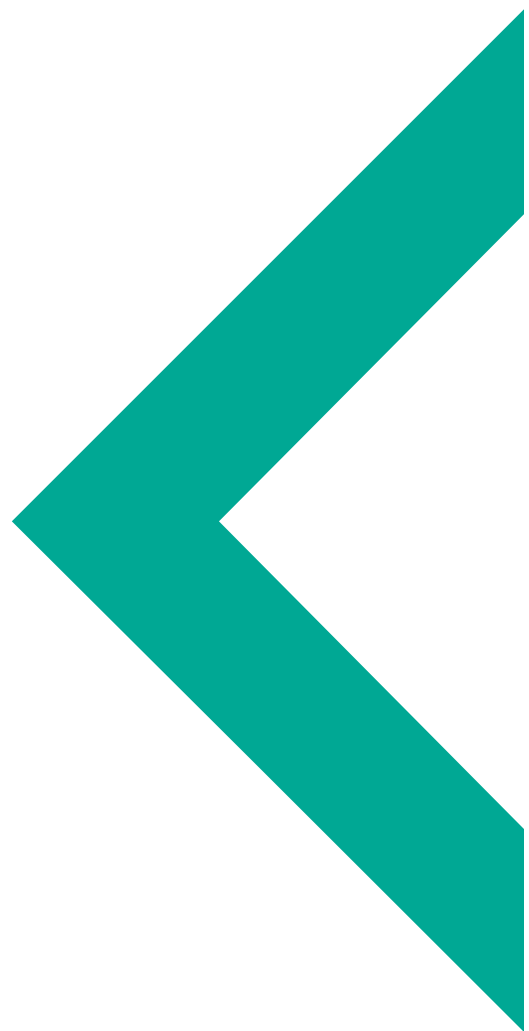


# 1997 Year 6 Test Report on School Survey



QUEENSLAND  
SCHOOL  
CURRICULUM  
COUNCIL

## Acknowledgments

The following officers participated at various stages in the conduct, analyses and reporting of this survey: Margo Bampton, Christopher Dean, Hendrik Dierich, and Andrew Lockhart.

The cooperation of school personnel in completing and returning the survey is appreciated.

ISBN 0 7345 2134 0

Office of the Queensland School Curriculum Council  
Level 27 MLC Centre  
239 George Street  
Brisbane Q

PO Box 317  
Brisbane Albert Street Q 4002

Inquiries:

Reception: (07) 32370794

Fax: (07) 32371285

Email: [inquiries@qscq.edu.au](mailto:inquiries@qscq.edu.au)

EVAL 00002

## Contents

LIST OF DISPLAYS AND TABLES.....	V
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. PROBLEMS WITH ASSESSMENT TASKS.....	1
2.1 Overall results .....	1
2.2 Problems with assessment tasks in Numeracy session.....	2
2.3 Problems with assessment tasks in Reading and Viewing session.....	3
2.4 Problems with assessment task in Writing session .....	3
3. INFORMATION GUIDE AND PARENT BROCHURE .....	5
3.1 Overall opinions .....	5
3.2 Suggested improvements to Information Guide .....	5
3.3 Suggested improvements to parent brochure.....	6
4. OTHER PROCESSES THAT WOULD HELP SCHOOLS TO PREPARE FOR TESTS .....	7
5. CONCLUSIONS.....	8
APPENDIX .....	10

## List of displays and tables

Display 1	School responses to whether or not students experienced problems	1
Display 2	School opinions on Information Guide and parent brochure	5
Table 1	Perceived problems with, or comments about, assessment tasks in Numeracy session	2
Table 2	Perceived problems with, or comments about, assessment tasks in Reading and Viewing session	3
Table 3	Perceived problems with, or comments about, assessment tasks in Writing session	4
Table 4	Suggested improvements to Information Guide	6
Table 5	Suggested improvements to parent brochure	7
Table 6	Other processes suggested that would help schools in preparing for the Test	8

## 1. Introduction

In 1997, 1529 Queensland schools participated in the Year 6 Test. All of these schools were requested to complete the *1997 Year 6 Test Return — Student and Test Information*. Included in this return was a short survey requesting feedback on:

- the extent to which students experienced problems with the assessment tasks, and a description of those problems where applicable;
- the degree of satisfaction with the Information Guide and parent brochures provided by the Queensland School Curriculum Council, and ways in which they could be improved;
- any other processes that would help the school in preparing for the test.

Altogether, 1491 of the 1529 schools (97.5%) responded to the survey. These responses were analysed by officers from the Quality Assurance section of the Office of the Queensland School Curriculum Council, and the results are presented below. Each of the three aspects listed above are considered separately.

A copy of the survey part of the *1997 Year 6 Test Return* is contained in Appendix 1.

## 2. Problems with assessment tasks

### 2.1 Overall results

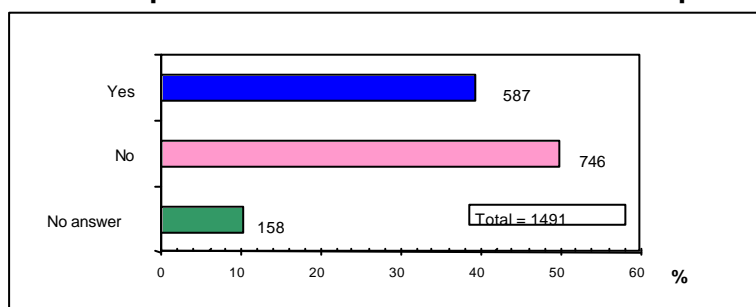
The survey contained the following question:

**Did your students experience particular problems with assessment tasks in a particular session (e.g. too difficult, too easy, not enough time etc.)?**

As can be seen from Display 1, about two-fifths of schools reported students experiencing particular problems with the assessment tasks.

#### Display 1

##### School responses to whether or not students experienced problems



Altogether:

- 398 schools (27% of total school returns) outlined student problems or provided comments related to the assessment tasks in the **Numeracy** session (Aspects of Numeracy Test). A total of 559 problems or comments were received from these schools on this topic;
- 233 schools (16%) outlined student problems or provided comments related to the assessments tasks in the **Reading and Viewing** session of the Aspects of Literacy Test. A total of 269 problems or comments were received from these schools on this topic; and
- 395 schools (26%) outlined students problems or provided comments related to the **Writing** session of the Aspects of Literacy Test. A total of 598 problems or comments were received from these schools on this topic.

## 2.2 Problems with assessment tasks in Numeracy session

About one quarter of schools (27%) outlined student problems or provided comments about the Numeracy session, and their responses focused on the following:

- **okay/good** comments;
  - **time** taken to complete the Test. Most of these respondents felt that more time was needed although some felt there was too much time;
  - **levels of difficulty** of the Test. Most of these respondents noted perceived aspects which contributed to test difficulty, although some schools felt that the difficulty level was about right or too easy;
  - **curriculum** aspects of the Test. Comments focused on the perceived lack of curriculum/test item match.
- Details are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Perceived problems with, or comments about, assessment tasks in Numeracy session**

Response	Frequency	% of Numeracy responses N=559	% of schools N=1491
<b>Okay/Good</b>	35	6.3%	2.3%
<b>Time to complete Test</b>			
• Not enough time	106	19.0%	7.1%
• More time needed in Part 2	44	7.9%	3.0%
• Appropriate length of time	9	1.6%	0.6%
• Too much time	5	0.9%	0.3%
<b>Levels of difficulty</b>			
• Ambiguous questions	84	15.0%	5.6%
• Problems with specific questions	70	12.5%	4.7%
• Too easy	51	9.1%	3.4%
• Difficulty level about right	17	3.0%	1.1%
• Difficult terms, e.g. tessellations/vertices	11	2.0%	0.7%
• Reading difficulty affected performance on numeracy test	6	1.1%	0.4%
• Students with learning disabilities had difficulty with the test	6	1.1%	0.4%
• Too hard	2	0.4%	0.1%
<b>Curriculum aspects</b>			
• Items not covered yet	34	6.1%	2.3%
• Too much use of problem-solving skills, higher cognitive processes	15	2.7%	1.0%
• Too much emphasis on Space over Number	13	2.3%	0.9%
• Items not in curriculum	6	1.1%	0.4%
<b>Miscellaneous</b>			
• Practice questions too easy, leading to overconfidence during test	3	0.5%	0.2%
• Students very nervous	2	0.4%	0.1%
• How much assistance can be given to students with learning disabilities?	1	0.2%	0.1%
• Other	39	7.0%	2.6%

### 2.3 Problems with assessment tasks in Reading and Viewing session

About 16% of schools outlined student problems or provided comments about the Reading and Viewing session, and their responses focused on the following:

- **okay/good** comments;
- **time** taken to complete the test. Unlike the Numeracy session, most of these responses indicated that either too much time was given or that the length of time was appropriate;
- **levels of difficulty** of the Test. Similar to the Numeracy session, most of these responses noted perceived aspects which contributed to test difficulty, although some schools felt that the difficulty level was about right or too easy;
- **curriculum** aspects of the Test. Comments focused on perceptions about there being too much emphasis on comprehension. Details are contained in Table 2.

**Table 2**

**Perceived problems with, or comments about, assessment tasks in Reading and Viewing session**

Response	Frequency	% of Reading & Viewing responses N=269	% of schools N=1491
<b>Okay/Good</b>	48	17.8%	3.2%
<b>Time to complete tests</b>			
• Too much time	55	20.4%	3.7%
• Appropriate length of time	18	6.7%	1.2%
• Not enough time	14	5.2%	0.9%
<b>Levels of difficulty</b>			
• Learning disabled, English as a second language, and/or Aboriginal students had trouble	38	14.1%	2.5%
• Ambiguous questions (assumed background cultural knowledge)	22	8.2%	1.5%
• Too hard	14	5.2%	0.9%
• Difficulty level about right	12	4.5%	0.8%
• Too easy	10	3.7%	0.7%
<b>Curriculum aspects</b>			
• Too much emphasis on comprehension	14	5.2%	0.9%
<b>Miscellaneous</b>			
• Writing task on separate day	3	1.1%	0.2%
• Other	21	7.8%	1.4%

### 2.4 Problems with assessment task in Writing session

About one quarter of schools (26%) outlined student problems or provided comments about the Writing session. Responses focused on the following:

- **okay/good** comments;
- comments that the writing task was **generally inappropriate**;
- **time** taken to complete the Test. Similar to the Numeracy Test, most of these responses indicated that more time was needed, although a small number of schools felt there was too much time;
- **difficulty** with aspects of the Test. All of these responses mentioned aspects which contributed to the perceived difficulty of the task;
- **curriculum** aspects. These responses commented on the genre chosen, the topic for the letter, or the inappropriateness of the discussion stimulus for rural/Aboriginal students;

- the **scaffolding** task. These responses commented on the difficulties of conducting the scaffolding task in a small school or queried the level of involvement of teachers in the task.  
Details are contained in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Perceived problems with, or comments about, assessment tasks in Writing session**

Response	Frequency	% of Writing responses N=598	% of schools N=1491
<b>Okay/Good</b>	23	3.8%	1.5%
<b>Generally inappropriate</b>	92	15.4%	6.2%
<b>Time to complete Test</b>			
• Not enough time	53	8.9%	3.6%
• Too much time	4	0.7%	0.3%
• Not enough time for preparation/discussion	4	0.7%	0.3%
• Test takes too long	2	0.3%	0.1%
<b>Difficulty with aspects of Test</b>			
• Too hard	60	10.0%	4.0%
• Students unsure who to address letter to or format of letter unavailable	55	9.2%	3.7%
• Cartoon 2 was difficult, ambiguous or inappropriate	13	2.2%	0.9%
• Use of cartoons was confusing for some students, e.g. write as themselves or cartoon character	11	1.8%	0.7%
• Persuasive writing difficult (taught in Year 7)	3	0.5%	0.2%
<b>Curriculum aspects</b>			
• Genre not in Year 6 syllabus (in Year 7 syllabus)	79	13.2%	5.3%
• Stimulus issues not relevant to rural/Aboriginal students	24	4.0%	1.6%
• Year 6 not aware of levels of government (in Year 7 syllabus)	10	1.7%	0.7%
<b>Pre-writing discussion (scaffolding)</b>			
• How much can teachers involve themselves in pre-writing discussions?	29	4.8%	1.9%
• One student or small student schools can't generate as much pre-writing discussion as larger schools	72	12.0%	4.8%
<b>Miscellaneous</b>			
• Security of test/genre	10	1.7%	0.7%
• Not enough time to teach genre after informed of it	9	1.5%	0.6%
• Can't use dictionary	3	0.5%	0.2%
• Bike riding not banned by local council	2	0.3%	0.1%
• Want one topic only not choice of two	1	0.2%	0.1%
• Other	38	6.4%	2.5%



### 3. Information Guide and parent brochure

#### 3.1 Overall opinions

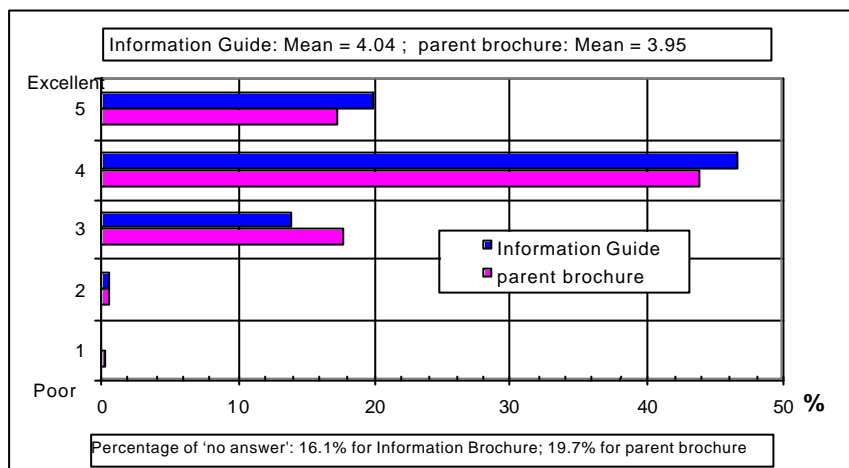
The survey contained the following question:

**When preparing for the test in your school, how satisfactory were the 1997 Queensland Year 6 Test Information Guide and The 1997 Year 6 Test... What you need to know (parent brochure)?**

As can be seen from Display 2, schools revealed a high opinion of the documents.

#### Display 2

##### School opinions on Information Guide and parent brochure



Schools were also asked to describe any improvements which they would like made to the two documents.

Altogether:

- 120 schools (8% of total school returns) suggested improvements to, or provided comments on, the **Information Guide**. A total of 177 responses were received from these schools on this topic;
- 89 schools (6%) suggested improvements to, or provided comments on, the **parent brochure**. A total of 93 comments were received from these schools on this topic.

#### 3.2 Suggested improvements to Information Guide

About 8% of schools suggested improvements to, or provided comments on, the Information Guide, and their responses focused on the following:

- **okay/good** comments;
  - the need for **further information**. Aspects included further guidelines for teacher discussion, more information on the genre and further assistance for special students;
  - **format/language** of the Guide, particularly making it shorter and simpler.
- Details are contained in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
**Suggested improvements to Information Guide**

Improvements to Guide	Frequency	% of Information Guide suggestions N=177	% of schools N=1491
<b>Okay/Good</b>	43	24.3%	2.9%
<b>Further information requested</b>			
• More guidelines for teacher discussion for writing task	16	9.0%	1.1%
• More specific information for helping LD students and students with special considerations	12	6.8%	0.8%
• More information on genre earlier	12	6.8%	0.8%
• Instructions for helping all students	4	2.3%	0.3%
• Appraisal/learning difficulties	5	2.8%	0.3%
• When to distribute handbooks to teachers	4	2.3%	0.3%
• List of materials required by students	1	0.6%	0.1%
• More guidelines for administration of practice test	2	1.1%	0.1%
• Problems filling in front cover of test	1	0.6%	0.1%
<b>Format/language of Guide</b>			
• Guide to be shorter; use simpler language	10	5.6%	0.7%
<b>Comments about other test materials (not the Guide)</b>			
• Comments about test overall	14	7.9%	0.9%
• Comments about handbook	13	7.3%	0.9%
• Writing genre released too early	8	4.5%	0.5%
• Problems with genre	6	3.4%	0.4%
• Syllabus linkage of items	3	1.7%	0.2%
• Other	15	8.5%	1.0%

### 3.3 Suggested improvements to parent brochure

About 6% of schools suggested improvements to, or provided comments on, the parent brochure, and their responses focused on the following:

- **okay/good** comments, or assumptions that the brochure was okay for parents;
- the need for **further information**. Aspects included explaining to parents that the Year 6 Test is just one part of an overall assessment process, giving a stronger rationale for why students are doing the test, providing some Test examples, and providing more publicity for the Test;
- **format/language** of the brochure, particularly using simpler language. Details are contained in Table 5.

**Table 5**  
**Suggested improvements to parent brochure**

Improvements to brochure	Frequency	% of parent brochure suggestions N=93	% of schools N=1491
<b>Okay/Good</b>	28	30.1%	1.9
<b>No feedback from parents; assume okay</b>	9	9.7%	0.6%
<b>Further information requested</b>			
• Explain it is only part of overall assessment	6	6.5%	0.4%
• Rationale; why are students doing the test	4	4.3%	0.3%
• Some examples of questions	4	4.3%	0.3%
• Greater publicity of tests in community	2	2.2%	0.1%
• Parents think test is for admittance to Year 7	2	2.2%	0.1%
<b>Format/language</b>			
• Simpler language	12	12.9%	0.8%
• Prepare an additional version for parents using Aboriginal English	4	4.3%	0.3%
<b>Comments about test itself (not about brochure)</b>	6	6.5%	0.4%
<b>Comments about translation problems/requests</b>	5	5.4%	0.3%
<b>Miscellaneous</b>			
• Deliver earlier in the Year	1	1.1%	0.1%
• Other	10	10.8%	0.7%

#### 4. Other processes that would help schools to prepare for tests

The survey contained the following question:

**Are there any other processes that would help your school in preparing for the test? If yes, please describe these.**

Altogether 248 schools (16.6% of total school returns) made a total of 269 suggestions, and their responses focused on the following.

- **okay/good** comments;
- inadequacy of the **practice materials**;
- problems with the **writing task**;
- the need for further consideration of **target groups**.

Details are contained in Table 6.

**Table 6**  
**Other processes suggested that would help schools in preparing for the Test**

Other comments	Frequency	% of other suggestions N=269	% of schools N=1491
<b>Okay/Good</b>	10	0.7%	0.7%
<b>Practice test</b>			
• Practice test inadequate — make it harder/longer/more of them	68	4.6%	4.6%
• Use same format for students biographical information on practice and real test	14	0.9%	0.9%
<b>Writing task</b>			
• Writing task genre — earlier access for practice	32	2.1%	2.1%
• Writing task — give a model format	27	1.8%	1.8%
• Writing task — choice of genre	18	1.2%	1.2%
• Writing task genre — not covered yet	15	1.0%	1.0%
• Writing task — more guidelines on amount of support to be given	10	0.7%	0.7%
• Security issues, especially for writing task genre	10	0.7%	0.7%
<b>Target groups</b>			
• More guidelines for the amount of advice/assistance allowed to be given generally and to LD students	7	0.5%	0.5%
• English as a second Language (ESL) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues (A&TSI) related issues	5	0.3%	0.3%
<b>Miscellaneous</b>			
• Earlier access to test administration procedures	8	0.5%	0.5%
• Stress of novel formal testing experience	7	0.5%	0.5%
• Used previous years test as practice test	5	0.3%	0.3%
• Make test items come from the curriculum	4	0.3%	0.3%
• Send extra tests for new enrolments	2	0.1%	0.1%
• Other	27	1.8%	1.8%

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the results of the 1997 Year 6 Test School Administration survey, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. The majority of schools did not have students experiencing particular problems with the assessment tasks of the Test. However, a large minority of schools (two-fifths) did have students experiencing problems of various kinds.
2. Most problems with assessment tasks centred upon three major areas, each area experienced by a minority (approximately 5–15 per cent) of schools:
  - the time taken to complete the Test;
  - the levels of difficulty of the Test;
  - curriculum-related matters.
3. Regarding test time, a minority of schools felt that more time was required for the Numeracy and Writing sessions, while too much time may have been provided for the Reading and Viewing session.
4. Regarding levels of difficulty, a minority of schools felt that some questions or tasks were too difficult, included difficult terms, or had reading levels above the ability of some students. For some schools, the pre-writing discussion (scaffolding) was problematic for teachers.
5. Regarding curriculum-related aspects, a minority of schools perceived that some items in the Test had not been covered yet, or perceived that the Test included some

inappropriate curriculum emphases e.g. too much problem solving, too much comprehension, or inappropriate choice of subject matter.

6. Overall, schools had a very high opinion of the Information Guide and the parent brochure.
7. The Information Guide and parent brochure could be improved through the use of simpler language and the provision of additional information to assist teachers and/or parents.

It is important to place these conclusions in their proper context: the 1997 Year 6 Test was designed as a universal paper and pencil test. Of particular importance is the brief that the Test is required to measure the full range of student performance across the state. Given such a wide brief, it is inevitable that not every school will regard the Test as being fully compatible with all activities undertaken in specific classes or schools. Some might regard such a wide brief as disadvantaging some students. But others might regard it as advantaging them, because at one point in time in the school year, all students for a particular year level are being assessed on the same instrument, using the same criteria.

Be that as it may, the survey information reveals a number of areas that the Office of the Queensland School Curriculum Council should be looking at closely as it goes about developing future testing programs.

## Appendix

### The Survey 1997 Year 6 Test Return – Student and Test Information

The following questions are designed for the purpose of gathering information in order to improve the service provided to schools participating in the Year 6 Test. Your feedback is appreciated.

1. Did your students experience particular problems with the assessment tasks in a particular session (eg. too difficult, too easy, not enough time etc.)? (please tick)  yes  no  
If yes, please describe these below.

Session	Problem
Numeracy	
Literacy, Reading and Viewing	
Literacy Writing Task	

2. When preparing for the test in your school, how satisfactory were (please tick) poor      excellent  
the **1997 Queensland Year 6 Test Information Guide**       
and **The 1997 Year 6 Test... What you need to know** (parent brochure).

3. Please describe any improvements you would like to see to these documents.

**1997 Queensland Year 6 Test Information Guide**

**The 1997 Year 6 Test...What you need to know (parent brochure)**

4. Are there any other processes that would help your school in preparing for the test?  
(please tick)  yes  no

If yes, please describe there.

**PLEASE COMPLETE OVERLEAF  
RETURN TO THE ETC WITH USED QUESTION BOOKLETS  
The Educational Testing Centre, c/- NCS Australasia, 23 Railway Terrace, Milton,  
Queensland 4064**